Weekly Highlights

Last week, students worked in pairs to investigate a topic explored in a recent issue of *Scholastic Science World* magazine. Students used the article as a jumping off point to conduct their own research into the topic and then prepared a short presentation to share their findings with the class. This activity really pushed the students to take control of their learning and work collaboratively with their classmates, and the results were great. The posterboards that students created are hanging in the hallway, so take a minute to check them out!

With the introduction of circle formulas involving both $2r$ and $r^2$, some students were still a little confused about the fundamental difference between these two expressions. In order to illustrate just how different the concept of $2x$ and $x^2$ are from each other, students graphed both on the same graph. The visual representation helped them really understand that a square gets bigger faster (an exponential increase) whereas an expression like $2x$ increases at a constant rate.

Our visit to the Art Institute to see the Byzantine art provided a great opportunity for us to revisit the concept of B.C. and A.D., and more broadly, number lines in general. This was a perfect segue into learning about negative numbers and starting to evaluate simple addition and subtraction expressions that include negative numbers.

Field Trip Connections

As the students get older, they will have more out-of-class learning opportunities that will be grounded in real-life experiences. It is important, however, that the students connect these experiences to what we are doing in the classroom. Every field trip we take works in conjunction with something we are doing in the classroom.

- Before our trip to the Ronald McDonald House near Lurie Children’s Hospital, the students investigated the history of the children’s hospital. This trip also coincided with Jonas Salk’s 100th birthday, so students researched polio and the impact of Jonas Salk’s work developing a polio vaccine. Several days later, we continued this discussion during a science presentation about smallpox. In a constructivist classroom, students learn that everything truly is connected!
- Prior to attending the production of *Alice in Wonderland*, we read and discussed Lewis Carroll’s poem “The Walrus and the Carpenter.” The students then wrote their own poems in which they tried to emulate the rhyme and rhythm structure of that poem. Since our class has had the opportunity to attend many different theatrical performances, they are developing into theater critics. After the show, we discussed what aspects of the performance we appreciated theatrically, as well as what we would have changed, comparing and contrasting it to other shows we have seen as a class.
- As follow-up to our visit to the Art Institute, students chose a particular piece from the exhibit that intrigued them and explained its importance in the context of the Byzantine period. This required them to draw on information they had learned during the museum visit and/or conduct independent research at home. At the Hellenic Museum, all of the pieces of art were accompanied by a poem. Students used these poems to inspire them to write their own poem about a monster from mythology.