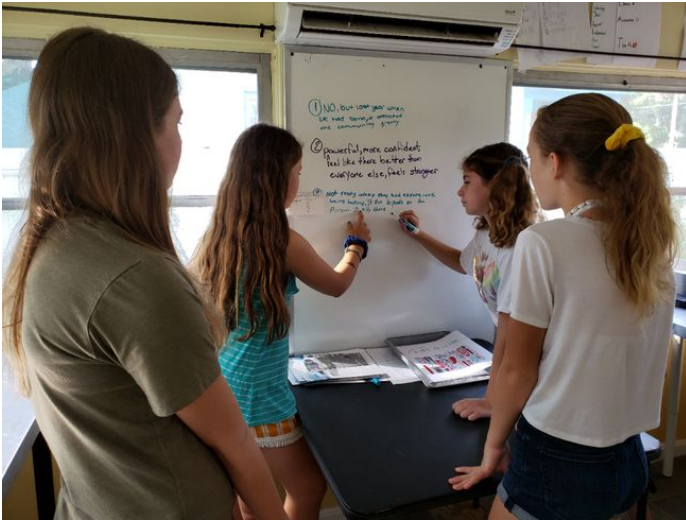




## WEEKLY RECAP

UPPER SCHOOL

8/12/19 - 8/16/19



## **GARDENING AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY**

MS. CAMILA, MS. SAVANNAH, MS. ANGELA, DR. J

Students continued to work diligently to prepare the farm at the 1861 school house. Weeds were pulled, the area measured and staked, water lines marked and finally, compost was laid on the first two rows of the farm area!! Last week, students planted terrariums with a variety of vegetable and herb seeds in preparation for populating the farm. This week, we were all thrilled to see the seedlings emerge from their long nap!

The students are especially delighted to work with our resident farm animals. The baby chicks are growing by leaps and bounds. They enjoy being handled and are very curious in nature. They have been introduced to the outdoors and will soon be able to spend their daytime hours in their new deluxe coop built by students over the summer session.

The bunnies are beautiful and cuddly but in need of more socialization time with the students and more mental stimulation. We hope to provide an outdoor exercise area for the bunnies as well as a more comfortable, rain-free and playfully inspiring hutch. We would greatly appreciate it if anyone can donate one or more dog exercise pens to help with this effort as well as gift cards to help with the purchase of roofing materials and other needs.

## **MORNING MEETING AND SOCIO EMOTIONAL**

MS. SAVANNAH, MS. ANGELA

Students continued to explore creating a positive school atmosphere by beginning the day with our morning meetings which include our breath-keeper and safe-keeper rituals as well as a game that helps to energize and connect the students (and educators).

## **KEEPING IT SAFE**

MS. SAVANNAH, MS. ANGELA

The older students collaborated in groups to create initiatives to prevent bullying. Each of those groups presented their initiative to their younger peers. The entire upper school then voted on the initiative they thought would best keep our environment free from bullying.

The younger students did various projects to gain a better understanding of what makes a school family. Topics discussed in depth were helpfulness, individuality, and acceptance with the framework of keeping their family members safe even during conflict.

## **BUILDING THE SCHOOL FAMILY**

MS. DENISE

For the first part of the week, we focused on identifying the emotions and behaviors of our Brain States and modeling/practicing how to shift to the higher centers of our brain when upset.

SURVIVAL STATE: Brain Stem - Unconscious Am I safe? Rage, anxiety, depression, fear, hopelessness  
Physical aggression, hitting kicking, screaming, punching, hiding

EMOTIONAL STATE Limbic System - Unconscious Am I loved? Sadness, hurt, irritation, disappointment, guilt Attention-seeking, hurting others with words, manipulation, name calling, blaming, social exclusion

EXECUTIVE STATE Prefrontal Cortex - Conscious What can I learn? Calm, peaceful, grateful, content, relaxed, present, alert, confident Problem solving, goal setting, motivated, responsible, consider the viewpoint of others, able to accept feedback or criticism

For the second part of the week, we focused on The Power of Perception which states that “no one can make me upset without my permission.” We practiced the shift in language from “he made me angry” to “I am angry.” It is okay and normal to feel negative emotions. What is important is that we don’t give others control of how we feel, that we take responsibility for our own state, and we work towards calming ourselves in those moments to respond thoughtfully instead of reacting from what the kids have monikered “our lizard brains.” To model this, we created paper vests. The kids added their “buttons” - things that annoy them easily. If we wear our vests inside out, anyone is able to push our buttons and cause a reaction. If we choose to turn them inside out, we can remain calm in all situations. The vests were a hit and the kids were very sincere about the things that make them easily upset like getting yelled at, others touching their things without asking, when the schedule/expectations change without notice, etc.

We also introduced Seesaw, our portfolio app, so that students could practice adding their work on their own.

MS. SAVANNAH

This week, the students were reintroduced to the school’s Safe Space and discussed that a Safe Space doesn’t have to actually be a physical space that you can go to, but can be a mental one for times when you are unable or unwilling to go somewhere other than the environment that you are currently in. Students brainstormed how they could utilize tools to bring themselves to a safe space within themselves (visualization, breathing, mindfulness, etc.) and identified their favorite physical safe spaces. Students also logged into and uploaded items to their SeeSaw portfolios.

## **GROWTH MINDSET and BRAIN STATES**

MS. ANGELA

Students learned about positive intent and how we can develop the ability to imagine the best in others versus assuming the worst. A helpful exercise students did to practice positive intent was taking turns imagining what positive things their friends might be thinking. The activity allowed students to realize we never really know what others are thinking or what their intent was. It’s always more helpful to imagine they had good rather than negative intentions.

DR. J

We continued our discovery of Conscious Discipline strategies and the benefits of a Growth Mindset philosophy. We grappled with tough questions about ourselves, trying to develop strategies to train our

brains to optimize learning and achieve our personal goals. We reflected on what types of environments help us to focus and what environments lead to distraction and frustration. We identified what type of information and education styles best suits our natural learning styles. We identified personal mantras that we could repeat inside our brains to help us deal with stressors, we worked to visualize success and practiced breathing to help calm ourselves and refresh our brains with powerful oxygen molecules. We discussed different brain-body states and how "Survival, Emotional and Executive" brain states drive our behavior and our ability to problem solve to achieve the highest levels of learning and functioning. We recognized that success has its foundations in effort, hard work, perseverance, practice, mistakes and failures. It also can be affected by our lifestyles; getting sufficient sleep, eating healthy and exercise are also foundations for success and achievement of goals.

## **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

MS. ANGELA

Our group played various team-building games to create bonds within our class. Students did trust exercises in which they had to lead a blind-folded peer through an obstacle course. Another exercise was walking in line with their eyes closed trusting the line-leader to keep them safe. Both exercises were a success with the leaders taking their positions seriously. The students are adjusting to our new space and to having a new educator. We are working hard to create an environment where every student feels valued.

DR. J

We all looked forward to our community building activities each day. From these activities, students were empowered to learn that they could rely on one another for help in navigating life's daily events. Some of our best memory creating moments occurred when we played the "Lake of Despair", "A Musical Symphony", Musical Chairs and Positive Affirmations, and "Sea Turtle Survival". In the lake of Despair, students identified worries or concerns that they had, wrote those concerns on a balloon, then worked in pairs to safely cross the obstacle-ridden Lake of Despair while juggling their balloon. Once they reached the shoreline, their worries were "popped". Students reported that they truly felt a sense of relief and achievement by the physical act of crossing the "lake" and popping the balloons of worry. Musical Symphony was a surprisingly harmonious blending of the unique and beautiful musical sounds each student produced using only his/her body parts. They snapped, clapped, hummed, whistled, stomped and sang to create a vibrant and uplifting harmony of individuals focused on a common goal.