



Key Benefits of Online Learning

It may seem counterintuitive that Think with Heart learning experiences - courses focused on *enriching our connections* - are offered online. Since face-to-face interaction is a key ingredient to enhancing connections with others, can we really learn about human connection online? We believe that yes, interacting online with quality course content and with each other is an effective way to build knowledge, practice valuable skills and form authentic connections.

Think with Heart students have shared that they value the online learning format for its flexibility, comfortable learning environment, and encouragement of higher order thinking skills (deeper cognitive processing) through reflective writing. The online design has proven to be especially beneficial to girls who prefer processing information at their own pace and expressing themselves in writing rather than verbally in group settings.

The online venue of Think with Heart is not meant to replace important and valuable face-to-face learning experiences in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. Rather, the online curriculum complements the core academic program and other school activities through offering co-curricular, non-traditional courses that are specifically designed to enrich face-to-face interactions. Improving the quality of relationships is a theme that carries throughout each online course and experiential learning program offered by Think with Heart. In *CORE*, girls learn from experts in the social sciences, connect new knowledge to their personal lives, and discuss their insights with one another in thoughtful dialogue. Participation in *The Listening Project* enables girls not only to learn and strengthen human connection skills and competencies but also to form genuine connections through meaningful exchanges in real time. Think with Heart experiences enhance girls' relationships with friends, family members, teachers and coaches.



The combination of rich and engaging content, a safe learning environment, and learning coach presence in the virtual classroom translates to a meaningful online learning experience.

Key benefits of the online learning venue are:

Scheduling Flexibility: Because the course material is accessible anytime and from anywhere, girls can spend time completing assignments and sharing ideas with peers when their schedules allow (note: the course commitment is 1-3 hours/week). While most courses are asynchronous (learning does not occur in the same place or at the same time), the courses progress in real time, with assignments due twice a week. Girls appreciate the flexibility of being able to do the work when it best suits them, yet they like progressing through the courses at the same rate as their peers.

Alternative Learning Venue: As affirmed in the foundation course (CORE), we are all unique, and we process information differently. Some of us, especially more introverted people, prefer to take time to process information before sharing it with others. And some introverts feel more comfortable expressing themselves in writing rather than verbally in traditional classrooms. An online learning venue is a great environment for introverts to thrive. And the discussion-based format of Think with Heart courses enables both extraverts and introverts to develop higher order thinking skills and practice reflective writing.

Empathic (Written) Communication Practice: Since more communication is moving to digital platforms, learning to communicate online with empathy and consideration of others' viewpoints is growing increasingly important in our ever-changing world.

Preparation for College: Online courses in higher education are becoming more common. According to a recent report, roughly 30% of all students in higher education are now taking at least one online course.

Reflective Writing Practice: An important component of Think with Heart's curriculum design is the built-in space for reflection, interpretation and analysis. The discussion-based courses promote reflective writing, and insights emerge through the reflective writing process. Reflective writing challenges us in ways other forms of writing do not. Through reflective thinking and writing, we integrate new knowledge, clarify our thoughts, draw connections, test our assumptions and personalize our learning experiences.

Learning Effectiveness: Research supports the effectiveness of online learning. As is the case with face-to-face classrooms, there is not just one way to facilitate learning in an online venue. There are a variety of ways to have a strong teacher presence and lively student engagement with content and one another in virtual classrooms.

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At Think with Heart, we are genuine believers in the value of online learning. We are also very strong advocates of quality face-to-face interactions. Our curriculum design allows for the benefits of an online learning platform to both complement and enhance important connection-building opportunities that girls experience in their classrooms and beyond.