

## Stone Spring

### *Gus Bus Supports Learning*

The Reading Road Show-Gus Bus, a Virginia Department of Education 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center, works in collaboration with Stone Spring Elementary School (SSES) and The Boys and Girls Club to offer innovative after school programming for SSES students. The Gus Bus program is based at James Madison University's (JMU) Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services.

Taking enrichment on the road, the Gus Bus functions as a mobile literacy program bringing books, learning activities, and food bags to families living in six different Stone Spring neighborhoods. By overcoming transportation obstacles, the Gus Bus strives to reach children and families where it is most convenient: just outside their door. Students visit the bus on Monday and Wednesday evenings to read books with JMU volunteers and to hear stories and complete activities with one of two program specialists, Becky Lantz and Rachel Gagliardi.

When the Gus Bus isn't on the road, program specialists are at the school teaching STEAM Enrichment classes to 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> graders at the Boys and Girls Club school site. STEAM activities present children with fun challenges that encourage problem solving and literacy development in a wide range of content areas. Some past projects include creating mazes, exploring the properties of bubbles, and mixing up Gak, snow, or slime. On Tuesday, December 14, third and fourth graders were challenged to come up with different ways to color salt using chalk. One solution was to use a grater and mix the powdered chalk with the salt. Another was to add a piece of chalk to a baggie of salt.

Using friction, the color of the chalk was transferred to the salt. The group then mixed the colors of salt they had made to see what other colors they would get. The class determined that grating the chalk worked better than using friction to create the colors.

In addition to neighborhood and school based programs, JMU student volunteers are recruited and trained by the Gus Bus to work as in-school and in-home tutors with Stone Spring children. Gus Bus tutors visit the school site twice weekly to provide homework help and additional learning support. Alternatively, JMU tutors are also paired with students to offer tutoring in the community, visiting the child's home once per week.

Last October, the Gus Bus hosted one of two Family Literacy Night events attended by 152 children and family members. Families worked on activities centered around health, nutrition, and discovering the fun in reading. The second Gus Bus Family Literacy Night will happen on April 20 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the Stone Spring cafeteria. Children, parents, and family members are invited to attend.

The Gus Bus is proud to work with Stone Spring students and families to provide a wide range of accessible after school activities. If you have any additional questions about Gus Bus programming, please contact Jolynne Bartley, Program Coordinator, at 540-568-4113 or at [bartl2jx@jmu.edu](mailto:bartl2jx@jmu.edu).



## Smithland Collaborative Colleagues

Reading and ESL Specialists and our Advanced Learning Specialist have been encouraged to work more collaboratively and follow “cycles of service” with classroom teachers. In addition to pulling out and pushing into classrooms, our support teachers have followed classroom teachers for several weeks to collaboratively plan and co-teach both math and language arts. The following are some thoughts and examples from our Advanced Learning Specialist, Sarah Lopacinski.

My intent as I work in classes is to model what Carol Ann Tomlinson calls “teaching up,” increasing rigor and engagement, as well as helping teachers differentiate for different abilities and learning styles. I also felt strongly about being seen as every student’s teacher, advancing *all* students, not just identified gifted learners. In the first cycle with fourth grade teacher Stephanie Van Nortwick, we focused on a Roald Dahl author study. We followed the pacing guide on comprehension skills and spent whole group time teaching strategies for the skill. Students were grouped in different Roald Dahl books based upon their reading level and applied the comprehension strategy to their independent reading. Small group discussion time was spent exploring vocabulary and making predictions and inferences. Each Friday, students discussed the assigned reading for the week and then collaboratively built a Lego structure to summarize the chapters read. Students then had a physical structure to use as a model for their written summaries. This hands-on approach to summarizing was a big hit with the students as well as being a great motivator for them to complete the assignments for the week. Our culminating project was a choice board based upon the multiple intelligences. Kensington shared, “It was fun because everyone worked together to build the story.”



In the second cycle, I worked with Kim Tinkham’s second grade math. Kim wanted to do some higher level problem solving with the students to start each lesson. This stretched the students who were below grade level, but because we discussed the strategies and the thinking behind the problems, students grew more confident during our time together. After our whole group time, Mrs. Tinkham and I worked with small groups, which were flexibly grouped based upon formative assessments. All students, regardless of their level of understanding, worked with me at least once a week where I focused on differentiated problem solving and math games. Toward the end of the cycle, our problems focused on reading graphs and gathering data. Students created a survey of their choice, learned about tallies and took data from all second graders. Our computer specialist, Derek Smiley, worked with students to create computerized bar and circle graphs with keys of all second grade data and students also created a Lego bar graph of their class data. Taiveon in Ms. Tinkham’s class said, “I thought it was awesome. I had fun making the graphs.”

Ms. Woods in fourth grade wanted her students to learn about traditional literature: fairy tales, tall tales and fables. Whole group lessons started with a read aloud and students created a trait list of each traditional tale, which was revised each day. Students reviewed and were exposed to grammar through mad libs related to traditional literature, as well as reader’s theater. Because traditional stories are rich in life lessons, students learned inferencing skills to help them understand theme. In independent reading time, students were introduced to the Myon application as it allowed us to differentiate a reading list for each student. Students wrote drafts of each type of traditional tale and at the end chose what they felt was their best work to publish. This published piece was a portion of their final project, which also included choice activities. Aniya in Ms. Wood’s class said, “We had our own fairy tales and everyone’s illustrations were so beautiful.” Tiberius added, “I liked how we all got to be creative and use our imagination.”

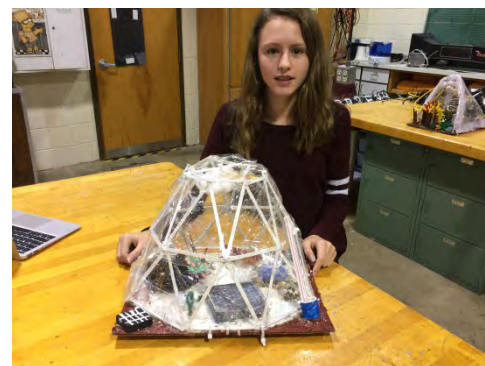
**THMS**
***STEM Show and Tell***


On November 16, the Thomas Harrison Middle School STEM program held a “Show and Tell” night for parents of STEM students. The purpose for the evening was to allow parents an opportunity to experience what their child has been working on in the STEM Academy. The seventh grade students shared their aquaponics and biome projects. The aquaponics project was the result of a \$500 grant that Mr. DeVier -Scott received through the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture. Students were challenged to design a sustainable aquaponics system that would produce an edible plant and fish. The biome project was a two-part project. First, students worked in groups of four to create one of the seven biomes on Earth. The second

part of the project was called the “Red Rising.” Students were challenged to create an environment that would allow their Earth biome to exist on Mars. Each group had to consider the harsh environment of Mars and the high cost of transporting materials. The scale of buildings, plants, and animals all had to be considered.

The eighth grade STEM students shared their lunchbox coolers and hot air balloons. The lunchbox coolers were a result of their study and research on insulation and energy transfer. Each group was tasked with designing a lunchbox cooler that would keep food at a safe temperature while also being an attractive product that would appeal to consumers.

The eighth grade hot air balloon challenge was part of an eighth grade review that will help students prepare for the eighth grade SOL test. This test covers three years of science, beginning with sixth grade curriculum, more material than any other SOL test students will take. The hot air balloon challenge helps them review weather from 6th grade. Students worked in groups to design, build, and test a hot air balloon that could potentially reach the height of the shop ceiling (20 feet). They also had to describe the weather conditions that are optimal for hot air ballooning.



The evening was well attended and we look forward to holding another “Show and Tell” night in the near future. As an added note, STEM Day at the Valley Mall will be held on February 18 from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. This is a fantastic opportunity to see what the Harrisonburg City School students are exploring in the world of STEM. Please come and support our STEM students, and have some fun!

## Keister

### Day Zero

In 2015, the Encore (Specials) Team at Keister began to brainstorm ideas around the best use of instructional time on our monthly early release days. Keister had just created a new student mission. After several Professional Learning Community meetings and speaking with colleagues from other elementary schools, the Encore teachers decided to adopt a “Day Zero” schedule. KES Encore teachers use the scheduled Encore block on early release days to break down and work on the student mission so that students can better understand it and begin to take ownership of it. Every month, the team creates lessons that focus on one sentence of the school mission and do small group activities related to that part of the mission. On this day, students at each grade level come to the gym during their scheduled Encore time and have specials as a whole grade level. Students know the Day Zero routine: they come into the gym to music playing and take a playing card, sit in a line, and participate in a breathing activity. Then, they read the school mission, go over the expectations, and learn about which part of the school mission they will be working on that day. We incorporate a whole group activity such as a book, skit, or video, and students split into small groups to do an activity related to the mission. These activities blend collaborative learning, art, and teamwork in which students must work together to complete a goal. At the end, students have an opportunity to verbally reflect on or share about the activities in small groups in English or Spanish.



Over the past year, students have learned new songs, worked together to complete challenges, designed flags about themselves and their heritage, created emojis that describe what makes them happy, participated in role playing activities about respect, and created and implemented a school wide pledge to be safe. Each month, students work with different students and a different Encore teacher according to the playing card that they receive when they arrive to class. One fourth grade student commented, “I like Day Zero because you get to interact with all the Encore teachers at the same time.” Another student adds, “I like that we work in teams... it teaches me how to be respectful so I don’t hurt others’ feelings.” Many students enjoy getting to meet and see students in other classes and “[I] always learn something new about someone else.”

Next month, students will focus on the last part of the mission - “to make Keister Elementary the best that it can be” - with a culminating activity to improve something in the school.

# The Insider

Highlighting Excellence in Harrisonburg City Public Schools



Photos by Bob Adamek



## Upcoming Events

- Jan. 16: No School for Students – Staff Development
- Jan. 17: School Board Work Session – School Board Office – 5:30 pm
- Jan. 23-24: No School for Students – Teacher Workdays
- Feb. 7: School Board Meeting – City Council Chambers – 7:00 pm
- Feb. 10: Early Release Day