

# Side Projects @MKA

BE CREATIVE.  
BE COLLABORATIVE.  
BE REFLECTIVE.

Seniors and their May Term projects are coming down the home stretch! We're seeing and hearing about such incredible work, and we look forward to celebrating with seniors and their families at next week's May Term Symposium (read to the end for details).

This week, we encouraged students to move forward with confidence, even if things don't feel perfect or their deadline seems unbearably close. We shared an article with them to remind them, for possibly the last time, that creativity is a practice and, like all practices, it has valleys and peaks and sometimes plateaus. [Reclaiming Your Creative Confidence](#) by Tom and David Kelley talks about the four fears that often inhibit our creativity: fear of the messy unknown, fear of being judged, fear of the first step, and fear of losing control. Facing fears in order to create is a challenge we all face; how lucky for MKA's seniors that they have a chance to experience both this fear and the overcoming of this fear before they head off to college and all the other adventures of their lives.

In this issue, as we have in the past three, we will continue to highlight process and progress as well as people and ideas. But we'll start with one of the unsung heroes of May Term, Mr. Rob Leather.

Thank you, as ever, for reading.

**Steve Valentine**  
Director of Academic Leadership and  
Assistant Head of Upper School

**Jill Maza**  
Director of Libraries and Research and  
Upper School Librarian

## MODEL MENTOR, DEAN, AND COACH: Rob Leather

Year after year no faculty member shepherds more seniors through their May Term projects than Rob Leather, Senior Grade Dean, Health, Wellness, and Physical Education Faculty Member, and Head Boys' Soccer Coach. This year Rob serves as mentor to fourteen seniors whose Creative Inquiry projects range from looking at fitness through a business lens to mastering the art of match analysis to numerous action research projects that consider ways to stay fit and eat well.

Rob's popular Biomechanics class (co-taught with Marc Tuazon) and its prerequisite Principles of Conditioning class (taught by Jordan Raper) have sparked a fire in our students to learn more about the science behind healthy living. Increasingly, students who have taken these courses hunger to apply to real life the principles they've learned, and May Term provides just the space and time to do so. Whether they seek to learn more about the science of recovery in season or how nutrition impacts mental health, students look to Rob for his wise counsel and creative thinking on ways to focus an inquiry and measure fitness.

Rob's mentoring approach includes weekly group sessions for his mentees, a model which provides access not only to his feedback and coaching but also to the collective brain of all other students' experiences. Serendipitous collaboration between projects often stems from his approach. This week Rob will lend his ear to all seniors when he leads them in a Weekly Meet-Up/Feedback Friday mashup where they'll reflect back on Senior Health and relate some of those messages to May Term. Rob will provide an opportunity for seniors to consider what they've learned about themselves during May Term before they set off for college. There's no one better suited to help seniors segue to life beyond MKA.

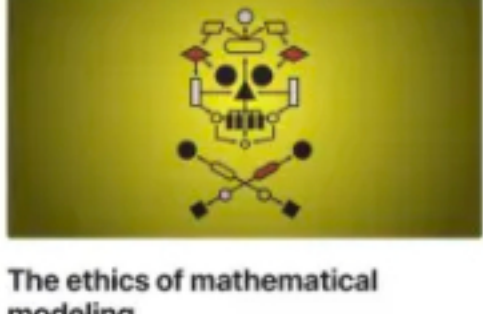


## MATH IN THE REAL WORLD (AND ON THE TENNIS COURT): Rohan Moniz

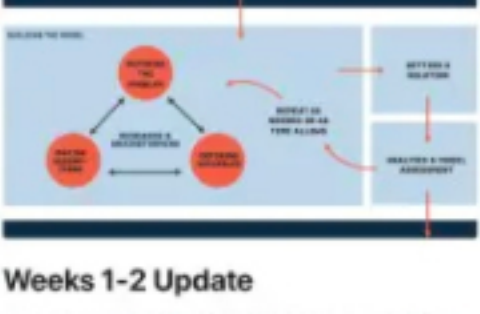
For my May Term, I've been exploring the subject of mathematical modeling and how it is used to predict the outcomes of real-world problems. For example, mathematical models have been key in predicting the spread of COVID-19 over the last year, allowing the government to source and allocate an appropriate amount of PPE and tests.

In the first half of the month, I learned about the guiding principles and techniques behind mathematical modeling. With that knowledge, I am currently attempting to build a rudimentary mathematical model. I have decided to incorporate my passion for tennis, so I am creating a model to forecast the outcome of professional tennis matches.

Throughout the month, I have been blogging my progress as well as my thoughts on certain aspects of mathematical modeling. If you're interested, please check out my blog <https://blog.nahor.dev/>.



**The ethics of mathematical modeling**  
Mathematical modeling is a powerful tool. Every day, these models influence major decisions in the financial, legal, and scientific worlds. Whether it's...



**Weeks 1-2 Update**  
During the second week of May Term, I have been able to learn about the basics of mathematical modeling—namely, the process of creating a model as well as...



**An introduction...**  
Hi! My name is Rohan Moniz and I'm a senior at MKA. This blog post is the first in a series of posts as part of my May Term project. During the month...

## A LOVE FOR THE EARTH: Grace Russo

For my May Term, I am creating a lesson plan and teacher resource for a future environmental and sustainability week at the Middle School. During the last two and a half weeks, I have researched and selected relevant topics for each day of the week (examples: Air and Water Pollution Day, Sustainable Farming Day, etc.), and I have found activities and experiments to reinforce each topic's learning objectives.

Last Friday, I was able to join Mrs. Zimmerman's 6th grade science class to help her with an activity on greenhouse gasses. This allowed me to see what types of activities the students enjoy, as well as to learn about the knowledge they already have regarding the environment. I will visit the Middle School again this week to test some of the activities I have found and to solicit valuable student feedback. Thursday, I will be leading Mrs. Zimmerman's 6th grade class in making solar ovens; if all goes well, we will be able to roast marshmallows in them. Then on Friday, I will demonstrate how the class can make individual compost bins.

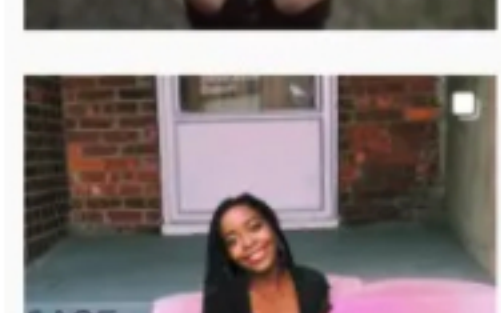
Once I have completed my research and compiled daily lesson plans, I will be consolidating my information on a website or in a Google Doc so that Middle School teachers can easily access the resources. The goal is for this resource to be used to spark MKA Environmental and Sustainability Awareness Week 2022 at the Middle School!

I love that I am able to focus my May Term project around my passion for the environment and that I am able to share that passion with young students. It also makes me happy to know that perhaps I can contribute to their choosing to live more sustainably. The students at the Middle School have been very enthusiastic and excited to talk with me and to try new things, and I can already see that many of these students share my love for our Earth.



## TELLING PANDEMIC STORIES: Riley Rendino

I spent a semester in South Africa with the School for Ethics and Global Leadership and researched the question, "Whose stories get told the most and who can tell whose stories?" I then started my May Term project. I have been compiling people's "pandemic stories" and documenting them on Instagram [@yourpandemicstories](#). I hope to authentically shine light on the various ways the pandemic impacted people's lives in different parts of the country and the world and on how people lived through and survived the pandemic.



## TEENAGERS CAN HELP: Aron Dyadyuk

Through my May Term Project, I hope to reach families throughout and beyond my community. COVID-19 has impacted every single one of us, and isolation has brought about significant challenges. Through Teenagers Can Help, I hope to connect teenage tutors and students in order to form friendships during this difficult time.

Young students need a helping hand academically and, more importantly, socially. Having a mentor from whom a child can learn is crucial during this time. As I think about the future of this program, I am excited to witness the friendships formed and the lessons learned. The flyer below will help you connect with this project in a meaningful way.

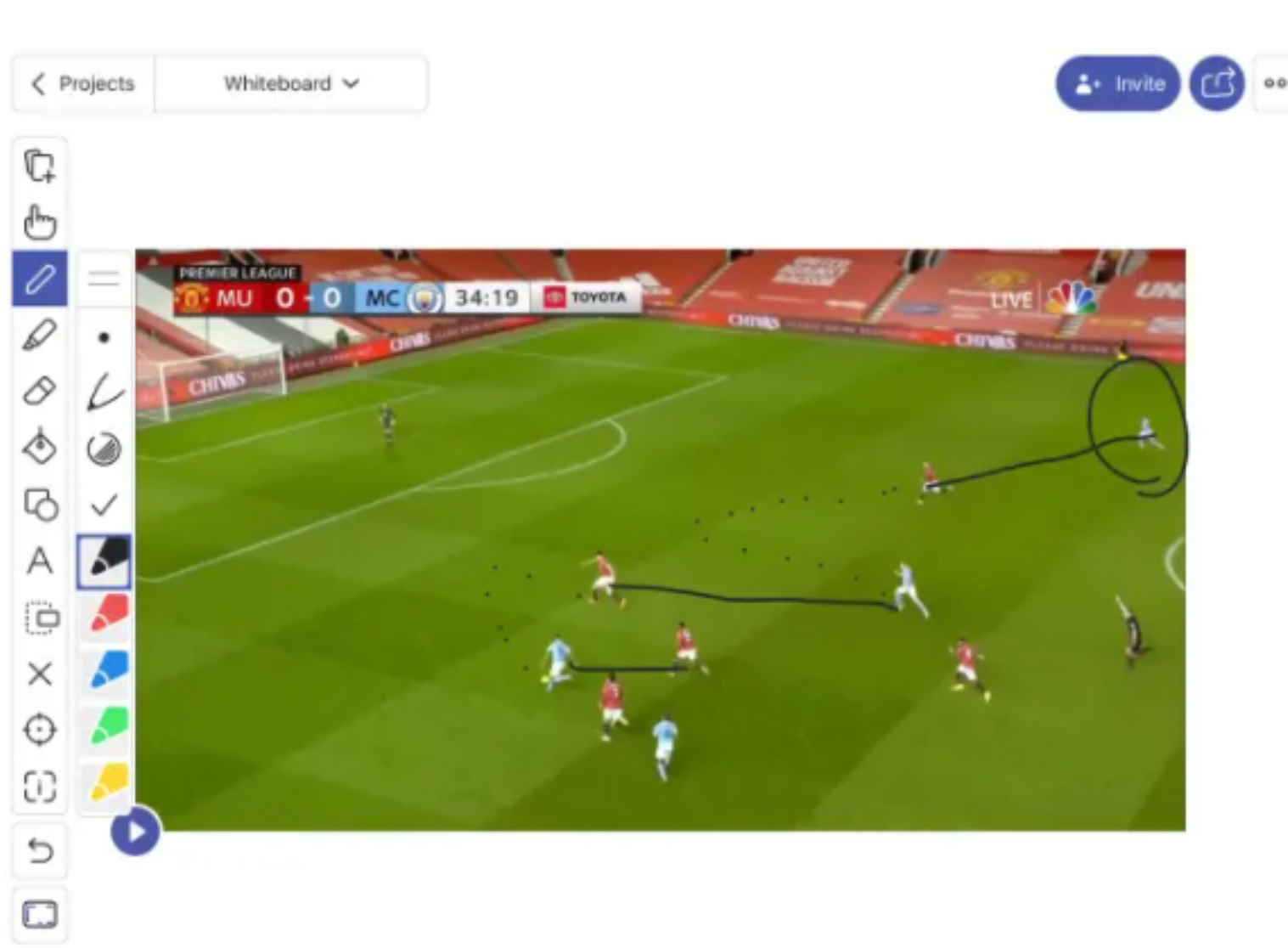
[View Flyer](#)

## MANCHESTER UNITED, FOR BETTER OR WORSE: Charlie Abdulhayoglu

For my May Term project I have taken the time to analyze Manchester United's 20/21 Premier League season. It has been fun and exciting to take a deep dive into the growth of Manchester United as a team and certain players as individuals.

In the beginning, I started to gather clips from games which I believe showcased what was right or what was wrong about the team. Next, I narrowed down those clips to ones that were put together in a long string of small clips while building my notebook for what I wanted to speak about in my analysis. As a last step, I am making a voice-over video of those clips to showcase my analysis of how Manchester United has found its identity over the season, how players have grown into certain positions, and how players' specific play styles have evolved for better or worse.

This photo [pulled from Explain Everything, an online interactive whiteboard app] is an example of the type of analysis I am doing with the explanation coming through what I will say to make sense of the drawings and my analysis of certain situations.

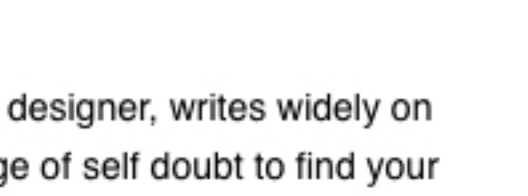
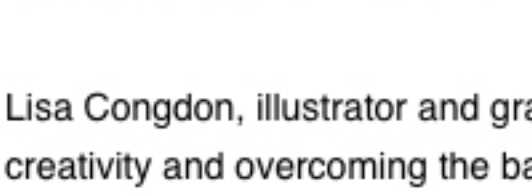


## A CREATIVE'S BOOKSHELF

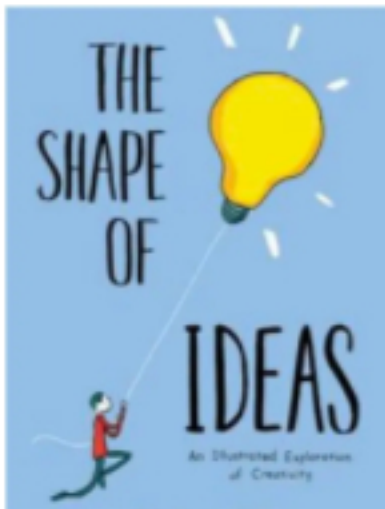
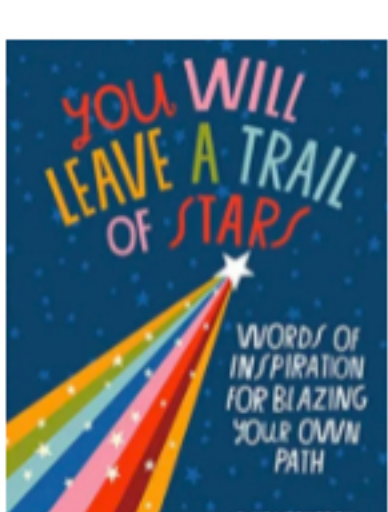
This year, 81 seniors are pursuing 61 Creative Inquiry projects. Not infrequently, seniors remark that their project "isn't really creative." Over the course of May Term, we will debunk myths around creativity, help students see the creativity in themselves and their projects, and dive into ways to actively practice the habits of a creative person. This May, we've shared pieces of advice and wisdom from this core collection of books written by and for creative people.



Austin Kleon's bestselling trilogy helps students find the beauty in process and provides practical strategies for sharing and sustaining their creative practice.

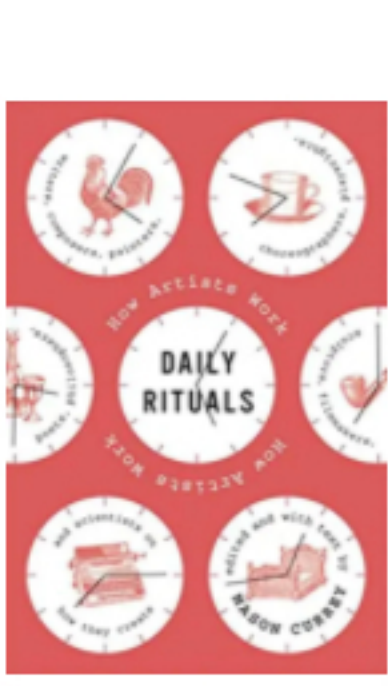


Lisa Congdon, illustrator and graphic designer, writes widely on creativity and overcoming the baggage of self doubt to find your voice. In *You Will Leave a Trail of Stars*, she considers how to "live with more intention, curiosity, and joy" through a collection of illustrations and short essays.



Grant Snider approaches creativity through a series of comic-style vignettes in *The Shape of Ideas*. Often light-hearted, self-deprecating, and funny, he considers everything from avoiding procrastination and creative blocks to rejection and inspiration.

Around the second week of May Term, as patterns and habits start to emerge, we ask students to consider what they're learning about the spaces, routines, and rituals that foster their creativity. Mason Curry's *Daily Rituals: How Artists Work* shares the daily rituals of hundreds of famous creatives from Voltaire's propensity to work in bed until noon when he would break for coffee and chocolate to Maya Angelou's insistence on writing in hotel rooms instead of at home.



Anyone intrigued by Tom and David Kelley's [Reclaim Your Creative Confidence](#) should go all-in and check out their book, *Creative Confidence*, a deep dive into the principles laid out in their Harvard Business Review article (mentioned above).

## Join us for the 7TH ANNUAL MAY TERM SYMPOSIUM

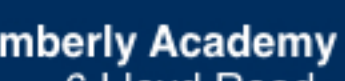
All seniors and their parents or guardians are invited to join us for the 7th Annual May Term Symposium. The event will take place on Thursday, June 3, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

As a way to both be outside and celebrate the creativity and joy of May Term, we will gather in a very special location: the back field at MKA's Brookside Campus (224 Orange Road, Montclair). We hope to see you there.

[RSVP via Email](#)

*\*Parking details and more information regarding COVID policies will be shared via email.*

#WeAreMKA



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