

skylines

Skyview School, Inc.

A Remarkable History Scott McCreery, Director

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One of the few issues that have strong agreement among policy makers right now is the charter school movement. Even though it has been 20 years since Minnesota became the first state to authorize charters, followed by California in 1992 and Arizona in 1994, charters continue to be one of the fastest growing innovations in education policy. Research over the past four years examined both the promise and pitfalls of charters and the potential they hold for transforming an educational system mired in mediocrity. In fact, as recently this month, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill with overwhelming bipartisan support to provide \$300 million in 2012 and each of the five succeeding years to aid development and expansion of successful charters, including support for facilities, evaluation of schools' impact, and the sharing of best practices.

As a leader at Skyview, I find these actions at the federal level to be welcoming news. We are currently in the process of expanding our facilities and I believe as an organization we have valuable insights to share and a

unique story to tell. The history of the school defines its character, its spark of genius, and its commitment as a community of learners to fulfill its bold mission. Given the timeline of the charter movement and the fact that Skyview was one of the first charters founded in Arizona, let alone in the country, I believe it is worthwhile to take stock in what we have accomplished.

When the founders first began to meet 18 years ago there was no template or guide to follow, yet they were willing to do the hard work to make every aspect of the school a model of "best practices."

Skyview has the distinction of being the first charter started in Prescott and the first to be started by *parents* in Arizona. Two parents in particular, Nita Laucher-Morris and Marilyn Ramsey, were the catalyst that brought the school to life. As parents in Prescott they encouraged the district to incorporate more innovative, research-based practices within the classrooms. They felt their children were given very few opportunities to learn in a responsive way that would stretch them as students

while at the same time addressing their individual learning needs and desires. Unable to elicit a positive response from the district, and with the passage of a new law authorizing charters in Arizona, Nita and Marilyn posted flyers around town; over forty people attended their first meeting.

With a core group of about 20 participants, Saturday mornings were spent investigating best practices and discussing educational philosophies. After months devoted to research, the group settled on creating a multiple intelligences-based school, modeled after the Key Learning Community in Indianapolis, Indiana. The founders believed in using the pathways provided by MI as a platform to create an integrated, thematic project-based curriculum using active and engaging instructional teaching strategies as the framework. From the beginning, Skyview was committed to an educational style that incorporated the "big picture" approach to investigations and a "learning by doing" model that nurtures and develops an intrinsic moti-



Talisa Bruce working hard on her writing skills.

vation and a love of learning in students. After 22 months of intense planning and preparation, Skyview School was awarded its Charter and the founders were excited to take the next step of fulfilling their dream. To build interest, teachers held S.E.E.D. (Skyview Educational Enrichment Development) workshops for children on MI that were offered to the local community. Parents discovered that children learn best when they are active participants in their learning and, from the beginning, parent support and involvement were crucial to our success. It was not long before Skyview was filling up with prospective parents and the urgency for a facility became a driving force. In 1996, when Skyview was first chartered, the charter school movement was still very much in

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Primary students at the Listening Center



Kindergarten shares during Circle Time



"Mom! I need a dollar—it's popsicle day!"



A pick-up game of soccer at lunch.



Kindergarten at play!

A Remarkable History continued...

its infancy. As such, there were only limited start-up funds available to launch the school. While subsequent charters received an average of \$250,000 to \$500,000 from state and federal sources, Skyview only received \$30,000. Given what research has shown about charter school funding as compared to their district counterparts, the founders faced a daunting task of securing a facility that would serve as a school. Graciously, through the generous collaborative relationship between the Ramsey family and Bill Feldmeyer, Skyview School, Inc. was able to secure a lease for an apartment building on Virginia Street.

The excitement of being granted the Charter was thrilling, yet daunting at the same time, as there were few precious months before the first day of school and limited resources to pay an army of workers to complete the necessary work on the building. The truth of it is that families stepped forward as a community, to ensure that their children had the educational opportunities they could only dream of at that time. Countless hours of sweat and equity were poured into the site from everyone and we were able to proudly open our doors to students for the first time.

In only three short years, it became evident that in

order for Skyview to be sustainable into the future, the Board would need to embark on an effort to find a permanent home. Our current site was purchased and, once again, the dedicated work of moving a school to a new site began. A remarkable group of committed parent volunteers, employees, and Board members dedicated an entire summer to this massive project.

We opened our new site in July of 1999 with an excitement that was only matched when Skyview had first opened. The school had reached a significant milestone of owning and operating our own facility and had carved out an educational niche that was proving sustainable. Yet, the next ten years would be just as challenging. Those years were spent refining our educational program; recruiting the very best teachers who believed in the school's mission and possessed the talent, work ethic, and creativity to bring it to life; searching for an effective school leader with a well-rounded capacity to fulfill the demanding role; strengthening the school's routines, policies and procedures; enhancing the facilities appearance and functionality; implementing an expansion plan that would position the school to be fiscally viable into the future; and completing a rigorous charter renewal application process to secure another 20-year charter

term. Even though this period in the school's history was not always smooth and free of conflict, the spirit of the school remained vibrant and strong.

Given what we now know about charters from research that has been conducted, the core leaders of the school did not waver from Skyview School's mission or adopt more traditional methods because they were faced with challenging circumstances. Instead, they used those opportunities to grow as an organization and learn from the pitfalls. This intense effort and passion is the reason Skyview has become a model charter school and why we continue to use innovative approaches with wonderful, heart-felt success.

The true story of the school is revealed in its stories and carried in the hearts of the children that we have served, as well as their families who have given so much to bring the vision and hopes of the school to life. It is satisfying to know that the national debate about charters has moved to the next tier to consider the needs of existing charters and how effective models can play a substantial role with revitalizing our nation's schools. Skyview has traveled a lot of miles, overcoming obstacles on its journey and we have learned much about operating and effectively running every facet of a charter school.

Academic Standards & MI Janet Bicknese, Teacher

“What does a straight line look like? Shape your body into a straight line. Can you create a curvy line with your arms? How can you mold your entire body into a curvy snake-like shape? What kind of lines are used to make a circle? Can you shape your legs into a circle? Can you use your entire body to make a circle? Now, how can you make a circle with a partner?”

Is it possible that these challenges are supporting and helping children meet academic standards? Using the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, the children are being exposed to alphabetic awareness which is part of our language arts curriculum. At the same time, they are also building a foundational understanding of required kindergarten geometry content. Both letters and shapes are made from straight and curved lines. The parameters of solving these problems with a partner require the children to use the interpersonal intelligence, thus developing citizenship skills that are addressed within social studies content.

“Let’s make alphabet soup. As we sing and dance the Alphabet Soup song, we’ll take turns putting the alphabet letters I’m passing

out into the soup pot. Then we’ll all stir the pot using a variety of body parts. Save one of your letters so you can name and post it on the magnetic board when we are finished.”

Here we are developing alphabetic awareness. Additionally, we are addressing body part identification, a requirement found in the science standards. In this instance, the musical-rhythmic intelligence is being utilized as the primary learning resource.

“Let’s say and clap the sounds (syllables) heard in each person’s name as we go around the circle. All names and words are made up of sounds. What do you hear?”

Using the musical-rhythmic intelligence, we are addressing phonemic awareness, i.e., hearing the sounds of language, which is foundational to every kindergarten student’s future success in reading.

“Today, we will write the first two letters of the alphabet: capital A and her buddy letter a, and capital B and his buddy letter b. As I draw these letters, notice that the capital A is made of all straight lines, while the buddy a is made of straight and curved lines. Stand-up with me and get ready to write in the air. Put your hands together as we draw each of

these letters. Beginning in the sky, draw a straight line angled down to your foot. Come back up to the sky and draw another straight line down toward your other foot. Now connect these lines together with a straight horizontal line in the middle... Let’s meet in the writing center, so you can practice writing these letters in your My First Alphabet Book.”

Once again, the multiple intelligences have been employed to create a full and varied learning experience. At Skyview School, we provide numerous ways for each child to access the curriculum. While it is important that children learn academic skills including reading and writing - paper, pencils, and books all in hand - each of these examples demonstrates Skyview’s commitment to content acquisition that is achieved through a dynamic learning environment characterized by active, rich, and engaging multiple intelligence-based activities.



Making an “O”

“...The MI have been employed to create a full and varied learning experience.”



And here’s a “Z”!



Kindergarten Self-Portrait



Montezuma's Castle study



Miss Von painting vineyards

Busy in Art! Yvonne Holland, Art Teacher

Hello to all Skyview families! Perhaps you've noticed some of the excellent art pieces on display in our hallways? K and 1st/2nd have been working on self-portraits, using mirrors, some of which are on display near the art room. You will also see some "Campbell's Soup" cans, drawn by 1st/2nd in our study of the cylinder and Andy Warhol. We began this lesson drawing cakes and learning about Wayne Thiebaud.

Third graders studied contour line and Van Gogh. You can see examples of their sunflow-

er still-life pieces done in watercolor. 5/6 painted and wrote reflections about Montezuma's Castle which they visited on a recent field trip. Guest Artist, Lisa Kaiser, came to Skyview to demonstrate techniques in sunflower painting and drawing.

7/8 have been learning about Sumi Painting. You may view their practices of bamboo and butterflies in ink. They are now drawing an Asian style landscape, which they will paint with watercolor. A written Haiku of their own creation will accompany the painting. Guest

Makiko Hirata came to the art room to demonstrate origami and sumi techniques, and tell about her childhood in Japan. It's been a busy quarter in the art room!

I took a plein air workshop this summer with painter, Richard McDaniel. I enjoyed painting in the field and honing my pastel skills in the lush wine country of Santa Rosa, California.

Come hear our band, Iona, as we open for the Scottish Band, Old Blind Dogs, at Trinity Presbyterian Church on October 8th!

Cheers!

3-4 News Ashley Fine & Kathryn Dominguez, Teachers

During the first quarter in the Intermediate 3/4 classrooms we have launched a Roald Dahl literature study. We kicked off the year with all of the students reading Dahl's The Magic Finger as well as biographies to learn about the life and history of this treasured author. We used The Magic Finger to introduce the students to several reading strategies that we will continue to focus on throughout the school year: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and

summarizing. These four strategies have also become the initial focus of the students' book clubs. The students are taking on various jobs or literacy tasks within their literature study groups, thus creating a clear purpose for reading and a stronger focus to discussions about literature.

As we near the end of the first quarter several students are reading their third or fourth Roald Dahl books. Students have had the opportunity to identify themes in Dahl's books

and to find commonalities among his stories. As the students become more skilled at applying various comprehension strategies we hope to see the level of their discussions elevated, a broadening of their vocabulary knowledge, and a deepening of their engagement with literature as they realize that strong readers do much more than simply sound out words correctly.

As we engage in literary discussions and practice a variety of reading

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Roald Dahl was born in Llanddaff, Wales on September 13, 1916.

Only boy of six children.

A language he could speak was English

Loved licorice bootlaces.

Dahl went to several boarding schools.

Dahl was a pilot in World War II.

An author of lots of great books.

He was six feet and five inches tall.

Lived until November 23, 1990.

-A biographical acrostic poem about Roald Dahl by Ishmael Rogers.

3-4 News, continued

strategies with the students, our goal is that they will realize metacognitively that true reading involves activating prior knowledge, making comparisons, evaluating stories and information, reflecting on and drawing conclusions from text, and ultimately making connections to their own

lives and events in the world around them.

Students were given the opportunity to write their own stories as if they had a magic finger to change something in the world. Through the literature study they were able to mirror some of Dahl's imagination and creativity to write rich

stories. Clever, humorous and inspiring stories such as those told by Roald Dahl in his books are helpful in that they capture the hearts and minds of children, thus opening pathways of learning and excitement about literature.



Artistic expression of the literature study: Roald Dahl's *The Magic Finger*



Book Club discussions ensue in the 3-4

Living Arizona! Lauren Cain, Int. 5-6 Teacher

This quarter has been full of adventure for the 5th/6th grade intermediate class! We have been to many incredible sites around the state during our intensive study of the Ancient cultures of the Southwest. We began our adventures in August when our class made their way to Montezuma's Castle and Well. The students sat and sketched in an amazing art lesson with Ms. Von, dipped their hats into the cool water of the irrigation canals at the well, and witnessed an incredible petroglyph panel near Sedona. After a long hot day of exploring these ruins, the class jumped into a swimming hole near the petroglyph site to cool off. It was a fantastic day.

As the main piece of this quarter's study, our class has been focusing on putting together research pro-

jects on a culture of their choice from around the Southwest. These visits around the state have been invaluable in giving the students a new perspective on what they are studying! In between our two big trips, the students crafted beautiful rain sticks, read a Reader's Workshop novel about a Hopi boy who travels back in time to Walnut Canyon, and worked on centers that increased their understanding of the wonderful state we live in.

Our second big field trip of the year just occurred! This epic three day trip to Northern Arizona involved visiting Wupatki National Monument, Sunset Crater, and Walnut Canyon National Monument. The students were tired after three days of learning and traveling around Northern Arizona,

but it was well worth the time. Due to these trips, our class culture has developed into a trusting, safe, and open community. The students all work so well together, and enjoy learning together. I have been extraordinarily impressed with how these students behave in the classroom and out in the world. They are a great representation of what the students are like here at Skyview and I have had multiple people come up to me on our field trips and comment on how awesome they are! Our class is looking forward to learning more about Arizona's modern history when we return from the Fall Break.



5-6 at Wupatki National Monument near Flagstaff



Miss Von and students during an art study at Wupatki



Center work in Primary

“Scientific literacy is vital to our society and the world as a whole.”

“...I look back at how far the children have come and am absolutely amazed.”

Scientific Literacy in Primary Emeline Phipps, Teacher

Recently my son asked me what life would be like if he couldn't ask “why”. “Well,” I replied, “it might be quieter, but you wouldn't be the smart boy you are”. I am sure we have all experienced a moment, probably many, when every answer you have given has been followed with “why”, until you finally run out of answers and realize your child has just tapped your knowledge on a given subject. This is one of the reasons I love teaching: the challenge of keeping up and asking “why” too.

This quarter the Primary has focused on the human body, and we have continually asked “why” and “how”! Why do we breathe and how does it work? Why do our hearts beat and when do they beat the

fastest? Why do we need to eat? Why can't we eat candy and cake for every meal? Why do we have bones, joints, and muscles? And in our most serious scientific voices, why do we poop, burp, and fart?

We ask these questions in the name of science and scientific literacy. As defined by the National Science Education Standards, “Scientific literacy means that a person can ask, find, or determine answers to questions derived from curiosity about everyday experiences. It means that a person has the ability to describe, explain, and predict natural phenomena...” The standards go on to explain scientific literacy in more detailed terms, then concludes by stating, “It expands and deepens over a lifetime, not just during the years

in school. But the attitudes and values established toward science in the early years will shape a person's development of scientific literacy as an adult.”

As we ask these questions, and will continue to ask in the quarters to come, we peak our curiosity. We researched, experimented, and investigated our daily habits and ourselves. Scientific literacy is vital to our society and the world as a whole. Decisions we make everyday effect our world, our bodies, and those around us. To be scientifically literate is to be conscious of our actions. Every child in the Primary has proven this quarter to be scientifically literate, and as we continue our studies, their literacy will deepen and grow.

1st Quarter in Music Steph Griffin, Teacher

Kindergarten: As we wrap up the 1st quarter of music classes in kindergarten, I look back at how far the children have come and am absolutely amazed. We began the year learning the different kinds of voices we have – especially our

singing voices! At Skyview School, our music program primarily follows the methods of *Orff-Schulwerk*, believing children should not only be singing, playing instruments, chanting, and improvising, but they should be moving, too...

all the time. When we learn a new song or chant, we don't simply sit and sing, we add movement. Some movement is choreographed, some is spontaneous, and some is cre-

Continued on next page...

Teachable Moments Continued...

ated as a class, individually, or with a partner. When our bodies are aligned with our voices – that's when the magic happens.

Primary When it comes to learning, first and second graders are sponges! We have learned the solfege syllables so-mi, and most recently, la. Students are able to identify these pitches in relation to each other, read them on a music staff, and demonstrate the hand signs associated with each one. Solfege is “the sign-language of singing.” Our primary students have also been enjoying playing many instruments in class, especially our non-pitched family of skins, metals, and woods. Using the rhythmic alphabet, students can identify, write, and create using quarter notes, (ta), eighth notes, (ti-ti), and a quarter rest.

Intermediate 3/4 Our intermediate students have displayed incredible musicianship this year. Seeing the growth from last year has been an eye-opening experience as a 2nd year teacher here at Skyview. We have spent the first quarter reviewing and playing our Orff

instruments – xylophones, metalophones, glockenspiels, and our non-pitched percussion instruments, skins, metals, and woods. We have spent a great deal of class adding instrumental accompaniments and movement to songs and chants. The process is the most important part of a lesson, but in music, the performance is the most rewarding part for kids. From “Deedle-Deedle Dumping,” to “Tongo,” there hasn't been a dull moment in the 3/4 music classrooms. These kids can do *anything* and I look forward to showcasing them in our celebration this December.

Intermediate 5/6 As students head to *Wupat-ki*, they are looking forward to performing a musical piece entitled, “Listen to the Rain.” We began this year by singing, playing instruments, dancing, and chanting. A few weeks ago, we took a step out of the normal routine and built an instrument. After the pounding hammers and the messy paint, each child proudly held his or her rainstick – this magical instrument made with card-

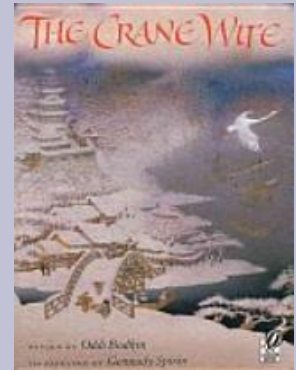
board tubes, rice or pebbles, and a whole lot of nails! After an intense afternoon rainstorm in Prescott, one student said, “I think we're making it rain!” This project taught students the science behind this strange instrument, the work it takes to make one, and how incredibly beautiful cardboard, nails, and corn sound together.

Middle School 7/8

“*The Crane Wife*” means two things to a Skyview Middle School student. First, it tells the tragic Japanese folktale of a poor sailmaker and a crane. Second, “*The Crane Wife*” is the title of a 2006 album by the indie-rock band, *The Decemberists*.

An elegant and beautifully written story with artwork that will give you chills, *The Crane Wife*, by Odds Bodkin and Gennady Spirin, is a children's book that I highly recommend adding to your family library.

Come see the middle school students perform our rendition of “*The Crane Wife*” at their Celebration of Learning on **November 17th, 2011!**



Book Recommendation:
The Crane Wife
By Odds Bodkin and
Gennady Spirin



Album Recommendation:
The Crane Wife
By The Decemberists

The Advisory Pam Robbins, Middle School Teacher



Middle School students work together to make our grounds beautiful.



Group work in the classroom

Middle school students have many needs and to assist them in finding their own pathway to helping themselves and others, each Monday and Wednesday we start our mornings with a Circle of Power and Respect, or CPR. This ties into our theme, Discovering the Human Spirit, and our three guiding questions, Who am I?, Who are we?, and Who are they?. In *The Advisory Book*, Linda Crawford identifies four basic needs that can be addressed in the Morning Meeting: autonomy, competence, relationship, and fun.

Each message, greeting, sharing, and activity is carefully woven into 30 different topics such as making choices, managing money, hobbies, and communica-

tion skills. Adolescents want independence and these topics are carefully scaffolded for the students to use appropriate judgments while helping them to stand on their own. The activities provided at the end of each morning meeting incorporate feeling competent, problem solving, and having fun. Researchers see the role of play as a central part of neurological development. Play, when woven into the curriculum, helps develop students who are interested in life and are more engaged in their learning.

It is during this CPR time that they learn and practice the skills necessary for socialization including being accepted and excluded. When they walk out into

the hallway and onto the playground they are bringing with them their strategies to put into practice.

The building, reinforcing, and solidifying of the personal intelligences are key for our middle school students. As they push through their adolescence to their adulthood, they need adults to be consistent in modeling the behaviors we want our children to develop so they can thrive in and out of school. They move from a self-centric focus or Who am I?, to select their closest friendships, Who are they?, to defining who they are, Who are we? We, the adults in their lives, have to be sure that we carefully guide and assist them every step of the way.

A Blue Planet Ashley Fine, Teacher



The River—by Ashley Fine



Miss Ashley and Astronaut Ricky Arnold

Upon returning from Project WET foundations global water education conference: Sustaining the Blue Planet, I find that I am at once humbled, grateful, invigorated, and inspired. My experience in Bozeman, MT was nothing short of remarkable. It was thrilling to be one of more than 200 attendees representing over 40 countries from around the globe. Throughout the week, I attended dozens of presentations addressing a wide array

of topics and I was deeply honored to share with such a diverse audience some of the water education efforts that are happening in my own country and state.

At this conference I met talented, inspiring artists, remarkable thinkers and researchers, gifted educators, philanthropists, and innovative project developers involved in countless health, environmental recovery, and education projects around the world. The dialogue was

rich and thought-provoking. As a teacher, the knowledge I gained makes me both thankful and inspired to challenge myself as a teacher to provide my students with more opportunities for authentic scientific investigations and an increasingly student-centered, inquiry-based curriculum.

A moment that stands out in particular was meeting Ricky Arnold, an astronaut from the International Space Station. Arnold gave a brilliant

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A Blue Planet, continued

presentation that featured incredible photos of our planet as seen from space. Two things were deeply striking to me when seeing images of Earth from that vantage point:

1. Earth is a remarkably watery planet with its oceans, clouds and polar ice caps. This is significant because where there is water, existing at the right temperature, there is life.

2. The Earth has a fragile sliver of gases surrounding it known as our atmosphere. This blanket of gases makes Earth habitable to a vast array of life forms by protecting them from the sun, controlling the planet's temperature and providing oxygen to drive metabolic processes. What was striking was what an insignificantly *thin and fragile* ribbon of protective and nourishing gases our atmosphere actually is.

During Arnold's presentation, an audience member asked him what he thought we should be do-

ing in education to prepare young students for the future. Without hesitation his response was, "stop teaching kids just to fill in bubbles on tests." Arnold made a call for teaching children to think critically, problem solve, take action and to make science a VERB in our classrooms.

This conversation reminded me of my awesome responsibility as an educator. My moral obligations as a teacher span far beyond preparing students to achieve academic benchmarks. My true charge is to guide them to activate their thinking, to discover new and varied approaches to problems, to work with others toward common goals, (even when it is difficult to get along), and to invent, question, explore and communicate their thinking. Indeed, students need these tools to pass exams and to be healthy, productive citizens and to lead rich,

meaningful lives as individuals. But, perhaps most importantly, our children need these tools because they will have the enormous responsibility of sustaining and protecting two of our most vital resources, air and water, on this tiny, uniquely livable planet.

The creative ingenuity I encountered at the conference gave me hope and inspiration. The doctors, teachers, artists and engineers reminded me of many of my students. It takes all of these kinds of individuals to pioneer new projects and ideas that will allow us to tackle the human, economic and ecological concerns that we face.

Stepping away from my daily routine to mingle with scientists and do-gooders from around the world makes it easy to be swept up in a bubble of optimistic idealism. However, as the excitement fades into

everyday work, I will strive to keep this encouragement alive in my teaching and in the way I work along side my colleagues and community members. I will strive to remember the true meaning and importance of my role as a teacher amidst the limitations and pressures (both real and imagined) that impact our educational system today.

I am grateful for the opportunities I had in Bozeman to sink deeply into the critical educational issues of our time as they relate to water availability and quality. I am also blessed to have had the opportunity to hear the thoughts and imaginings of a special man who has seen our watery planet from a great distance. Meeting astronaut Ricky Arnold and seeing the beautiful images he gathered in space were powerful reminders of the amazing opportunity and awesome responsibility it is to be an educator.

Lunchtime!

