

VOYAGES



The Real Superheroes by London '20

Going The Distance

Although educators tend to be planners, we never anticipated a global pandemic would close our campus in March. We were less surprised, however, to find our school uniquely positioned to respond to this challenge. Strong relationships among teachers, students, and families and tools provided by our Community Core framework helped us quickly and effectively adapt to this new reality.

Distance Learning at OSS: Community Core Tools in Action

by Ariana Wohl, Academic Dean

Every day at OSS, our Community Core tools help us practice and teach social and emotional literacy, providing strategies for dealing with adversity, problem-solving and more. These tools help us meet the challenge of distance learning.

Set Achievable Goals

We built our plan in phases, knowing we couldn't replace the in-school experience, but we *could* keep brains stimulated, maintain connections and community, and leverage daily routine. We aim to do so without creating additional stress.

Research Before Action

To gain time to consider best practices for virtual instruction,

teachers began with self-paced learning assignments. In parallel, Ms. Mitchell built a distance learning website and we established a schedule for online classes and teacher check-ins.

Identify Community Needs & Support Others

We called our students' families and graduates to offer support and assess needs. We continue to provide resources to help families

file for unemployment and find free WiFi, and we secure donations for families in need.

Identify Personal (and Collective) Strengths

The arts are an essential part of OSS—lessons in visual art, STEAM, music and theater continue remotely. With their Chromebooks and past technology instruction, we knew students were prepared for online learning. We also knew they could balance academics and personal interests with increased responsibilities at home. Pairing structure with creativity and choice, we honor the integrity and genius of each Sister Sailor.

Value All Feelings & Honor Emotions

Teachers help students stay engaged and calm, tailoring instruction to unique circumstances. Virtual Advisory sessions continue social and emotional literacy lessons and help students process their emotions. We made sure to secure distance mental health services and more check-ins with teachers.

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In the World, from Home

by Sarah Herman, Head of School



I have vivid childhood memories of curling up on the couch with *National Geographic*, looking at pictures and reading articles about people from all over the world whose lives were so different from mine. I developed an insatiable travel bug and

before I was 25, I had lived, worked, studied or adventured in more than 25 countries. More than anything else, I gained perspective on the world and felt gratitude for my health, freedom and education. Now I mostly adventure at OSS by exploring and learning alongside students, families, staff and volunteers. Leading the School continues to be one of my greatest journeys of all.

This school year was disrupted by a very unexpected detour—one that led us into our homes for distance learning, rather than out into the world. The new coronavirus is challenging each member of our community in unprecedented ways, and it can be one of our most powerful and motivating teachers.

Whether on campus or from our homes, OSS community members come together to make sense of our world, to organize ideas, understand feelings, and learn to seek the whole truth. In this 100th anniversary year of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, there is no better time for girls and young women to gain knowledge and skills for informed civic participation. Despite our physical distance, OSS Sister Sailors continue to journey through history in order to shape the present and future. Please read the interview with Ava Faria '16, a graduate who will exercise her right to vote for the first time this fall—and thus affect our world.

We continue to strive toward our core values of Excellence, Community, Citizenship and Leadership by practicing our Community Core tools with focus. More than ever, we are reminded to feel gratitude for the simple things we may have taken for granted in the past, like our health and freedoms. Our Student Council collaborated on a “shout-out” video recognizing essential workers who are keeping the wheels turning for all of us. Teachers flipped what is traditionally Teacher Appreciation Week to recognize families for their dramatically increased role in the effort to educate! We are all practicing gratitude, resilience, patience, empathy and problem-solving with renewed resolve and sense of purpose. We hope students will be further inspired to study science, engineering, government and public health. In other words, even though horizons are blurred by the pandemic, we are exploring to understand and actively contribute to our world with even more intensity.

I applaud, and am grateful for, your courage, dedication, and continued support of OSS.

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Communicate Clearly & Receive Feedback Openly

We stay in frequent contact with families and graduates. We sent surveys to formally obtain feedback and also held an optional Family Zoom Meeting, listening to understand and adjusting to meet our community's needs.

Be Reflective

For staff, we doubled the number of weekly meetings to ensure time for reflection and co-planning. We maintained our regularly scheduled school vacation week in April, giving our brains and bodies a chance to recharge.

Persevere & Overcome Obstacles

Students and teachers are rising to the challenge in remarkable ways. In addition to coursework, we celebrated National Poetry Month, created an online Variety Show, a “Quarantine Zine” publication and a virtual Festival of Arts and Achievement. By

May, students were preparing online versions of their year-end portfolio reflections.

This experience is testing—and proving—the value of our Community Core tools, reminding us that in community we can overcome fear and face challenge. It is making us stronger and more certain that anything is possible. We can meet the unexpected with calm, caring and excellence.

A Student's Experience by Samara '22

At first it wasn't that big a deal. I thought, oh well, we'll just do homework on the computer for a week and then go back. Now it's more worrying.

Getting Settled

I didn't have internet at all for the first three weeks. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Charlesworth helped by printing out papers for pick-up. Then, OSS helped me get a network connection. It was kind of overwhelming—there was so

much to catch up on. I started by uploading the homework I had already done and responding to questions on Google Classroom.

My first virtual class was on a Friday, so I returned for Student Council and Advisory and saw my classmates! I use a Google Calendar like I learned at OSS. I now have the skills and tools to make it to online meetings.

Family Time

I have three siblings, and I love teaching them. I take care of them and learn how to make new foods, mostly Arabic ones. My mom showed me how to make a marble cake. We had to revise the recipe because it didn't taste good. It was like in STEAM class when a design challenge doesn't work and we have to fix it.

I have a yarn bin. I thought about making things my siblings would like to play with at home. I'm making my brother an elf! My sister plays with dolls so I made a cardboard refrigerator. We do a lot of cleaning and laundry! I'm teaching my siblings how to make their beds and clean up their own messes. I am also fasting for Ramadan for the first time.

Leadership Strategies

I use Community Core tools a lot. *Think Flexibly* has been important when I'm trying to help my siblings but I have homework too. I help them first since they usually have less. I figure out what time is best for breaks and cleaning.

I also use *Empathize*, *Support Others* and *Be Kind*. I help my brother so he doesn't get in trouble with his teachers. Sometimes my siblings don't want to do homework, so I find ways to reward and motivate them. I made a poster for my brother about opinion writing that he could

color and I'm reading a book on unicorns with my sister. I find time for everyone. I also *Manage Tone*; I can't scream at them.

Overall, teaching my siblings and doing my work are easy. Thinking about what happens next in the world is what makes me worried.

Samara thinks about becoming an art teacher, a writer, judge, horseback rider, or pediatrician in the future.

A Teacher's Experience by Eric Charlesworth

Distance learning is both challenging and rewarding. It is new territory for almost all of us; I no longer feel like the new person at OSS! We're all learning together on a shared curve.

A Typical School Day

My kids are upstairs and I'm downstairs. They're doing their work and they're good at it. I spend time before class orchestrating slides, videos, my interactive white board, and the instructional progression. I try to make the experience interesting and important. Some assignments are home-based, like identifying different types of angles around the house. After class, I'll stay on Google Classroom while students are completing assignments so they can ask questions. Much of my work is communication: sending emails or texts if help is needed.

It's nice to connect on fun things that I might not have time for when we're in the building. And I practice ukulele often! I am finally making progress, thanks to OSS teacher, Nan Starr.

Gains and Benefits

Distance learning has prompted the deepest professional learning in a while. Certainly, the technology aspects are huge. The other



part is I get a different window into students' thinking and how they sort through problems. I do that on campus, but with more one-to-one, there's a different type of insight now.

Students are taking real responsibility for their learning. They help each other stay on track. They are more communicative, reaching out with texts and emails. Many of them are juggling so much—like going from mom's to dad's house. Especially the 5th graders...they are only 10 and 11!

Challenges

Of course, we lose a lot without the interaction of regular instruction. It's hard to teach new complex content and facilitate organic discussion without being in the same room. It's especially true for math. I run Google Breakout groups with success

but it's a challenge. I focus on reviewing past content and introducing more algorithmic skills.

I do think we picked the sweet spot for the amount of contact time we have online. However, it is necessarily less time for scaffolding and discovery than we have in person.

Gratitude

I am grateful to be part of a positive and energized team. The technology has been reliable; I feel lucky for the Community Core tools and Ms. Mitchell's distance learning expertise. Having two staff meetings per week and department meetings with Ms. Rapoza has been helpful. I miss seeing everyone and look forward to our return!

Eric Charlesworth is the 5th/6th grade math teacher, department chair, and MATHCOUNTS coach. Find the podcasts he makes with his sons on Spotify.

Growing Courageous Girls

This year is the centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment which legally granted women the right to vote. However, as every OSS student learns, the women's suffrage movement began long before the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, and continues today as women of color fight to upend persistent inequities.

The long arc of women's suffrage provides an object lesson in the tenets we hold dear at OSS: the value of women's voices, the central role women play in history and society, and the importance of being an agent of change in your community and country.

That is why, every year, the 8th grade class collectively writes, directs, and performs an original play as their culminating project for the Suffrage Unit in Humanities. In this year's play that took place in February, *2020 Vision*, two girls engaged in a game that accidentally transported them back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In order to return to the present in time to vote in the 2020 election, they must "remember the ladies"—traveling through important moments in history to learn about the sacrifices and struggles the suffragists made to ensure that women's voices could be heard at the ballot box in 2020.

By developing and performing their own play, our students deepened their understanding of women's history, and had the opportunity to share their learning with people outside of the OSS community. But what good is the 19th Amendment if we don't

exercise our right to vote and act to correct inequities? On Super Tuesday, OSS held a schoolwide mock caucus. Students practiced supporting a candidate, backing up their arguments with facts, and respectfully discussing the qualities they want in a president.

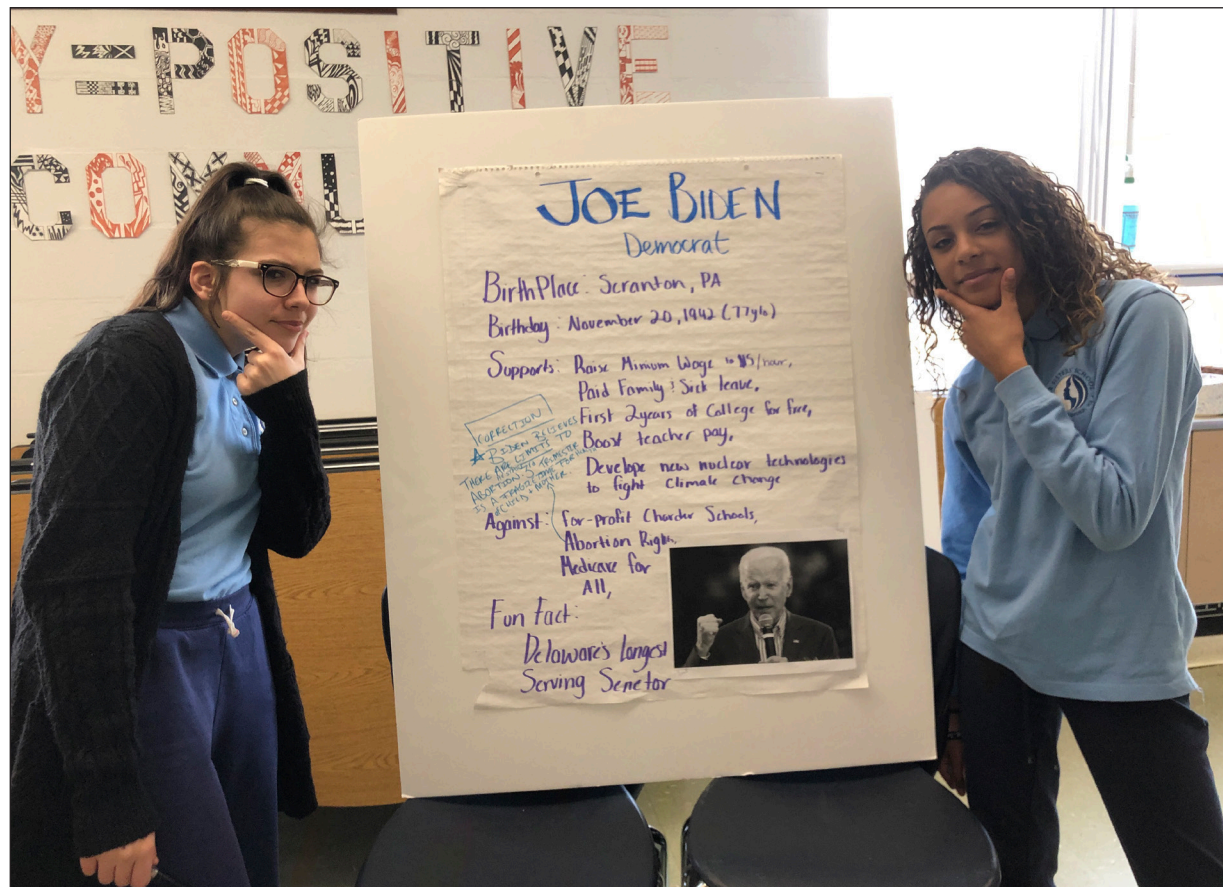
Experiential education helps each student feel like they are "part of the process," with the power to carry on the important work of the women who came before them. On International Women's Day, OSS graduate Ava Faria '16 contributed to the important work of women change-makers by publishing a personal essay in *The Standard Times* about the work that has been—and has yet to be—done to secure equality for women of color.

Ava Faria '16 is a senior at St. George's School, so Fall 2020 will mark two milestones in her life—she will be heading off to Brandeis University and voting for the very first time. In honor of the centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment, we asked her what it means to be able to vote as a woman of color.



The Class of 2020 collectively wrote, directed, and performed an original play as their culminating project for the Suffrage Unit in Humanities.

OSS held a schoolwide mock caucus on Super Tuesday where students respectfully discussed the qualities they want in a president.



What does voting for the first time mean to you?

Ava: A lot of people my age say that turning 18 doesn't come with many privileges. But to me, it marks adulthood. You obtain a position of power because you gain the right to vote. Women of color have historically been oppressed, so the chance to vote for someone who can hear you is important. A biracial girl from the small city of New Bedford has a voice in who gets to represent

us on a much larger scale. That is exciting to me.

Did OSS change your beliefs about what a woman or a girl is capable of?

Ava: I've grown up around strong women my whole life, so I've always felt empowered. But OSS helped me find my own voice and advocate for my personal and political rights. I learned that I am capable of making change and that the small changes around me can manifest into something much larger in the future.

How do you want to make change in the world?

Ava: I am passionate about educating people on healthcare opportunities so that they can afford to maintain their health even if it doesn't seem possible due to their income. I want to educate communities who wouldn't otherwise have access to this type of knowledge.

What did it mean to have your essay published in *The Standard Times*?

Ava: It meant a lot. Not only did I reflect on my own personal experience, I was able to capture the perspectives of many women in my life. I was mostly inspired by my relationships with my single mom and my sisters who have always been independent, and strong role models for me. I am grateful to have been able to use my voice, as a woman of color, to speak on behalf of others who may not always be recognized. To me, being a woman means being independent and sharing your own voice even when those around you do not want to hear it.

A Century of Women Empowering the Community

Published March 7, 2020 in *The Standard Times*
Ava Faria '16 is a current senior at St. George's School

On the first International Women's Day in 1911, American women could not even vote. The 19th Amendment gave them that legal right in 1920. This year, the 100th anniversary of that landmark, is a good time to think about the progress on women's equality that has—and hasn't—been made and to reflect on what it means to be a woman today.

The beauty and power of identifying as a woman is that it contains multitudes. There is no universal definition or answer. But our shared identity comes with shared lived experiences. For centuries, women have navigated through patriarchal trenches that continue to this day.

Although significant changes have been made, there is more work to be done. We are still fighting stereotypes and working to break barriers that remain deeply ingrained in our modern world. We have gained new responsibilities, but kept old ones too. Women must wear many hats and fill many different shoes, all while going the extra mile to prove ourselves to those who still doubt us.

Not all experiences are shared though. We cannot address women's rights and gender inequality without recognizing the inequality within gender groups, especially related to race and class. It is important to acknowledge that the battle for equal rights has mostly represented women who are upper middle-class and white.

Going forward, we must focus on empowering marginalized women, such as women of color and those born without the resources and choices that other women can now take for granted. This is the mission and purpose of my alma mater, Our Sisters' School. As I complete my senior year at St. George's and prepare to enter Brandeis in the fall, I am grateful and proud to be part of this empowering community.

Much has changed over the last century, but one thing has not: the immense joy and healing of sisterhood. In our common struggle, girls and women gain strength and inspiration from each other. We find and build our power together. Women are leaders. We are changing our present, creating our future, strengthening our communities and shaping our society. Whether the world is ready or not.

#SHOUTOUTSOSS

Jocelyn Mitchell was recently awarded the 2019 Elaine Adams Professional Development Award by the Massachusetts Association of Science Teachers. This is the first time she has been so honored for her dedication to teaching science while at OSS. This award will enable Jocelyn to attend a professional development course at Kroka Expeditions in Marlow, NH, to bring the power of nature into the curriculum in areas of the humanities, earth sciences, sustainability education, leadership, and the development of community and unselfish practices for young people.

Trinity Monteiro '13 was awarded a scholarship for minority students at UMass Amherst who are using sports to change the world. She was also recognized as a 2018 Community Influencer on the FoundHERS website for starting the first ever I Am That Girl chapter at Tabor Academy. And this summer Trinity was offered an internship with the National Basketball Association (NBA) as their 2020 Diversity & Inclusion Summer Intern. Due to COVID-19, her program has been cancelled. However, we celebrate her nonetheless and await eagerly for her next opportunity.

OSS was named 2020 Best of New Bedford Award in the Schools category. We appreciate **Jennifer Brum** (mother of London '20) for nominating the School, and are honored by this recognition and grateful to all families who voted.

The artwork of **eight OSS students** were submitted and accepted into the IGNITE Youth Showcase of Art Inspired by the Historic Women of the SouthCoast. The jurors reviewed all the entries for relevance, creativity, and originality. They selected **Janice's '20** piece titled "Brave," inspired by Lieutenant Colonel Mary Elizabeth Hartley, for the award in the 7th & 8th grade age group. Other participating students included **Anyis '22, Arieannah '21, Ava '20, Lyla '20, Millie '20, Nia '21, and Savannah '20.**

Six OSS students showcased their artwork in the statewide 2020 Youth Art Month Exhibit at the State Transportation Building in Boston. Work ranged from painting, colored pencil, pencil and watercolor.

The Earth Day EcoChallenge is about committing 30 days to taking action towards making the earth a healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable place. This is OSS's third challenge and we chose to partner with Team Southcoast, organized by UMass Dartmouth's Leduc Center for Civic Engagement. **All OSS students** are participating in the EcoChallenge as part of their Distance Learning Program through their science classes.

Over the first two weeks of the Quarantine Spring Reading Challenge during the pandemic school closure, **OSS students and staff** voluntarily logged 12,320+ minutes reading 13,405 pages. The Challenge is ongoing and the tally grows every day... Go OSS!



Suzanne Church

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

They are an essential engine of OSS—168 active volunteers whose talent and commitment power so many initiatives, special events and everyday functions. Among these vital contributors is Suzanne Church, a near-constant presence on campus, often with her dog Abby in tow.

She is a member of the OSS Advisory Council, a reading tutor, a staff mentor, and an advisor to the Student Council. She works in the office, serves lunch, and drives students on field trips. She also helped launch and sustain the Outdoor Club. Most recently, she was the driving force behind the "Soup-A-Thon," which provided hundreds of nutritious and delicious meals to our students, graduates, families, and staff during the Covid-19 pandemic over a 5-week period.

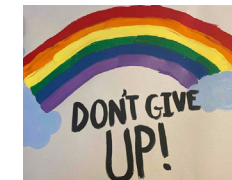
"She is amazing. She is autonomous," says Margaret McSweeney, OSS advancement associate and volunteer coordinator. "Give her a task, and she'll make it happen."

Suzanne, a Westport resident who hails from the Boston area, is passionate about the OSS mission of educating girls and developing "good humans" who are kind, generous and eager to give back to their larger community. "The way OSS designed its curriculum, it's not just about learning, but how to be a good person," she says. "That's really the message: Be good people."

In 2015, Suzanne and her partner, restaurateur Chris Schlesinger, galvanized their friends to provide food for over 325 attendees at the OSS Doris Kearns Goodwin fundraiser. She also spearheaded the effort for appetizers for over 300 people at the 10th anniversary event in 2018, and organized a fundraiser dinner for 100 people at the Back Eddy restaurant in 2019. But Suzanne says it's the personal interaction with students and staff that she treasures most. "I just like being at the School, working directly with the girls, the teachers, the staff. It's a family. It's so inspiring to be there."

"During this pandemic, when I think of OSS, a few things come to mind: leadership, collaboration, creativity, dedication and teamwork. I believe what Aden has learned in the classroom is serving her very well during remote learning, and more likely will serve her well in life."

Addis Alemtsehay
Ackah P'23



by Skylar '23

The Next Voyage

Secondary School Update

While a traditional graduation ceremony is not possible during the pandemic, the Class of 2020 joined for a virtual screening of President Barack Obama's commencement speech on May 16. They were inspired, and are excited for their own graduation on June 9. As is our tradition, our eighth-graders planned their own ceremony. With cautious attention to social distancing practices and precautions, they have decided to employ a combination of outdoor classroom space and personal vehicles to strike a balance between ceremony and safety. Our eighth-grade students worked hard and applied to 24 independent and public schools, and they will be attending:

- Bishop Stang High School (3)
- Bristol County Agricultural High School (1)
- Dartmouth High School (1)
- Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational-Technical High School (7)
- New Bedford High School (3; 2 in the Academy of Honors)
- Old Rochester Regional High School (1)
- Phillips Academy Andover (1)
- Westover School (1)

ALUMNAE NEWS

The OSS graduates from the Class of 2016 set their sights on colleges near and far, from Massachusetts to Pennsylvania to Georgia. They will be studying biology, criminal justice, political science, mechanical engineering, neuroscience and more. Some decisions have been made and others are still pending. The following are the schools to which they have all been accepted, and choices that have been made are indicated by parentheses:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Brandeis University (1) | Rhode Island College |
| Bridgewater State University | Salve Regina University |
| Bristol Community College (1) | Spelman College (1) |
| Curry College | Stonehill College |
| Dean College (1) | University of Massachusetts Amherst |
| Fisher College | University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (1) |
| Fitchburg State University | University of Rhode Island |
| Lasell College | Wentworth Institute of Technology (1) |
| Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences | |
| Pennsylvania State University (1) | |



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Mission Statement

As an independent, tuition-free, non-sectarian middle school, our mission is to educate and inspire economically disadvantaged girls from the New Bedford area. OSS empowers girls to step into the future with valuable life skills and a mindset of achievement and excellence by providing a safe, supportive, and academically challenging environment.

Why "Our Sisters"?

Our school's name honors the bravery of the women known as "sister sailors" who boldly headed out to sea from New Bedford's harbor during the city's whaling days. Like these women, OSS students courageously embark on a voyage in a challenging academic environment carefully crafted to support them as they discover and achieve their greatest potential, while finding true north on their moral compass.

SUPPORT THE OSS ANNUAL FUND

Unlike charter schools, OSS is not eligible for state funding as a single-sex school and we rely solely on our friends and foundations. Your generosity makes it possible for OSS to provide a transformative education to our girls. Make a gift today at www.oursistersschool.org or contact Georgie Goulding, Director of Advancement, at ggoulding@oursistersschool.org or 508.994.1255, to discuss the different ways you can help OSS.



OSS is honored to be one of only 29 schools recognized as a Spotlight School by the New England League of Middle Schools.

Non-discrimination Statement

Our Sisters' School, Inc. admits girls as students to the School regardless of their race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, creed, or sexual orientation. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, creed or sexual orientation in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship programs, athletic and other school administered programs.

Our Sisters' School, Inc. employs personnel of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, religion, creed, and sexual orientation to all the rights, privileges and activities generally accorded or made available to personnel at the School.