



*academic excellence ~ personal growth ~ small school environment*

# Roadrunner *report*

## **Sports Programs are Off and Running!**

After a two-year hiatus, SCS athletes laced up their running shoes and hit the trails with renewed vigor. Students, teachers and parents have worked together to revive both the “Girls on the Run” and Cross-Country teams. Both programs empower students to develop their physical and mental stamina, build confidence and reach their fitness goals.

Girls on the Run, a national non-profit organization, facilitated by teacher and parent volunteers, help girls in grades 3 through 5 to cultivate inner strength and develop critical life skills. Twice-weekly sessions combine interactive social-emotional lessons and physical activity. Targeted lessons cultivate character development, encourage connections with teammates and help young girls develop healthy habits that set them on a path to self-esteem and positive choices.

The program aims to “reach girls at a critical stage, strengthening their confidence at a time when society begins to tell them they can’t. Underscoring the important connection between physical and emotional health, our program addresses the whole girl when she needs it the most.” The culmination of this 10-week program is a non-competitive 5K run which gives the girls a sense of confidence, as their training and perseverance pay off in a tangible accomplishment.

Also this fall, Cross Country runners in grades 6th – 8th represented SCS in the Verde Valley Athletic Association. While many students were new to the sport this year, they completed an impressive first season. Despite often training and competing in 100-degree temperatures during September and October, students persevered and completed their practice runs and meets with enthusiasm. Team members cheered each other on, with every runner completing their races with encouraging support at the finish line. The final meet was a championship contest. SCS runners were able to bring home several trophies in various age groups which made for an exciting finale to the season.



November brought the winter basketball season to SCS in grades 5th through 8th. With two boys’ teams and one girls’ team, this season has brought a tremendous learning experience to many students. It has been an opportunity for more experienced players to provide coaching and modeling to the less experienced players. All players have improved their dribbling, passing and shooting, as well as their teamwork and communication on the court. In addition to the enthusiasm of the athletes, the support and involvement of the entire SCS community has been remarkable. Families with children in all grades have been attending the games to support the teams. The younger students have been inspired and can’t wait until it’s their turn to play!

With continued participation in the Verde Valley Athletic Association, 5th-8th grade students will have the chance to participate in soccer during February and March. Stay tuned for more details about the spring season and opportunities for SCS parents to participate in a coaching role.

## **Letter from Executive Director Amy Fultz**



When I walk into any of our classrooms during a work cycle I am in love all over again. There is a wonderful buzz of students working, collaborating and discussing a plethora of topics. It is Montessori Magic!!

Montessori is based on each student’s needs. We as educators provide guidance, instruction and encouragement. The one thing we cannot give to a student is drive or ambition! Like with anything else in life, that must come from within. Montessori’s pedagogy is developed around her discovery of four planes of development.

The first plane is from infant to age 6 and is known as the plane of physical independence. During this phase the child is said to have an absorbent mind, learning through the environment where gross motor, fine motor and language take form. Academics start to take root. Montessori discovered that in order for academic learning to take place the following must first be established by a student: OCCI – Order, Concentration, Coordination and Independence. Academics will follow naturally after OCCI is in place.

The second plane of development is where mental independence develops and covers ages 6 to 12 years. Also known as the fairness plane, students are more interested in group work versus independent work. They also become more concerned with the end product versus the process. Rules and fairness are key in this stage.

The age of adolescence, ages 12 to 18 is when students are most creative and turbulent. The first three years of this plane is referred to as “the second toddlerhood” as students lack discipline and revolt against authority. For many there is an internal struggle that is occurring. The student needs guidance, but wants complete independence. Students are trying to gain social independence and figure out where they fit into the world.

From 18 to 24 years of age, Spiritual and Moral Independence are reached, as adulthood is finally obtained. Responsibility and purpose are examined and decided. The planes of development are a guide to child growth and development. Each student is a unique individual and mitigates through planes of development at their own pace. The classrooms use this guide to work with students so their academic, social and emotional needs can be met.

## Creating Community in Lower El

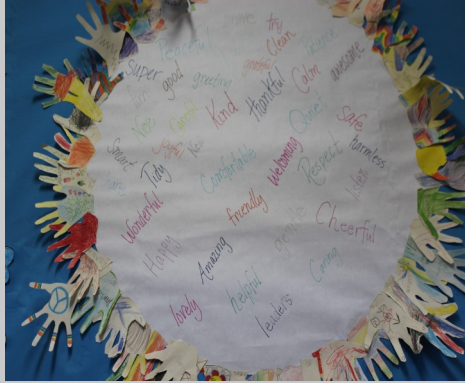
Sedona Charter School's youngest students, in grades 1 through 3, spent the first part of the school year designing their classroom culture. Discussions included the meaning of community, how to establish it in their classroom and how to hold each other accountable for following community agreements.

Taking ownership of the process, students were able to envision their space and create the language that would define their community in their Classroom Constitution.

Descriptions of their ideal classroom

community included: respectful, kind, loving and peaceful. All students displayed their agreement to these terms by tracing their hand as their signature to the Classroom Constitution.

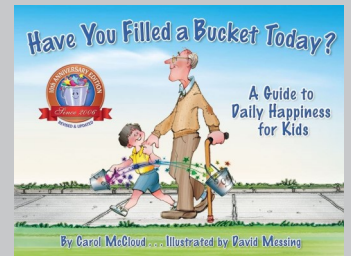
Follow-up discussions included tools students can use when it may become more challenging to adhere to the community agreements, such as a conflict with a friend. The concepts of self-awareness and awareness of others' emotions were introduced, along with the idea of positive mindset and breathing exercises that can be used in the moment. Students also learned about "courageous conversations," a social emotional learning (SEL) tool that helps children understand



themselves and their world. It empowers them to have difficult conversations. In this facilitated conversation, a safe space is created for students to speak their truth face-to-face. In this manner, an initially uncomfortable exchange can transform into a deeper connection and often stronger friendships. It also provides an important teachable moment for students as they navigate the social dynamics of their classroom

A literary extension of the community theme included a reading and discussion of *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud. This picture book nurtures positive behavior by using the simple metaphor of a bucket and a dipper to demonstrate how easy and rewarding it is to express kindness, appreciation, and love by "filling buckets." When we choose to be kind, we not only fill the buckets of those around us, but also fill our own invisible bucket of good thoughts about ourselves.

Students brainstormed things they can do to fill each other's' buckets.



Engaging families in the classroom is another important aspect of building community in Lower El. The

culmination of a study of Europe and

student presentations included a European-themed community feast that parents were invited to join. This spring, following the study of South America and student presentations on topics they will pick with the teachers in the classroom, a second community gathering is planned. Parents will join the class in a South American-themed potluck feast.

## looking ahead >>>

**Feb. 2, 3, 9 & 10** ~ String Spectacular Concert  
Strings performances by LE, UE & MS  
2:30 – 3:00 PM @SCS Performance Art  
Classroom



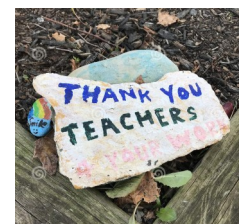
**Saturday, April 1** ~ Junior High Dance  
for 7th and 8th graders  
5:30 - 8:30 PM @ Sedona Public Library.

**Sat. Feb. 11** ~ SOUPer BOWL soup cook-off Fundraiser  
for MMUN (Montessori Model U.N.) trip to NYC.  
Enter your homemade soups or come for a tasting.  
2:00 – 5:00 PM @ SCS; Family event with kids' activities.

**Fri. March 9** ~ Bohemian Movie Night  
Art displays in classrooms & class performances on the  
SCS Patio: LE - 3:30; UE - 3:45; MS - 4:30 PM  
Family Movie Night with dinner for purchase.

**Fri, May 5** ~ String Fling Final Concert  
Location and time to be announced.

**May 7 – 13** ~ Teacher Appreciation Week  
Weeklong events celebrating our  
fabulous teachers!





## 'Goings-out' Bring the Curriculum to Life

This fall, Upper Elementary students had the opportunity to participate in several "going-outs," or experiential learning trips outside the classroom to reinforce elements of the curriculum. As children learn how the world works, these first-hand explorations provide a spark that often awakens something in the child and leads to a future interest to delve into more deeply. From camping trips and science centers to museums and illusion performances, these experiences form an integral part of the curriculum.



These interactive opportunities began with the students' experience of Bill Blagg's performance blending illusion and magic with the wonders of physical science. The children were visually enthralled while learning first-hand how to create illusions using core scientific principles such as force, energy, friction and motion. The students were particularly entertained as they volunteered Ms. Lucy to dance on stage as part of an illusion to defy Newton's Law of Motion using magnets! Exploration of physics and chemistry principles continued during the class trip to the Arizona Science Center. Both of these purposefully-designed experiences encouraged students' curiosity about science and the Scientific Method. They reinforced concepts taught in the classroom, bringing them to life.



A highlight of fall in Upper El has always been the overnight camping trip and this year was no exception. The intent for community building was woven throughout the two-day excursion at the McDowell Mountain Regional Park near Phoenix. For many younger students, this community camping experience provided a safe way to explore being away from home for the first time. Students practiced valuable life skills and returned home with fond memories of shared experiences, setting the tone for a strong

bond with classmates and a close-knit learning community.

An integral part of the Montessori experience in Upper El is the teaching of the five great lessons, also called stories. The lessons start at the beginning of time and follow science through prehistory to early human evolution and development. The timeline helps frame the development of our world and allows students to visualize the interconnectivity of life over time. A fall trip to the Northern Arizona Museum in Flagstaff enhanced this curricular theme of the interconnectedness of all things that are taught daily in class. There were many tie-ins to social studies, earth and life science, and the visual arts through authentic artifacts and hands-on activities relating to the real world. Through the lens of the cultures of the Colorado Plateau, students observed the vital interconnections between people and the natural world.



Upper Elementary teachers have designed the "going-outs" to be student-driven rather than teacher-driven, allowing for flexibility in following the interests of the children when deciding which explorations to embark on each year. There have also been several "bringing-ins" of parents and local community members, such as a parent author, an entomologist and weavers, to share their stories, special skills and real-world experiences. Again, this brings areas of study to life during this time of discovery.

Plans for spring "going-outs" are taking shape and may include the Copper Art Museum, showcasing the history of copper-created artwork, as well as Arcosanti, a model of sustainable architecture and building in balance with nature.



All Upper El students have the opportunity to experience a

### ZION NATIONAL PARK

culmination trip in May. While the 6<sup>th</sup> years will head to Zion National Park for several nights of camping and outdoor education, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years will participate in a two-night community overnight trip closer to home. It is always remarkable to see the growth in the children's independence and confidence as they navigate these trips in both the fall and spring.

## Congratulations!

*The SCS Strings Musicians completed another successful holiday performance season in December.*



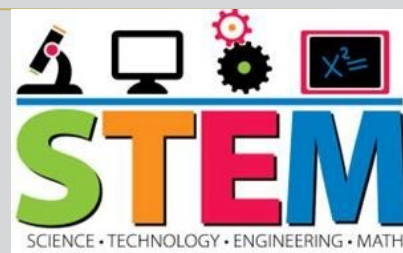
Members of the Intermediate and Advanced SCS Orchestra program performed at the annual Tlaquepaque Tree Lighting Event.



SCS Strings students also performed at the Sedona Heritage Museum Holiday Concert in December.

## *Designing Futuristic Cities in Middle School*

Seventh and eighth graders are participating in a national competition to design a “future city.” The competition is organized through Future City, an educational STEM program for middle schoolers that aims to inspire students to think about how they can make the world a better place. The competition brings the engineering design process (EDP) to students as they tackle a citywide sustainability topic.



Applying math and science concepts to the real world, seventh and eighth graders have been working in small groups of 3-4 to design a futuristic city. This year’s challenge asks students to address climate change in the city they design. Students have been engaged in the creative process over the past few months as they work on solutions to this question. Students began by envisioning what their imagined city will be like 100 years from now - what it will look like, feel like, smell like. Thinking like an engineer, they have been focusing on innovative solutions to climate change.

Productive discussions have included student observations of issues they have seen in their local community, such as the age of the population, tourist visitors, traffic patterns and round-about, and how these issues and others connected to sustainability may play out in a futuristic city. Throughout the design process, students have been using their researching, thinking, writing and building skills to problem solve. Each group is required to prepare an essay and a presentation which includes building a model of their futuristic city. Reinforcing the idea that everyone brings different strengths to a project, the cooperative groups have allowed each student to contribute his or her unique gifts of researching, writing, constructing and presenting to the team’s final product.

Student video presentations, where the groups bring their designs to life, will be submitted at the end of January as part of the regional competition. This unique design project has provided an opportunity to reinforce many curricular threads and engage students’ imagination and creativity in the process.

## *Meet our Newest Teachers!*

*~ Written by Sofia Wolf, 8th grade*

This year at SCS we had several teachers join us in our Lower and Upper Elementary classrooms. Today we will get to know a little bit more about the new teachers and their lives before SCS. Each teacher has two truths and a lie that you are going to have to guess.

First up we have Jess Sweeney. She is a teacher in the Upper Elementary classroom this year. Her two truths and a lie are that she won a contest for an electric company at 8 years old, she was rescued from the Gulf of Mexico, and she has a collection of 300 cat figurines. Before coming to SCS Jess ran an outdoor kindergarten and ran a Montessori toddler program in Phoenix.

Jess became inspired to be a teacher simply because somebody told her she would be good at it. Her favorite thing about SCS is the community of students, teachers, and parents.



Next, we have Rachael Ryan who is also a teacher in the Upper El classroom. Rachael’s two truths and a lie are that she was in the air force, she had a herd of 300 cattle, and she loves roller coasters. Before Rachael came to SCS she was a teacher at Verde Valley Montessori, and she was a dental hygienist for 25 years. She became inspired to be a teacher because she loved most of her teachers and looked up to them and thought it would be great to do the same. Rachael's favorite thing about SCS is the kindness and how there are a lot of “really kind and good humans at this school”.



Katrina Koenig is a teacher in Lower Elementary this year and her two truths and a lie are her best subject in school was math, she doesn’t like hiking, and she was born in Germany. Before coming to Sedona Charter School Katrina was a stay-at-home mom for 10 years, and before that she was in personal training and massage therapy. What inspired her to be a teacher was mainly her kids. She informally taught at science camps and helped at the library. Her favorite thing about SCS is the kids and how SCS is a beautiful space.



Christa Badorek is the Primary Educator in Lower El, and her 2 truths and a lie are that she ziplined to Costa Rica, was born in Maine, and served coffee to Eddie Vedder. Before coming to SCS she was a lead teacher at Villa Montessori in Phoenix. What inspired her to be a teacher was her daughter who was going to kindergarten at the time and Christa didn’t like the system that her daughter’s school was being run by. She had worked in the mental health field, and at that time she volunteered in a Montessori classroom and fell in love with the way of Montessori teaching and never looked back. Her favorite thing about SCS is the community, the families, and children. She loves the staff and she thinks everything is just great.

These are some of the new teachers at Sedona Charter School this year. Now to reveal the two truths and a lie....Jess Sweeney does not have 300 cat figurines, Rachael Ryan hates rollercoasters, Katrina Koenig loves hiking, and Christa Badorek has never ziplined to Costa Rica.

*Stay tuned to learn about new middle school teachers and office staff in our next issue!*