D211 POST: CHS APPLIED TECH TEACHER IMPROVES THE VIEW FOR REMOTE LEARNERS

For many teachers whose classes require showing hands on procedures, a new step in the virtual classroom is adjusting camera angles for the students to have the best possible view. This can, at times, cost time and may not always present a smooth view as the work progresses.

Conant High School Applied Technology teacher Jon Babcock has created a way for students to have an up-close view of the class projects in progress.

“I thought about what I would want to see if I had to tune in from home as a student,” Babock said. “The New Yankee Workshop with Norm Abrams was something that was on tv at home on the weekends when I was growing up and there were always a variety of camera angles.”

After a variety of prototypes, he decided to have a laptop in a backpack with a webcam clipped the shoulder strap to provide students a look at the projects from his point-of-view. He said he drew additional inspiration from a variety of sources, including within District 211.

“I was inspired by Steve Elza, who had tweeted about using something like this for his autos classes,” he said.

Jon Babcock, an Applied Technology teacher at James B. Conant High School, demonstrates using a router on his body-worn camera set-up during a woods class.

Babcock said that this has not only saved him time in class, but has also increased students’ understanding of safety factors when working with the tools.

“Safety is far easier to see when the vision is the same as what I am experiencing,” he said. “In years past, when the first demo of a machine is completed, the kids closest to the machine get the best view, but the kids in the back need to see it done again.”

Because of the point-of-view appearance in the virtual classroom, Babcock said his students can still select which projects they will do.

“Once we, as a class, have completed the safety, function, and processes part of the class, the students can come up with projects and see them built from a natural view,” he said. “Students sign up for woods classes to make their own projects. I want to bring these projects to them. I have seen the students get excited when their project is in the spotlight or on deck to be built in the class.”

James B. Conant High School Applied Technology teacher Jon Babcock uses his camera to show details on a drawer joint during a woods class.

As with many innovations, this design is not without its minor issues.

“The laptop heats up in the backpack so it gets pretty warm on my back after an hour of class,” Babcock said. “I also have to make sure my laptop is charged before 2nd hour. Charging in between 2nd and 3rd hour is also very important.”

Babcock has said that when classes return to full capacity, he would continue to utilize his camera for classes.

“In the future, teaching safety in the classroom will always follow this model,” he said. “After that, depending on whether or not the project itself has been recorded, edited and posted, that is when I will keep the camera rolling.”

The projector screen in Jon Babcock’s woods class shows the video feed from his body-worn camera rig.