INNOVATION
The Evolution of the School Library – Gaynor’s SMART Lab

Integrating Science, Math, Art, Research, and Technology Under One Roof to Build Real Life Problem-Solvers

The concept of building Gaynor’s SMART Lab started with the simple question: What is the library of the future? Traditionally defined as a repository for books, the standard library model that knowledge is stagnant and must be stored in a finite space is something we wanted to break. Today, we know that access to information using search engines to pull data from the Internet seems infinite. So much so, that the task of accessing information requires the higher level skills of culling the information and critically analyzing the results to not only answer a question, but to improve upon it. Gone are the days of grabbing the Encyclopedia Britannica off the shelf to get a specific answer to a specific question. We want our students to be innovators, problem-solvers, and agenda setters for the future. Instead of building a place to store information, we built a SMART Lab to teach children how to improve the world around them.

If you give a classroom of students a project to build Native American longhouses and provide them with the same materials (shoe box, popsicle sticks, and glue), there will be little variation in the results. The students would have a hope that we can inspire students who can go out and build a deeper appreciation of Native American life, but would also extend students’ understanding of other cultures, as well as their own.

Developing children’s critical thinking skills at an early age is essential to meeting the demands of today’s dynamic curricula. These skills are also required by our evolving workplace. We need future leaders who are not only socially action minded, but are also innovative in their approach to problem solving. I am hopeful that we can inspire students who can go out and build a safer, caring, and more sustainable world. Giving students the skills and experiences offered in the SMART Lab will not only help to prepare them to manage their paths to success, but it also will embolden them to create their own paths.
Building a Stronger Community:

Gaynor’s South Building Expansion Continues to Unfold

When the doors of the South Building opened at the start of the school year, architectural drawings vanished and new opportunities emerged. The staircase outside the South Cafeteria, which had been closed off for construction, led to an entire new floor of Middle School classrooms, complete with a Science Lab and innovative Science, Math, Art, Research, and Technology (SMART) Lab. The cranes that had been spotted outside the building left their mark with a unique enclosed rooftop field house for year-round sports activities. Stephen Gaynor School students now have nearly 80,000 square feet in which to learn, grow, and reach their full potential.

In 2009, the School seized an amazing opportunity to purchase the historic Cuerenmont Stables and Carriage House on West 89th Street and began planning an expansion that would add nearly 50,000 square feet to the campus. The construction unfolded in phases, beginning with the opening of the Early Childhood campus. The construction unfolded in phases, beginning with the opening of the Early Childhood campus. The last phase of this exciting expansion project in the South Building will be the Performing Arts Center, consisting of a full-size stage, space for nearly 300 seats, and the home of our exceptional music department. We look forward to seeing our talented students shine on stage!

We are grateful to all in our community who helped make the idea of expanding our campus a reality. Thank you for donating your time and resources. Not only are we now able to provide an individualized education for more students, but we also have state-of-the-art facilities designed to ensure an optimal learning environment for them all.

All Gaynor students – from Early Childhood through Middle School – are enjoying the rooftop field house, a structure unlike any other in New York City schools. At its peak, the interior height is 20 feet, with a gentle slope to maximize light in the space. With more than 3,600 square feet, the field house provides additional space for PE and recess, and is also ideal for after school classes, such as flag football. Max Silverman, Lower School student, shared his thoughts on the new space.

“My favorite thing about the field house is how soft the grass is,” he exclaimed. “In flag football, it feels like you’re in a real arena, like real football players. It’s just amazing!”

The South Building expansion was completed in phases, beginning with the opening of the Early Childhood campus in 2011, then two floors of the new Middle School in 2012 (including Digital Art, Research, and Technology (SMART) Lab). The cranes that had been spotted outside the building left their mark with a unique enclosed rooftop field house for year-round sports activities.

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Technology in the 21st Century

By Chris Koble, Lower School Technology Teacher

...and Middle School Technology Integrators (myself about in their homerooms. Lower School and Technology with what students are studying Maker-Tinker-DIY project space that marries center of this strategy is the SMART Lab - a for success here at Gaynor and beyond. At the SMART Lab as separate learning endeavors. We believe that they consist and that learning through making allows for an in-depth exploration of a particular topic.

So far this year, Middle School students have been busy flexing their creative muscles with a variety of projects ranging from creating ancient artifacts to support the study of archaeology and descriptive writing in Ms. Glazer/Ms. Finn about video production and green screen ‘s homeroom, to learning Glazer/Ms. Finn's homeroom, to learning...
At the beginning of the year, Ms. Rachlin told her Middle School art students: “Art isn’t in your hands; it’s in your head.” She wanted students to value their individual talents and creativity, no matter how sophisticated or simplistic their final products may be. Hence, individual expression was the theme in her art class. Similar to Ms. Hochman’s class, students in Ms. Rachlin’s art class were given assignments designed to prompt their innovative thinking and generate their own art projects. For example, some Middle School students used technology applications to enhance their skills in graphic design, recreated scenes from literature, constructed sculptures that were architectural in nature, sketched couture fashion for the runway, and painted murals and still life pieces. “It’s all about how you relate to the materials,” said Ms. Rachlin, who was proud of how her students garnered their inner passions to create beautiful art.
**Drama Update**

**Bringing a Legend to Life:** Lower School Students Perform

Throughout the fall, students in Ms. Fug’s class created an original play to be performed for their peers in the Orange Cluster in January. Rehearsals have allowed students to refine their acting skills, build confidence in their ability to be creative, engage in collaborative teamwork, and express themselves as individuals. Kudos to our young thespians!

**Middle School Drama Update:** Learning Self-Expression and Revisiting History through Plays

Ms. Pfluger-Moore’s (aka Ms. Kristen) Blue Cluster drama classes recently studied and rehearsed one of two plays scheduled to be performed in January for the entire Blue Cluster: Eight Angry Asians or The People of Clarendon County. Both plays provided insights into historical events and simultaneously tied into the larger study of diversity and identity, which was adopted schoolwide this year. Eight Angry Asians allowed students to gain an understanding of the challenges faced in our criminal justice system, including the way prejudice and quick judgements can be detrimental to the process of receiving a fair trial.

Conversely, Green Cluster students worked to become play-writers. Students honed in on their writing, creative, and character-building skills in order to write a short original play about a topic of their choice. Examples included economic hardship, friendship, and sibling rivalry. The plays were presented to the entire Green Cluster in November. Bravo to all Middle School actors and play-writers!

**Music Update**

**Lower School Students Make Melodies**

Whether in the Pink or Red Cluster with Ms. Robinson (aka Ms. Amelia) or Ms. Patti, or the Orange, Yellow, or Silver Cluster with Ms. Shuppy, all Lower School students explored their musical talents using multi-sensory tactics. Students learned about rhythm and beat, which helped them develop expressive movement with their bodies. As a group, in trios, duos, and individually, students used solfege to encourage pitch matching and voice control. In order to become better musicians, students also learned musicianship skills, or the importance of focusing and listening to achieve success in music.

Musical connection was a big theme in Ms. Patti’s class, where students were encouraged to connect music from class to prior experiences outside of school. Building a sense of community was central to Ms. Shuppy’s class, where all students participated in group games and songs. Students also learned to work with one another to perform as an ensemble. The culmination of the semester came during the Winter Arts Festival when each cluster performed songs that they had rehearsed since October.

**Middle School Students Show Off Their Talents for Peers**

Building from their years of musical experiences in Lower School, Middle School students in Ms. Shuppy’s class delved deeper into the study of music theory and instruments. Green Cluster students spent eight-weeks in music class, improving their music skills while working in an ensemble. Tailored to their level and understanding of basic music theory (rhythm, reading notes, musical terminology), students learned melodies on pianos and xylophones, which they bravely performed for their cluster to complete their music classes.

Blue Cluster students enjoyed music for the semester, taking advantage of the time to build upon the skills they mastered while also performing as an ensemble. Each student chose an instrument to focus on in addition to reading notes on both the treble and bass clef and playing chords on the piano and guitar. Those interested in rhythm and beat particularly liked performing rhythms on drums, bucket drums, and playing melodies on boomackers. The grand finale? These students also braved an end of semester performance for their peers!
Many Middle School students in the Green and Blue Clusters tackled Graphic Design and Photography with Mr. Gaynor (Green Cluster’s fine arts cycle; Blue Cluster’s new fine arts elective). In this class, students learned how to create a balance between design and technology. The curriculum began with a foundation of the history of photography and graphic design and then began integrating technology. Design principles, creative thinking, and problem-solving techniques were a huge part of this course, providing students a strong foundation to design their own projects. For their final project, students created commercial food labels and music posters. Check it out!

**Middle School Students thrive in Graphic Design & Photography**

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After a slow start to the season, the girls’ volleyball team, coached by Ms. Fung, Ms. Moraz, and Ms. Ngau, found its stride and had some electrifying matches. The girls demonstrated a great deal of support for each other throughout each and every game. While the team’s record does not reflect the overall growth and performance of the team, the program has continued to gain momentum in only its second year. Ms. Moraz said, “Our team members applied their work ethic and love for the sport to improve their volleyball skills, at each practice and game. We’re very excited to continue to build our program next year!”

**Girls’ Volleyball Dives into the Second Season**
Methods integrated throughout the Lower School years are essential to help students move towards the abstract, more technologically inclined Middle School classes.

For example, Pink Cluster students often use magnet boards during therapy for spelling dictation. Each board consists of a color-coded alphabet on one half to distinguish consonants from vowels. Teachers will say a word and students will choose the corresponding letters to spell the word on the other half of the board. Then, they confer with a friend and top underneath each letter to check the corresponding sound.

Similarly, Silver Cluster students manipulate color-coded, foamplace-value discs to help with basic math skills, like identifying place-value to multi-digit multiplication problems. Ms. Sandler, Silver Cluster Head Teacher, explained, “Teaching of creating different sets of numbers benefits students because they can see and touch the process, rather than simply writing numbers with a pencil.” Students can group the discs to see how 3 x 10 = 30. Ms. Fox, Yellow Cluster Head Teacher, who gives her students Hershey Kisses to skip count, said, “It’s all about finding materials that motivate the students.”

The examples are endless, but the tangible methods integrated throughout the Lower School years are essential to help students move towards the abstract, more technologically inclined Middle School classes.

September 10, 2015 marked the first day of school, but it was also the launch of a new six-day schedule for the oldest Middle School students – the Blue Cluster. This innovative approach to students’ learning provides the Blue Cluster with fresh opportunities to pursue individual interests. The schedule rotates around a set and consistent Wednesday, one of the most important days of learning in the week, when students have the opportunity to consolidate and apply skills to prepare them for a High School curriculum. “Real World Wednesday” is innately student-centered, providing the space students need to learn and grow.

Over a six-day period, students participate in the traditional five-day school week, with one day (Wednesday) consistently providing an opportunity for students to apply the skills they’ve learned to real-life settings. “I really like the change in our schedule. It brings a different kind of learning into the school,” expressed Middle School student, Jay Siegal. There is time on Wednesdays for remediation, collaborative project-based work, including dedicated SMART Lab time, and student advocacy (see more about student advocacy on page 25). Project-based learning is a dynamic approach to teaching where students actively explore real-world problems and synthesize their learning into hands-on projects, giving them the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in life.

Every student participates in one project-based learning course per semester, Gaynor Construction Project. Where students use their math skills to develop various types of housing for a real location in New York City, Human Education, an approach to teaching and learning that addresses the global consequences of our lifestyles, behaviors, and the systems we support.

In addition, the six-day schedule allows time for students to explore their passions through writing-based electives that rotate on a trimester basis. Students choose courses such as: Public Speaking and Debate, Hollywood vs. History, Sustainability Through Technology, Creative Writing, Geography: No Boundaries, Human Behavior: Holocaust, Unsung Heroes of the Social Movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and The Personal and The Political: The Work of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.

Furthermore, students are given the opportunity to participate in one student club of their choice for the entire year, without diminishing the time spent on core academics. Examples include: Youth Animal Protectors’ Club, Gay Straight Alliance, Cranston Times Newspaper Staff, and Multi-media Club. Student Council is the exception, as there are three cycles throughout the year, and Student Council members may also participate in another club. If a student is not interested in participating in a club, he/she attends study skills during the time set aside for clubs during the day’s schedule.

“Real World Wednesday,” and new Blue Cluster schedule are a success!
ANDREW PRASARN
Science Specialist

WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER? I spent ten years working at science museums as both an educator and an exhibit developer. This experience helped shape my teaching style—hands-on, interactive, and highly engaging. In many ways, Special Education students benefit more from this multi-sensory, experience-based approach. I think it’s a great fit for me, and hopefully for the students as well.

WHAT SCHOOL DID YOU GRADUATE FROM? Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Go Dutch!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER? My favorite thing about teaching is what I call the “A-ha moment”: seeing a student’s face light up when they finally understand a difficult concept and that they can apply it going forward.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TYPE OF MUSIC? I enjoy all genres but my favorites would be rock, hip-hop, and classical.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE COFFEE OR TEA? Iced coffee. Definitely iced coffee!

IF YOU COULD TIME TRAVEL, WHERE WOULD YOU GO? The Middle East.

TELL US ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF. I have lived in four states and two countries.

ANDREAS HOCHEMAN
Lower School Art Teacher

WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER? Anyone who knows me, knows I’ve never done anything the traditional way. My love for creative, unique experiences has influenced my career choice. This is what led me towards working on my Master’s in Art Therapy. Not only is Art Therapy innovative and creative, but it allows me to surround myself with those who thrive on thinking differently, including kids.

WHAT SCHOOL DID YOU GRADUATE FROM? I graduated from the University of Illinois for my undergraduate degree in Sociology and The Adler School of Professional Psychology for my Master’s in Counseling Psychology: Art Therapy.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER? There is nothing more rewarding then having the chance to see students grow over time. I am constantly impressed by how children relate to art and I am always learning from them. The moment something clicks for a child brings me so much joy.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TYPE OF MUSIC? I love all music but my favorites would be the '60s, 90's alternative/pop songs or anything by T-Swift.

DO YOU PREFER COFFEE OR TEA? Coffee. Definitely coffee!

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE QUOTE OR MANTRA YOU LIVE BY? “Do it for the kids.”

TELL US ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF. I love all music but my favorites would be the '60s, 90's alternative/pop songs or anything by T-Swift.

MICHAEL OCASIO
Middle School Assistant Teacher

WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER? When I was a substitute teacher, I saw a lot of students struggling academically and not getting the support and services they needed from their teachers. I wanted to be a part of the solution and be a teacher who was trained in Special Education to become a resource for all students.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER? The “A-ha moment”: seeing a student’s face light up when they finally understand a difficult concept and that they can apply it going forward.

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TELL US ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF. I love all music but my favorites would be the '60s, 90's alternative/pop songs or anything by T-Swift.
Traditions run deep at Stephen Gaynor School and there is none more cherished than the annual Apple Picking field trip! To celebrate the beginning of the fall season, Lower and Middle School students and faculty made the familiar trek to Demarest Farms for a fun-filled day of apple picking, tractor rides, and a picnic lunch in the midst of the pumpkin patch. The Orchard Store provided another sweet treat with homemade pumpkin donuts, for Gators who wanted to ensure they captured the full experience of all the farm had to offer.

Fall Fest interactive dance party made this Fall Fest a memorable one for all! Gooey slime experiments, mounds of pumpkin foam, and the school, the gym, where a creepy chemistry show awaited them. Early Childhood students transformed into animals, princesses, and superheroes as they proudly paraded around the Middle School halls. Lower School students headed to the depths of the orchard to explore the Fall Fest, and next door neighbor, St. Gregory’s. During the Thanksgiving season, St. Gregory’s provides meals to families in need. Proceeds from a student bake sale went to support the cost of perishable food items for a warm holiday meal. In addition, students wanted to bring more attention to Gaynor’s Thanksgiving food drive, so they decorated collection bins and placed them strategically on every floor to boost visibility and awareness of this important donation effort. Along with St. Gregory’s, students from our entire school donated non-perishable food to support people in the community who could use a helping hand.

In conjunction with the holiday season, Gaynor Gators took a moment to reflect on how they could help the broader community. In November, Community Service Club students, under the guidance of Ms. Felt and Ms. Nielsen, decided to host a bake sale fundraiser and food drive for longtime community partner, and next door neighbor, St. Gregory’s. During the Thanksgiving season, St. Gregory’s provides meals to families in need. Proceeds from a student bake sale went to support the cost of perishable food items for a warm holiday meal. In addition, students wanted to bring more attention to Gaynor’s Thanksgiving food drive, so they decorated collection bins and placed them strategically on every floor to boost visibility and awareness of this important donation effort. Along with St. Gregory’s, students from our entire school donated non-perishable food to support people in the community who could use a helping hand.

After School Community Service Club Supports Holiday Food Drive

The Community Learning Center’s (CLC) annual basketball tournament was held on Saturday, December 5th. Named in memory of Ms. Jackie Long, Gaynor’s longtime Director of Admissions who passed away in 2012, the Jackie Long Memorial Tournament brought Gaynor faculty, parents, alumni, and friends together for a morning of friendly competition and fundraising.

The CLC is a free after-school reading program for public school students in our community. This annual fundraising event is critical to ensure the program can continue to serve neighborhood children who truly need the extra support. Co-Directors Ms. Adlin and Ms. Evans are thankful for the continued generosity from supporters that helps maintain the program’s strength. “We have more blings than ever coming through the program, and families are approaching the public schools to inquire about how to enroll their children, even before the schools are flagging children as ‘at risk,’” said Ms. Adlin. This year, eight teams came out strong to compete and support the admirable cause.

Spectators and players alike enjoyed fellowship off the court over pizza, baked goods, and a raffle. The tournament came down to the last game. Defending champions, From 3 Portland and The Coaches played hard, but The Coaches raised their arms in victory when the final whistle blew, bringing the trophy back to Gaynor. With the support of our Gaynor community, we raised more than $8,000, making this the most successful fundraising event for the CLC! Ms. Adlin and Ms. Evans were thrilled with the tournament results. Thank you to everyone who participated in the event, especially Co-Directors Ms. Adlin and Ms. Evans, for continuing to lead the charge of improving reading outcomes for students in our community.

3-on-3 Basketball Tournament Supports Gaynor’s CLC

Students in our After School Community Service Club were tired of seeing the non-descript recycling signs provided by New York City’s Department of Sanitation posted around the school. Not much recycling was happening because students could not easily decipher what could and could not be recycled. “Our students decided to make a change,” said Ms. Nielsen, Community Service Club Advisor. “They researched what items could and could not be recycled, looked around our buildings to see what materials were often thrown away that could be recycled, created new, detailed, and informative signs, and replaced the Department of Sanitation ones.” As a result, Gaynor’s facilities are both cleaner and greener. Community Service projects often help the greater community, but this year, saving the planet started within Gaynor’s own halls.

Cleaner and Greener: After School Community Service Club Revamps Recycling

During the annual Parents’ Association Fall Fest, Early Childhood students transformed into animals, princesses, and superheroes as they proudly paraded around the Middle School halls. Lower School students headed to the depths of the orchard to explore the Fall Fest, and next door neighbor, St. Gregory’s. During the Thanksgiving season, St. Gregory’s provides meals to families in need. Proceeds from a student bake sale went to support the cost of perishable food items for a warm holiday meal. In addition, students wanted to bring more attention to Gaynor’s Thanksgiving food drive, so they decorated collection bins and placed them strategically on every floor to boost visibility and awareness of this important donation effort. Along with St. Gregory’s, students from our entire school donated non-perishable food to support people in the community who could use a helping hand.

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From Popsicle Sticks to 3D Printers, Gaynor’s Innovative SMART Lab Fosters Problem-Solving Skills

STEAM, STEMA, tinkering space, maker space – these are all buzz words in the world of innovative education. At Gaynor, we’ve taken elements from all of these concepts and incorporated them into our new Science, Math, Art, Research, and Technology (SMART) Lab.

The SMART Lab wasn’t always intended to be so. Originally, the space was slated as a Research and Writing Center – a library of the future. But it soon became clear that in order for students to succeed in the 21st century, we needed to design a trans-disciplinary space where they can be engaged in exploration, problem-solving, and project-based learning. The SMART Lab allows teachers to take curriculum from a 2D level to a 3D level, inspiring students along the way. “We see the lab as an area of opportunity for students to expand their horizons and open their minds to new opportunities,” explained Mr. LeWinter, Director of Technology. “The end results may look different – from robotics and design, to video editing or 3D printing – but the goal is the same: creative exploration.”

Much thought and research was put into what we now proudly call our SMART Lab. Administrators, teachers, and specialists participated in bi-weekly brainstorming sessions, as well as site visits to schools and colleges with successful design and tinker labs to examine the spaces and curricula. Determining the layout of the room to ensure creative work flow (e.g., collaborative project space and individual space) and the specific materials that would flexibly work well within the space, and more importantly, pique students’ creativity, required thoughtful time and planning. Materials like cardboard, foam, Legos, zip ties, popsicle sticks, bamboo poles, repurposed plastics, modeling clay, circuitry components, and twine fill the shelves, which are surrounded by tables that fold down to make additional floor space for student work, as needed.

But most importantly, there was deep discussion on the ideal philosophy of the space. The emphasis is on being bold enough to try, not whether or not students have accurate hypotheses. A critical aspect of the SMART Lab is its ability to be a safe haven for our students where they are encouraged to problem-solve, fail, learn from their mistakes, try again, and succeed. This idea requires close collaboration with teachers to ensure the space is being used for the right types of activities and projects, incorporating science, math, art, research, and technology.

This summer, teachers, specialists, and administrators participated in vital professional development to ensure optimal use of the SMART Lab. They took part in the “SMART Lab Challenge” where each team was tasked with developing something in a short amount of time, forcing them to experience firsthand how creative problem-solving works within the confines of the lab. This experience better informed their lesson plans and allowed them to see what type of resource the lab could become. “It’s all about connecting the use of the materials to enhance what you’re teaching,” explained Ms. Schostak, Writing and Social Studies Coordinator, who has helped teachers this fall facilitate low- and high-tech projects in the lab.

Ms. Paterson/Ms. Janczyk’s Orange Cluster students’ inaugural SMART Lab visit centered on a low-tech assignment – they had to “save Fred.” Fred, a gummy worm, was positioned on top of a life raft (AKA a cup) and had to be dressed in a life jacket (AKA wire), which was stuck under the life raft, to become safe. The students were armed with two paper clips and were not allowed to use any technology in the room. Mr. Koble, Lower School Technology Teacher, designed the experiment to help foster creative problem-solving. “I was looking to gauge how students worked together to deconstruct a problem. It helped me understand how to get them to the next level of creative problem-solving.” Ms. Paterson added, “It was important for students to understand that technology isn’t just about iPads and key boards. The goal is to work on problem-solving first, then weave in technology.”

Middle School Technology Teacher, Mr. Russ, encourages his students to see every aspect of the SMART Lab. “It’s typical for students to circle the room, grab and go, build, experiment, break, damage, get dirty, and have fun exploring and solving problems,” he expounded. Blue Cluster students taking his Sustainability through Technology elective have been exploring different technologies that can be used for environmental causes such as energy, gardening, and recycling. They used their time in the lab to build three different types of gardens using recycled materials, repurposed materials, and a hydroponic system to compare/contrast the best system to grow plants in an indoor environment.

Providing an opportunity and innovative space for students to tinker, explore, and problem-solve is essential to their growth. Gaynor’s new SMART Lab affords our students the ability to do just that and we believe the benefits will be seen for years to come.
Color Like Me: EC Students Explore Skin Tones

During social studies, Early Childhood students in Ms. Saad/Ms. Gerhardt’s and Ms. Chan/Ms. Young’s classes studied how people are alike, but not exactly the same. They read the book *The Skin You Live In,* by Michael Tyler and *The Colors of Us,* by Karen Katz, to better understand the varying skin tones people have all over the world, and learned that people are not simply white, black, brown, or olive. With the help of their teachers, students were able to find their own skin tone by mixing together a combination of eight shades of paint, including ebony, chocolate, cinnamon, almond, caramel, peach, olive, and beige. Students realized their skin was not one color, but two or three colors! Once they found the perfect match, each student traced his/her hand, and then painted it with the appropriate colors. Finally, they compared skin tones with a friend and noted that while some were similar in color, none of them were exactly the same, and most importantly that skin tone does not reveal anything about an individual’s personality or interests.

Who Did What?: Pink Cluster Students Combine Writing and Social Studies for a Fun Exercise

In preparation for their trip to the local police station, Ms. Rothbart/Ms. Sprung’s class combined writing and social studies curriculums to create “Who Did What?” sentences. With the help of a graphic organizer on the SMART Board, students identified multiple parts of a sentence, the “who,” the “what,” and the action word. The “who” was always a policeman, but the “what” was determined by personal choice, such as, the policeman blew his whistle, took someone to jail, helped a boy, or ran. This helped students learn about the variety of things that policemen may do throughout the day. Then, each student made their own “who did what” sentences at their desk by choosing a “who” and “what,” pasting it on the graphic organizer, and writing the sentence.

Readers Turned Film Makers: Yellow Cluster Students Make “Magic E” Movie

Students in Ms. Fox/Ms. Vidra’s class took their reading curriculum to the next level by writing a script and filming a short movie to help them master reading rules and skills—specifically, the role of the “Magic E” at the end of a word. Students brainstormed ideas, wrote a script, assigned parts, and filmed a short movie explaining the spectacular duties of the “Magic E.” Students came up with the idea to create a “Magic E Wizard.” To show its role, the “Magic E Wizard” consistently jumped over the consonant to make the vowel say its name. Ms. Fox loves this interactive approach to teaching reading because she said, “It’s multi-sensory and students learn by writing the script and then watching themselves on film.” What fun!

Middle School Students Use New Technology to Create Ancient Artifacts

As part of a social studies unit on archaeology, Green Cluster students in Ms. Glazer/Ms. Finn’s class constructed their own artifacts in the new SMART Lab. The purpose of the project was for students to grasp the concept of an artifact and how it relates to the way people understand ancient civilizations. Students tapped into their creativity to produce artifacts out of a variety of materials, including Styrofoam, clay, popsicle sticks, and paper bags. Out of these materials came an incredible teddy bear, watch, boat, and clay figurines as well as several other innovative artifacts. The project concluded with an exercise in creative writing in which the students wrote colorful descriptions and original stories about their newly developed artifacts.
To foster students’ growth and understanding about diversity, Gaynor has several ongoing diversity initiatives, including the Community Values Committee (CVC) and the Gay-Straight Alliance, which faculty and students voluntarily participate in. Elements of these two initiatives are infused in curriculum from Early Childhood through Middle School. In addition to these school-led efforts, the Parents’ Association, who also recognized the need for more of a focus on diversity, is proud to announce its newfound Diversity Committee, chaired by Ms. Traci Lester to announce its newfound Diversity Committee, dedicated to promoting and advocating for increased diversity and sensitivity to differences among the Gaynor school community. “I applaud the PA’s efforts and am grateful to have additional support of our endeavors throughout our community,” said Dr. Gaynor, Head of School. “It’s comforting to know that beyond the school’s efforts, the PA is also working diligently to bring awareness to diversity, while fostering an inclusive environment among our families.”

Stephen Gaynor School itself is a special community of children who learn differently, but this committee addresses many types of diversity within our community. The Committee hopes to serve and celebrate the many types of diversity within the Stephen Gaynor School community including: ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, sexual orientation, family configuration, lifestyle, language, gender, and adoption status. They are planning various activities throughout the year, where family and student participation is voluntary and solely through self-identification.

**Orton-Gillingham Update**

Stephen Gaynor School was very busy this summer as our school-wide Orton-Gillingham initiative rolled on under the supervision of our OG master fellow, Ann Edwards. In June, teachers from our Middle School participated in a week-long practicum working with students from the Early Childhood program and Lower School to refine their knowledge and understanding of the phonics skills taught to our youngest students. In July, teachers from our Lower School spent a week focusing on morphology instruction (the study of the smallest units of meaning), which faculty and students voluntarily participate in. Elements of these two initiatives are infused in curriculum from Early Childhood through Middle School. The Community Values Committee (CVC) and the Gay-Straight Alliance, which faculty and students voluntarily participate in.

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Stephen Gaynor School prides itself on remaining true to its mission to provide a highly individualized educational program for students to learn, grow, and reach their full potential. The faculty and administration strive to develop self-confident, self-aware learners who can advocate for their own needs and have respect for themselves and others. This year, an innovative new class on Student Advocacy has been implemented for all Middle School students in the Green and Blue Clusters to better fulfill the school’s mission and formally infuse the life-skills of understanding what it means to be a self-advocate or an advocate. Ms. Kasindorf, Middle School Head Teacher, forged this new addition to the curriculum from experiences in her own classroom. In describing her first year at Gaynor she said, “It became apparent early on that many of our students did not have a solid understanding of the specific strengths and challenges that affected their learning.” Consequently, these students were unable to advocate for themselves. Her students recognized that certain tasks were more difficult than others, but could not provide a reason why. This disconnect between her students and their learning differences sparked the formation of formal Student Advocacy lessons. Ms. Kasindorf said, “As special educators, we have a responsibility with the skills and strategies necessary to become successful students and later, successful adults.”

This year, the Student Advocacy class is taught by Ms. Traci Lester. The goal is for students to discover their strengths, what skills they need to develop and why, who they are as learners, how they learn best, and how to proactively articulate what they need to be successful. The class is largely discussion based, and the environment exudes a sense of permission, respect, and safety. Ms. Kasindorf foresees the students being successful in this class because they will have the tools to help them evaluate potential high schools based on their learning needs, it’s evident that the focus on Student Advocacy is positively impacting Gaynor students. Current Middle School student, Lomax Hunter, recounted, “Through the ongoing process of self-discovery and self-acceptance, I will continue to grow and become a stronger person. Having hard work and determination, I know that I will be successful regardless of my challenges.”

Transition and life after Gaynor are popular topics for older Middle School students. The Student Advocacy class, students learn interview skills and how to respond when someone asks about their learning differences. Confidence is built through role-playing exercises where Dr. Gaynor conducts mock interviews to provide students an opportunity to practice advocating for themselves. This video-recorded exercise proves useful in real-life interview preparations as students may refer back to it for tips. Henry's parent, Ms. Hamilton agreed saying, “The curriculum really gave my child all the right language to use when interviewing for high school.”

The Student Advocacy curriculum allows students to shift to a growth mindset, encourages innovative thinking, and equips them with the most powerful tool for educational success: knowing who you are as a learner, what you need help with, and how to ask for it.
**GREAT GATSBY INSPIRES MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE**

Gaynor Gym turned Great Gatsby this past December as students donned dapper outfits descended into the roaring twenties for the Middle School Dance, sponsored by the Parents’ Association. Inspired by the opulent lifestyle of Jay Gatsby himself, Student Council members worked diligently alongside Parent’s Association Middle School Co-Chairs Conni Langan and Fanci Sachs to plan the evening.

“The dance was really fun because everyone actually danced this year,” recalled Middle School student Samantha Lang.

“We learned to play blackjack, won prizes, and ate lots of food. It went by too fast!” Lavish entertainment included billiard stations and photo booths, in addition to a live DJ who spun tunes for students who danced the night away. A feast for royalty consisted of options such as sushi, chicken fingers, macaroni and cheese, pizza, cupcakes, refreshments, and more.

Prior to the dance, students used class time to create timeless decorations relevant to the innovative twenties era, including elegant head bands and hats to accessorize their outfits upon arrival.

Thank you to the Parents’ Association for taking students back in time for this exciting evening!

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**Gaynor Gazette Shout Outs!**

A huge “shout out” to Middle Schooler Kaia Miller for being the youngest artist ever to be featured at Ricco Maresco Gallery in Chelsea as part of a photographic self-portrait show called “ME.” According to the gallery, the fall show consisted of “contemporary and vintage photographic self-portraits by known and unknown artists across the spectrum.”

Miller makes extraordinary self-portraits on her iPhone using applications such as Superimpose and PixArt to transform basic images into artful masterpieces. She creates one portrait per day and says the hardest part is “coming up with the ideas.” Each image is accompanied by a thoughtful, often times emotional, caption. She said it’s “how I let out my feelings between the pixels.” The self-portraits give viewers a glimpse into “Kaia’s world” which she describes as “rainbows and unicorns.”

For Miller, it’s all about the joy she finds in manipulating photos to create astonishing self-portraits. She repeatedly references how much fun it is for her. Her artwork has been featured by multiple media outlets, including The New Yorker, CBC News, Shelter Island Reporter, and various blogs. It can also be found on Instagram by searching for her username: growingrainbows. We are so proud of Kaia Miller! Congrats!

The Gaynor Gazette would also like to recognize two of our very own Music Teachers, Ms. Shuppy and Ms. Robinson (AKA Ms. Amelia), for their recent accomplishments.

Bravo to Gaynor’s own Ms. Shuppy and her theater troupe for bringing home the title of International Champions from the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival in England! The Blue Hill Troupe performed over the summer, proudly representing the United States and New York City.

Congratulations to Ms. Amelia for winning the Parents’ Choice Award for her new album, “Now That We’re Friends...”! This is the second consecutive year that she has won the esteemed award. She performs under the name Mil’s Trills, and last year her album “Everyone Together Now” took home the prize. Well done!
Gaynor Gators are multi-talented and have opportunities throughout the year to showcase their talents, including the annual Middle School Science Fair, which took place on December 4th. Both Green and Blue Cluster students participated in this semester-long project, culminating with tri-fold boards bursting with results and a sense of accomplishment on behalf of the scientists.

“The overall goal of the Science Fair was for students to explore the scientific process from asking a question to determining a hypothesis to communicating end results,” said Ms. Fabricant, Chair of the Science Department. Middle School students were given a wide range of flexibility when determining which experiment they would perform. There were no strict guidelines, as the Science Fair is designed to be wholly individual, while promoting a love for inquiry. Ms. Fabricant encouraged students to choose something that piqued their interest and a project where they would be successful. In the end, she was elated with her students’ dedication, effort, and resiliency throughout the process.

The fifth floor of the South Building was transformed into an impressive array of exhibits the day of the Science Fair. Visitors included Lower School students, faculty, staff, and parents who were welcomed by eager scientists ready to share their findings. Middle School student tour guides accompanied visitors throughout the fair where unique experiments, such as finding out how different pollutants affect aquatic environments; a Galileo experiment showing whether mass or height matters more when measuring the speed of a dropped object; the chemistry of making ice cream and what happens if the freezing point of water is lowered; and what happens when different objects, like a pencil, egg, and nail are placed in a cup of Coca-Cola for a week. Needless to say, the Science Fair was a complete success!
The Winter Arts Festival theme strives to encompass the ideals of community, home, and the season. This year, the festival revolved around "nature" and our place in the world as we travel through the seasons and enjoy the things around us.

Spread over two nights, Gaynor’s Winter Arts Festival musical performances and art displays impressed attendees. The lobby was overtaken with immaculate art from students across all clusters. Pink and Red Cluster students in Ms. Hochman’s art class created snowflakes, which hung throughout the foyer to capture the essence of winter, while older students in the Orange, Yellow, and Silver Clusters painted murals capturing the different aspects and raw forces of nature. Middle School students in Ms. Rachlin’s art class painted beautiful winter landscape murals. And photography students from the Yellow and Silver Clusters displayed ornate ceramic frames that were created as part of a mixed media project.

After perusing the creative art work by Gaynor’s talented students, attendees moved to the gym to enjoy the concert, spearheaded by music teachers, Ms. Patti, Ms. Robinson (AKA Ms. Amelia), and Ms. Shuppy, with help from Drama Teacher, Ms. Plylar-Moore (AKA Ms. Kristen). On opening night, Pink, Red, and Orange Cluster students captivated the audience with their performance. An array of songs flawlessly flowed from their harmonious voices, including "Ain’t No Mountain High Enough" by Marvin Gaye, "Inch by Inch" by John Denver, "Sunshine Day" more commonly known as the Brady Bunch theme song, "Three Little Birds" by Bob Marley, and "Gaynor Garden," an original song by Middle School student Elena Giddens.

Yellow and Silver Cluster students put on a superb encore the second night for a full house. Students belted out “Gaynor Garden” and “Three Little Birds,” in addition to new tunes including "If You Want to Sing Out" by Cat Stevens, "I Can See Clearly Now" by Johnny Nash, "Lovely Day" by Bill Withers, and the infamous "Seasons of Love" from Broadway’s own, Rent.

“We are so proud of all of the students who participated in this year’s Winter Arts Festival, whether by displaying artwork or showcasing their singing voice,” said Ms. Shuppy. "It was wonderful to see our students flourish in the spotlight, celebrate the Gaynor community, and the winter season over two nights."

Thank you to Ms. Patti, Ms. Kristen, Ms. Amelia, and Ms. Shuppy for putting on such a magnificent show allowing all of our students to shine!
Bryant Park was transformed into “Gator Nation” this past November during the Annual Gaynor Community Skate Night, sponsored by the Parents’ Association. Wind painted cheeks were rosy red while students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff joined together to celebrate over pizza, cookies, and hot chocolate. Distinctive crunches could be heard when metal skates hit the ice, surrounded by laughter as the Gaynor Gator glided past.

In the midst of all the fun, Middle School student Chase Wickham had a chance to ride the Zamboni, (a “special experience” his parents won during last year’s Gaynor Gala auction). The Second Annual Skate Night Alumni Event was a success, providing an opportunity for alumni to visit with each other, as well as the entire Gaynor community.

A special thank you to the entire Parents’ Association Skate Night Committee and especially Co-Chairs Patty Lifter and Sharon Moody for their hard work in planning such a wonderful winter event!
Digital technology is here to stay and has extraordinary benefits in the lives of our children. At the same time there is a continuously changing cyber landscape that has significant risks, particularly if children are not properly supervised or taught about responsible usage. Children need to become empowered to make smart, ethical, and respectful decisions when using media and technology. Schools need to partner with parents so that together, we can cultivate online resilience and digital citizenship in the lives of our children.

All school, we are addressing this issue through different interventions. In each middle school technology class, there is a focus on being a good digital citizen and we are encouraging students to treat each other with respect, act kindly, and report any inappropriate behaviors or content. In addition, the Psychology Department, Technology Department, and home-room teachers are collaborating to have classroom discussions regarding these issues.

The following guidelines are for parents, to foster responsible and appropriate technology usage at home:

1. Figure out your parenting style and family culture: Consider what kind of relationship you have with technology and what kind of relationship you wish to model for your family.
2. Understand the digital landscape: It is essential to get a feel for how digital technology is actually used today by children and adolescents at different ages.
3. Create a family technology plan and media rules (proactively) to ensure that technology has a positive impact on your child’s development: It is essential to create a balance between online and offline time, as well as limit your children’s exposure to age-appropriate content. Decide together which privacy settings protect your children the most and discuss the impact of your child’s digital footprint on future goals.
4. Remain positively engaged: Pay attention to your children’s online involvement and create teachable moments that promote positive digital citizenship. Keep an ongoing open dialogue about social pressures and cyber-bullying as a way to monitor and safeguard your child’s online social life.
5. Adopt a developmental approach: The use of technology changes with age. Technology exposure often begins with playing educational games during the early childhood years and peaks into social media usage during the tween and teen years. Autonomy and exposure should be gradual and contingent on demonstrating increasingly good critical thinking skills, safe decision-making and positive digital citizenship.

For a longer, more detailed article on this topic, please go to the Parenting in the Digital Age, by Yalda T. Uhls, PhD.

**Development Update**

**BY MAGGIE KEITH, DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT**

Introducing Stephen Gaynor School’s Alumni Association

We are making great strides this year in growing our alumni community, and continuing to foster and further develop relationships with former Gaynor students and parents. We value our alumni families as an integral part of the lasting community at Gaynor and are excited to welcome some exciting alumni happenings this year.

Our Second Annual Skate Night Alumni Event, held on November 16th in the Park Lounge at Bryant Park was an evening of fun for all who attended. We had a great turnout from the class of 2019, as well as previous graduating classes. Faculty and staff were thrilled with the opportunity to mingle and re-connect with Gaynor alumni.

We are also excited to announce the formation of the Alumni/Parents of Alumni Committee, made up of alumni and parents of alumni who will serve as ambassadors for their class year. A handful of Gaynor student alumni class representatives have already stepped up to be part of the committee. In addition, almost a dozen parents of alumni have volunteered to act as ambassadors for their child’s graduating class. These ambassadors will help strengthen the Stephen Gaynor School Alumni Association, offering their time and creative ideas, while fostering a continued sense of community. If you would like to become involved in the Gaynor alumni.

Each and every gift to the Gaynor Fund, no matter the size, makes a world of difference to our teachers and our community. Thank you for your continued support!
**Walking Across the Brooklyn Bridge: Red Cluster Students Study New York City**

Red Cluster students learned about New York City as a part of their social studies curriculum, studying each borough while simultaneously investigating what brought people together. To commemorate their study, students went on a field trip to the Brooklyn Bridge, a momentous landmark that served as the first connection between Manhattan and Brooklyn. Prior to the trip, some students built and tested their own ideas for bridges in science class. Students were able to walk across the vast bridge and internalize what a massive undertaking its original construction must have been. They topped off their trip with delectable Grimaldi’s pizza at Brooklyn Bridge Park.

**From Gaynor Gator to Gelato Creator: Spotlight on Alumnus Harrison Geller**

Student success is the end goal at Stephen Gaynor School. Success for Harrison Geller (*’10), a drama student and senior at LaGuardia High School, came in the form of a cup, small spoon, and three flavors of personal choice. Last August, Geller opened Polpo Gelato, a pop-up handmade gelato shop and entrepreneurial effort located in the Lower East Side. In his own words, Geller caught the “gelato bug” while on a trip to a farm in Umbria, Italy last summer and learned the craft from an old Italian gelato maker.

The popular shop garnered media coverage from national and local news outlets including ABC News, Yahoo News, and Gothamist.com. Geller’s shop featured eight flavors daily, a testament to the name, which means octopus in Italian, with a new flavor being cobbled out every other day. Geller said Gaynor directly influenced his ability to be successful. “When I entered Gaynor I was a completely different person. I couldn’t focus on my priorities. By the time I left, I felt success in both my personal and academic lives. I learned how to manage my workload socially and academically, and that has made all the difference going forward.” As Geller shops for the right college, he assured us that if he ends up at school in New York or Boston, with a little help from his investors, we can keep an eye out for the return of Polpo Gelato!

**Connect the Dots!**

**KIDS ONLY!**

**Human Origins**

Green Cluster students wrapped up their social studies unit on early humans with a trip to the American Museum of Natural History’s Hall of Human Origins. They were able to see how scientists paired fossils with DNA research to present the history of human evolution from early ancestors who lived more than six million years ago to modern Homo sapiens who evolved 200,000 to 150,000 years ago. Students were enthralled with the lifelike replications of various species in their own habitats and enjoyed seeing the behaviors and capabilities scientists think they had at the time.

**Silver Cluster Students Step Back in History at South Street Seaport**

In conjunction with their social studies curriculum about the Age of Exploration, the entire Silver Cluster traveled by subway to the South Street Seaport for an action packed day. After studying how and why explorers came to the New World, students climbed aboard the Peking, a ship built in 1911, to learn about its history as a cargo ship. The students explored the different vessels in the ship, while learning how sails moved and the conditions of the boat from a knowledgeable tour guide. Students even had an opportunity to work together to raise a sail just like the sailors did one hundred years ago. The trip allowed students to imagine what a cargo ship must have been. Students were able to walk across the vast bridge and internalize what a massive undertaking its original construction must have been. They topped off their trip with delectable Grimaldi’s pizza at Brooklyn Bridge Park.

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**FIELD TRIPS**

**EC Students Shop For Apples**

After studying the lifecycle of an apple in science, apples and the changes that occur over the seasons, Mrs. Chan/Ms. Young’s class went on a shopping adventure in early October with only one thing on their list: apples. First, they went to a fruit stall on 90th and Broadway, which they found through their social studies unit studying places in the community. At the stand, five students bought either a red or green apple. They then walked one block to Garry’s Whole Foods, a grocery store with a wide variety of organic fruits and vegetables. There, they found organic apples and five new students.

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KIDS ONLY!

CAN YOU FIND THE GAYNOR-RELATED WORDS?

R T A J C G L E D H X S F C V
G I I I Y T M T A L E N T E D
A N G A E O I G B O L I H D W
Y K L F D D N D S O B K F R K
N E J J C V N E P G A T S B Y
O R R N A L O C M U Q Q H G L
R L W U I P V C Z A A H O D H
F B W X O X A H A L C L I I U
W F C R E A T E H C O D L V R
X K I T G X I X F N Y N J E C
D T X R A I O T H A K C Q R G
Z F J D T Y N C B G L T R S Q
Z A U H O Y E G Q Z V L X I X
T S M A R T L A B J L G Y T T
I X Q O G F C J K O J S G Y J

INNOVATION
SMART LAB
CREATE
TINKER
GAYNOR
GATOR
ALLY
ADVOCACY
GATSBY
TECHNOLOGY
DIVERSITY
TALENTED
TO PARENTS OF ALUMNAE/I:
If this issue is addressed to your child who no longer maintains a permanent address at your home, please notify the Development Office at 212.787.7070 ext. 1125 or alumni@stephengaynor.org with the correct mailing address. Thank you.

SAVE THE DATE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016
THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, 6:30-10:30 PM

Gaynor Gala

Honoring Stephen Gaynor School Parents
KASS AND MIKE LAZEROW

Event Host: SETH MEYERS
HOST OF NBC’S LATE NIGHT WITH SETH MEYERS

Musical Performance by: JON BON JOVI
STEPHEN GAYNOR SCHOOL PARENT

JOIN US FOR SILENT AND LIVE AUCTIONS, COCKTAILS, DINNER, AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT!