

From the Headmaster

GARHETT WAGERS

The spring of 2020 brought about unprecedented challenges for everyone. The global pandemic spread fear through communities all over the world for our general safety, while also creating economic uncertainty. Schools were impacted greatly, forced to turn on a dime from our on campus, classroom-centered model for education to a distance learning experience. Everyone was disoriented. Parents were trying to work from home while also playing the role of the teacher in many ways. To say it wasn't easy is a huge understatement.

That said, we look for the opportunities within the crisis. Clearly, it is important to prepare children for the path ahead through the many courses of study school provides, such as math, reading, writing, science, social studies, Spanish, religion, art, music, physical education and more. However, preparing children for the path is more than content. We want our children to learn about the world and to learn about themselves. We want them to develop agency and independence in their thinking and actions. While much has been written expressing concern for possible lost learning in some areas, there were opportunities to learn in others. Our students, like our teachers and parents, were challenged to adapt quickly to a new approach. They had to assess what they knew, what they didn't know, and how to close the gap between the two. At all ages we saw some students struggle to get there, students start slowly and make progress, and students apply what they knew and close the gap.

The challenges of the spring frame the uncertainty and fears for the fall. How will schools provide a sense of normalcy and consistency in our learning spaces, while keeping people safe? The rules to be followed seem to change frequently as does the world around us; much more quickly than we are comfortable living with. At St. Mark's, we are committed to the health and safety of our students, faculty & staff, and our parents, and to providing the best learning environment possible. We've learned a great deal from the spring, and that learning will guide our practices in the fall. We will all be better from the challenges we experienced, and we will continue to prepare our children for the path ahead, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Although we all felt frustrated at times this past spring, I also saw creativity, perseverance, flexibility, and growth mindedness in so many within our community. These muscles need exercise as well, and they certainly received it.

We expect the 2020-2021 school to have challenges similar to this past spring, and we are all better prepared to navigate them. The people (students, teachers, and parents) have learned and grown. Our distance learning experience has highlighted where we can strengthen our program both on campus and remotely, and created the opportunity to move forward together, advancing our strategic plan. There are so many ways the world is evolving quickly, calling for growth and change in our communities and organizations. At St. Mark's, we see and embrace the opportunity to listen, learn, and lead. To read more about our strategic plan, including how the current environment is shaping our goals, please see the next page.



Garhett Wagers
Headmaster

“There are so many ways the world is evolving quickly, calling for growth and change in our communities and organizations. At St. Mark's, we see and embrace the opportunity to listen, learn, and lead.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garhett Wagers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.