



The Independent Mind

Returning to the roots of education: Thematic Learning and Multi-age Classrooms Jessica FitzPatrick, PhD - Head of School

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of education:* by Jessica
FitzPatrick, PhD.

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“Education is not
preparation for life;
education is life
itself.”

- John Dewey

If we are willing to let go of the idea that every child needs the exact same set of skills to lead a successful life, we might be able to imagine an exciting and dare I say fun educational experience. A key question to answer is ‘what is a successful life?’ Is a successful life defined by the job that you have, the degrees behind your name, the money in your pocket, or is it something more complex and ever-changing? Most parents I talk to want their children to be happy, get along well with others and have the education needed to make their life choices... well choices and not the consequences of being unprepared.

At Clear Spring School our thematic learning and multi-aged classrooms are not new nor revolutionary, they are actually founded on educational theories of learning and cognitive development. Learning is neither linear nor formulaic, it is relational and complex. We learn through observation, trial and error, and practice.

Multi-age classrooms allow for scaffolding, peer teaching, and flexibility. For example in the Ozark Naturalist block, the students help each other identify birds, insects, mammals and their habitats.

They make field guides for the creatures found on campus. Spelling, writing practice, math, science and geography

are all included in the study of the Ozarks. Students work in groups on projects and presentations, teaching other students what they have learned. They connect these studies out to some of their specialty classes, making bat boxes, bird houses, dream catchers, and bird feeders to name a few examples. Structures such as these allow teachers to modify and adjust projects and activities to fit the students in their class.



We recognize that success is different for each student, each class, and each family. We also see education as more than academic achievement, yes students need the skills to 'perform' jobs but what are the skills needed to navigate the challenges of coworkers, changing expectations in the workplace or shifting careers as they grow and mature. Not every student knows what job they want to perform as an adult. We actually don't know what jobs will be available for our current students when they enter the workforce. It seems more and more common that people who can create jobs based on the needs they see in their communities are best able to navigate their lives.

More importantly schools are seeking ways to create environments that promote communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and character. Clear Spring School offers a model of how this can be done.

Jessica FitzPatrick, PhD.

Clear Spring APT - Trashathon



Clear Spring School's Association of Parents and Teachers has been very active this year, participating in the parades and helping with this year's Trashathon. This year's crew are featured in these photos



include students, staff, parents and teachers. They picked up more than 15 bags of trash on Pivot Rock Road, Bass Lake, Hwy 23 and downtown to celebrate this year's Earth Day. APT also had a successful "Quilt Auction" which raised money to help support the school and conducted their "Spring Clothing Swap" which is their second swap event of the year.

"Wisdom of the Hands" founder, Doug Stowe retires after 20 years

Doug Stowe, master craftsman, teacher, writer and supporter of hands-on learning first launched his "Wisdom of the Hands" woodworking program at Clear Spring School in 2001. His vision for the program was to get kids working with their hands again and to learn the joy that comes with making things. His program has been an integral part of the Clear Spring School curriculum for the past 20 years and has been the subject of many books, articles and teaching moments for other programs nationwide. Doug



continually writes on the importance of teaching the arts in schools and has written

14 books and over one hundred articles on woodworking throughout his career and was named an Arkansas Living Treasure in 2009. He recently wrote in a guest editorial for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette on how important hands-on experience is to both teachers and students and reflects, "In

reviewing my own career, it was apperent to me that woodworking was an ideal means to integrate many of the subjects kids are expected to learn in school. Math, history, literture, physics, natural sciences, design, economics, and more can find real-world connections in wood shop."



Doug's program has brought the joy of learning to so many students at Clear Spring School and we are sad to note that he is retiring after 20 years. He has trained a successor, Dustin Griffith to continue the wood shop program which will remain a part of the school's curriculum.

We honor the gift that Doug has

given to our school of his time, dedication and vision for the "Wisdom of the Hands" program and will be forever grateful for all the ways he has shared his craft with our students. Everywhere you look on campus there are ever-present reminders of the magic that was created in Doug's program; bathouses, bird feeders, the free-library, the pay-what-you-want shop, buddy benches, bridges and the giant froebel blocks are just of few of the ways Doug's work will continue to impact student life on campus.



Captions: top left going clockwise - Doug with kindergarten students in wood shop; hanging finished bathhouse with students; with teachers, students and Head of School on bridge, giant froebel blocks on main campus.

Around Campus

This spring brought lots of activity after a long and cold winter. Students were busy exploring, biking, hiking and making things for their classes. Juanita's students had a wonderful time building Eastern



Left: Bird Feeders - Above: Juanita hanging a handmade a bird house with student

Bluebird houses and bird feeders in wood shop with Doug. They hung some for the campus bluebirds and sold a few others to purchase a bird bath for the school.

Ridgon's students did an architectural field trip around Eureka exploring the rich history of the different types of architecture that make up our beautiful city. Here they are in the picture below left viewing the centennial mural that reflects on the early development of Eureka Springs.



Students in Kristi's class volunteered for Answering the Call - a local community non-profit that feeds community members in need.



Chris's students visited small businesses around town to learn more about marketing and what it takes to run your own business. Here students are at the local Farmer's Market. Lots of great experiences this spring at Clear Spring, check our Facebook page to see more about our students.
<https://www.facebook.com/ClearSpringSchool>

Clear Spring Student Clubs



Clear Spring Students get active in school clubs this spring. During the week we have several clubs to choose from; bikes, games (like board games), drama, woodshop, floats and installations, and activities with Aly (usually hiking, or some kind of team game).



In the photo on the right we see the bicycle club on their newly donated bikes getting ready for a ride.



After school twice a week we have a running club sponsored by parents (Dax and Z. Luminaré). Students are running a race in the photo to the right and below is the running club stretching in Dicks field before heading out on a run.



We also started a Book club this year for the LTL students, with Rigdon, Ginny and Jessica also participating. So far we have read *Maus*, *The Hate You Give*, and currently we are reading *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Clear Spring Celebrates 48 years as an Independent Non-profit School

Dawn Ward, Director of Development, PhD.

There are many amazing aspects to an education at Clear Spring School and our 48-year history of operating a hands-on and hearts-engaged curriculum has offered our students a unique learning environment that includes art-integrated classrooms, outdoor educational programming as well as specialty classes in woodshop, beekeeping, gardening, camping and more. We are able to create this learning environment by being an independent non-profit accredited school which allows us to meet the students where they are in the learning process. This provides Clear Spring the ability to be flexible and provide a variety of quality educational programming that has become synonymous for the school.

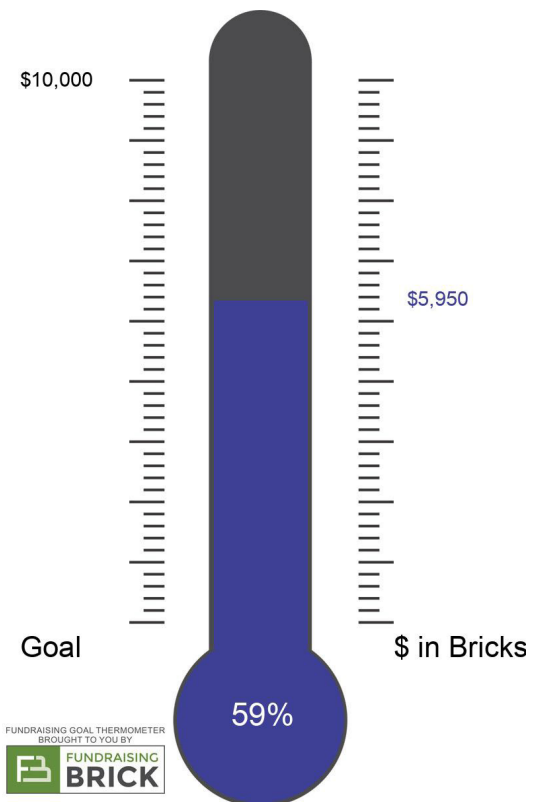
This has been made possible through the support of the community, parents, volunteers, teachers, board members and dedicated staff that help the school. Clear Spring relies on fundraising, grants and donations to meet its operational costs every year. We had another successful auction which helps support our general operations and our scholarship fund, known as “Adopt Excellence” is near its yearly goal which helps keep our school affordable for all students. We also received nearly \$20,000 in grants for the 2021-22 academic year including funding for our greenhouse which will be delivered this summer, a garden grant for the pre-primary and kindergarten campus, bicycles for our students’ bike club and 40 Chromebooks for our classrooms.



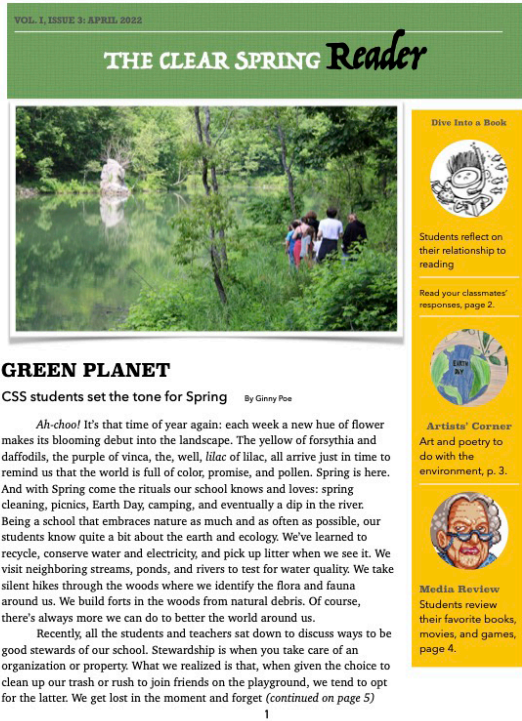
We are also seeing our endowment grow this year and have started the first 2-year fundraiser specifically to support the endowment. A strong endowment means a secure foundation for the future of Clear Spring School. We are currently doing a brick fundraiser “Building a Path to the Future”. An endowment gives back to the school forever and generates income for the school that can be used for future programming. This is a great opportunity to make a lasting gift to the school and show your support with a brick for our new pathways around the Phyllis Poe

Hands-on Learning Center. Phase I of the campaign is currently underway so order now to help us reach our 2021-22 goal of \$10,000. You can purchase a brick, include your name, message or quote by going to this link <https://www.fundraisingbrick.com/online-orders/clearspring/> You can also make larger gifts to our endowment by contacting Janell Robertson at the Carroll County Community Foundation [479-253-8203](tel:479-253-8203) where our endowment fund is managed. For more information about our brick fundraiser see our website <https://www.clearspringschool.org/endowment-fund> Thanks to everyone that helped the school be successful again this year!

Sincerely,
Dawn Ward,
Director of Development



New Student Newsletter Launched



Catch a copy of the new student newsletter "The Clear Spring Reader"! Students are loving working on this newsletter and they create all the content from writing the stories to taking photographs. Ginny Poe,

the school librarian works with the students to publish an issue each month and you can pick one up at the office or view it digitally on Facebook and our website. There are 3 issues so far with April being the first issue in full color. The May issue will be out soon!



CSS Alumni Association

There is a new Alumni Association for Clear Spring School whose mission it is to connect and engage our alumni with the school. We have a facebook group to help us communicate and inform our alumni of the great things happening with the school. If you are an alumni or

know a Clear Spring Alumni please follow our group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/318185919744572>



We hope to start having more alumni events so stay tuned.

Tax Deductible Donation Form

Clear Spring School is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We rely upon the financial support of individual and corporate contributions in order to continue providing the quality education we have been known for since 1974. If you or someone you know is interested in contributing to Clear Spring School, please complete the form or call us at (479) 253-7888. Tax Donation Letters are available.

Give online at www.clearspringschool.org/giving

Name _____

Address _____

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I have enclosed \$ _____ towards:

- ☐ Phyllis Poe Hands-On Learning Center
- ☐ Clear Spring School's Endowment
- ☐ Adopt Excellence (Scholarship Program)
- ☐ Annual Fund
- ☐ Wisdom of the Hands
- ☐ Other _____



Thank you for your generous gift!



P.O. Box 511
374 Dairy Hollow Road
Eureka Springs, AR 72632



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