



The Herald

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Teaching the Teachers at MCA

Our staff development for all teachers and teaching assistants helps ensure a continued high caliber of instruction for our students. Although teachers and their assistants have various opportunities to attend conferences and workshops for personal improvement throughout the year, just before students return our development is a bit more comprehensive. The week before school starts, all MCA teachers and teaching assistants participate in a week long intensive staff development session to move our vision forward, motivate and create enthusiasm for the coming year, and promote unity within the faculty and staff.

Each year, MCA's School Improvement Team, comprised of teachers and administration from both lower and upper schools, identifies a specific need relating to development. In the past, training has focused on writing, history, and literature. This year, the focus is on science and more specifically how to grow and improve inquiry-based science instruction within the school.

Inquiry-based science is a natural part of a classical education, and refers to the activities through which students develop knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, as well as an understanding of how scientists study the natural world. "Inquiry-based learning uses a central question to frame a curriculum unit or module. Students answer this central question for themselves, discovering and learning through a series of guided discussions, experiments, and hands-on activities over several class periods. Teachers find that students are more engaged in what they're learning, and have a wider context for understanding the material rather than just hearing a lecture or memorizing facts." (Natural Science Teachers Foundation, www.nsta.org).



High school students experiment with and learn about metal alloys during science class.



Students in last year's Journaling Through Nature class enjoy studying the outdoors.

Dr. Patricia Bricker, Associate Director and Associate Professor at Western Carolina University, will be assisting with this year's staff development. Dr. Bricker has extensive experience in teaching, especially in the area of elementary grades science education using inquiry-based science.

What does all this mean for our students and how might our parents see results from our staff development at home? Our goal is for all our students, from kindergarten through high school, to be struck with a sense of awe and wonder with an eagerness to learn and find out about the world around them. We want our students to come home excited about their science lessons, telling you, their parents, all about what they've learned that day. We desire for them to learn to ask questions and increase their natural curiosity about nature. We want

them to spend more time outside and truly experience real-world science.

Teaching our teachers is always a win-win situation for our faculty and our students, and we look forward to sharing new learning experiences in inquiry-based science throughout the coming year.