



Newsletter Date: January 27, 2022

The Gecko



MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL:

Dear Concept Families,

I hope you have been keeping warm this winter. I am ready for spring! At any rate, things at TCS are moving along. Report cards are in the mail and our students did well, overall. Please contact your child's teacher if you have questions about a particular class. We had our main hallways painted over winter break and we installed new lockers that were paid for by COVID-19 relief funds. The students seem to be enjoying having brighter, brand-new lockers.

We are still in the throes of this pandemic and while the case counts are dropping, I am afraid we will be dealing with this virus for some time to come. I urge you to get your child vaccinated and/or boosted. It does seem to be the best way to be protected and to protect others. I had mentioned earlier in the year that we would be taking part in a weekly, voluntary testing program. After receiving all the information and materials, I decided to not do the weekly testing due to the amount of time it would take from staff members to implement the program. That being said, we do have rapid testing materials available. Please let me know if you need to have your child tested. It can be done here, or I can send home a test kit. We will be requiring masks until the CDC tells us it is not necessary. I appreciate the students' cooperation with this requirement.

The Board of Directors will soon begin planning the budget for the 2022-2023 school year. That means we will be sending out information about tuition and contracts for the new school year soon. I will let you know when that information is being sent home.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Bill



February 1 – Virtual TCS Parent Session
February 17 – Parent Conferences: 12:00 dismissal
February 18 – Teacher In-Service: School closed
February 21 – Presidents' Day – School closed
March 18 – National History Day Presentations
March 25 – End of 3rd Marking Period

2021 Shakespeare Festival Highlights – Shakespeare Under the Stars



Behind the scenes...



Rehearsals...



A testament to the positivity and growth that are felt by our students during the Shakespeare Festival.

“Thank you so much for making this Shakespeare without a doubt one of this school's best, whether past or future. It's amazing, it feels so organized and past Shakespeare I felt anxious or stressed and while I have at times today, the day of, I have a sense of clarity and excitement I have not felt in others. It has been so easy to perform thanks to you. It's so clear that you and [Mrs.] Wright have grown alongside the students and honed your theatrical and planning skills. You have let me show my raps which I appreciate. Plus the awesome guest and all has just made this a really great time that could only be attributed to this warm and kind atmosphere you, Wright, Culler and Tilmon have made. I'm so excited and I know it's going to be great. So thank you. A sentiment I'm sure is shared among everyone here. Thank you so much- Petruchio, Infant and, Romeo”

Special Guest at TCS!

As part of our Shakespeare Festival, actress and theater teacher Sharon Geller visited TCS in December and taught us theater tricks. Sharon has performed all over Philadelphia and other theater hubs, as well as appearing on Saturday Night Live several times. We played theater games and learned to use our minds to help us feel and appear confident onstage and in daily life. It was a super fun morning with Sharon!





4 Life Lessons from Shakespeare

It's always important to reflect on events in our lives (good or bad) in order to take any lessons from them that we can. This is how we learn, grow, and prepare for the future. It's how we can

avoid making the same mistakes and replicate successes so we can experience them again and again. Shakespeare was such a huge success that I wanted to share some lessons from the experience I feel are valuable. The students really did teach us a lot and I hope you find them useful!

1. We are capable of more than we may realize. Sometimes, we may look at a big goal like putting on a Shakespeare production in front of a large crowd as a monumental and therefore unreachable goal. If we convince ourselves a big goal like this is out of reach, then it likely will be; this negative thinking will probably mean not putting forth enough effort to achieve the goal and our skepticism of achieving that goal will be confirmed when we don't reach it.

The TCS students proved that there is another option: to work hard every day, practice repeatedly, support one another, and improve from one day to the next. At the start of rehearsal, some of our students struggled with their confidence on stage. However, as they kept pressing forward and practicing, their confidence grew. Often, as we grow our skills, we grow our confidence. If we wait to be confident to practice our skills, it might not ever happen! Sometimes we have to dive right in, even if we don't feel completely ready. That's what our students did.

Keeping the big goal in mind, the students pressed on and continued practicing. Students who lacked confidence at the beginning of the process ended up shining brightly on stage. There are few joys as fulfilling as being able to surprise others, but more importantly yourself, by accomplishing something you never dreamed you were capable of.

2. Small steps every day can cover a lot of distance. When asked how he writes so many lengthy novels, prolific horror author Stephen King replied, “One word at a time.” Although his response appears humorous at first, it really is true. A little bit every day can add up to wonderful results. As our students exhibited, practicing often and with strong commitment can add up and culminate into something great. The Shakespeare performance was only one example, but there are many- writing a novel, reaching an exercise goal, learning a language, building a house, learning a new skill, mastering an instrument, etc. Each of these big goals doesn’t happen overnight. They require consistent effort every day, day after day. In an age where we can access things immediately on a digital device, patience may be challenging. But, the more we can delay gratification and trust the process, the more likely it will be that we can accomplish big things.

3. Teamwork makes the dream work. We can also accomplish big things when we work well with others. No one person could have put on our Shakespeare performance by themselves. The production was a true team effort, with directors, actors, stagehands, props, lights, music, and everyone collaborating toward a common goal. The students worked well together during Shakespeare by listening to the directors, being patient with one another, encouraging one another, and committing to their specific ‘role.’ Teams take many forms - families, a group project, sports, a band, a dance group, etc. Being able to work on a team requires the same skills exhibited during the Shakespeare performance and can produce equally amazing results.

4. Taking positive risks promotes personal growth. The thing about our ‘comfort zone’ is that it’s comfortable. When we’re comfortable, we want to stay put. It’s cozy. But when we’re cozy, we’re unwilling to take positive risks. Now, some risks may in fact be dangerous – like jumping into shark-infested waters in a wetsuit made of steaks. Not wise! But taking other types of risks can have enormous payoffs. For Shakespeare, the risk was potentially ‘messing up’ on stage, forgetting your lines, or making some type of mistake. Making mistakes or failing at something can be scary because we too often think it means that we are a failure as a person. But this isn’t true. A mistake is a learning opportunity. It’s how we grow, and we all make them. Embrace making mistakes because it means you’re trying. Learn from it and do better next time. The next time you face a challenge, remember what you were able to overcome during Shakespeare. Often, the fear of making a mistake is much worse than the mistake itself. Taking positive risks expands our comfort zones and increases our confidence.

I hope our students can apply these lessons moving forward. They really did do an amazing job and I am very proud of all of them. Students, next time you're faced with a challenge that feels impossible, just remind yourself, “This is nothing- I’ve done Shakespeare at TCS.”



In Mrs. Culler's Classes:

In History, we are preparing for NHD! This year some of our topics are The 19th Amendment, Marian Anderson's Fight for Inclusion, The Titanic and Maritime Law, and Martin Luther King Jr's Diplomatic Efforts.

In Science Class: We're looking forward to hands-on experiments in Earth Science and Life Science. We'll be creating earthquake resistant structure models in Earth Science and making pesto with angiosperms and gymnosperms in Life Science!

New Theater Elective: Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Griffith, and Mrs. Culler are excited to collaborate on a Spring Theater Elective focusing around mystery. We're going to study the great detective classic, *Murder on the Orient Express*. More news about that soon!

In Mr. Burtch's Math Class:

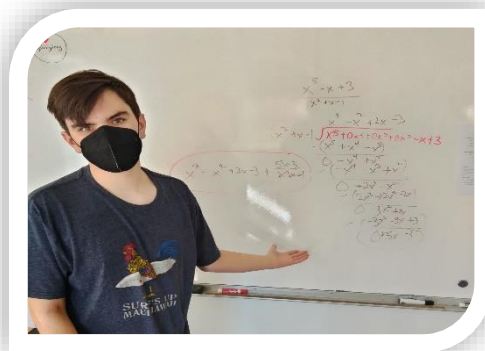
On Friday morning December 17, during Mr. Burtch's Period 1 Geometry class, an unusual thing happened. The sound of upbeat music playing in the background of math class is common in Period 1.



However, hearing a shout out from across the internet to a student (Mark Mack) working on Pythagorean word problems and another (Ashe Winchester) working on props for the Shakespeare Festival, was unusual.

The shout out came from CKUA radio in Edmonton, Alberta, more than 2,300 miles from The Concept School! Mr.

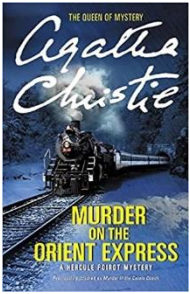
Burtch and his morning classes are frequent listeners of CKUA's program, *Alberta Morning*. But you can imagine the surprise for the students when they heard themselves being recognized across the internet from so far away! They seemed pretty happy about it.



John Krajicek did some ambiguous polynomial long division with remainders. The solution was:

$$(x^5 - x + 3) / (x^2 + x - 1) = x^3 - x^2 + 2x - 3 + (5x - 3) / (x^2 + x - 1)$$

In Mrs. Wright's English Class:



At the start of our return to school after winter break, students continued chatting about how much they enjoyed being a part of the Shakespeare Festival, *Shakespeare Under the Stars*! Every year, it is a wonderful and fulfilling experience for all involved. Students have asked if it would be possible to do some sort of play in the Spring, and after some thinking, we are excited to announce that we have something in the works! We are planning to stage Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*! We had a great student turnout during the meeting we held to poll student interest. Students who are interested in having a larger part (acting, stage crew) will be placed in a theatre elective to read the story, help plan and create, and be a major part of the entire behind-the-scenes process!

A few ELA classes have been hard at work with another round of their beloved Sherlock Holmes and the mystery of *The Speckled Band*. And thanks to a great suggestion from a parent who's a fan of Sherlock as well, we have begun watching the film version of the story starring Jeremy Brett. Students are able to really envision the character of Sherlock Holmes and make great connections to what they already know! Others have delved into titles such as *Pax*, *Samurai Shortstop*, and *Absolutely Truly: A Pumpkin Falls Mystery*. No matter the class, there is wonderful literature being read!

News from Mrs. Griffith:

As Mrs. Wright said, students, staff, and audiences were wowed by our final production of *Shakespeare Under the Stars*.

Philadelphia actress Sharon Geller worked with our students on confidence and "play" on one of our early days of pre-production in December.

Students are so excited about theater that our theater elective will culminate with a Spring production of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. We can't wait to see what our thespians do next as they are challenging themselves and taking risks because of the community that was created in December!

Mrs. Griffith's literature classes have resumed. Some are reading Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* and delving into descriptive writing, haiku, and mindfulness. The Zen of the Orange has been a fun activity! Others are studying Lin Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* as it pertains to hip-hop, narrative, history, and art. Ray Bradbury short stories are continuing to be a hit with another group as we ponder the role of technology in our lives. Finally, studying rhetoric and figurative language as it pertains specifically to MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech and the words of Maya Angelou and Jamaica Kincaid have asked us to question power in the past and present.

We are always peeling away the layers, diving deep, and finding treasures in paragraphs, verses, sentences, and words!

We are also studying haiku in English. I asked the students to write a haiku for homemade pesto, using imagery and simile.

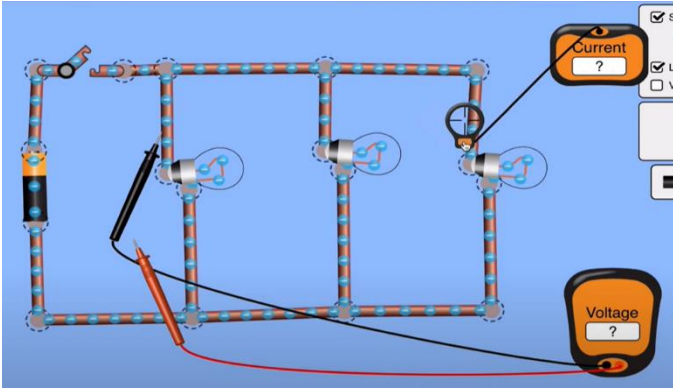
This is what Addie Althouse wrote:

*Taste of garlic leaves
Smell of buttery goodness.
Looks like nature's food.*

In Mrs. Fredericks classes:

STEAM

Mrs. Fredericks's STEAM class is learning about circuits. We're using a combination of online simulations and hands-on activities to learn the concepts. We'll be using LEDs, batteries, copper tape, play doh (conductive), modeling clay (insulating), circuit boards, Makey Makey and Arduino to program the circuits.



Environmental Awareness

Mrs. Fredericks's Environmental Awareness class is studying plastics. The students are learning what the recycling numbers mean. They've learned that you should never microwave plastics! "Microwave safe" plastic means it's safe for the plastic, not for humans! Plastics that are #3 and #6 are especially dangerous to humans. We're also learning about how dangerous plastics are to animals and to our food chain, and how much plastic we consume every day!

Photo Editing

Students in Mrs. Fredericks's Photo Editing class learned how to extensively edit human faces. We worked with several different tools including the healing brush, and the clone stamp to fix facial blemishes, scars, and enhance the image with blur, sharpen, and transparent brushes, as well as, applying other techniques that we learned earlier this semester.

Video Editing

Students in Mrs. Fredericks's Video Editing class had projects in stop-motion animation, whiteboard animation, and green screening (chroma key). The students learned how to cut and move clips, how to add narration (voice over) and music to their projects. They had fun while doing so, too

Special Event...

Autism, ID, and Other Disabilities

What you need to know

After Age 18

February 1, 2022 - 6:00-7:30

Join us for a complimentary virtual TCS parent session as we discuss the following topics:

- Why is it vital to become eligible for SSI/SSDI?
- Is it possible to work and still receive benefits such as Medical Assistance and federal cash benefits?
- What is a Special Needs Trust and why is it imperative to consider one? (3-Person Retirement?)
- What is a waiver?
- How can I blend state and federal government programs while preparing for his/her future?
- What is the difference between an IEP and an ISP?
- What is the difference between Medicaid and Medicare?
- What and why is Person Centered Planning important?
- The ABLE Act. What is it and what does it mean for savings and Special Needs Trusts?
- What's the difference between Power of Attorney and Guardianship?
- What are future housing options?

Presenter:

Michele A. Leahy, MS, CPWIC



Please see Michele's website - <https://www.leahylifeplan.com/>

Register in advance for this webinar by using the link below:



A good massage is always welcomed!



AHHH...Jasper seems very relaxed.



Tabletop Game Club

Tabletop Game Club Continues in February!

Our NEXT meeting is: Thursday, February 3rd

Students remain after school and must be picked up by a parent or carpool promptly at 5:00 PM. (Please note: Parents must contact their district transportation to inform them of changes to your student's bussing schedule.) Permission slips will be distributed at school.