

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

Professional Development through Education Technology Support and the Remote Learning Fellows Program

By **Anneke Emerson**, Chief Innovation Officer

Everyone in the Viewpoint School community has relied on remote teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unexpected circumstances, and the pressure they place on individuals as well as on the institution, help to reveal strengths as well as opportunities. We at Viewpoint continue to learn a great deal as we navigate the historic challenges the COVID-19 crisis presents.

Even though Zoom has its limitations, from the start of the pandemic, it allowed teachers and administrators to come together quickly to solve problems. In some ways, the video conferences offered an easier way to gather larger and more diverse stakeholder groups, within and across departments and divisions, than we experienced face to face. Some meetings addressed strategies, and some focused on the nuts and bolts of distance learning. The cross-fertilization of ideas, tools, and strategies has been highly useful in boosting teachers' camaraderie and confidence amid these new instructional challenges.

Just as not all of our students learn in the same way or at the same pace, neither do our faculty and staff. The plethora of new remote learning tools has been daunting to keep up with, much less master, in such a compressed time frame. The administration saw an opportunity to provide increased faculty support by creating a Remote Learning Fellows program, training a cohort of teachers in all divisions to support colleagues through spring and fall 2020. We selected 21 teachers representing every grade level and department in the school.

REMOTE LEARNING FELLOWS

- Demonstrate competency in a variety of online and blended pedagogies and processes, such as online collaboration, screencasting, "flipped" learning, and digital assessment.
- Participate in their own ongoing professional growth through webinars, courses, readings, and/or trainings.
- Have access to an instructional coach who will guide ongoing learning.
- And make themselves available to support their Viewpoint colleagues in both structured and informal ways, serving as peer coaches/mentors to others.

The Remote Learning Fellows program already has supported a rapid and significant shift, strengthening skills and confidence in our faculty's ability to translate best instructional practices to the different modalities of both synchronous and asynchronous remote learning. Remote Learning Fellows have hosted office hours to

field faculty questions; led online seminars on software, pedagogy, and a variety of tools; and coached faculty one-on-one, in addition to other duties. Examples of online seminar topics conducted by teachers include "Maximizing Engagement in Synchronous Lessons" and "Designing Interactive Presentations." Their work, which began this summer, will continue throughout the first semester of the new school year.

The Remote Learning Fellows have been building a framework of best practices in online and remote learning, categorizing tools and technologies that support six teaching methodologies of ongoing significance to the community: synchronous instruction, asynchronous instruction, differentiated instruction, assessment, feedback, and well-being. Additionally, Viewpoint supported a number of iGrants, or summer projects designed by teachers to work on innovative curricular ideas for the 2020-21 school year.

While this spring was challenging in many ways, Viewpoint's response to these challenges has put the school in a strong position going forward, whatever scenario may play out in an uncertain future.

Bill Brendle, Upper School Music

In Digital Music, students worked remotely on songwriting, beat making, podcasting, mixing, and instrumental lessons. In vocal ensembles, classes learned microphone techniques for maximizing sound quality for recordings. Those techniques contributed to these virtual performance videos:

- The Contemporary Vocal Ensemble's "How Sweet It Is To Be Loved By You" (John Yang '22 soloist)
- The Contemporary Vocal Ensemble's "Midnight Train To Georgia" (Jordan Moore '20 soloist)
- Viewpoint Vocal Jazz Ensemble's "La Costa"

Julie Clark, Middle School Social Studies

Students in Middle School Social Studies learned about Joan of Arc in an independent lesson on the Nearpod, a student engagement platform that combines dynamic media with engaging assessments

to check for understanding. The lesson included "draw-it" activities, allowing students to interact with paintings of Joan of Arc.

Also, history students learning about WWII contributed content to a collaborative Google Map, adding summaries, images, and videos about battles onto the virtual map points.

Cherie Boss, Middle School English

Students shared their writing in Google Classroom and received feedback using Kaizena. "This add-on allowed me to highlight text within a student document and record my own voice with instructions, helpful hints, or questions. Kaizena gave me the ability to connect with my students by giving authentic feedback which was meaningful to them. As a result, I began to see my students were writing and revising like I had never witnessed before." Students also recorded themselves reading their work on Flipgrid, a tool that lets classmates give meaningful feedback to one another.

Nell Yates, Upper School Ceramics

Remote learning for a deeply hands-on class like ceramics involves a lot of creativity and flexibility. Depending on their preferences and their access to materials at home, students could choose from 50 projects, working with an array of tools, such as paper, found objects, or even computer-generated forms. "I wanted them to feel safe to either pick up clay from school on a monthly basis and keep working with the medium they love, or find value in crafting an origami sculpture or a salt dough project that could influence their work if they were back into the studio with me in the fall."

Mandy Bahnuik, Upper School Dance

A dance company called CLI Studios offered an excellent partnership during this unexpected time. Founded by dancers and dance teachers, CLI Studio's goal is to use technology to give the users unparalleled access to many of the top choreographers in the country. This gave Viewpoint students a wide variety of different styles and types of classes remotely. Dance students also spent remote learning time learning about the importance of keeping active and fit; participating in a Broadway speaker series; creating "mashup" videos of performances; and choreographing projects to teach one another online.

Dan O'Reilly-Rowe, Middle and Upper School Film

When the Film program found the challenge of watching and analyzing motion pictures together online more challenging than they had anticipated, they got innovative.

"The technological challenge of providing a high-quality video stream to students that could be viewed live by everyone simultaneously and paused for discussion was more difficult than it originally appeared. An interesting solution has come in the form of leveraging tools commonly used by video game streamers to create an online screening room." Students also participated in rapid filmmaking challenges remotely and had the benefit of access to Adobe tools that they could use for editing.



Top (from left to right): Derek '26 and Lisa Kessler Bottom: Lucas '27 and Ethan '24 Argano-Rush, Michael Custance, Lance Argano-Rush

PPE COMMUNITY EFFORT

Viewpoint Teachers and Families Initiated Community-Wide Effort to 3D Print PPE

In April, technology teachers **Alison Steelberg Corneau '97** and **Lisa Kessler** were featured on KTLA in a story about the Viewpoint community's response to the COVID-19 crisis. They highlighted how teachers, students, and their families gathered their own resources to help produce much-needed PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). In the first two weeks of production, the Corneau, Kessler, Didden, and Argano-Rush faculty families all 3D printed face masks, and face shield pieces fabricated on Viewpoint's Lulzbot 3D printers. Then non-faculty students and their families also heated up their printers to help the cause. By the end of April, they had fabricated and distributed hundreds of face masks, face shields, and ear guards to hospitals and healthcare facilities across Los Angeles. Some were shipped as far as Northern California and New York City to meet the most urgent need at that time.



TALKING MASKS

Isabella Appell '21 has a longstanding interest in helping the hearing impaired. A few years ago, she taught herself American Sign Language and has raised money for The Hearing Aid Project, which provides hearing aids to those who cannot afford them. Isabella also was aware that many people with a hearing impairment rely upon reading lips to communicate, so she decided to make her own masks with clear vinyl panels to make reading lips possible.

Isabella set up a website (www.talking-masks.com) to make the masks available with a donation to The Hearing Aid Project. Since April 2020, Isabella has made over 500 masks and raised over \$9,000 through her website. Her Talking Masks also caught the attention of the local media, including interviews with CNN, CNN International, CBS LA, and NBC News. On September 28, Isabella appeared on the *Drew Barrymore Show* to discuss Talking Masks, and was presented with a \$5,000 donation to the Hearing Aid Project.

Congratulations, Isabella, on the continuing success of Talking Masks!

TEACHERS / CONTINUED

Pat Neville, Middle School Math

Students used a tremendously successful rotation model for learning math:

- Day 1: learn new content
- Day 2: play online games that reinforce concepts
- Day 3: work on individual instruction via Zoom breakout rooms

Students used Google docs to log their time and track their work. Rather than relying on formal assessments like tests and quizzes, the student work logs, game results, partner work, and short conferences in breakout rooms served as excellent assessment opportunities.

Kelly Samuels, Middle School Science

In science, labs went (partially) digital! The Seventh Graders used a disease transmission simulation to see the impact of social mixing, social distancing, and vaccination rates on the transmission of various fictitious diseases. Additionally, they were tasked with altering the disease parameters to simulate COVID-19 in order to uncover the most important factors in slowing the spread of the virus. In Eighth Grade Introduction to Physical Science, classes spent several weeks using PhET's online circuit board to explore the role of electrical components like lamps, resistors, and switches in manipulating electrons to do our bidding. The unit ended with an experiment related to Ohm's law and home energy audits.

Lacey Thompson, Kindergarten

Thanks to Seesaw, Kindergarten continued to start the day with a Morning Message, and with the help of Zoom, they held their Morning Meetings and their reading groups and reading sessions. In order to give families the flexibility to meet their different needs, teachers sent emails on Sunday with announcements and links to assignments for the week. On Seesaw, they shared a daily reading activity and math activity.

Marian Williams, Lower School Science

Students in Grades Three-Five received science care packages in the mail. They used the materials for hands-on experiences during Zoom and asynchronous lessons. Students also attended a virtual field trip to the Nature of Wildworks. "I went to the site and the kids Zoomed in! I actually walked in a mountain lion cage..." Fifth Graders who look forward to the annual Astrocamp rite-of-passage event every year had the opportunity to participate in two virtual classes with the gracious team at Astrocamp.

Lara Didden, Middle School Coding

What happens when Viewpoint Middle School electives go remote? A Microbit arrives at your door.

"The Invent elective was designed to explore coding and physical computing. This spring, the students were able to apply their coding skills to programming a Microbit. We created temperature sensors and collected data, coded games with LED lights, and used the Microbit as a controller for games coded in Scratch. Writing programs to control things in the physical world provides instant feedback for students as they learn the logic of coding. ■



BRINGING IN AN EXPERT

Introducing Gayle Cole, Director of Distance Learning

What is your role at Viewpoint?

I am the Director of Distance Learning, a position designed to support Viewpoint educators in continuing to deliver the highest quality program when any or all students learn remotely. Even though this is a new position, it grew organically from my previous work consulting at Viewpoint, including professional development I co-facilitated with Anneke Emerson starting in 2018.

What is your background that prepared you for this role?

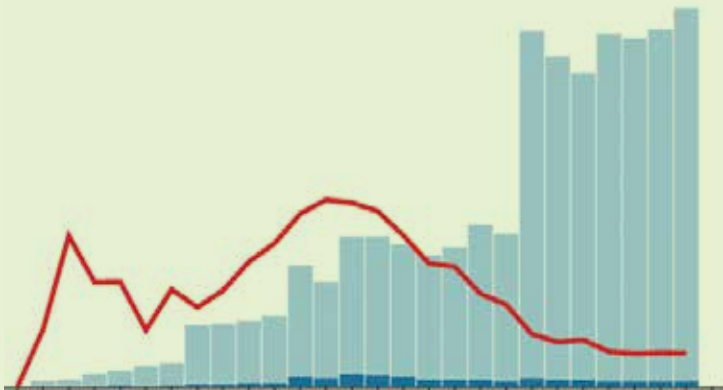
I have worked in several schools and nonprofits, holding such roles as technology integration specialist, professional development coach, teacher, and administrator. I have an MS in Educational Technology, and I completed the Johns Hopkins graduate certificate program in School Administration co-sponsored by ISTE, the International Society for Technology in Education.

Can you give examples of some of your projects or initiatives?

For parents, I give presentations, answer tech support questions, and maintain a Distance Learning web page. For teachers, I offer coaching and training, maintain a blog of distance learning strategies, and find resources that meet their needs. Overall, I have been especially glad to partner on wellness initiatives for the community, including addressing social and emotional learning. Distance learning does not always mean using screens! In Lower School, I worked with the Technology and Innovation team on a creative project for students to design and build creatures for a virtual zoo. In the Upper School, I co-teach an English elective on podcasting and storytelling.

Why Viewpoint?

Viewpoint has an incredible team, and there is nothing more satisfying to me than collaborating with dedicated, caring professionals who nurture young people and have a vision for cultivating well-rounded learners and leaders. ■



FROM PLANETS TO COVID WATCH:

Alumna helps the government with COVID-19 data and epidemiology*



Anjali Tripathi '05 is a scientist committed to public service.

By day, the former White House advisor works at NASA JPL on climate change. By night, she's part of the team that delivers LA's daily COVID case counts.

When COVID-19 hit, Anjali switched from planet hunting to mapping COVID-19 cases. After finding inconsistencies in the data, she joined the LA County Department of Public Health's COVID-19 data and epidemiology team. She said, "I've never gotten emotional over data before." When Anjali first saw disparities in the data, public conversation didn't involve equity. Since April, she has been expanding the statistics the County releases. Her website, COVID Watch, <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/COVIDWatch.pdf>, makes new data available, including how COVID-19 stacks up to other illnesses and what to expect as flu season worsens. Anjali hopes that by improving data transparency and communicating it clearly, outcomes will improve for all.

*The branch of medicine that deals with the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases and other factors relating to health.