



We're kicking off the final issue of *Side Projects* with a visual summary of the May Term experience. In the photos that follow, Sanaa Williams quite literally tracks the progress of her mural project. More figuratively, she models the way daily effort and iteration can add up to something meaningful, beautiful, and true.

As you'll see in the Spotlight features and the final May Term slide deck, Sanaa's lessons were put into practice again and again by MKA's distinguished Class of 2021. Yes, their Symposium was rained out — twice! — but they owned this process in ways other classes never have. We wish them the best of luck in all of their endeavors, and we expect that the lessons they learned during the past five weeks will continue to reverberate in their lives, their careers, and beyond.

Thank you 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



WE NOW PRESENT...THE CLASS OF 2021



We invite you to browse the [May Term Symposium Slide Deck](#). While these slides will never quite capture the conversations, language lessons, chess matches, and fresh baked cookies planned for our live Symposium, they provide a small glimpse into each May Term. As you read blogs and writing tips, watch short animations and films, and listen to podcasts and oral histories, imagine, too, the stories behind and lessons learned through this special time of growth and reflection.

Project Spotlights:

OPPOSITES ATTRACT: Jonah Barbin and Alex Glotzer

This May, we have filmed a ten episode series that exists at the intersection of podcasting and social experimentation. Using a curtain, a couple pairs of headphones, and microphone distortion that gives the two guests the illusion that their partner has just inhaled a balloon full of helium, we were able to facilitate conversations with zero biases. We carefully picked each pair so that while they will recognize each other when we ultimately pull back the curtain at the conclusion of the hour chat, we are creating a conversation that would not usually occur. It has been an extremely rewarding experience for us all and something we hope to potentially continue in the future.

Be sure to [subscribe to our YouTube channel](#) to watch all ten episodes!



WASHINGTON SQUARE CHESS PARK: Mohamed Hassaneen



For my May Term, I took a deep dive into the world of chess, learning openings and defenses from a textbook and honing my skills through online play via the Lichess platform. Toward the end of the month, Caleb Hofmann and I travelled to NYC to play chess with some local chess enthusiasts. We also brought along a tactics book by Maksim Blokh to help with our game playing. I implemented some of the studies and openings into the games I played, including both the Ruy Lopez and the Sicilian defense. It was an overall amazing experience to experience some sense of normalcy in the city again and to witness how chess is integrated within our society and culture. I have a great level of appreciation for the game of chess and its indiscriminate factors. Chess is a masterful game that solely requires your brain and has nothing to do with your age or identity or background. When not playing, Caleb and I watched people of all ages and backgrounds play against each other, and it was wonderful to see.

THE STUDY OF SURFOLOGY: Robbie Di Geronimo, Holden Hargrave, Cam Kwiatkowski, and Gabe Stocus

During our May Term, we went to multiple surf beaches along the coast of NJ. All of the surf sessions were filmed either using a video camera or a drone, and the footage was used to make a 30-minute cinematic video that can be found on [YouTube](#). Our goal was to capture the emotions of surfing. We also interviewed a few legends from the NJ surfing community. Besides our own surfing footage, our other main features are advice from a surfboard shaper and an interview with a surfer that has been embedded in the NJ surf culture for decades. We also spent a week in Cape May which is a linchpin in NJ surf culture.



LESSONS LEARNED

Last Friday, we asked students to be specific about what they have learned during May Term. As educators, we may be biased here, but we don't think there's a more fitting end to a school experience than the unvarnished words of students reflecting lessons learned. Here are 10 (of many) things students learned in the classroom of May Term, which of course is also the classroom of the world.

- "During May Term, I was able to learn about how to construct a mathematical model. I also became more informed about the real-world uses of mathematical modeling as well as the ethical issues surrounding some of these uses. The whole May Term process also taught me how to better manage unstructured time, which will definitely be useful in college."
- "I learned about how to set up an investment portfolio and how to view/value stocks from an investor's perspective. I learned that you should consider qualitative factors such as company history, strengths, competition, weaknesses, and potential opportunities, as well as qualitative factors such as their growth in terms of number of stores, net revenue, operating income, net income, stock price, etc...overall I think I learned a lot of very important experience that will be valuable as I pursue my interest in finance and analytics."
- "Project management in a team setting is one of the most important things I've learned in May Term. Prior to this experience, I didn't need to organize most of my files and as a result, many of the layers were either unnamed or were not grouped together well. Moreover, I've learned how to easily transfer and sync files with people I'm working with."
- "I learned how to schedule my time on my own."
- "I learned how to use creativity to my advantage and market products to an audience."
- "I learned a lot about the challenges of creating static educational content. Live teaching certainly has its own difficulties, but it is easier to adapt and fit students' needs during a live teaching session. Most of the insights my group gained during the past month are related to how we can effectively communicate with our audience no matter the mode that we are teaching in. We explored using feedback forms, emails, flyers, and more to effectively gauge our students' interest and measure their engagement."
- "How to use Blender's built-in fluid simulation system to create a simulation of fire. How to rig a bird's wings to have proportional rotation scaling. How to create a density map for Blender's hair particle system using weight painting."
- "I've learned good time management and communication skills. I had the opportunity to work on my communication skills by making and continuing conversations with patients either about their exercises or what they were doing in their lives. I was also able to work alongside physical therapists and shadow how they treated the patients."
- "I learned about a lot of the local trails and ecosystems and was able to refine my own process when taking nature photography."
- "I learned that a comfortable reading pace for me is about 50-75 pages per day. I learned about Celtic legends, Pavlovian psychology, and the 19th century American whaling industry."