



Animal Friends Teach Maury Kids Empathy

by Besa Pinchotti

When you walk into Ms. Levin's pre-school classroom, it's a zoo—and I'm not talking about the lively 3-year-olds in dress-up clothes working at learning centers. Ms. Levin's class is home to several animal friends including a bird named Stanley, a snake named Sasha, a turtle named Toothless and a tank full of fish. But these aren't just pets; they're important tools for lessons in empathy.

"In addition to the familiar cognitive abilities measured by standardized intelligence tests, educators now understand and recognize the importance of other types of intelligence -- emotional, social and moral," said Ms. Levin.

The children in Ms. Levin's class, who call themselves the Bella Birds, are responsible for feeding the animals, providing clean water and keeping the terrarium clean. It's not just a job; the kids learn that these defenseless pets need them. The Bella Birds feel empowered because they're not the most vulnerable creatures in the room. The empathy they feel towards the animals translates to increased empathy toward their peers.

"The children are incredibly respectful and affectionate to the animals," said Ms. Levin. "The animals encourage them to challenge their fears and be accepting of diversity."

A different family takes Stanley the bird home every weekend, which helps to build a sense of community. And the social interaction created by caring for the class pets is kind and loving; animals are proven to help decrease aggression in children.



Although Sasha, Stanley and Toothless live in Ms. Levin's class, other Maury kids (and adults!) benefit from their presence at school. Mr. Havner sends two different well-behaved 2nd graders to visit the animals every afternoon, and other kids often stop by for a quick (and sometimes not-so-quick) peek. The turtle, fish and filter are soothing to watch and hear which seems to have a calming effect on children and adults alike. Stop by the first floor of the new building for a visit!

The Olympics are here!

Ms. Hunt and Ms. Sweeney are working to bring the Olympic spirit to Maury. Students have the opportunity to learn about the countries, cultures, games and traditions in both Library and PE this month. Be on the lookout for pictures and updates!



February 2014

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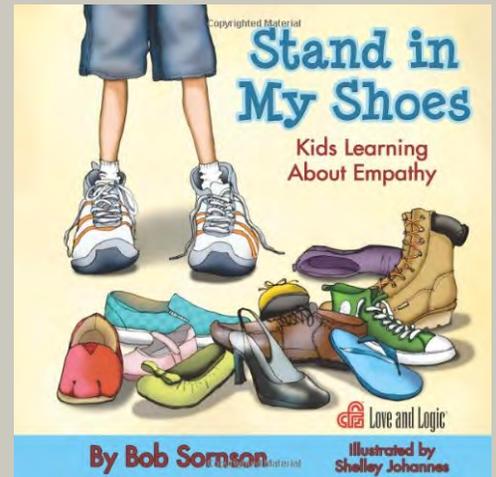
1250 Constitution Ave, NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-698-3838
www.mauryelementary.com

Principal's Book of the Month: Stand in My Shoes: Kids Learning about Empathy

by Bob Sornson

When Emily asks her big sister what the word empathy means, Emily has no idea that knowing the answer will change how she looks at people. But does it really matter to others if Emily notices how they're feeling? Stand in My Shoes shows kids how easy it is to develop empathy toward those around them. Empathy is the ability to notice what other people feel. Empathy leads to the social skills and personal relationships which make our lives rich and beautiful, and it is something we can help our children learn.

This book teaches young children the value of noticing how other people feel. We're hoping that many parents read it along with their children.



Library Corner

By Ms. Sweeney

If you've walked by the library lately, you may have seen kids hunched over computers, deep in contemplation...of Angry Birds. What they've been up to is no game, though. Third and fourth graders have been using code.org, a website set up by a former Microsoft engineer, to learn how to write computer code. The site uses characters from familiar games like Angry Birds and Plants vs. Zombies alongside a visual coding tool called Blockly to put computer code in the hands of kids.

It starts simply: write a code to move the bird two spaces so it can get the pig. But it gets more complicated, fast. Soon, the program requires the use of more and more sophisticated commands.

The kids have risen to the occasion, tearing through the levels of code.org and learning a lot about programming while they work. It's been a great experience for everyone!

Technology class has come to an end for Maury's 3rd-5th graders, but we're already looking forward to next year and more exciting challenges to come! Stay tuned to hear what our 1st and 2nd graders are up to in technology class.



Submit your Anti-Bullying Campaign Ideas!

DCPS is really cracking down about bully prevention and has reached out to art teachers across the district to find students to help come up with the future branding of their anti-bullying campaign.

Students are invited to come up with a poster, logo, slogan, jingle, illustration, whatever, that reflects bullying prevention strategies in schools and the community. For example, when designing their submission, students should ask themselves, "What can Maury do to make all students feel safe and welcome? or "What can students do to prevent bullying?"

Ms. Bomba will be collecting submissions on a rolling basis but the deadline is 5:00 PM on February 21, 2014. There is no size limit or restriction on materials used. Maury artists are some of the most interesting and creative I know so the possibilities are endless.

Submissions will be scored on expression of theme, composition, and originality. Winners will have their artwork and slogan featured on DCPS bullying prevention materials throughout the District for an indefinite period of time. This includes posters, promotional swag and social media. The school with the first place winner will receive \$200 to put towards art supplies in their building.



Little Cougar Corner

The Cougar Cubs (Maury's PreK3 and PreK4 classes) have been busy recently. Below are some updates on what our cubs have been doing.

Bella Birds!

Ms. Levin's Pre-K3 class, the "Bella Birds," has a dynamic presence at Maury. It has a supportive, active, engaged learning community!

Her class community has been strengthened by participation in a social event each month that earns nearly 100% attendance from parents, including home visits, a Pancake breakfast, Thanksgiving pot-luck, Winter holiday dinner, and several inspiring field trips!

The specials teachers tell me that Ms. Levin's class is a "bright spot" in their week and that they are touched by the level of "empathy and compassion" among students in her class. One teacher commented that Ms. Levin's students are "good at sharing" and they are "eager to help each other." Those skills can be challenging for young children.

In the afternoons and evenings, Maury students, their siblings and their parents are not eager to leave their classroom. I often find my child (and other Bella Birds) re-reading their morning message using a pointer, using a magnifying glass to examine the myriad insects they are raising, and exploring learning activities in their classroom.

At least one parent of each child in Ms. Levin's class is subscribed to her list-serve, as are the specials teachers. Parents of students in her class are thrilled to receive real-time photos, videos and anecdotes about their children every day. This deepens their investment in and connection to the learning that occurs in her classroom. Parents are often seen volunteering in class.

The "Bella Birds" foster a sense of respect and inclusion for everyone at Maury.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle!

Mr. Scott's class continued and wrapped up their recycling study. A number of questions were examined and discussed with the class, including "How will you reduce, reuse, and recycle from now on?" Among the outputs from the discussions, Mr. Scott created a video asking the kids in his class about recycling. The film can be viewed via the following link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/rpka2b4ovkaidoh/Recycle%20Movie%202014.mp4>. The class also worked in some of their discussions, along with their love of art and Ms. Bomba's wonderful work in the specials, into a presentation outside Mr. Scott's class (see pic).

The class is now in the middle of the next study on how things move. To help support the study, Mr. Scott created a donor's choose project for different materials including ramps, wooden balls, and other materials used to explore physics. The project was matched by Disney and fully funded within a couple days!

The class work is also being integrated with additional learning gained through specials like Think Tank with Mrs. Ford, and posing questions such as "Do all balls bounce?".

From the parent perspective, some of the class parents are taking Mrs. Ford up on her offer to stop by and visit the Think Tank when the kids are there. It was a lot of fun! It was very interesting experience overall to get more of the big picture to see how she teaches the students, how it gets tied into their regular class, and also how the kids handle their parents visiting and joining in (then yes, having to leave at a different time in the daily routine). In the case of Mr. Scott's class, they have Think tank Mondays at 9:25am, so parents ended up staying after drop-off, sitting in on their morning meeting and morning song/dance (also fun!), going to Think Tank with the kids, and returning back to class.

For other activities in January, the kids had a blast at the concert by members of the NSO and attending the Think Tank and STEM Expo. Coming up, they're looking forward to a field trip February 10 to the Museum of the American Indian with Ms. George's class.



Little Cougar Corner (cont'd)

Box Study....

Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Whitley's PK4 class has continued their study of boxes over the past month. They've been learning about different types and sizes of boxes and what they are used for. As the culminating activity for the box study, the students are constructing a castle made out of all sorts of boxes. When it's finished, it will be displayed outside the classroom. Following the box study, the students will soon move on to their next investigative unit: water.

The students are also budding entrepreneurs. They have transformed the dramatic play area into "Wal-Mart," complete with products for sale and student-written signs. Using play money, the kids are honing many skills with the pretend store, including practicing one-to-one correspondence counting when making change for their "purchases."

Finally, the students have started using their "Handwriting Without Tears" workbooks. This tool will help the budding writers prepare for kindergarten. everyone at Maury.

Mrs. Wright-Spurlock's class is also finishing their unit of study about boxes! The students loved building with boxes, wrapping presents, creating mazes, and playing "Box-o-Ball" all while learning the characteristics of solid shapes.

Insects....

Timmons's and Mrs. Johnson's class finished up their insect study at the end of December. The class celebrated with a potluck lunch during which parents were entertained by the children's songs about insects.

The class is now studying buildings. They have built their own buildings as big as themselves! They are working with all types of building materials (who ever said that cereal boxes don't make great building materials!). And when the weather isn't so frigid, they have explored our Maury neighborhood to check out the different architecture that is abundant in our Capitol Hill neighborhood.



Stay tuned for the next Cougar Cub playdate (to be scheduled soon)!

For the PreK4 parents out there, we will be scheduling a sneak peek at the Kindergarten classes for our rising Kindergarten students. More information will be available soon.

Maury at the Market 2014 Update

Only 8 more weeks till Maury at the Market! Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 22nd from 7-10 pm for an adults-only evening of eating, drinking, and bidding to support your kids' school! Every penny we make after expenses goes to the PTA for its discretionary funds.

We are so pleased and grateful to announce that National Capital Bank is continuing its tradition of supporting the auction as our Title Sponsor. If you are a customer, be sure to tell them "Thank You!" the next time you are in.

And there's more exciting news! The Argonaut is generously supplying the wine-and-beer bar for the event. They join Nando's, bringing their super-popular catering and Capitol Hill Cake Mom, providing her fabulous desserts.

Ready to lend a hand? We have all kinds of volunteer opportunities. For instance, we are looking for someone to run the in-school auction. This takes place for the two weeks leading up to the event and kicks off the auction excitement. Requires some advance planning so we need to identify this Lead now - have a friend you'd like to work with? This is a perfect spot. Email Elsa at elsa@elsahuxley.com if this opportunity appeals.

We are also working hard now to secure sponsorships and item donations, both efforts vital to the evening's success. Neither of these tasks have to be too time consuming but we do need help so please email Elsa (sponsorships) or Linda Samuel at lindabsamuel@yahoo.com (item donations) to pitch in.



Think Tank Expo

by Robert Pohl

When my son is asked about his favorite subject is, his immediate answer is "Think Tank." And after seeing the Think Tank Expo at Maury on January 23, it is easy to see why.

Vanessa Ford organized the fair. She contacted 24 different organizations – from the Anacostia Watershed Society to the US Forestry Service – to bring age-appropriate materials, and hands-on learning experiences to the school.

In some cases, Ms. Ford did not have far to look for her exhibitors. Several Maury parents were exhibiting, including Labyrinth, who already have a great presence in the school, both in teaching teachers how to use games in the classroom, and in running aftercare game programs. Ms. Sweeney, Maury's technology teacher, was also there, showing parents – and a lot of students who are not yet taking her class – what it is that the 3rd and 4th graders are up to.

And so, for a thrilling one and a half hours (Much too short, according to one young critic) the kids and their parents could: Look through a telescope at Venus and its moons; try on bee-keeping outfits; build a bird-feeder; try out night-vision binoculars; build bridges with playing cards, and much, much more.

One particularly interesting exhibit was the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab's 3-D printing. Particularly interesting was the use to which they put it: instead of spending huge amounts of money manufacturing something that might not fit, they can – in relatively short order – print out a plastic piece that will show them that their new design is correct. 3-D printing technology has thus gone from being an esoteric curiosity to an important part of their work in just a few years.

Without a doubt, the exhibit garnering the greatest attention was the one by Flying Higher LLC, who brought in three birds of prey to show to the assembled crowds. Dozens watched in rapt silence as Jo Santiago pulled out her birds and explained how each one uses its superior senses to track and catch prey. One particular fact stood out among the many she mentioned: A red-tailed hawk can read the date on a penny at 50 yards.

Over 400 people came through the doors, including many from other schools. Hopefully, this means that next year, there will be similar events at other schools on Capitol Hill and across the District. As a means of raising awareness and excitement, it is tough to beat.



Maury Third Grade at National Building Museum

by Robert Pohl

On Friday, January 17, the Maury third grade went on a field trip to the building museum. As always, this was a great opportunity to learn more about this excellent museum. Ms. Donnelly's class went to the Play Work Build exhibit, which has a play area with enormous foam blocks, which could be put together in any number of ways, and used to build all sorts of structures – many of them bigger than the students building them.

The main part of the trip was an opportunity for students to plan and build their own city. After a brief introduction into city planning and the many different types of buildings contained in a city, the students were split into different groups, each tasked with building one type of structure: Residential, commercial, industrial, etc.

With only their imaginations – and time – as their limits, these buildings were made out of recycled materials (your correspondent was especially pleased with his insight that the bottoms of egg cartons can be converted into wheels for a fire truck) The finale had the students lay out their city on a large map, making sure that the commercial and residential buildings were grouped together – and the industrial ones kept well away. It was a great learning experience for all. Even the chaperones left smiling.



Congratulations to our Spelling Bee Winners!

First Place Winner: Ethan Williams (Grade 3)
Second Place Winner: Isaac Smoker (Grade 5)

Students to compete in DC3 Spelling Bee in the spring:

3rd grade: Ethan Williams, Kevin Anderson
4th grade: Milo Shea, Isabel Zaring
5th grade: Isaac Smoker, Shaun Robinson

Students to compete in the Scripps Cluster Bee

Isaac Smoker 5th grade
Milo Shea & Isabel Zaring 4th Grade!

Maury Family Traditions Night Coming Soon – March 6, 2014!

It's time to think about which family tradition you would like to highlight at our 3rd annual Maury Family Traditions Night. Many families highlight traditions from a heritage perspective. They include traditional clothing, food, and more. We would like to expand our event to also include a greater variety of traditions. For example, does your family have an annual family reunion? How about an annual trip to a special place for your family? Does your family have a special holiday meal? Do you have a family storyteller? All of our families have wonderful traditions. Please consider sharing on March 6. More details to come...

Thanks for being the kind of community that makes authentic projects like this a reality for teachers and students!



Upcoming Events

- February 3:** Maury Open House @ 9am & 6pm
- February 5:** ANET Testing - Reading
- February 6:** ANET Testing - Math
- February 7:** A Journey Through Time/Celebration of African American Heritage @ 9:30 - 10:30am
- February 7:** Report Cards go Home
- February 13:** Reading Initiative Celebration
- February 13:** Maury Loves Disco @ 6 to 7:30pm
- February 14:** PDD for staff - NO SCHOOL
- February 17:** Presidents Day - NO SCHOOL
- February 19:** Maury Open House @ 9am
- February 20:** PTA Meeting @ 6-7pm
- February 24:** Parent - Teacher Conference - NO SCHOOL
- February 28:** Black History Program @ 9:30 - 10:30am

Play Ball! Register Now for Capitol Hill Little League

Registration is now open for Capitol Hill Little League's spring season. This year, CHLL features five baseball divisions from t-ball up to kid-pitch (for boys and girls ages 6-13), and we hope to expand our championship-

winning softball league to three divisions (for girls ages 9-14). A new Little League rule now opens up the program to anyone who lives or goes to school within our boundaries. See www.chlldc.org for more information, and register at <http://chlldc.org/registration>.

Registration closes on February 26 for the Majors division (primarily ages 11-12) and March 12 for every other division, including softball. See you at the workouts in Feb/March and on Opening Day on April 5!



Capitol Hill Little League
Registration is now open!!
Go to: www.CHLLDC.org



Active Maury DonorsChoose.org Projects

Help Us Capture The Special Moments: Printer Needed For ECE

– Mr. Scott (PS & PK)

Our five early childhood classrooms use the Creative Curriculum to guide their inquiry based studies. Because the work is process based instead of product focused, it can sometimes be difficult to share the awesome work our students do with community stakeholders and family members. Teachers regularly document every child's learning using digital cameras. A photo printer will allow teachers to easily and quickly print photos of important moments in a child's learning.

For the past 4 months, our early childhood teaching team has been meeting weekly for a book club. Our book this past semester has been focused around quality documentation. To get the best and most reliable data, a vast majority of early childhood student performance data is collected through "documentation", including photos, anecdotal notes, and videos. A photo printer for our early childhood team will help us ensure that this high quality documentation is shared regularly with our families. (Total cost = \$2092)

To donate or see latest active Maury projects to to: <http://www.donorschoose.org/school/maury-elementary-school/28253/?active=true>

