

Distance Learning

VIRTUAL SCHOOL



Sophie Chadha, '29, works on writing in her dining room at home; Ms. Hernandez's 8th Grade Advisory poses via video call

When we closed the doors to our campus for Spring Break, we had no idea that we would be unable to return for the remainder of the school year. As our city, state, and country moved into a state of social distancing, self-isolation, and quarantining, at St. Mark's we found ourselves on the precipice of a new frontier: Distance Learning.

Our children stayed at home, while attending school virtually. Many of us began working remotely from home, while trying to provide support for our students and stepping into a homeschool teacher role. As the weeks stretched out, it eventually became clear that we would not be returning to campus to end the 2019-2020 school year. Headmaster, Garhett Wagers, shared, "While we didn't plan to spend our spring in a design thinking experience, that's how it turned out. The process of design thinking includes visualizing your user's needs, defining the problem the user has based on those needs, creating ideas to solve this problem, starting a solution, and testing it. The [Distance Learning] experience was a very thoughtfully designed prototype." Our users, the students and parents, tested the prototype with courage and patience as our team of faculty members and the technology department acted quickly to adjust and adapt to the new normal.

Parents provided feedback that allowed us to make improvements over the course of the experience. While we recognize that Distance Learning has major shortcomings, looking back now, we feel tremendous gratitude for our families who learned alongside us, and for our teachers, who made every effort to meet each child where they were.

A DISTANCE LEARNING HIGHLIGHT

This spring, our 8th graders in Spanish were tasked with researching a significant historical event that had an impact on the society or culture of Argentina in ways that are still evident today. After researching the historical event of their choice and educating their fellow classmates, students hypothesized how society may have been affected by the event. Our students were able to connect with Argentinians to gain insight, sending these individuals messages in Spanish to begin the conversation. Ultimately, the 8th graders produced a podcast, called the St. Mark's Culture Cast (S.M.C.C.) Podcast, to share their research and findings.

Mason Bollinger and Fletcher Dyke studied the Nazis fleeing to Argentina to escape the Nuremberg Trials. They learned that today, there are areas of Argentina where there is a strong German influence as a result. Dominic Green, Sam Marino, Owen