

Academic SPOTLIGHTS

Our dedicated single-subject teachers played a pivotal role in enhancing interdisciplinary learning throughout this unit.

- **In Art**, students collaborated on the design and creation of large mixed media, Egyptian sarcophagi, influenced by the elaborate ancient burial cases designed for Egyptian royalty. Additionally, students benefited from the unique opportunity to step back in time during a visit to the Getty Villa, an actual reproduction of an Ancient Roman villa and home to authentic sarcophagi, the mummy of Heracleides and countless treasures of the ancient world.

- **In Music**, students studied songs and instruments from various cultures around the world. They examined songs and instruments from a cultural perspective, drawing connections to their historical roots. This study of music resulted in the Grade 3 concert setlist.

- **In Spanish**, students learned about ancient civilizations in Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, such as the Mayans, Incas and Aztecs. They learned about the lives of famous leaders, languages, gods, foods, famous places and more.

- **In Science**, students learned about DNA, inherited traits and acquired traits, studied dominant and recessive genes and how they are expressed, plant genetics and how alleles are expressed.

- **In Design Technology**, students honed their skills by creating a slide about their chosen god or goddess, mastering the navigation of Google Slides.

- **During Physical Education**, students enthusiastically participated in St. Mary's Greek Olympics.

Thanks to the Segerstrom Center for the Arts Teach program, we had the incredible opportunity to host the renowned actor, Carl Weintraub, at St. Mary's. In the intimate setting of our Black Box Theatre, Carl mesmerized us with his performances of two classic myths: 'Perseus and Medusa' and 'Persephone in Hades.'

For the Design Faire, Grade 3 students were tasked with designing various objects for Greek gods and goddesses. Following the design thinking steps, they empathized with their deity, defined the challenge, generated ideas and crafted prototypes. Drawing inspiration from Greek mythology, they unleashed their creativity to bridge ancient stories with modern design.

In the end, Grade 3 students embarked on an incredible journey of discovery. Throughout the unit of inquiry, students not only deepened their knowledge through constant application across the subject areas, but also honed their critical thinking skills and appreciation for the interconnectedness of civilizations.

As they navigate their own journeys, may they carry with them the lessons learned from the past and continue to explore, innovate and forge connections in our ever-evolving world.

geometry, discovering that the word geometry is from Ancient Greek: γεωμετρία; **geo-** "earth" and **-metron** "measurement". γεωμετρία; where 'geo-' signifies 'earth' and '-metron' denotes 'measurement.' Through their studies, students engaged with both two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes, furthering their understanding of spatial concepts and geometric principles. Geometry was critical in understanding the architectural wonders of ancient civilizations.

Students built on their geography skills by actively mapping each civilization's location and discovering their proximity to bodies of water. For instance, they uncovered that Ancient Mesopotamia earned its title, 'the land between two rivers,' due to its location between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Utilizing tools like Google Earth, students further explored the geographical placements of these civilizations today.

Through exploring architectural structures like the Ziggurat, the Great Pyramids and the Parthenon, students discovered the significance of these structures, employing the key concept of function. The Ziggurat served as a religious temple in Mesopotamia. It symbolized the connection between the humans and the gods. In Egypt, the Great Pyramids functioned as monumental tombs for pharaohs, embodying the belief in an afterlife. The Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, served as a symbol of Athenian democracy and housed a monumental statue of the goddess.

Guided by the key concept of change, students scrutinized how these inventions changed and evolved. Researching specific inventions from each civilization illuminated the evolution over time. For instance, focusing on the invention of the wheel, students traced its progression from its inception in Mesopotamia where it was used for pottery making and transportation, to its adoption in Egypt for chariots and Greek carts. In China, the wheel enhanced agricultural practices with the wheelbarrow. Today, the wheel remains a cornerstone of modern transportation, from automobiles to airplanes.

Grade 3 Civilizations Unit

As an IB World School, our curriculum is rooted in transdisciplinary teaching, placing emphasis on the interconnectedness of knowledge and its relevance to the real world. For Grade 3 students, the unit of inquiry Where We Are in Place and Time offers an exciting voyage of learning and exploration. During this unit, students delve into the central idea of how evidence of the past connects ancient civilizations to each other and the present. Students embark on a journey through time, exploring the contributions of Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and China. Throughout this unit, we seamlessly integrate the subjects of reading, writing, math and geography along with connections across single-subject classes and field trips.

Students engaged with a range of texts, reading both narrative and informational genres. They read numerous Greek myths, such as Pandora's Box, Demeter and Persephone, Daedalus and Icarus, The Trojan Horse and King Midas. Analyzing story elements and character traits, writing summaries and discussing themes and morals were integral parts of their learning. A particular highlight was Readers' Theatre, where students assumed the roles of Greek deities and the chorus. Readers' Theatre provides a supportive environment for practicing public speaking skills among peers, enhancing reading fluency, expression, and communication abilities, all while fostering a sense of enjoyment and creativity.

As authors, students drew upon their understanding of the story elements found in Greek myths as a springboard for crafting their own adaptations. They first pinpointed a lesson or moral they wished to convey. This included the origins of natural phenomena such as storms, earthquakes, droughts, sunrise, stars and the seasons. Moral themes ranged from cautionary tales against boasting, the virtue of patience, the triumph of goodness and the consequences of greed, to the importance of obeying their parents. Students' narratives featured various characters, including deities, monsters and humans, each contributing to their mythological reimaginings.

As mathematicians, students uncovered the ancient roots of fractions, tracing their origins back to the Egyptians. They learned that the Egyptians employed a concept known as 'unit fractions,' where the numerator of a fraction is one. Mathematicians focused on

EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

by Shelly Harmon
Head of Early Education



strengthened their large motor skills while galloping around the EEP Playground. On the field at the simulated "Derby," preschoolers learned more about time measurement from how long the horses typically run.

Each class rotated through stations to develop their measurement skills, small and large gross motor skills, teamwork and so much more. All were encouraged to watch the Kentucky Derby and cheer on their chosen horse with their family. Upon returning to school on Monday and following the 150th Kentucky Derby, the classes debriefed, discussed the very close race and celebrated the winner, Mystik Dan. We then treated all EEP students to actual pony rides in the Courtyard.

In Preschool, connecting measurement to real-world experiences like the Kentucky Derby offers a dynamic and engaging way for children to explore how the world works. By integrating Derby-themed activities into the curriculum, St. Mary's educators sparked curiosity, ignited imaginations and laid the foundation for a lifelong love of learning. Preschool successfully explored the world of measurement where every moment was a winning stride towards educational success.

Striding Into Measurement

The Preschool transdisciplinary unit of inquiry, How the World Works, emphasizes inquiry-based learning, allowing children to explore, experiment and make connections with the world around them while developing early mathematical concepts. They learn about different tools and resources used to measure and engage in hands-on activities, such as comparing sizes, weights & capacities, and children begin to comprehend the concept of measurement organically. They explore the attributes of different objects, observe patterns and develop language skills to describe and compare quantities.

When it comes to understanding measurement, we decided to use the timely event of the Kentucky Derby to engage and bring measurement to life. From the length of the track - 10 furlongs - to the weight of the jockeys - 126 pounds or less - to the height of the horses - on average, 16 hands - there are numerous opportunities to integrate standard and non-standard units of measurement into the Derby experience.

We recently hosted a simulated Kentucky Derby on the St. Mary's field for our preschoolers. As a cross-curricular unit, we began with the arts where students decorated hats to complement their Derby attire. Our students also learned about the 20 horses that would participate in the race and chose their favorite horse. Pony sticks were available, and the children played and



Life As A Poem

Some years ago, University of Chicago researchers studied Americans' relationship with poetry. They arrived at two key insights: first, adults averse to poetry tend to have formed their negative feelings as youngsters in school, and second, adults who do embrace poetry and regularly read poems "lead more engaged and satisfying social lives than those who don't."

Armed with this knowledge—the long-term dangers of exposing young people to poetry in a clumsy or uninspiring way, and the distinct advantages derived from a life enriched by poetry—I launched this spring a new unit in Grade 8 called Life as a Poem.

Students began by reading and seeking to understand works by a diverse set of poets: William Shakespeare, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Percy Shelley, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Robert Frost, Seamus Heaney, Rhina P. Espaillat, Billy Collins, Maya Angelou, Carol Ann Duffy and José Olivarez. The poems ranged from the comic ("Ode to Cheese Fries") to the romantic ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?") and from the elegiac ("O Captain! My Captain!") to the cautiously hopeful ("Let America Be America Again").

Meanwhile, I invited students to construct their own poems. One particularly memorable class block, I showed students Vincent van Gogh's painting The Starry Night while playing Don McLean's 1970's ballad "Vincent." The song uses the painting as a starting point for waxing poetic about the artist's work and life and especially his mental health. From this experience students gleaned insights into ekphrasis, an ancient practice of writing poetically about works of art. They immediately started to experiment. Visiting a dozen stations around the classroom where I had placed prints of different notable paintings, they paused at each one to jot down ideas for a poetic response. A color, a human figure, a specific daub of paint, a visual theme, a hint at a narrative—students noticed a massive range of features in the paintings and eventually turned their thoughts about them into full-fledged poems.



by Gregory Campeau
Grade 7 Language & Literature Teacher

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Soon students were abuzz every day with new ideas and poems. Reading great poets' works turned into an exercise in foraging for techniques, forms and subject matter. Like bees, students were picking up the nectar and pollen of inspiration here and there and everywhere and then, with effort and time and creative processing, distilling them into a diverse array of aromatic honeys. Students' poems "tasted" of many different places and experiences: the saltwater pleasures of beach living, the heartbreak of young love, the beauty of sunsets, the pain of loss, the glories of sport, the bitterness of injury (outward and inward), the sweetness of friendship.

The unit concluded with the submission of a portfolio of five original poems accompanied by a poet's statement, in essence a reflection on their process and learning. In these statements many—indeed most—students wrote enthusiastically about reading and writing poems, even if sometimes it was befuddling or a struggle. "Poetry allows me to speak my mind and heart in a way I've never been able to before," wrote one.

I don't yet know whether my students will maintain a poetic life beyond my classroom, but I see positive signs. To me, that is a success.



LOWER SCHOOL



by Keri Del Conte
Grade 3 Teacher

