



Countdown to Christmas

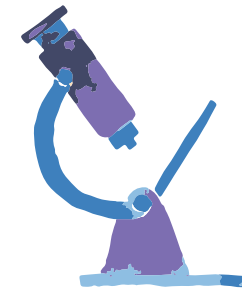
Each day after Thanksgiving, in the weeks leading up to Christmas break, we shared brief videos of our students completing Christmas performances. In classrooms, students watched the videos to begin each day. The spirit of the season was maintained, and our students loved seeing each other perform! While we hope that next year we will be able to host some of our traditional Christmas events, like special chapels, Lessons & Carols, and the Primary School Christmas Concert, we loved the excitement of the Countdown to Christmas, and plan to incorporate pieces of it into our holiday seasons going forward!



Headmaster's Council

Increasing opportunities for our middle school students to practice leading and contributing to our community is an idea we have been planning for a while, and this year we took action! Headmaster's Council is a new leadership opportunity for students in 5th through 8th grade, which provides students access to our Headmaster, Garhett Wagers, in a space where they can serve their fellow students and serve as a representative. One student from each cohort group in each middle school grade level is elected by their peers in a blind election to serve semester-long terms. These students are asked to have awareness around what is going on in the middle school, and find opportunities to improve the St. Mark's experience. After two-thirds of the year, Mr. Wagers is confident that the feedback of our middle schoolers is adding particular value this year as he evaluates our programming and policies.

Over the years, we have had immense pride in our Admission Ambassador program, along with our strengthened Student Council program. The Headmaster's Council and our newly formed Hospitality Program, where 8th grade students work with our arrival staff in the morning to greet fellow students and parents at arrival, provide leadership opportunities for more of our middle school students.



Seeking Solutions

Building connection between concepts and between students is important across the school experience, but especially crucial during the formative middle school years. This year, the 7th grade teaching team has lived into our Characteristics of Professional Excellence, exploring and utilizing emerging tools and techniques to meet the needs of 21st century learners. Our Science Department felt strongly about continuing live labs in class this year. The team spent significant time over the summer researching tools and methods to provide students with the hands-on experience that is so important in Science class. Mr. Gottfried discovered an interactive program called Gizmo that allows students to manipulate information to experiment and solve problems. Mr. Gottfried also uses a camera to demonstrate labs while keeping students socially distant. The lab is projected onto the screen, which is also shared with students in Distance Learning. Mr. Gottfried shares, "By using a digital camera, I am able to allow students to see close ups and view things

Parent Guild Events

While we miss gathering in person, our evening, virtual Parent Guild meetings are allowing higher attendance and more engagement from across our community. We're grateful for our Parent Guild, who are continuing to seek and provide creative opportunities for fellowship and celebration. Our Lion's Drive In Movie events were fun, and we are looking forward to having more on campus later this spring!



that they would have never been able to see." In math, Mrs. Aylsworth has utilized digital assignments and worksheets for the first time. It has been helpful, since the assignments auto-grade, freeing Mrs. Aylsworth up to give immediate feedback to students in person. The kids love the program, because it has a more "fun feel" than typical paper assignments. Mrs. Aylsworth, who joined us at St. Mark's this fall, shares, "I also feel that we have had to get creative with how we connect with students and how the students connect with one another. I feel that since we have focused so much on making sure we maintain connections, that we have gotten to know our kids fairly well. Better than I expected!"

