

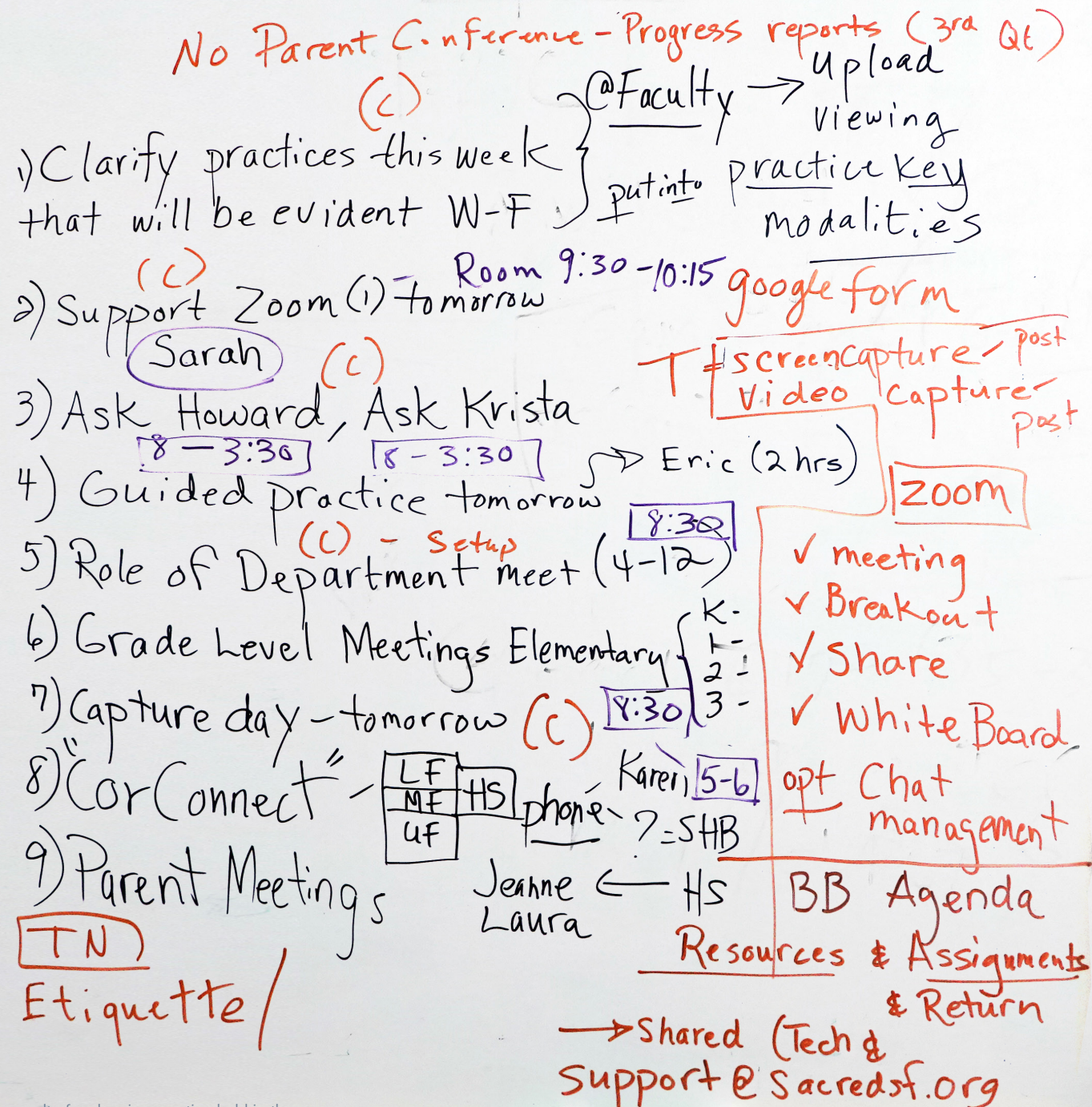
COVID-19: An Inflection Point

in-flec-tion point

noun

1. MATHEMATICS
a point of a curve at which a change in the direction of curvature occurs.
2. US
(in business) a time of significant change in a situation; a turning point.

Definitions from Oxford Languages



The result of a planning meeting held in the President's Office before remote learning began.

As the impact of COVID-19 took hold, Convent & Stuart Hall developed an innovative, adaptive and expansive response plan.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN IN THE CONTEXT OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Area of Impact III in our strategic plan called us to build organizational structures and systems that would demonstrate "strategic agility in order to respond to an ever-changing world and imbue the same agility in each of our students and professionals." This plan of action and vision positioned us, sooner than we might have imagined, to meet the COVID-19 inflection point with swift and effective agility.

Strategically, we were poised as an organization to respond to an adaptive problem* that would require swift innovation and creativity. Fortunately, our Leadership Team was trained in design thinking and design implementation, and in 2018, an ad hoc committee of the Board of Trustees had been formed to consider and advise on what future life and future work might look like. The "Future Life: Future Work" committee consisted of trustees, faculty and staff, and this group forecast what the future of our education would need to be in order to stand the test of adaptability and to respond to ambiguity and unknown variables.

In the first days of March 2020, it became clear to President Ann Marie Krejcarek and the Leadership Team that Convent & Stuart Hall needed to design for a significant change in what it meant to "hold school" and that our own response and learning curve needed to be quick, effective and sustainable for the "long haul."

**Adaptive challenges refer to situations where there are no known solutions to the problem or cases where there are too many solutions but no clear choices. Adaptive challenges are volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous in nature. Solutions to this type of challenge usually require people to learn new ways of doing things, change their attitudes, values and norms and adopt an experimental mind-set. - "Adaptive Challenge and The Leadership Challenge." Edited by Joe NG, Team Building Singapore, FOCUS Adventure, 11 Dec. 2016.*

OUR BELIEFS AND COMMITMENTS

Continuing a high quality school experience for our students was paramount in our design process, and we were confident the faculty could deliver in any environment they encountered without sacrificing the quality of their instructional time with their students. School leaders were guided by the words of one of our founding mothers, Janet Erskine Stuart: "It is always here and now, there is always the present moment to do the very best we can with, and the future depends on the way these moments are spent."

DESIGN ASSUMPTIONS

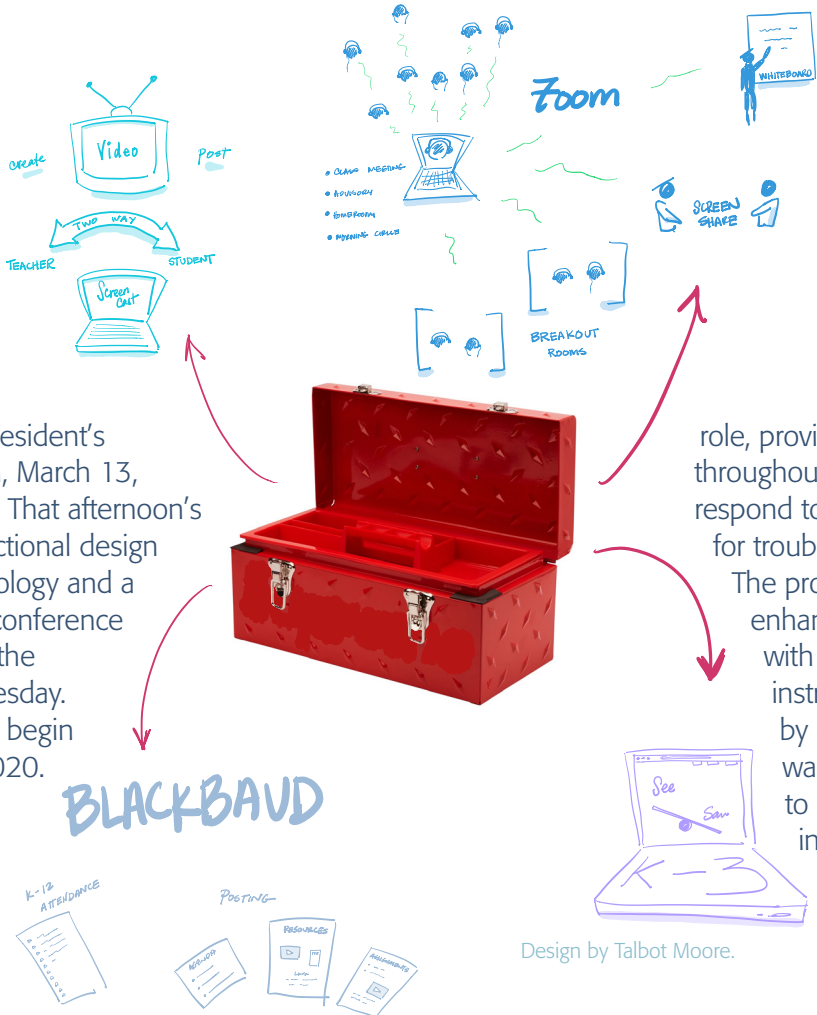
1. Possible 12-18 month pandemic impact
2. Synchronous teaching and learning was required; asynchronous engagement would not be adequate
3. Short-term solutions would add more disruption; the design needed to be "pressure-tested" for long-term sustainability
4. A belief that our faculty and staff were poised for success. They had training and access to equipment that had been in place as part of their teaching long before March 2020. The learning environment was saturated with technological tools so faculty had the means, capacity and mastery to shift their teaching and learning to a new remote environment.
5. A unified, school-defined communications platform for students, faculty and families via the learning management system (LMS) to provide consistency with virtual navigation
6. The technology team would become an ongoing responsive resource, providing a learning center and "concierge" tech support
7. School as it had been previously experienced would not occur for at least 12-14 months; meanwhile, in-person, on-campus instruction would begin as soon as the county allowed, so Convent & Stuart Hall would begin immediate preparations of the campus with viral transmission mitigation: ventilation, sanitation stations, traffic flow and density management, layouts and signage

OUR DESIGN PROCESS

A team gathered in the President's Office on Friday afternoon, March 13, 2020 to formulate a plan. That afternoon's work resulted in an instructional design plan with identified technology and a two-day faculty and staff conference designed to be delivered the following Monday and Tuesday. Remote instruction would begin Wednesday, March 18, 2020. The guiding charge: "We know how to make this happen — let's do it."

On March 16 and 17 of last year, the school hosted a professional learning conference to prepare and support our faculty and staff in implementing the design. This teacher-led, in-house conference was a time to share and practice techniques and tips for seamless and synchronous remote delivery. Topics were led internally by peer leaders in the use of technological tools, making for an experience in community and organizational learning like never before. By the end of the day on Tuesday, the collective community felt equipped and confident to begin remote delivery the following day.

When school resumed on March 18, the importance of the prior saturation of campus with technological tools and know-how eased the way in the first days of remote instruction. The 1:1 iPad and laptop programs for Grades 3-12 were expanded to Grades K-2, which dramatically increased the number of teachers who were using iPads as secondary writing devices. The Technology and Innovation Department established the "Tech Concierge"



DIGITAL LEARNING TOOLBOX

once the initial move to online learning happened. Guided by the essential question, "What needs to be taught and what needs to be learned?" the school then engaged the "how." What technology, training and support would be needed to make sure the instructional experience would be of the highest quality and seamlessly delivered in a new format? A leadership group of faculty and administrators gathered to co-create a shared plan of action: leverage a unified communication platform via the LMS and expect teachers to use a toolbox of technological support for online teaching and learning. This toolbox included Zoom and its many features, such as screen sharing, whiteboard, breakout rooms and the ability to view participants in different ways (gallery view vs. speaker view). Additional tools to enhance the learning experience included Screencastify, Seesaw, Flipgrid and Formative.

OUR COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISHING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND BUILDING COMMUNITY



LEFT TO RIGHT: Kara's Cupcakes delivered treats to faculty and staff at their homes. The moment Stuart Hall eighth graders announced a first-of-its-kind virtual Congé. Dr. Lisa Damour, now a regular guest at Convent & Stuart Hall, first spoke to students on Zoom about managing stress and anxiety during the pandemic. While at a distance, faculty and staff stayed connected by sharing their creative endeavors in the Cor Cafe.

Convent & Stuart Hall would commit to being a community that was intrepid in its capacity to try new things and one that would learn from regular feedback channels (we initiated a weekly feedback log with every teacher) as a means of communicating what was working well and what else was needed. Using this feedback, we provided enhanced support where necessary and made tweaks to the design of the plan. On day one of our remote learning launch, a micro-website was developed for families and students to find links to remote classes, FAQs and any current updates, and a dedicated email address was established for parents and faculty to find out more information and share feedback.



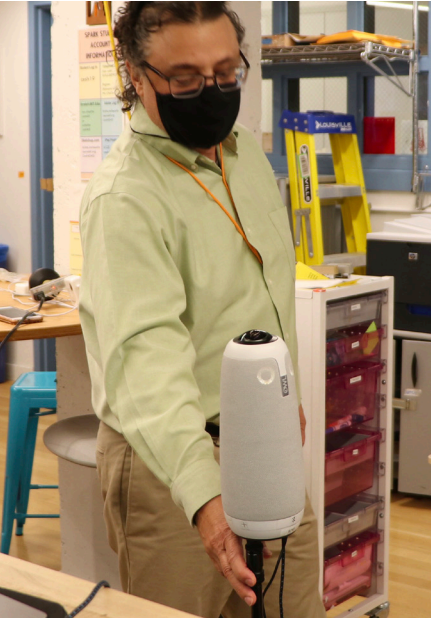
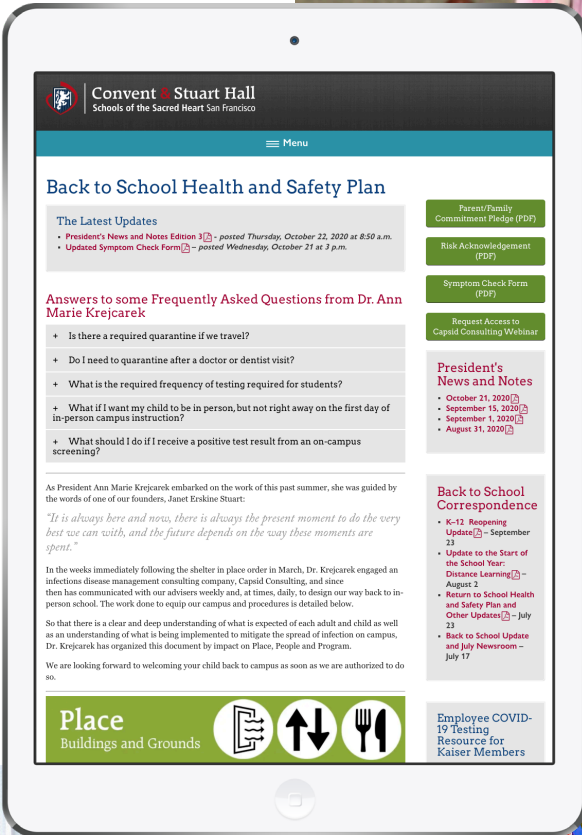
As much as anything, we wanted to keep the spirit of our community alive. The goal was to create a rich learning environment, where the quality of the student-teacher relationship was a constant and where aspects of community life — such as chapels, assemblies, clubs, advisory and even Congé — could still be realized. While our faculty were engaged with the academic delivery, our Leadership Team worked to design and deliver the community experience that included "walking the halls," teacher appreciation, Cor Unum, community support, world-class speakers and, of course, a special commencement for each individual student in Grades 8 and 12.

CONVENT & STUART HALL

OUR COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING IN-PERSON SCHOOL

While we were committed to delivering an excellent remote experience, our hope was to hold in-person school for our students as soon as it was deemed safe by the Department of Public Health (DPH). In April 2020, we forged a unique partnership with CAPSID Consulting, a company dedicated to developing comprehensive infection prevention programs in hospitals, medical centers and skilled nursing facilities. They agreed to share their expertise with us, their first school client.

With the guidance of CAPSID Consulting, our Director of Physical Plant and Strategic Design Facilitator, Geoff De Santis, led a comprehensive overhaul of our school ventilation systems both in buildings with HVAC and in older school buildings. The HVAC and duct systems were sanitized, filters were replaced with MERV 13 filters and a bipolar ionization generator was installed in each system. For those areas not supplied by an HVAC system, portable Dyson air filtration systems were installed so that every square foot of our internal environment was treated to diminish transmission of viruses while also improving the quality of air during any external air quality event, including smoke from the fires in Northern California. Additionally, internet bandwidth was increased both inside and outside, and flexible classroom audio systems were installed.



FIRST IMPLEMENTATION: SUMMER CAMP AND FACULTY CHILDREN LEARN ON CAMPUS

Starting immediately with the move to remote school in response to the city's shelter-in-place order in March 2020, the school recognized the need to provide care and a learning space for faculty with elementary school-aged children. As an essential educational facility, we were granted approval to host a school program for our essential workers (faculty and staff) throughout the school day. Hosted by After School Program (ASP) staff, the school day for faculty children was held in a "one-room schoolhouse" classroom space where faculty children across various elementary grades could access their remote-learning options in a safe and supervised school environment.

In June 2020, the school was granted approval from the DPH to host summer camp. The experience of a successful summer camp, from a Kinder Kids program to high school "summer term" classes, provided robust confirmation of the solidity of the school's health and safety plan and protocols. We ran several weeks of programming for several hundred students, successfully, joyfully and without any incidence of COVID transmission.

LEFT: Howard Levin (far left), Director of Educational Innovation and Information Services, held a series of Meeting Owl training sessions for faculty and staff with the 360-degree camera. Students returned to campus on the first day of in-person learning following safety measures outlined in the school's Health and Safety Plan.

Right: A successful and safe summer camp and on-campus learning opportunities for children of faculty and staff members provided a chance to evaluate our systems in operation.



A RETURN TO IN-PERSON SCHOOL REALIZED

COVID-19 RESPONSE

COVID-19 RESPONSE

16

17

Despite a city-wide return to remote learning at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year, Convent & Stuart Hall remained focused on delivering the promise of in-person instruction to our students and families as soon as possible. Making this happen would require approval from the DPH and ongoing updates and messaging to community members — faculty, staff, families and students — to communicate health and safety plans,

hopes, intentions and logistical details.

We submitted our application to reopen in person on September 4, just days following the release of the application by the county on August 31. Following our site visit, we received the good news that we were approved to open in a staggered format, starting with Grades K–2 on September 22 and, then, in two-week intervals, Grades 3–4 and subsequently 5–8. When the

application process opened for high school, we submitted immediately and were prepared to meet the criteria set forth by the county. As a result, our high school students were welcomed back the first week of November. This sequence of school reopening required careful communication and planning to ensure that our scheduling systems, including traffic flows, instructional scheduling, recess and lunch times, would allow for

consistent management of density and cohorts. As students began returning to campus, the school launched a robust on-site COVID-19 testing program to complement a wide range of other mitigation measures. All of these initiatives combined was no small task, but the joy on our students' faces when they returned to school was well worth it. 🍎

Convent first graders enjoy being back in their classroom on the first day of in-person learning.