

Dear Upper School Students and Families:

Happy Sunday! The lovely mild weather certainly is making sheltering in and around the home more tolerable. Spring has arrived in splendor.

While our distance learning platform still has some wrinkles to iron out, the second week seemed to go much more smoothly as we all adjust to novel routines, technical elements, and academic expectations. However, if you are still finding elements of the system particularly challenging, please don't hesitate to reach out to me, your child's advisor, or your child's teachers.

Teachers of core classes have updated grades in [PlusPortals](#) this weekend. While parents (and children) may vary in the frequency they consult such grades online, it's worth looking a bit more closely, at least in the short term, to see how grades earned in the first two weeks of distance learning are combining with those earned before campus was closed. Also digital communication and submission of assignments may make it more likely that details or files go missing along the way. Double-checking that everything that is required has been received is wise at this juncture.

I also want to clear up any confusion about what is known loosely as "enrichment." Those enrichment classes that met routinely as part of the normal academic schedule earlier in the year--religion, music (including band and choir), art, and P.E.--will still be graded (on the ESN scale) this term. Thus students are expected to accomplish the posted requirements in those respective Google Classrooms. However, the new enrichment "clubs" (e.g. Stargazing Club or Languages Club) are not graded. Nonetheless, we hope for eager participation and effort, and teachers leading those activities may reach out to invite students to participate further in their offerings.

Here are a few additional announcements and reminders:

- Seventh graders found out Friday that there will be a slight adjustment to their schedule, affecting only their afternoon classes, beginning this week. The newly updated schedule can be found on the school's distance learning [webpage](#).
- Now that it's clear that we are in this distance learning mode for the long haul, it's high time to "brand" our program. The logo contest winner will be announced tomorrow during our Monday Chapel video!
- If you've been struggling with wifi bandwidth (as we have at home with as many as four people video-conferencing at any one time), Stephanie Healy has passed along some tips that Cox Communications has sent to customers:

1. Disconnect devices in your home from your wifi like dishwashers, coffee makers, and

refrigerators as these devices do not require wifi to function.

2. Place your wifi modem/router in a centrally located area so that the signal can reach more rooms within your home.
3. When viewing movies, select standard definition (SD) versus high definition (HD).
4. Keep your wifi modem/router away from the refrigerator, microwave, baby monitors, and other devices that emit electronic radiation.
5. Avoid mirrors and reflective objects like metal blinds as these can deflect signals sent from your wifi modem/router.
6. You can plug your computer directly into your modem rather than working off your wifi.
7. Avoid putting the wifi modem/router near the fish tank as it can soak up your signal.
8. Beware of windows and doors and cement walls as these are common obstructions that can interfere with the signal's ability to extend throughout your home.
9. Keep strangers and unwanted guests from hijacking your wifi and slowing your speeds by protecting it with a password.
10. Put your wifi modem/router up high on a shelf or tall piece of furniture because the signal travels outward and downward.
11. If you have gamers at home, ask them to download upgrades and stream at night as gaming devices eat up a lot of bandwidth, slowing speed to other devices relying on wifi in the home.
12. Keep your wifi modem/router away from Bluetooth devices like smart watches as they tend to operate on the same frequency (2.4 GHZ) and can interfere with the transmission of data between your devices that use wifi.

● And on a cheerful note, I'll end with information about our "Kindness Rock Challenge," which Ms. Hart has already shared with Lower School:

I'd like to challenge your family to participate in an activity that's completely fun, therapeutic, and will leave our neighborhoods and the Tucson community feeling loved and cared for. From now through April 12 (Easter), pick out a plain old rock from your yard, paint it, write an encouraging word or phrase on it (or just paint a picture) and place it in your neighborhood where someone will be able to see it. Everyone could use a random act of kindness right about now! Maybe there is an elderly neighbor who lives down the street that could use some cheer, or maybe you'll find the perfect spot to leave your rock for someone else to find while walking with your family. There is no wrong way to go about it! Here are some simple instructions to participate:

1. Pick a rock from your yard, preferably one that fits in your hand and isn't too heavy
2. Paint your rock using acrylic paint and include an inspirational message/word/picture



3. Write “Keep it, share it, or leave it for another” on the back (sharpies work great!)
4. Seal it (if possible) with Mod Podge or nail polish (clear coat)
5. Take a picture of your rock and email it to: mhart@stmichael.net
6. Find the perfect spot for your rock in your neighborhood!

We will be posting rock pictures on our Facebook page over the next two weeks.

Happy painting! I wish you all a restful and safe Holy Week.

Best wishes,

Alex Hawes

Useful links:

St. Michael’s Distance Learning Webpage

<https://stmichael.net/covidresponse/distancelearning/>

PlusPortals

<https://www.plusportals.com/SaintMichaelsParishDaySchool>

Arizona Together

<https://arizonatogether.org/>

This is the Governor’s site that he launched late last week. It’s a wider list of resources, regular information updates, and links to community support.