

school notes

COMPILED BY SUSAN BRAUN JOHNSON

Capitol Hill Cluster School Peabody Arts Integration Focuses on Georgia O'Keefe

Have you ever felt a little stumped by abstract art? Well, perhaps the 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds at the Peabody Early Childhood Center can help you out. They're spending the fall semester exploring the work of abstract painter Georgia O'Keefe, through a partnership with the Phillips Collection (which will open a major O'Keefe exhibit in January), the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Georgia O'Keefe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Leading the effort for Peabody are art teacher Katie Cushman, pre-school teacher Melissa Smith and kindergarten teacher Gail Murdoch, who received special training from the museums' education staff. Arts programming is often geared toward older children, but these teachers are giving the museum staff some pointers on how to use art in early childhood education, something they've been doing for years.

Cushman works with the children to understand O'Keefe's artistic process and theory and to make their own studies of the artist's famed jack-in-the-pulpit flowers (or "jack in the puppets" as one preschooler calls them). At the same time, their classroom teachers are connecting the excitement generated in the art studio to age-level learning in core competency areas from literacy to life science. Whether they're reading from the school's new collection of age-appropriate books about the artist's life and work, writing about their artwork in student journals, or making careful observations of leaves and flowers from the school's gardens, they are improving fine motor skills and phonemic awareness, building their vocabularies, exploring the natural world, and learning to express their feelings in a variety of ways.

When the O'Keefe show opens at the Phillips Collection, the students and their teachers will be in attendance and some of their work will be on display. Who knows, maybe the next great abstract artist will be a Peabody graduate! —Karen Bates. Peabody Early Learning/SWS Reggio Emilio-425 C St. NE – 202-698-3277.

Watkins Grows its Readers-Writers Workshop Project

One evening last month, the third-grade teaching team in Watkins traditional program met with



Young Peabody Student works on O'Keefe inspired nature study.

an overflow crowd of parents to talk about a new program being used to help their children read more thoughtfully and critically and write about what they've read in a way that reflects that higher level of engagement. Put simply, the team (and most of their counterparts at second and fourth grade) is using a program developed by Columbia University's Teacher's College to help kids really relate to what they read at school, own it for themselves, and, in the process, develop a life-long love of learning.

The method – formally known as the Readers and Writers Workshop – has a number of key elements not always seen in traditional elementary classrooms. According to teacher Fran Ewart, students read and respond to "real books," rather than short exercises from reading workbooks that too often lack interesting storylines, character development, etc. Each classroom has a full collection of such books, organized by "levels" so readers in all stages of development can find appropriately challenging (but not overwhelming) books.

The program's first mantra is "reading is thinking" – not just "decoding" words. The children are taught that to really understand a new book, they should make connections between it and others they've read and experiences from their lives and current events. In addition, students learn to: identify and discuss unfamiliar vocabulary; make predictions about what might happen next and think about their reactions when the predictions are proved or disproved; try to determine what's most important to the author based on the story's orga-

nization; and make inferences from what's written by "reading between the lines." They practice these techniques for engaging with what they're reading first with their teacher, in a very structured process that ensures they've mastered them, and then in small groups.

Amy Wertheimer tells her students that good writers "notice everything" and "collect details" and she encourages them to collect story ideas in volume at first and then come back after some time has passed and choose the ideas they like the best to work up into full stories. In a typical unit, they'll work for three weeks on a genre, collecting story ideas, details, etc., and then spent the fourth week making their favorite idea into a story.

Judging by the teachers' enthusiasm, parents' reactions, and the jump in DC-CAS reading scores at Watkins over the past two years, the Readers/Writers Workshop is meeting its goal of creating engaged and critical readers and creative and persuasive writers. Watkins Elementary/Montessori - 420 12th St., SE – 202-698-3355. – Karen Bates.

Stuart Hobson Students Stargaze at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Nine lucky Stuart Hobson students and their eighth-grade science teacher, Sandra Jenkins, were invited to the White House recently for Astronomy Night. President and Mrs. Obama welcomed them and 150 other students from local middle schools to the South Lawn for a very special evening of stargazing.

The event marked the International Year of Astronomy coinciding with the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first astronomical observations using the telescope and focused on inspiring young people to love and study science.

More than 20 telescopes were on the lawn so that students could observe Jupiter, the moon and selected stars. In addition, they had the opportunity to participate in hands-on experiments with astronomers from across the country, and talk with astronauts including Sally Ride, astronomers, staff from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and representatives from several museums and planetariums.

President Barack Obama spoke to the students about the importance of science, engineering, and math education, as well as his support for astronomy's capability to promote a greater awareness of



St. Peter School Safety Patrol Keeps Students Safe! (Credit:Diane Dewhirst)

the human place in the universe, expand knowledge, and inspire the next generation of explorers. The first family was also in attendance, getting in on the star gazing themselves. – Karen Bates. Stuart-Hobson Middle School - 410 E St., NE – 202-671-6010

Washington Yu Ying PCS School Awarded FLAP Grant & IBO Candidate Status

Washington Yu Ying Public Charter School, the only Chinese language immersion school in the District of Columbia, was awarded a 2009 Foreign Language Assistance Program Grant from the US Department of Education. Yu Ying, as a Charter School and its own Local Education Agency, was one of only a few individual schools in the nation to receive this grant. The grant includes approximately \$290,000 each year over the next three years, cost shared 127 percent with Department funds.

“FLAP provides us with critical funds to develop key components of our program,” remarked Lisa Seachrist Chiu, President of Yu Ying’s Board of Trustees.

Washington Yu Ying PCS has also received “candidate status” from the International Baccalaureate Organization this fall. The school is on track and working to achieve World School status in the upcoming years. www.washingtonyuying.org. Mary Shaffner, Executive Director: 202-635-195.

St. Peter’s School Sixth-Graders Shine on Safety Patrol

No doubt you’ve seen them. Each morning and each afternoon, a dedicated posse of sixth graders arrive at school early and stay at school late to assist fellow students as members of the St. Peter School Safety Patrol. They are posted at each entrance of the school and at the corner of 3rd and E Sts., SE, as well as throughout the school building to assist students who walk to school, help those who are in the carpool line, and direct them safely to and from their classrooms. In its second year at St. Peter School, the safety patrol is under the direction of Washington, D.C. native Barbara Marks, who is the Middle School Science teacher. “As a member of the safety patrol, a student develops leadership skills and real sense of responsibility,” said Ms. Marks. Nine sixth grade students were selected by Ms. Marks in September. They must maintain good grades and provide a good example at school in order to serve on the patrol. This patrol performs a great service to the school, and we thank them for their dedication!

Winter Open Houses

St. Peter School Winter Open Houses will be held Jan. 13 from 6-8 p.m. and Jan. 14 from 9-11 a.m. Applications will be available, and prospective families are invited to tour the school and meet with faculty and parents. If you are in-

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interested in learning more about the school, please contact the school office at 202-544-1618 or visit www.stpetersinterparish.org. St. Peter School, 422 Third St. SE. 202-544-1618, www.stpetersinterparish.org. -Sally Aman.

Ludlow-Taylor

Buenos Dias. ¿Cómo está usted? Bien, gracias. So begins another class with Tanya Murray, head of the Spanish language program at Ludlow-Taylor Elementary School.

Ludlow-Taylor students from pre-school to fifth grade are delving into the Spanish language. Pre-school, pre-K and kindergarten students meet twice a week for half an hour. First through fifth-graders meet once a week for forty-five minutes.

The Spanish language program reflects the arts integration emphasis at Ludlow-Taylor. For example, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See?" is read – in Spanish, of course – and acted out by the students in a unique dramatization. Spanish-themed art is produced, and Spanish-themed music is performed by the students.

Each month Ms. Murray explores a different learning theme. In October, the theme was food, and in November, the theme was celebrations, e.g. Dia de los Muertos and Dia de Gracias. Learning Spanish aids in learning other subjects as well, according to Ms. Murray. The fact that Spanish is Latin-based means that

the students will have a big assist in vocabulary development. And because teaching language requires addressing multiple learning styles, the students will be familiar with various approaches to learning.

Murray considered a number of DC schools. She liked what she saw at Ludlow-Taylor; she liked the arts integration program, and she liked the palpable, dynamic forward movement. ¡Bienvenida a Señora Murray!

Duke Club Sponsors Halloween Fall-Into-Fitness Fair

The Duke Club of Washington Partners-in-Education program offered a healthy start to Halloween for Ludlow-Taylor students and the surrounding community. The free Fall-Into-Fitness Fair offered interactive booths featuring healthy snacks such as Spooky Spider Sandwiches and Jack-o-Lantern Fruit cups as well as nutritious, tasty cooking demonstrations by local chef Dan Traster. The fair included obstacle courses and fitness games like Ring the Pumpkin led by Duke alumni and fitness experts from Results Gym. The event also brought together health professional volunteers who provided advice on topics ranging from nutrition to physiology. Kids and parents alike enjoyed the healthy Halloween kickoff! –Submitted by: Tom Hamilton, Lauren Garson, and Shahna Gooneratne.

Ludlow-Taylor Elementary is



Brent students welcome Sammy Soil at the dedication of the school's new rain garden.

located at 659 G St. NE; 202-698-3244. ludlow-taylorfriends@hotmail.com. Or visit www.ltneighborhood.blogspot.com

Brent Elementary Dedicating a New Rain Garden

Brent Elementary, a museum magnet school on Capitol Hill, dedicated a new environmentally friendly rain garden and welcomed the completion of the school's new playground.

"The rain garden is an attractive way to reduce the amount of storm water entering the sewer system while providing a fun learning opportunity for Brent's students and neighbors," said Brent parent Heidi Johnson.

The rain garden was installed through a collaborative effort between the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the District of Columbia's Department of the Environment. Besides its environmental function, the Brent rain garden will provide a living, outdoor classroom for the students.

"The new rain garden and our outdoor classroom will benefit our students in so many ways," said Dr. Cheryl Wilhoyte, Brent's principal. "Our students are learning about conservation and the importance of preserving their own environment."

To create the rain garden, about 1300 square feet of pavement from the edge of the playground was removed. Rain gardens reduce the storm water runoff and help clean water by

filtering pollution before it enters watersheds. Brent's rain garden will help clean water that eventually ends up in the Chesapeake Bay. Several national and local officials attended the dedication ceremony including Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells.

Brent Seeks to Close the Gap, Offer Accelerated Studies

Starting last month, all Brent students who need more help in reading or math now receive extra help, every day, to ensure all students are on or above grade level. Additionally, Brent students, who are interested, have the opportunity to participate in accelerated studies for both math and reading.

Brent Open Houses

On Dec. 8, from 7:30-8:30 a.m. and on Jan. 7, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Brent will hold open houses for families interested in learning more about the school. Principal Wilhoyte, teachers and families will be available to answer questions about the school's high-quality education and its special museum studies and Chinese language programs. - Angie Lundberg

Brent Elementary School is located at 301 North Carolina Ave., SE, serves students in grades PK-3 through fifth grade. www.brentelemetary.org; 202-698-3363.

Capitol Hill Day School Singing, Dancing, Drumming at CHDS



Mickey Mouse, as part of a joint DC Cares and Disney Destinations effort, helps to plant tulip bulbs for the Ludlow-Taylor Courtyard. Volunteers also painted classrooms, made fun playground decorations, raked, and cleared out a storage closet.



CHDS Jazz Band prepares to play." (credited to Heidi Ruesswick)

Music in all forms is woven throughout the grades at Capitol Hill Day School. Starting with rhythms, pitches, movements, and melodies, CHDS students deepen their knowledge of and familiarity with the process and performance of music. The emphasis is on music as a cooperative group effort, culminating in an all-student Spring Music Festival.

This year, CHDS third-graders are collaborating with students at The Wessex School, an English speaking school in Concepción, Chile. The theme of this activity is "cooperation" and the students teach each other songs and games. CHDS students recently filmed a song and game called Black Snake/Rattlesnake, created an instructional video, and posted it on their blog. The Wessex students used it to learn the song and game, and performed it for their whole school. CHDS students also made a film asking questions about the students' lives in Concepción.

The musical highlight for sixth-graders is their theater production with recent musicals: Oz!, Willy Wonka, Jr., and Aladdin. This winter's production will be Seussical! In addition to learning their lines, 6th graders develop theater and choral skills, and work on choreography, character development, and backstage technical skills. Teamwork is emphasized, with students encouraging and supporting one another, and celebrating the achievements of the group.

Seventh-grade music students

broaden their perspective on music and performance in different cultures through their exploration of the musical traditions of West Africa, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. Eighth grade music students hone the hand drumming skills they learned in 7th grade, and learn to use their voices and instruments to create ensemble works. Building on their drumming work last year with visiting artist Kristen Arant, students in grades four, five, seven, and eight will perform in the Congressional Schools of Virginia Choir Festival in December.

-Jane Angarola. 202-386-9919; janea@chds.org; www.chds.org.

River Park Nursery School RPNS Thanksgiving Program

River Park Nursery School recently held a Thanksgiving program and potluck lunch for students and parents. The children made pumpkin seed shakers and shared the reasons why they feel thankful. They are enjoying a pretend grocery store in the classroom and are learning about a variety of different foods. RPNS students also wrote special letters to their grandparents, stamped the envelopes and took them to the mailbox. In Dec. the children will be busy in Santa's workshop making special gifts for loved ones. www.riverparknurseryschool.org; 202 546-7767 -Suzanne Nelson.

Payne Elementary The Farm Visits Payne

Early Childhood students at

Financing a Private School Education

Join us for a financial aid presentation featuring Aaron Wachholz of the National Association of Independent Schools.

TOPICS

Affordability of Independent Schools

The Financial Aid Application Process

Financial Aid Q&A

WHERE

Maret School Theatre
3000 Cathedral Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

WHEN

Thurs., Dec. 10, 2009, 6:45 p.m.

RSVP

Mike Leonard, Maret School
mleonard@maret.org
202-939-8814

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Burgundy Farm Country Day School

Payne had the opportunity to see and touch farm animals up close and personal right here at Payne at our fall festival. Students had a day of fun and experienced life on the farm. Rabbits, goats, chickens, ducks, turtles were just some of the animals they got a chance to touch and observe. They not only experienced the opportunity to touch the animals they were able to ride a horse and pony. The students were amazed and this learning experience will last a lifetime. Along with the farm experience the students jumped in a moon bounce, played countless games, and even decorated pumpkins.

DC United promotes reading at Payne

The mascot Talon from D.C. United came to visit several classes at Payne. Their message of the importance of reading and doing well was heard and internalized by the students. They were excited to see Tal-

the character trait for each month.

-- Vielka Scott-Marcus, Principal & Juanita Stokes, Pre-school Teacher. Payne is located at 305 15th Street, S.E. 202-698-3262. Vielka.Scott@dc.gov .

J.O Wilson Elementary

JO Wilson's has successfully completed several grants to expand sports programs for students in order to best utilize the outdoor recreation grounds. In addition to football and basketball programs, students will now take part in soccer and tennis as part of their physical education curriculum.

And on a fun note, students and teachers took some time to celebrate the fall season. Younger classrooms enjoyed a pumpkin patch and older students took part in a Hallowfest event complete with costumes, games and dancing! - Nancy Rothgerber; nancyrothgerber@gmail.com.



J.O. Wilson students enjoy preparing for Halloween.



Payne students demonstrate new incentive program, ROAR.

on and hear from some of the D.C. United players.

Police Band assist Payne Kick Off its Incentive program

At Payne the students R.O.A.R loud and clear: They remember to show respect, are on task at all times, have an a+ attitude, and are responsible. The Police Band along with students danced and bounced to the beat and were motivated to be positive student role models everyday. The students at Payne are encouraged to use

Tyler Elementary PTA Holding Winter Fest, Dec. 5

The Tyler Elementary PTA has discovered a treasure trove of talent among its ranks this fall. The engaged, active, membership has found answers to the question "How can I help?" and "What can I contribute?" Parents and teachers are bringing their talents to the table in what has been an incredible start to the academic year.

The chair of the Tyler fundrais-

ing committee, Daniel Traster, is using his culinary skills to raise money for the PTA by making hundreds of chocolate truffles to sell in December at the Tyler Winter Festival (Dec. 5 - 3-6p.m.)

Sarah McPhie and Linsey Silver, both graphic designers, created a new school logo for the website, school stationery, and the new Tyler T-shirts. The T-shirts were offered in yellow and blue and are an acceptable form of the school uniform. T-shirt sales generated enough revenue to buy a T-shirt for every student in the school regardless of their ability to purchase one. Face-painter extraordinaire, Adondra Woods, will be painting bright faces at the Winter Festival.

Erika Lehman, parent of a Tyler

second grader, is a project manager for a real estate management company and has used her skills in project coordination to help get approvals for work and to bring in recycled furniture. Erika also looks forward to using over 15 years of school design work as a member of the SIT (School Improvement Team) as Tyler heads towards a proposed summer renovation.

No discussion of talented Tyler parents would be complete without mention of Anya and Steve Sattler, the coordinators of the Tyler Outdoor Classroom Project. Anya and Steve are using their backgrounds in landscape architecture and urban planning to coordinate grant funds, contractors, and the ongoing permit process. If you have not seen the new early childhood playground that was just installed, stop by to check it out because it is a beautiful and creative playground with rocks, climbing structures, planting areas and a pond. Caterina Roman, urban planning professional, used her grant writing talents to secure the majority of the funding for this unbelievable project. - Catherine Jouet; cjouet@gmail.com



Phase II of the Outdoor Classroom Project at Tyler, as seen from the third floor window.

Maury Elementary Maury's New Look

Thanks to Leslie Nayman of Nayman Design, Maury has a cool new logo! This design, both colorful and clean, speaks to the growth of our diverse students, and we couldn't be happier with it. Come by the school to see it painted on our walls in mu-



Maury first grader Anaya's picture entitled "The City People Love."

rals by local artist Kim Frieze! Thank you to Duron Paints on Barracks Row for supplying the paint!

ANC 6A A/V Grant

Brittany May, Maury's full-time music teacher, submitted a grant for audio/visual equipment to improve the sound quality of the schools performances and events. ANC 6A came through with a whopping \$3,500 grant for speakers, monitors, and such so we can hear what the children sing and play. Thank you, ANC 6A commissioners!

Early Childhood Program

Maury hosted a panel in Nov. to introduce a new Creative Curriculum assessment program and is fortunate to have been chosen to pilot this important initiative. The event was geared toward Preschool and Pre-K parents who wanted to learn more about the early childhood program. Diane Trister Dodge, the founder of Teaching Strategies (who developed Creative Curriculum) as well as Miriam Calderon, Director of Early Childhood Programs, was part of the distinguished panel.

Children and Seniors Collaborate

Maury Elementary held a student art contest, from preschool to 5th, with the theme of "Sharing in DC." A winning drawing from each grade was selected by a jury of members from Capitol Hill Village, a community of seniors, who used a variety of criteria to judge the works. The winning drawings have been made into note cards – sweet, colorful, detailed, showing the children's perspective on what sharing in DC means to them. These gift-packaged cards will be available for purchase at your favorite Hill retailers – Frager's, Pawticulars, Stitch, Marvelous Market, Groovyland, and The Family Room. The Maury family is so happy to be in this wonderful community – thank you.

Happy holidays, and have a healthy and prosperous 2010, Capitol Hill! -Heather Schoell. Maury Elementary, Carolyne Albert-Garvey, Principal. 1250 Constitution Ave. NE. Come by any time. 202-698-3838 or www.mau-ryelementary.com.

St. Anselm's Class of 2010 Honored in National Merit

At St. Anselm's Abbey School, 12 members of the Class of 2010 have been honored in this year's National Merit recognition programs. This represents more than one-third of the 32-man senior class.

Students Matthew Bollinger, Robert Cobb and Benjamin Moniz have been selected as National Merit Semifinalists for scoring in the top 1 percent of over 1.5 million high school seniors nationwide who took last year's Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The following students have been recognized as National Merit commended students, scoring in the top 3 percent: Jonathan Aguilera-Titus, Branden Alegbeleye, Jeremy Cockerham, Jose Gutierrez, James Keegan, Neil Sood and Liam Walsh-Mellett. Branden Alegbeleye was also named a semifinalist in the National Achievement Scholarship Program, while Solomon Brown and James Mwombela have been named commended students. The National Achievement program is administered by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation and honors outstanding Black American high school students. Congratulations to all the honorees! - E.V. Downey, 202-269-2379. www.saintanselms.org; admissions@saintanselms.org. ★



Eight of the 12 St. Anselm's Abbey School seniors who were honored by the National Merit program this fall. Back row: Branden Alegbeleye, Benjamin Moniz, Jonathan Aguilera-Titus, Matthew Bollinger. Front row: Neil Sood, Liam Walsh-Mellett, Jose Gutierrez and James Keegan. Not pictured: Solomon Brown, Robert Cobb, Jeremy Cockerham, James Mwombela.

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OPEN HOUSE / INFORMATION SESSIONS AT THE SCHOOL ON THE FOLLOWING THURSDAYS:
• January 14th, 2010 from 9:30-10:30 am
• February 25th, 2010 from 9:30-10:30 am
• March 11th, 2010 from 9:30-10:30 am
• April 15th, 2010 from 9:30-10:30 am

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