

Life in Lockdown

Since Life in Lockdown (the Blog!) began, you have had various people talk to you about how you can live life differently and productively at this time. We all talk about doing it. Some of us achieve it. Some of us imagine it. Many of us do very little more!



In an earlier blog, I talked about how I watched a Pilates class, but didn't actually do it. This week, however, I have done something different. Yes, I can't believe it either. More importantly, those who know me definitely don't believe it. I promise you it is true!

Let me explain.

This week, our year 10 students have completed a "virtual" work experience. As your parents may recall, work experience was something that you did so you could understand what it is like to work for an employer, perhaps try out a future career, perhaps even find out what it is you don't want to do in the future! "Virtual" work experience is the only option we can offer during lockdown.

So, how do you "virtually" work. A number of national employers have offered online work experience. Learn Live offered the chance for students to watch videos and communicate with different employers through a Chat facility. Barclays Freeformers offered students the chance to be part of a digital technology company. There was the experience with the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, White and Case LLP (law) and Haliday Fraser Munro (architects).

Now, here's the bit where I've done something different. It has been my privilege this week to be part of the virtual work experience that has been groundbreaking for us at St. Joseph's. A few weeks ago, Alison Watson from Class of Your Own and the Scape Group contacted me to see if we would be interested in trying out a different type of work experience. The architecture, engineering and construction industries are very interested in trying to work with students differently. They were willing to put on a work experience full week placement, where students were given a task of designing the Esteem Pavilion in Dubai. Just like you would on a normal placement, the students would be given daily access to professionals who could help them with their project.

This took a lot of effort to set up: Alison got together over 30 professionals from Turner and Townsend, Mace Group and Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh); I had to get everyone ready for daily online meetings. I recruited six year 10 students – and on Monday, we set off!

There was a rigorous daily routine. We would begin with a 9.30 a.m. meeting where we would discuss the design brief and the tasks for the day. We would meet with the professionals at 12.30 for an hour, so we could discuss aspects of construction and design. We would then meet again at 4.00 p.m. to review the day's events. This replicated the rhythms of a working day in industry.

Oh, was it a challenge! As you all know from various assemblies I've given over the years, I am not a very practical person. Listening to our students talking intelligently about how to use space, how to ventilate the building, how to make it useful and sustainable for a multi-client base, I learned so much. For example, I didn't know that buildings these days are only expected to be used for around 30 years before being demolished. I was enlightened.

What impressed the St. Joseph's group most, though, was the time and effort all the professionals took with us. We will be forever indebted to all those who spent their days sending us messages with ideas and resources outside of the meeting. All were outstanding.

I can't wait to see the 3-D models tomorrow!

So, it has been an unusual week for me. I've delved into areas that I knew nothing about. I genuinely feel as though I am enriched for knowing this information. For once in my life, I have done something different.

Most of all, though, I am so proud of all our year 10 students this week. They have taken a risk and tried something different. I hope that they have all enjoyed the experience and have a more clear idea of what they want to do – or not to do! – in their futures. Thank you for all your hard work.

Mrs Sanders