



The Independent Mind

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“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”

- John Dewey

What is this ‘Clear Spring thing’ all about anyway?

I don’t know what your specific goals are for your own children, but if you are anything like my parents, it involved bringing happy, healthy humans into the world who could contribute to society and generally make the world better by their presence. I now recognize what a gift this was to me and how it shaped many of the choices I have made in my journey through life. It is also what drew to me to Clear Spring many years ago and has continually pulled me back after each foray into the ‘real world’.

What this tiny school-in-the-woods offers is a safe place to play, grow, explore and become. This idea of becoming is a powerful one, which means ‘to bring into existence’. Who are these young humans who grace us with their presence and who will they become? The processes of growth are amazing to observe and so many unintended influences make a mark on the development of a child. Learning ought to be joyful; it ought to involve discovery and it ought to connect the child to those around them. We learn and grow in communion with others. We socially construct our understanding of the world through relationships and risk taking. We build who we are, one interaction at a time.

The CSS curriculum offers those obvious skills of school such as reading, writing, math and science and adds to them the more complex skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and character. We call these the 5Cs. Through play, project-based learning, and discovery-centered curriculum students at CSS are immersed into worlds that are rich in content and connect to their own individual and family experience. As a class, students go places, see what is happening and connect it back to the classroom learning. In the higher grades they have saved, earned and budgeted the money to travel. When they go camping, they take their science, math and language arts with them. They learn about the rocks, rivers and landscape of the campground. They hike on trails and learn to use field guides, then they draw and journal, based on the activities of day. They work together to put up tents, make a campfire, and cook their meals. It is all these activities taken together that make up the CSS program and it is their own reflection on these activities and the active participation of the students that will enable them to continue to be lifelong learners who understand their place in the world and engage actively in making it a better place for everyone.

As has oft been quoted of late: We are all in this together.

Your socially-distant, yet ever-present
Head of School,
Jessica



Classroom Connections



Rigdon Irvin's Lower Elementary Students (above) and Ginny Garber's Upper Elementary Students (below)

Ginni's Upper Elementary class has been learning about Arkansas this spring, focusing on history, geography, geology, trees, flora and fauna. Even though we were unable to take our scheduled trip the the class had a great time studying the world around them in our own town. In addition to Arkansas studies, we've also been working closely with our beehives, assembling new hives, checking on existing ones, and studying bee behavior and anatomy. Now with our distance-learning format, we continue to have daily lessons, discussions, and videos, with the aim of staying as connected as possible during this time.



Chris notes that the Lower Middle student's camping trip was a wonderful example of what experiential learning can bring to fruition. Students took on new leadership roles as the more seasoned campers helping the younger students who were nervous about being away from home. Students also worked with world-renowned botanist Steven Foster, who led a nature hike around Lake Leatherwood.

We also created works for the school's "World Fair" from our studies of Asia. Students learned about the Silk Road and how it brought different cultures together and then they chose a country for their project which included the culture, customs and how geography might impact how they live. When the students at Clear Spring School heard about the difficult time children in Lanxi City were having as they were held up in their home for months due to Covid-19, they decided to write poems and notes of encouragement. A week after their tender letters of support reached their destination in China, they found out that their own classes were to be canceled for the same reason. Their works were published widely across China by China's Poetry Society, and were even featured by the national newspaper, *People's Daily*. A few days later, the children in the Shiyan kindergarten and Jiaogong kindergarten of Lanxi City, Zhejiang Province, wrote their own poems and painted posters to encourage their new friends across the globe and relay things they had learned from their months of quarantine experience. One of those posters is shown above.

The class also joined with the UofA's robotics department to begin our course on engineering and robotics. The robotics team gave a demonstration on the space rover robot they had been developing and even let the class take the controls and drive the robot around. We then worked on our own engineering projects provided to us by the robotics team.

Rigdon notes that the Lower Elementary hit the ground running after the Winter Break. 2020 brought about changes in our building. As we now have the entire space as our classroom, we set it up into several stations including a: Reading Loft & Library, Creative Center, Dramatic Play Area, Store, and substations for learning through building and creating. These stations are designed and allow for students to use their critical thinking skills, communication with one another, creativity, collaboration and our character skills. Our Store station offers the opportunity to teach the students about money, commerce, and budgeting. I have been reading *The Boxcar Children* series and it has become one of their favorite times of the day with them begging for "just one more chapter, please!!!"



Chris Barner's Lower Middle Class holding their correspondence with children in Lanxi City. Elementary students are in the front sending peace.



The Upper Middle School students with teachers Zach Trent and Heather Hughes (right).



This year has been wonderful for the Upper Middle class. We have learned about macroinvertebrates and how to scientifically observe and caretake river ways. During the block we collected samples, canoed the Buffalo River, and camped. The students had a blast and learned via field work and hands-on experience. We then had an Independent Study block where students were given the opportunity to pursue their own interests. Everything from cooking, to clothing, to animatronics were represented. The ability to self guide their own learning helped empower the students to really flex their initiative and perseverance as they faced the joys and challenges of their own field of study. We used D&D as a vehicle for learning math and the students loved it. They were able to create their own characters and test their math skills in simulations through a D&D lens.

This semester the High School delved into their Independent Studies block and honed their public speaking skills. The students developed websites, created 3-D art, wrote stories, and created visual art and costumes. Their endeavors were presented during an event that they planned and hosted in early February.

They continue their studies in Health, Wisdom of the Hands, French, and Music. Through Health class, they learned about different types of diets and the value of juicing and micro-greens. They worked on building Shaker stools during their time in Wisdom of the Hands and expanded their vocabulary in French. This semester saw the addition of weekly art class with Dawn Ward, where they learned bookmaking in anticipation of their upcoming (and ultimately cancelled) trip to Washington DC.



High School students with teacher Sam Hutchinson

APT NEWS

Last Fall APT hosted a clothing swap for our families. We had lots of clothing donated in children and adult sizes. We had a great variety! We enjoyed snacks, tried on clothes, and everyone was able to stock-up on some clothes before winter came rolling in. All the leftover clothing was donated to The Purple Flower, a local nonprofit for domestic violence and sexual assault, and to our local thrift stores. We also enjoyed “Pasta at the Poe” for an evening of all things pasta! Our APT parents made some wonderful dishes and for \$5 a person you could eat all the pasta, salad, and bread you wanted. It was a great fundraiser and a great night to be had! Parents had the chance to see our newest renovations at the POE and enjoy the company of our CSS staff, families, and friends.



Phyllis Poe Hands-On Learning Center offers new classrooms for students

Although classes started at the POE last fall the Wisdom of the Hands Woodshop and the Art Studio had yet to be renovated. The Woodshop officially moved its equipment into the new facility over the Winter Break. The art room was finished in December and all parts of the POE were active spaces before the COVID-19 crisis. Even during the crisis the enrichment teachers have reached out to students, providing online instruction for projects related to their studios and Doug Stowe produced some take-home wood-working kits.



Doug with Elementary students showing their wooden puzzle projects on the left and the Kindergarten students show off their clocks in the new woodshop (above).



Carmen Rose is posting Spanish and Cooking projects for students as we all try to adjust to distance learning. Pictured on the left is students working on their Spanish pronunciation and on the right is the puppet theater in action where Carmen's class put on a puppet show for the school in Spanish called *Invierno Mágico* - "Magic winter". The performance was excelente!

Dawn Ward, with a grant from the Arkansas Arts Council has been Clear Spring's Artist in Residence this year. Ward notes that "Students have been working on their Discovery Books all year, creating a variety of artworks using different media to include in their final work." The grant has expanded our art programming this year and Ward is currently working to help the students complete the binding of their books so that they can be finished at home if needed. The student's learned printmaking, paper marbling, collage, binding techniques, watercolor processes and even created 3D pop-ups for their books.



Dawn Ward with Kindergarten class making robot collages



Upper Middle students carving their lino-lem blocks for their "Discovery Books"

POE continued . . .

Victoria Canter is posting healthy eating tips on the shared Facebook page to continue providing her Health Class for the students.



Lower Middle student's making vege treats in Victoria's Health Class in the kitchen at the POE.

Mark Hughes (pictured on right) who has been busy making masks with the help of Steve Beacham and other volunteers, (2000 and counting)



ing) took the time to post

a video teaching students how to make a mask at home using their recently aquired sewing skills. Here's the YouTube link <https://youtu.be/yYYPM-flXnKc> Mark also taught our students to make berets - see Samuel and Willow showing off their chapeaus (left).



Seniors give back to the community with self-directed projects that reflect our “Hands-On, Hearts-Engaged” philosophy.



Hawk Slane, Clear Spring Senior, working to produce mask filters and ear reliefs.

Hawk Slane has been 3D printing covid resistant filter attachments for the 3M paint respirators with bayonet clips. The main material being PLA, a renewable thermoplastic and the filters being 2 layers of surgical sterilization wrap made to prevent any harmful particles. Slane notes that although they cannot test until they have a respirator they “will be printing ear reliefs for any basic mask”.



Early stages of the build and Steven pictured in his Eagle Scout uniform to the right.



Steven Rivers had a vision for an outdoor classroom at Clear Spring and conducted a “Go Fund” me campaign to raise the money last summer and began building. The classroom was a project that Steven did for Eagle Scouts and he did the work himself with a little help from his Mom & Dad. The classroom is nestled in the corner of the playground for students to use. The school hopes to add some educational programming to use the facility in the fall.

Clear Spring Fling Auction 2020

Highlights from The Director of Development, Dawn Ward

This year's auction was held at the Holiday Island Ballroom with an amazing crowd and lots of fun for all. The food was outstanding, catered by our own Jane Tucker/Cateriad, and the music was provided by DJ Testube. There was dancing and shopping, bidding and visiting and the feedback from the attendees was that it was a wonderful event. So many people made this event possible and I want to thank everyone!

First our Fundraising Auction Team; Steve Beacham, Pam Greenway, Jane Tucker, Peggy Pot, Carrie Brooks, Stephanie Shock, Kelly McDounough, Chris Ritthaler and Dawn Ward. The team did all the publicity, mailings, gathered donations and set up the

space. Additionally I would like to thank the parents and volunteers who helped everyone during the silent auction and later helped us pack items, put up tables and chairs and clean the space so well that the team did not have to return the next day. A big thank you to everyone who helped make this a success!



Jessica FitzPatrick & Steve Beacham making announcements



CSS Staff: Pam, Stephanie, Jeremy, Carrie, Jessica and Carmen have fun with the photo booth (above) and left is pictured Doug Stowe, talking with Steve Beachman and Mark Hughes.

Peggy Pot and Victoria Canter with big smiles!



Lots of familiar faces in the crowd and lots of smiles too.

Congratulations! Clear Spring 2020 Graduates

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Devon Walls



Steven Rivers

*“The important thing is not to stop questioning.”
– Albert Einstein*



Hawk Slane

River Studies Program

with Juanita Crider

River studies focused specifically on the “health” of our local streams and rivers. It was a comprehensive curriculum that was co-funded from The Nature Conservancy and Kings River Watershed Partnership. The course offered hands-on activities including bug kits to identify invertebrates that can indicate the health of our waterways, and water testing sampling to look for potential pollutants or changes in water quality.



High School students learning to test samples



Left - Right: Lucky, Genesis, Lila, Garrett, Arah, Sam, Benni, Angela and Juanita

We assessed the physical, chemical, and biological parameters of Mill Branch Creek and multiple locations on the Kings River. The physical component taught students how to subjectively evaluate each habitat and riparian zone. The biological assessment taught students how to collect macroinvertebrates

and identify if the species were tolerant, sensitive, or somewhat sensitive to pollution. The results gave students a general indication to how clean or unclean the water was. Lastly, we collected water samples from each location and tested it chemically with our Lamont Water Testing Kit. Once all three assessments were complete, the students had a holistic view of the water quality at each specific location. They were able to express their scientific insight and findings to each other. In preparation for our presentation for the Kings River Watershed partnership annual meeting,

both classes spent a week practicing public speaking activities and games to help them become more confident in their public speaking skills.



HS students discussing findings (left) students collecting samples (lower and upper right)





We analyzed our audience and learned about voice, nonverbals, and content within a presentation. The CSS High School class created a google slide presentation of their data and findings. Each student was responsible for two written slides and two visuals.

Upper Middle School students learning to test samples in the field



Left - Right: Heather, Logan, Henry, Mike, Bailey, Olivia, Silas, Angel, and Alexi



Upper Middle students collecting samples

Macroinvertebrate Sonnet

- A - Macroinvertebrates are what we found.
- B - Mayflies are sensitive to pollution!
- A - Water Pennies can be copper and round.
- B - Finding them means there is a solution.
- C - The crawfish pinchers are so masculine.
- D - Damselflies can be confused with Mayflies.
- C - Crawfish carry young on their abdomen.
- D - It would be a shame if one of them dies.
- E - Yes indeed, some rivers are polluted.
- F - Leeches are tolerant and will ravage.
- E - With macros, rivers will be well-suited.
- F - Slimy leeches suck blood and some scavenge.
- G - Though this world has hardly no solutions.
- G - KINGS RIVER has few signs of pollution.

The CSS Middle School class created a sonnet about macroinvertebrates. They learned about the pattern of a sonnet, how each line has to have ten syllables, and then how to recite properly using iambic pentameter. Each student wrote two lines of the sonnet, and had to work cooperatively with a partner and the group as a whole, to help integrate content and rhyming schemes.

Jessica FitzPatrick, Head of School commented on the curriculum, “Students were really energized and excited about their findings and loved the hands-on experience. This is what the Clear Spring model is all about.”



Upper Middle students collecting samples and recording data

Tax Deductible Donation Form

Clear Spring School is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We rely upon the financial support of individual and corporate contributions in order to continue providing the quality education we have been known for since 1974. If you or someone you know is interested in contributing to Clear Spring School, please complete the form or call us at (479) 253-7888. Tax Donation Letters are available.

Please visit www.clearspringschool.org.

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