

Main Line Classical Academy  
Newsletter  
February, 2018

**English, Kindergarten, 1st, & 2nd Grade - Frank Chilbert**

The students have been working very hard in English the month of February. On top of preparing for the next poetry night, the Kindergarten and 1st grade students performed two poems at our last field trip. They performed “The Tyger” by William Blake and “The Lord Will Provide” by William Cowper. Their appreciation for poetics increases daily as we continue to learn the tools of poetic analysis. Each grade is also progressing well in their respective penmanship skills and phonics rules. The 1st grade is about to finish their first volume of “A is for Apple” textbook and the 2nd graders are continuing to engage in advance punctuation and grammar rules in their “B is for Bear” textbook such as action and linking verbs as well as common and proper nouns.

We have continued reading some wonderful Greek myths in Kindergarten English class such as Apollo and Daphne, Echo and Narcissus, the birth of Pan, and the death of Asclepius. During these stories, we have great conversations about early Greek inventions like the Panpipe, the lyre, and the Greek symbol of medicine. In first grade, we have followed Stuart Little as he searches the countryside for his long lost friend, Margalo. We have also learned very much about spiders and the art of web-making in 2nd grade English class while reading “Charlotte’s Web.”

*Kindergarten:*

Most Recent Poem:

“The Cow” by Robert Louis Stevenson

Stories:

Greek Myths

*1st Grade*

Most Recent Poem:

“There is Only But One May in the Year” by Christina Rossetti

Stories:

“Stuart Little” by E.B. White

*2nd Grade:*

Most Recent Poem:

“Weariness” by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Stories:

“Charlotte’s Web” by E.B. White

## English, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - William Walter

When the third graders read and study poetry, their instruction involves three general things: first, the students learn the content and theme of the poetry; they also learn about poetics and figures of speech, such as meter, rhyme, metaphor, synecdoche, etc.; and third, they learn the connection between the two. This week, the third grade class went over two poems about birds, one of which was titled “The Mournful Linnets.” In this poem by Christina Rossetti, two linnets mourn the destruction of their nest, saying “Too late to build, too sad to sing.” Besides learning what a linnet is (a small bird found in England—often called a finch), the children discussed the theme of what cruelty can do to others. In the poem, boys came round the nest and just for fun, crushed the eggs “so neatly laid.” Just a small, thoughtless action had so many negative consequences! In their discussion, the students all agreed that cruelty in the name of fun, is always wrong, toward people as well as toward animals. Made up of only two four-line stanzas, Christina Rossetti’s short, simple poem shows the poet’s skillful crafting of words to communicate a message. Just in the end of the poem, there is a caesura—a division in the middle of a line, that imitates the sound of a birdcall. The word “too” is repeated in an isocolon (a line or phrase with balanced structure) that emphasizes the sadness of the birds’ situation. All of the students, it seemed, were greatly affected by Rossetti’s moving work.

The fourth graders just finished writing a narrative essay on a topic of their own choice. The narrative essay, or personal essay, involves a chronological account used to communicate a message or observation about life. Their assignment was to relate a personal experience using the “3D’s” to make their writing “three-dimensional”: detail, dialog and description. However, the instructions were further specified: they are not just to add the 3D’s to make their composition longer or include it just “for decoration.” Too often, even in what passes for professional writing, you will find gratuitous description with alluring adjectives that come off unnatural and sometimes even pretentious. I then gave them an example of the same story told three times, the first using no detail: “A man came into a grocery store and robbed it.” The students all agreed that was a “lousy” narrative. The second went like this: “I was shopping at the Acme the other day, when I heard a shout at the front of the store. It was a man dressed in an army jacket, with a stocking over his head. He said, “Hand over the cash . . .” The students agreed the second story was much better. Then came the third story: “I was in the Acme the other day, shopping for canned peas, and I was trying to decide between the generic brand and Green Giant. I then spied the sodium content of the generic brand and thought, ‘If the salt does not kill me, my doctor will.’ As I was carefully making my selection, I heard a shout in the front of the store. It was a man dressed in an army jacket, which had a big oil stain on the pocket. I thought to myself, ‘I bet my mother could get that stain out...’ The robber had a stocking over his head—silky smooth and white, sort of the kind of stocking my Italian grandmother used to wear on Easter Sunday.” The third telling of the account illustrates the dangers of indiscriminate detail

and description. The master essayists, such as E. B. White and George Orwell, show in their personal narratives the judicious use of the 3D's; as White wrote in his *Elements of style: A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary words*. Every detail should serve a function and that is to help communicate the central idea.

This month the sixth graders read Chaucer's "Nun's Priest Tale" (translated into modern English). It is a hilarious story about two chickens arguing about the significance of dreams. The idea of a rooster arguing with a hen, each using quotations from various ancient authors to bolster their side of the argument, is silly indeed. The story, however, is not merely an exhibition of the ridiculous to get a laugh. It is a parody of heroic tales such as the Iliad and the Odyssey, or a mock epic in which insignificant events are given lofty treatment with a comic effect. The rooster, Chanticleer is hilariously described as a knight: "His comb was redder than fine coral and was turreted like a castle wall. His bill was jet black and shiny. His legs and his toes were as blue as the sky. His nails were lily white, and his feathers were like burnished gold." Also, the work satirizes Medieval scholastics who were wont to argue minutiae by citing the authority of classical texts. Armed with that knowledge the students were able to enjoy the work for all it was worth. One student said he loved it. It's great to have a 14th-century text continue to speak to us today!

### **History, Kindergarten & 1st Grade, Early American History - Frank Chilbert**

In history class, the students have continued to follow the American Patriots into battle against the British Redcoats. Most recently, we have been learning the stories of the earliest battles that took place in the Massachusetts colony in and around the city of Boston. Some of these include the battles of Lexington and Concord, the battle of Bunker Hill, the Capture of Fort Ticonderoga, and the Great Siege of Boston. Many of these gave victories gave great confidence to the American soldiers, but there is still a lot of trouble brewing for this lively American militia. After the British leave Boston, they make their way for New York. This movement south will turn the tables of fortune for the war. Our young historians will soon watch while the American Continental Army begins to learn the virtue of humility and the power of discipline.

## 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Grade, Ancient Greek History - Frank Chilbert



During the month of February, the 2nd-4th grade historians evaluated the effectiveness of Athenian Democracy. Although the tyrannies (ruled by one) and oligarchies (ruled by a few) of early Greece provided quick and decisive political action, they also came with a great deal of risk. What if a terrible tyrant came into power? What hope would the citizens have for liberty? What we have find in democracy is very different in its strengths and weaknesses. Democracy offers a slow, but rather low risk version of government. Athenian Democracy helped protect itself from the need to bow to a single ruler. If someone became too powerful, the Ancient Greeks had a regimented process called “ostracism” in which they were exiled from the city for 10 years. Be sure to ask your children about the Ostracism game we played in class!

After learning about early Athenian Democracy, we have begun watching the Athenians defend it with their lives against a great empire. The Persian Wars highlight a time of heroic virtue for Athens as well as Sparta. These city-states refused to give up their political autonomy and took a stand against an army 12 times their size. We will continue to watch as Emperor Xerxes takes up his father’s mission to add Athens to its list of obedient subjects. There are many incredible battles to discuss in the near future.

## History, 5th & 6th Grade - Graham Gormley

As we began to delve into Sparta's constitution and the life of Lycurgus according to Plutarch this month, I began reflecting on the chasm between that of which we learn through the accounts of others and that which we directly experience for ourselves. Sparta was an unbelievably brutal regime, even in her best light, yet somehow, either despite that or in certain ways because of it, we cannot help but notice an excellence in the character of the men she produced. The notion of a finely-tuned warrior class living in a city-turned-war-camp, hardly nourished by blood soup, enduring extreme physical pain for sport, seeking death in combat as the highest honor, etc. is so far removed from our daily life that it can only seem like pure fantasy to the children. It often seems so to me. Yet, these were *actual* people, who *actually* lived this way. So how could one come to consider it, not as a product of some historian's

fancy, but as an actual way of life? I thought we would try to practice developing our own versions of something resembling the Spartan notion of virtue - or at least a domesticated, somewhat tamer version of it. As you may have divined from the assignment I sent home, I'm hoping the boys will find how difficult it is to develop even a small measure of a minor attribute of the Spartans, such as laconic speech, moderation in diet, obeying orders, etc. If they find even that onerous - which I suspect they will - then perhaps they'll at least get a sense of how far one would have to go to create an entire city of men who've developed such habits to the fullest extent.

In contrast to Sparta, we began looking at the constitution of Athens. We opened with the oft-repeated notion that she was a *laissez faire*, liberal democracy of the ancient world, but the boys are beginning to see that she was actually something quite different. If one considers how prevalent (because cheap) slavery was, the unenviable plight of women, and the notable size of resident merchants without political rights contrasted against the male-citizen class generally dominated by those with the wealth to acquire weapons, one begins to see that Athens, at her height, may have appeared as an aristocracy more than a democracy from certain angles. Still, the conventional understanding is not entirely without warrant. Athens was surely the least illiberal of the ancient Greek polities.

Our discussion of the different types and aspects of the two regimes, along with our continued work on Homer's *Iliad*, has taken a bit longer than anticipated. The children tend to have very thoughtful, philosophical questions for their age which are worth discussing. For example, this week, having read of Draco's harsh laws, we wondered what a good lawmaker should do if laws are failing and the smallest infractions already have the greatest penalty. One can only be put to death so many times... Is there a way to compel people to be good through laws? If so, what laws? If not, then is there some other way to produce good citizens? Etc.

I look forward to finally beginning the Persian Wars next month and, from there, we'll only be a small step away from the Peloponnesian Wars.

## Math, Kindergarten - Yulia Shpilman



Here is a brief look into what we did in February in Kindergarten math (the structure of our classes remains similar from previous months):

1. **Counting routine** - this month, we have continued to use base 10 blocks to solidify our understanding of two-digit numbers, and we have started exploring 3-digit numbers as well. Kindergarteners love big numbers, so they're very excited to learn to name and write numbers such as 320 or 873.
2. **Arithmetic practice** - We are continuing our arithmetic practice on a daily basis, using manipulatives and games such as Tiny Polka Dots, 1-2-3 peek and see, Splat and others. The goal for the rest of the year is to keep encouraging the students to apply the knowledge that they've already gained to complete addition and subtraction problems and sanity check their answers.
3. **Special topics** -
  - a. Our special topic this month has been attributes of objects, looking for which object doesn't belong and explaining why (the kids are super creative at this) and sorting objects into groups in various ways. We will continue exploring and sorting sets of objects and get acquainted with Venn diagrams in the next couple of weeks.
  - b. Our other special topic that we started this month and will continue to explore for the rest of the year is the calendar. So far, we've covered some basic facts such as number of days in the week, in the year, in each month. We are also learning to write the date in mm/dd/yy format. We also started to explore the structure of

the calendar. The kids were fascinated to learn, for example, that their birthdays fall on a different day of the week each year.

4. **Game time** - We continue to play our favorite games of Swish, Blink, Memory, Turbocount, Where is the penguin hiding, and others. One game we've added to our repertoire this month is Pig 10, which is another great game to practice addition within 20 and to solidify the students' knowledge of pairs that make 10.

In March, we will continue our focus on subtraction and will indeed start working on 2-digit addition, as well as solidify our understanding of 3-digit numbers. We will continue to do some work in set theory that we started in February. We will also continue to explore the calendar.

### **Math, 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th Grade - Sasha Fradkin**

The first grade math class spent the month of February exploring the topic of measurement. First, we spent some time measuring length. The students had fun measuring the same objects using different units of length such as snap cubes, paper clips, (unsharpened) pencils, and their feet! We also discussed why it is important to have standard units of length as well as different units of length and read some stories illustrating what could go wrong when everyone has their own units. After length, we moved on to measuring weight. The students solved some fun and tricky problems involving balance scales. We concluded the unit by discussing what other types of things people measure and came up with a list that included temperature, time, volume, and speed.

Throughout the month of February, the second graders continued exploring addition strategies in math class. They first practiced identifying when pairs of numbers add up to 100, and then to other multiples of 10. Then they solved many problems and puzzles that involved adding more than two numbers at a time. For example, if one is solving  $36+82+64$ , if one notices that  $36+64=100$  then the answer of 182 pops out right away. Similarly, if we are computing the sum  $17+48+52+83$ , if we notice that  $48+52=100$  and  $17+83=100$ , we can rearrange the order in which we add the numbers and quickly obtain the answer of 200. The second grade class particularly impressed me when after computing  $1+2+3+\dots+8+10=55$  together, they immediately saw the answer to  $11+12+\dots+19+20$  (quicker than I did!) by taking out  $1+2+\dots+9+10$  and noticing that what remained was 10 tens, which is 100.

In the third grade math class, the month of February was devoted to learning about the distributive property. The main focus was on exploring how one can use the property to help with certain computations. The students quickly became comfortable with breaking up  $18 \times 7$  into  $10 \times 7$  and  $8 \times 7$  and then adding the partial products. However, they had a much harder time seeing how to use the distributive property in the other direction. For example, in order to compute how much money I have if I have 19 quarters and 25 pennies, it is much more work to figure out  $19 \times 25$  and then add 25 than just notice that 25 pennies gives us another quarter and

so the answer is 20x25 cents or \$5.00. Similarly, when we're computing  $17 \times 8 + 17 \times 12$ , we want to simplify our computation by using the distributive property and rewriting the computation as  $17 \times 20$ .

During the month of February, the fourth grade math class was mostly spent on exploring some concepts in geometry. The first half of the unit was devoted to the study of angles. Students learned to measure and draw angles using a protractor. They also discovered that the degrees of the angles in a triangle add up to 180 and solved problems where they had to use this fact. The second half of the unit was devoted to the study of symmetry. Students learned about reflection and rotational symmetry and worked on some tricky problems involving both. For example, they classified all the letters in the English alphabet according to the types of symmetries that they had.

### **Math, 5th & 6th Grade - Tatiana Ter-Saakov**

Time to learn lots of new terms as the 5th and 6th graders starts to work on the topic of statistics. We go through many problems and puzzles, first to memorize the new vocabulary, then to compare the means, medians and modes of particular sets, with quite surprising results: for example, sets that look quite alike may have very different median and mean. In addition, Dr. Fradkin introduced students to a topic with deceptively simple name of "Counting." However, getting precisely correct answers proved harder than it seemed. We are counting number of elements in sets that are too large to explicitly write out, and applying subtraction correctly requires certain skill.

### **Science, Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd & 3rd Grade - Tatiana Ter-Saakov**

Students in K-1st and 2nd-3rd grades were studying the nature of sound. We conducted quite a few experiments, exploring how well can sound travel through various materials. One of the experiments was listening to the same timer just held in the air, or wrapped in soft jacket and covered with a pillow, or submerged in water in a ziplock bag. For more precise results in the last version probably we should have put our heads in water as well, but unfortunately the container was not big enough. If you take your child to the pool, and ever get a chance to try a similar experiment there - please share the results with us!

### **Science, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Tatiana Ter-Saakov**

For the 4th-6th graders, the month of February started with conversation about gravity. Using the formula, students calculated the force of gravity between two birds sitting on the bird feeder



under our windows. We had to use a calculator to get to the answer. Even though 4th graders may not be experienced with decimals yet, even they were convinced the force is so small we do not feel it. However, gravity force between one of the birds and the Earth is much more significant, due to the enormous weight of the Earth.

Our next topic was the force of a stretched spring or elastic material. Students spent a few lessons conducting a lab on Hooke's law, and processing the results. It required subtracting fractions in large quantities, so good math skills proved very helpful. Despite using very simple equipment, and hand measuring with a ruler, students were able to confirm the Hooke's law in about two-thirds of cases.

We are going to start March with conversation about energy, then move on to optics.

### **Robotics, Computer Programing - Tatiana Ter-Saakov**

Students continue their work on programming the robot, in pairs or individually. Each mission requires the robot to move around pre-set field to specific destination point, accomplish a certain task, and return to the base. Most of groups already created necessary attachments, which will act as a "hand" in their missions. Now most groups are working hard on moving the robot to the desired place on the field with reliable consistency. Everyone started with using pure odometry, and very soon students discovered that the longer path the robot needs to cover - the less accuracy it demonstrates. So students are in a process of incorporating sensors in their work. Some are using the ultrasonic sensor to follow the wall, some are working on correctly using the gyro sensor to measure the turns, some are positioning the robot against black lines on the mat with the help of color sensor. The programming aspect here is that using sensors requires if-operators and loops, certainly a big leap forward for the students!

## French - Kindergarten - Betty d'Herve



This month, we started to describe the weather of the day. We continued our routine about the date and numbers. We are very close to 100 counting one by one (several times we counted past 90). We played more memory games with new vocabulary (foods, animals...) and learned two new songs:

- Mon petit oiseau (entirely) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4aoJTogyQ4>
- Ah vous dirai-je maman (tune of twinkle twinkle little star)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VINThOqPmqo>

We also reviewed the song “Les Champs Elysées”. We continued to work in our book “Mes copains et moi” and we made many sentences using several adjectives (colors and numbers) in one nominal group. We described pictures answering the question “Combien de/d’ ... il y a?” (How many ... are there?). We continued to read the color in French and we also worked on the French alphabet .

Vocabulary:

veut (wants)

va (goes)

mange (eats)

des bananes (bananas)

une fille (a girl)

un garçon (a boy)

## French, 1st Grade & 2nd Grade - Betty d'Herve

This month, we continued our routine about the date and numbers, counting 2 by 2 or 5 by 5. We reviewed the French national anthem “La Marseillaise” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTLBYoUy6RM>) and “Les Champs Elysées”. We learned the traditional French songs :

- “En passant par la Lorraine” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CotZfnKGWHM>)

- the first verse of the song “Un jardin extraordinaire” (Charles Trénet, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7H57p1HNbY> ).

We conjugated the irregular verb “vouloir” and studied its “special” construction following by infinitive. We reviewed the infinitive form of all the verbs we studied so far. We learned the days of the week as well as the time of the day and combined these two elements. We answered to the question “qui” (who).

Vocabulary:

vouloir (to want)

lundi (Monday)

mardi (Tuesday)

mercredi (Wednesday)

jeudi (Thursday)

vendredi (Friday)

samedi (Saturday)

dimanche (Sunday)

ce matin (this morning)

cet après-midi (this afternoon)

ce soir (this evening)

lundi matin (Monday morning)

lundi après-midi (Monday afternoon)

lundi soir (Monday evening)

au cinéma (at the movie theater)

le/un film (the/a movie)

## **French, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Betty d’Herve**

This month, we continued our routine about the date and numbers, counting by 2s or 5s. We reached 500 counting like this. We finished to study Jean de la Fontaine’s fable: “le Corbeau et le Renard” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPkxWkrHVg8> ). The children presented it individually in front of their classmates. We reviewed the French national anthem “La Marseillaise” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTLBYoUy6RM> ) and “Les Champs Elysées”.

We learned the traditional French songs:

- “En passant par la Lorraine” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CotZfnKGWHM> )
- the first verse of the song “Un jardin extraordinaire” (Charles Trénet, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7H57p1HNbY> ).

We studied up to lesson 8 in our fifth French book (Le français en image, book E). We reviewed the conjugation of the irregular verb “aller”, of the auxiliary verb “être” and of the pronominal verbs . We learned how to make negative sentences with these verbs. We also studied more

adjectives and their different forms according to their gender and number. We continue to practice spelling with “dictée”.

Vocabulary:

Cf. homework vocabulary papers

### Latin, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Asya Sigelman

This month, in addition to continuing to build our knowledge of Latin vocabulary, we have delved into the following grammatical subjects:

- **Personal pronouns** (I, you, he/she/it and we, you, they). This also gave us occasion to review the distinctions between first, second, and third person. Pronouns are trickier in Latin than in English: they decline, so one must keep track of their number, case, and sometimes also gender. Furthermore, some of them are irregular (i.e., do not follow a predictable pattern).
- **Present active indicative of first and second conjugation verbs:** up until now, for each verb we encountered, we had practiced only two forms: 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural (e.g., *amat*, he/she/it loves and *amant*, they love). This month I introduced, for each of the verbs we have studied so far, the first and second person both singular and plural. For example:

ausculto – I listen

auscultas – you (s.) listen

auscultat – he/she/it listens

auscultamus – we listen

auscultatis – you (p.) listen

auscultant – they listen

- **Transitive vs. intransitive vs. linking verbs:** we discovered that verbs in both English and Latin fall into three function-based categories. Transitive verbs take a direct object. Linking verbs function like an equals sign (=), linking the subject with a predicate nominative or a predicate adjective. Intransitive verbs take neither a direct object nor a predicate nominative. We also discussed that in Latin a direct object would appear in the accusative case while a predicate nominative will appear in the nominative case. Finally, we discussed English verbs which are sometimes transitive and sometimes intransitive (I walk; I walk my dog); as well as verbs which are sometimes linking and sometimes transitive (I felt tired; I felt the cold wind).
- **The irregular verb sum, to be:** “to be” is the main linking verb in both English and Latin. It also happens to be highly irregular in all languages.

sum – I am

es – you (s.) are  
est – he/she/it is  
sumus – we are  
estis – you (p.) are  
sunt – they are

- **The third conjugation:** We have spent a while now practicing first conjugation (“a”) verbs and second conjugation (“ē”) verbs. In the last week we discovered the next group of Latin verbs, the “third conjugation”, which displays “i” as its theme vowel. Here are the four third conjugation verbs we know so far:
  - Scribo – I write
  - Tango – I touch
  - Dico – I speak/say
  - Lego – I read

We have also been reviewing new quotes of the week. Ask your child where the following two quotes appear and what they mean:

- ❖ Cogito, ergo sum.
- ❖ Noli me tangere!

And, of course, we have been continuing with our reading of the *Aeneid*. We are in the thick of the final battle books, and the class has split in its opinion of Aeneas and his main opponent, Turnus.

### **Music, Kindergarten - Karina Butterworth**

The kindergarteners are now playing the violin with two fingers and are able to hold the violin and bow well. Once a week they write musical dictations with combination of 4-5 notes, whole, half and quarter notes, and sometimes they do dictations orally. They are singing solfeggio cleanly using ABC symbols, all together, one by one, with or without piano support. They are also playing the piano much better and are memorizing their songs faster. They can accompany to each other now as well.

### **Music, 1st Grade - Karina Butterworth**



The first graders are very strong and even in music. They play the violins with good position and cleanly. They learn well as a group and no one needs special attention or individual explanation. The children are able to write musical dictations with combination of 5-6 notes, whole, half and quarter notes. They sing solfeggio cleanly with ABC and Do-Re-Mi symbols, all together, one by one, with or without piano support. They are also playing the piano much better and memorize their songs faster.

### **Music, 2nd & 3rd Grade - Karina Butterworth**

The new students are integrated nicely into the class. They are strong and motivated so we are ready to move forward in our program. During the violin ensemble we worked on few Suzuki songs, improved our hand position, and intonation. We have been writing musical dictations and sing solfeggio ABC and do-re-mi symbols, all together, one by one, with or without piano support. Kids had chance to perform in front of class and during field trip, we also combined few duets.

### **Music, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Karina Butterworth**

During the violin ensemble we worked on few Suzuki songs, improved our hands position, intonation and bowing. We wrote musical dictations and sang solfeggio ABC and do-re-mi symbols, all together, one by one, with or without piano support. The students had chance to perform in front of the class and during the field trip.

### **Art, Kindergarten & 1st Grade - Karina Butterworth**

In art this month, the students were working on finding simple shapes in difficult objects, learning how to build composition, and holding the pencil without too much pressure. This month, the children were working in pairs on proportional portraits of each other, learning how to make jumping origami frogs, and drawing human bodies with different motions. They made a copy of “Boys Climbing a Tree” by Francisco Goya or drew their own composition of moving people. I noticed that they learned to paint accurately with the tip of their brushes.

### **Art, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Karina Butterworth**

This month the children were working on still life with watermelon, drawing human bodies with different motions. They made a copy “Boys Climbing a Tree” by Francisco Goya or drew their own composition with moving people. They also copied one of the portraits by Goya in watercolor and Moses by Michelangelo in pencil. Also we sketched the cars in our parking lot one afternoon when the weather was nice.

### **Art History, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade - Asya Sigelman**

This month, we read Jane Langton’s *Saint Francis and the Wolf*, a retelling of a medieval legend about the saint to whose life Giotto devoted a famous cycle of frescoes. We have also been studying Giotto’s technique by looking at his cycle of frescoes from the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (ca. 1305). This cycle depicts scenes from the New Testament. In addition to giving the students a better sense for the distinctiveness of Giotto’s style, the frescoes have also gotten them acquainted with some of the most popular subjects in Western art which have inspired Great Masters across the centuries—biblical scenes such as “Flight to Egypt,” “Massacre of Innocents,” and the “Pietà.” After studying the Scrovegni frescoes, the students made a list of “what makes Giotto Giotto.” Here are some of their observations:

- (As most Medieval art) Giotto’s frescoes lack perspective: castles, temples, and city gates are the size of dollhouses.
- The background landscape (e.g., trees) looks like flat paper cutouts.
- The figures in the front look a bit like low-relief sculptures.
- All figures wear long flowing robes.
- Important figures have gold haloes and the haloes have a distinctive “Giotto” look (“ribbed” and vertical).
- Common farm animals (donkeys, sheep, cows) look realistic.
- Exotic animals (camels, lions) look unrealistic—we discussed that painters would have read about exotic animals in the Bible and heard about them from merchants or pilgrims but would never have seen them with their own eyes.
- Eyes are slightly elongated (this is unique to Giotto and prefigures Da Vinci’s *sfumato* technique).
- Most faces appear in profile.

Based on this list, the students then embarked on their own illustration project: I asked them to draw a brief cycle of frescoes *in the style of Giotto* illustrating the story of St. Francis and the Wolf. Interestingly, the students discovered that the most challenging part of the assignment is drawing without perspective—having to “unlearn” everything they have been diligently studying in Mrs. Butterworth’s Art Studio class!

### **Art History, 4th & 5th Grade - Jessica Todd Harper**

Building on our earlier introduction to the Renaissance via Brunelleschi's cathedral in Florence, his re-invention of linear perspective, and his fascination with Greco-Roman architecture as exemplified by the Pantheon in Rome, we have plunged into some of the most famous works of the Renaissance. Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper", Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" and Raphael's "School of Athens" are the works we have been studying in class. Like Brunelleschi, all of these artists use ideas from Classical Antiquity and how these ideas are blended into the Christian narrative is one of the focal points to our study. We are studying how Plato and Aristotle (as depicted in Raphael's "School of Athens") know about reality and how compositional choices in terms of how to organize an image underscore those beliefs. The children noticed right away that the figures on the Sistine Chapel have a presence and loftiness and expressiveness that is different from the static figures of the medieval period, and it is a joy to see the expressiveness of these characters conveyed in the children's copies in their blue books. We have continued to explore the purpose of art and how to talk about it in terms of its value. How do we evaluate what is depicted in these great paintings and how do we know that it is done well? By understanding the cultural and textual contexts in which they were created, we better apprehend their worth.

### **Hands-On Skills - Adam Darer**

This month in Hands-On Skills, we completed our woodworking unit where the students built wooden chairs and benches. We learned basic woodworking technique and how to use tools such as screwdrivers, wood glue, measuring tape, levelers, wood clamps, sandpaper, hammers, hand saws, and squares. I was very impressed with the teamwork the students demonstrated as they built the chairs and benches and also with their ability to see this (at times) challenging task through to completion. The students decided the chairs and benches will live outside by the playground area so they have a place to sit and eat during recess and lunch.



## Hebrew - Tal Gutman

K-1st Grade: In February, our main vocabulary topic was dedicated to birthdays, seasons and sweets, which we studied through the Israeli song "ani ohev": [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJmqmn6\\_IKw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJmqmn6_IKw)

We combined this with practicing verbal and nominal sentences such as "I like cheesecake" / "It's cold in the winter" / "I eat a lot of popsicles" and also held a vocabulary competition that the students liked a lot.

Another topic we focused on was converting nouns from singular form to plural form, which required to indicate first if the noun is masculine or feminine. We also practiced new verbs such as "run" / "sit" / "walk" / "jump" / "fly" and did this through motion games. Verbs in Hebrew also have masculine and feminine forms, so in order to develop the ability to distinguish between them each student is required to listen carefully to the instructions and decide if she or he should demonstrate the verb or not according to their gender.

We also worked intensively on reading and writing. In Kindergarten, we studied special phenomena and the connection between letters and sounds with our vocabulary. We also practiced reading with the "a" sound. In every class we practiced handwriting of the Aleph Bet letters. In 1<sup>st</sup> grade, we are now focusing on "e" and "o" sounds in reading. We read short texts and wrote short stories together, which implemented the grammar, syntax and vocabulary studied.

In our conversations, we spoke often about Purim, and the students' costumes. The students were particularly excited to learn that Hamantaschen's Hebrew name ("Ozen Haman") literally means, Haman's ear!

3rd Grade: During February our routine of daily conversation in the beginning of each class was dedicated to Purim. We spoke about the various costume options which the students considered, Purim parties at the synagogue and at school, what we eat in Purim and the reading of the Megila, "the Book of Ester". Purim is one of the most exciting Jewish holiday and the students also initiated conversation by themselves and updated us about their costume decisions and when they were supposed to arrive. It was a great learning opportunity for time expressions in Hebrew like – **always, last year, this year** ("I am always an officer in Purim" / "last year I was a witch" / "this year I will not be Harry Potter").

Another topic we focused on this month was adjectives and agreement between adjective and noun in gender and number, for example: good, smart, pretty, young, big, small, and more. We regularly practiced building independent sentences, and the students built sentences using adjectives by themselves and enjoyed using their imagination to describes themselves, people and animals. We will continue to practice these skills throughout the year.

We took another further step in grammar, and moved from verbs in presents tense to the form of infinitives (to run, to learn, to play...) and the combination of helping verbs and infinitive (I want to live in..., I want to go to..., etc.). We also practiced reading short and long texts without

vowels, and the students were very enthusiastic so they asked me to give them more and more challenging texts to practice: "Give us the hardest you can think of".

Yet again, this group of students can serve as an example of meaningful learning processes!

## **Christian Studies - Betsy Bashore**

Our Christian Studies month felt shorter due to a couple two hour delays and the President's Day holiday. All the same we are arriving at the end of the story of Abraham in just one lesson. It has been a long road getting here - but it was much shorter for us than for Abraham! We discussed how faith in God has its ups and downs. The name "Israel" literally means "One who wrestles with God," which describes the story of faith so well. No person, except Christ, has displayed perfect faith and yet, God remains faithful to all of His promises - Isaac's birth has come precisely in the way God said it would! We finished up our Old Testament lessons this month with an early morning "story time." The students grabbed pillows, blankets and bean bags, ate popcorn and drank hot chocolate as we covered material in Genesis 19-21. In the New Testament we had a month of miracles - Jesus feeding the 5,000 and walking on water. Crowds are beginning to follow Him and are hoping to make him King. Due to this, the tension between the Jewish leaders and Jesus is growing. Jesus, however, has no intention of being an earthly king. We continue to see how Jesus reflects the same characteristics God Himself possesses. Lastly, we had a phenomenal questions day where the students asked, "What is Hell? Did God create Hell? If God is all good how can He create Hell which seems all bad?" Using the Socratic method, the students arrived at the conclusion that Hell is actually created good in nature as a place of God's justice - a critical attribute in His character. What a month!