

# Know Thyself

A Publication of the Rainbow Journey: Preschool Through Eighth Grade

Issue 1

Fall 2025

## Spiritual Connection Begins in Preschool

The story of spiritual connection begins with our littlest learners. Our Blue Door Preschool class begins each day with centering, a mindfulness practice that extends to every classroom. Centering always includes lighting a candle, setting an intention, observing a moment of silence, and taking three deep breaths together. Centering helps children to calm their bodies, come together as a classroom community, and prepare for their school day. Mindfulness practices, in general, help children to improve social relationships, develop self-regulation skills, decrease stress and anxiety, increase attention span, and develop empathy. Throughout our school day, elements of the spiritual domain show up while practicing self-regulation, conflict management skills, nature appreciation, and seasonal celebrations.



## Student-led Inquiry and a Celebration of Skin Tones

The story of student-led inquiry is alive in all of our classrooms. Earlier this year, students in the Green Door Preschool classroom had the concept of skin tone come to the forefront of their awareness and the teachers embraced their students' curiosity!

While reading *Shades of People* (Kelly and Rotner), the children naturally started comparing their skin tones. They had many great observations, noticing similarities and differences. They complimented each other's skin tones and compared their skin tones to objects found in our world. The last page of the book has a photo of hands together in a circle. When our students saw it, they naturally made a circle of their own! It was a touching and beautiful moment of camaraderie and inclusivity.



Later, students matched paint chips to their skin color, gluing them alongside a drawing of themselves. These were compiled into a book called *Celebrating Our Skin Color*, which will remain in the classroom library. The children practiced writing their names, and writing the name of the shade they chose. This beautiful learning experience gave students a chance to practice myriad skills, such as forming letters, cutting, comparing and contrasting, using books as a source of knowledge and inspiration, and so much more!

## The Joy of Learning to Read!

The story of learning continues as our kindergarten class engages in literacy with wonder and awe. They have been learning letter names and sounds each day using multi-sensory approaches that include writing in sand, in dirt, with chalk, and with finger lights. They have been using phonemic awareness games and activities to break down sounds: they hear, touch, say, and feel each letter and sound. The culmination of many weeks of consistency and systematic teaching have begun to manifest in learning how to read CVC words in sentences!



### In Appreciation of Appalachia

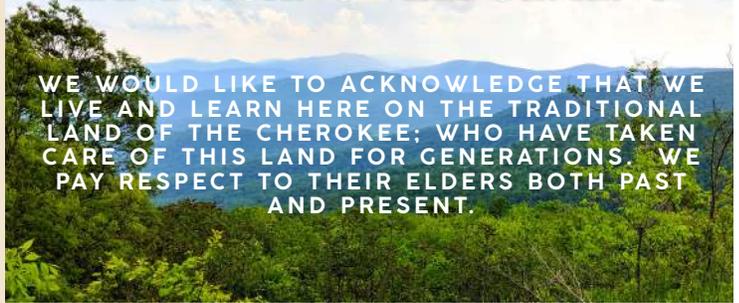


First grade kicked off their study of Appalachia with a hike in Pisgah Forest! They set off from the Pisgah Inn and followed the Buck Spring Trail to the ruins of the Buck Spring hunting lodge, built for the Vanderbilt family in the early 1900s. Surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains, students participated in

a common naturalist practice, a "solo sit", in which they paused and absorbed the beauty and awe of the natural world. Reflections during these intentional moments are often translated through the creative domain, and in this instance students used watercolors to capture the expanse of the horizon. It was a gorgeous day and a truly authentic way to begin our study of these mountains we call home.



### 2ND GRADE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE LIVE AND LEARN HERE ON THE TRADITIONAL LAND OF THE CHEROKEE; WHO HAVE TAKEN CARE OF THIS LAND FOR GENERATIONS. WE PAY RESPECT TO THEIR ELDERS BOTH PAST AND PRESENT.

OTSALIHELIGA  
"WE ARE GRATEFUL."  
2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE HAS THE HONOR OF EXPLORING THE FIRST PEOPLE OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, THE CHEROKEE. WE SET AN INTENTION FOR THIS UNIT WITH THE CHEROKEE WORD OTSALIHELIGA-"WE ARE GRATEFUL" AND STATING OUR LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. BY INTEGRATING THE SPIRITUAL DOMAIN INTO EVERY DAY WE ARE GIVING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR LEARNER'S SOULS TO BE ENRICHED AND SPOKEN TO; TO BE CONNECTED IN A WAY THAT REMINDS US OF HOW THE CHEROKEE LIVE AND LIVED THEIR LIVES.

### LEAF Artist Residency

Our third graders were thrilled to be participating in a LEAF residency with local musician, Billy Jonas. Along with embracing song and performance skills, students embarked on a STEAM challenge to create and design their own instruments. They also explored the power of writing through lyric creation and music composition, giving voice to their wishes for the world. Immersing into the arts to develop self-awareness, creativity, resiliency, and confidence is a powerful pathway to knowing oneself. Our experience with our LEAF residency and performance is a valuable learning opportunity for the kids in so many ways, also made meaningful by connecting with this beloved local organization whose mission of creating community resonates deeply with our own.



### 4th Grade Botany Unit Highlights



Field Trip to local business, ChloroPHyl, for an interactive workshop



Propagation workshop by a Master Gardener



Trip to Sunny Point Gardens to learn from their Garden Manager, sketch plants, and track pollinators



Harvesting and planting our class gardens with help of a local gardening expert and business owner



Presentation by a local botanist



Plant dissection lab

Field Trip to an herb farm, Kestrel Farm, for a tour and herb-tasting experience



**Learning is expansive in 4th and 5th grade. Presenting advanced content through the Rainbow Seven Domains™ helps to foster strong academic understanding and engagement of a variety of learning dispositions.**

### 5th Grade Watershed & Ecosystems Unit Highlights by Domain



#### Spiritual Domain

Writing about and discussing the roles and impact we have in our community, specifically with our local ecosystems and watershed - a theme that is revisited throughout the school year.



#### Social Domain

Working collaboratively to design a watershed and simulate environmental impacts; working collaboratively to identify different species in our compost bin; playing various games to build on our understanding of consumers, food chains and food webs.



#### Mental Domain

Creating a graph of organisms found in the compost bin; reading about ecosystems and different relationships that exist within them; writing about our understanding; drawing different groups (individual, groups, communities, ecosystems) to show our understanding of each.



#### Creative Domain

Finding a small or larger ecosystem on campus and identifying the biotic and abiotic factors within that system and drawing them.



#### Emotional Domain

Journal writing in nature sharing appreciations and moments of awe and beauty.



#### Natural Domain

Exploring the creek at West Asheville Park and learning how to assess its health through identifying indicator species and water chemistry.



#### Physical Domain

Playing games like *Ladybug*, *Aphids*, and *Ants* to highlight different relationships within ecosystems; creating a model of our watershed and then simulating environmental impacts.

## The Hawaiian Concept of Ho'oponopono

In Omega sixth grade, social-emotional learning is truly a daily lived experience. Together we navigate the waters of big feelings, social complexities, and questions of self-image, value, and worth. To support our students through these challenging moments, we use a variety of techniques including songs, improv games, engagement with the natural world, and the *Our Whole Lives* curriculum focused on adolescent and puberty development.

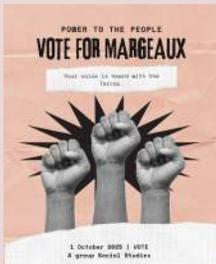
Before the song featured in the linked video (right), we explored the Hawaiian concept of Ho'oponopono. As described on the Ho'omana Spa Maui website, "Ho'oponopono is the ability to "mahalo"—to thank—all of those lessons and challenges that have come. To look back and understand it took those challenges in order to get to where we are. It's not damaged. It's all perfect."

We discussed how feelings, social complexities, and moments of self-reflection arise to teach us. We can thank them, extend our gratitude and love for the opportunity to face them, and forgive ourselves and others for anything we may have done that doesn't align with our personal integrity.



"Thank you, I love you,  
please forgive me,  
I forgive you.  
Ho'oponopono, mahalo nui loa."

## Learning Experiences in Omega 7/8



**SOCIAL STUDIES** - Omega 7/8 students engaged in a democracy simulation curriculum called *Civic Mirror* in their social studies class. The two classes have each created their own countries. Each country's laws are based on the U.S. Constitution, but there's a lot of room for student input and creativity in terms of how laws of the country are passed and carried out. Each student has a bank account and a fictional family to care for, and they also have the opportunity for property ownership and some ways to generate income. The project includes an election in which students developed political parties and policy platforms and candidates gave speeches to their fellow citizens. A tied vote provided additional opportunities to dive deeper into governance policy!

**SCIENCE** - This Fall Omega 7/8 students studied chemistry through the lens of plants, soil, and food science! They investigated garden crops, harvested native aronia berries, used refractometers to test the Brix, tested the pH, and made aronia berry syrup. The syrup was used to make homemade ginger ale with yeast. Students used pH sensors from the NC State Extension Office to test and graph pH of common liquids and learned how to create chemical changes that affect pH. Students also learned about how CO<sub>2</sub> pollution is affecting ocean acidification and coral reef ecology.



**MATH** - Multi-sensory math is not just for young children. Seventh Grade Math students studied geometry and measurement by designing art and tessellations with the many polygons explored. Additionally, defining how to use individual pace/step to measure feet and distances moved the class outdoors to broaden their scale of polygon creation. Building on their fifth grade orienteering unit, students utilized compasses to better understand angles and bring math to life.

Eighth Grade Math and Math II students expanded their understanding of linear relationships and geometric transformations by applying their knowledge to create artistic representations of their mathematical understanding.