

Virtual High School: A Window to the World

Without a shred of doubt in my mind, I can confidently say that VHS has heightened my desire to further explore languages and world cultures. In the first few days of my Russian course, each student had to introduce herself. The amount of languages that the class collectively spoke simply amazed me. I found out that together we could speak Hebrew, Russian, Italian, French, Spanish, German, and even a Native American language. I have never been part of a community of such diversity and multiculturalism. Through my second VHS course, my interest in surrounding myself with peers of global talents and skills has blossomed. Being able to participate in a microcosm of internationality has granted me experience for my future career. As a future federal agent, I know that I will be dealing with people from all cultural backgrounds.

The opportunity to take the Russian Language and Culture course has demystified the largest country in the world for me. Topics such as Russian food, history, and family have been so enlightening. At my school, only a limited amount of historical and cultural classes is offered. Likewise, the only two languages I would ever be able to take are French and Spanish. Without Virtual High School, I never would have been able to choose Russian as my third language. I now know for a fact that I will be taking Russian language courses throughout my university career. VHS has opened me up to a language which I otherwise never would have experienced. It seems to be rare that American students are able to explore uncommon languages without actually being immersed in a foreign country. My Russian-born teacher's encouragement, combined with the fascinating subject matter, have fomented an enormous desire to continue studying the country which Winston Churchill once described as "A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

One of my proudest moments in the Russian Language and Culture course was the moment when I learned the Cyrillic alphabet in completion. The ability to read and sound out any word I wanted was an incredible experience. Suddenly, an alphabet which had always looked like a daunting jumble of characters became a decipherable language which appeals to the senses.

Before my Russian Language and Culture experience, I joined VHS through a World Religions course. This introductory class provided a foundation of cultural and theological understanding. In reality, countless nations base their roots in one of five main religions. If I ever have the chance to visit Israel, Tibet, Lebanon, or India, I will know that VHS has given me a deep understanding and sensitivity about other cultures closely tied to religion.

In sum, I have shared so many enriching moments with both my classmates and two teachers. In my World Religions course, I have partaken in debates over Tibetan autonomy, atheism, and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In my Russian Language and Culture class, I have been able to cook an authentic Russian dish, read about Russian-American marriages, and learn survival Russian in case I go abroad. By interacting with my multicultural peers, these two courses have truly come alive. Although I had the desire to immerse myself in other languages and cultures before I joined Virtual High School, my courses have both allowed and encouraged this deep-rooted goal. It is quite difficult to imagine this past year without the influence of Virtual High School. It seems that many people view senior year as a time to relax from the pressure of the coming years. On the contrary, I have used this year as a transition into my future with the help of the Virtual High School Global Consortium.