



October 9, 2020

Notes from Ojai Valley School

Dear OVS Families,

You see some amazing things working at a little school like this. You would think that 18 years of the same schedule, following a similar calendar, eating at the same lunchroom, and reliving your elementary and middle school experience would become somewhat stale. The truth is that I don't think I have ever had two days that remotely resembled each other in all my time at OVS. I've seen students find their power, voice, and strength. I've seen parents watch their children achieve something they never thought possible. I've seen best-friendships form, grow on a parallel course, struggle as the paths diverge, only to come back together before graduation. I've seen incredible courage, and I have seen children show a level of compassion that most adults forgot they were capable of. I've been privileged to witness extraordinary things and meet incredible people during their formative years.

Today is no different. However, today it is the teachers who caught my attention. I just returned from a quick campus tour and it was remarkable to see kids in every classroom focused on lessons, busy, and noticeably happy. Switching from remote learning to in-person classes mid-unit is a challenging adjustment. A few days ago, some of us were online using cutting-edge technology, and now we are in person trying to revive old-school methods while staying six feet apart and talking through our masks. The mental flexibility shown by the teachers who have made this transition is incredible. Our teachers in 7th-12th grades will get their opportunity to face this challenge soon enough, and I know they are eager and taking notes.

Today as I walked the Lower Campus I saw engaging lectures, dramatic readings, independent work, art projects and tons of smiles. Even in the digital realm, I saw an incredible leadership talk supporting the Student Council. I learned about honey bees in an unplanned response to a bee flying into the room. This is the magic that being back to school facilitates. When we surround students with dynamic educators who love teaching and learning there is nothing we can't accomplish.

Parents, guardians, and friends, please take it from me: students are happy and smiling in the face of challenges. Remote learners are chiming into the conversation and maintaining their roles as valued community members, and teachers are working harder than I have ever seen. It is my sincere hope that all parties feel incredible pride in themselves for the adjustments they have made and ample confidence to face those to come. I encourage you all to take the weekend to reflect on how far we have come since March and pat yourselves on the back. If you have any steam left, please reach out to a teacher and express your gratitude. The average OVS teacher can survive for weeks living off the oasis of a few well-placed emails of appreciation, so please join me in thanking the people who make OVS what it is. *Thank you, Faculty!* The work you do, and the way in which you do it, is the most amazing thing I have seen yet.

Warm regards,

Mike Mahon,
Assistant Head of School,
Lower Campus



Family Weekend is Approaching

Family Weekend is October 23-24 and we are taking the events online! On Friday, October 23, parents are encouraged to attend the virtual college admissions presentation by College Counselor Fred Alvarez at 5 p.m. In lieu of the traditional parent social and family dinner, there will be a 6 p.m. virtual parent social featuring an online tour of the new Upper Campus buildings under construction.



On Saturday, October 24, the Elementary Play will be staged online. Due to the pandemic, we will be holding all parent-teacher conferences virtually the week of October 19-23 for Lower Campus ([click here](#) for the Lower Campus conference scheduler) and October 26-30 for Upper Campus ([click here](#) for the Upper Campus conference scheduler). Links for the virtual events will be sent on October 21.

Fine Arts Friday!

Our Kindergartners created colorful fish today in the distinctive style of author and illustrator Eric Carle. The students hand painted paper and then cut it into fish shapes. It's an interdisciplinary project that blends art, science, and literature, and it's recognizable to every parent or child who has read Carle's famous books featuring spiders, bugs and animals.



College Conundrum

After working hard to get into their top schools, members of the Class of 2020 were ready to take on the world. Then came COVID-19, which upended their college experiences through quarantine, closures and unprecedented restrictions. [Read some of their stories](#) written by the staff writers for *On The Hill*, the OVS student journalism website.



Student Council Elections and Virtual All-School

Congratulations to all the candidates who courageously ran for office, created posters, and [gave speeches](#) on Tuesday for Secretary and Treasurer, and later for President and Vice President during our [Virtual All School](#). The responsibilities of the Student Council are varied and require dedication, collaboration, and leadership. All of our candidates demonstrated these character qualities, and more, during the campaign. They supported each other and set a positive example of positive leadership for all our students on campus. Well done! We did have a tie for one position and both candidates will serve. The newly elected officers for 2020/21 Student Council are:



President: Ben Scordamaglia
Vice President: Mary Moses
Secretary: Clementine Rowan
Treasurer: Danika Carver, Adam Ngankoy

Reopening Reminder for Grades 7-12

Ventura County has moved into a less restrictive COVID-19 tier, which could allow us to reopen for in-person instruction on Wednesday, October 21, for grade 7 and on Thursday, October 22, for grade 8 and grades 9-12. As a reminder, before we resume in-person instruction we expect all faculty and staff members, as well as all returning middle and high school students to reduce virus exposure by...

- Limiting social interactions and avoiding gatherings outside of the home for the next 14 days
- Monitoring health on a daily basis for symptoms of COVID-19
- Getting a COVID-19 test and presenting a negative test result prior to the start of in-person classes. This is expected for high school students and encouraged for middle school students.

