



The Hiland Hall School NEWSLETTER

Spring 2020

Dear Friends,

An abrupt school closure mid-March caused by the coronavirus pandemic led us to develop a 'School at Home' teaching program in short order. Staff worked tirelessly to maintain a truly progressive curriculum while meeting each student and family on their own terms.

One of the tremendous benefits of a Progressive Education is that it fosters flexible thinking (and action!). Creating a substantive 'Continuity of Learning' is not as simple as moving everything to an online format. I have been so impressed with teachers' thoughtful address of how to maintain our school standards while also creating a structure that allows for the individual supports that make the Hiland Hall School such a tremendous learning environment.

Our 'School at Home' program includes daily emails, whole and small group meetings online, one on one phone conferences and lots of curriculum content and guidance from staff including a detailed program planning document to help families understand the program and navigate this new terrain with us.

My best wishes for health and well-being to all!

- Meg Cottam, Director



Painting of a Harris Hawk for Independent Study
Weslyn, age 10

From Quena and Brennan's 'School at Home' letter to families

THANK YOU! We deeply appreciate the partnership with families that we have entered into as we shift from what started as a two week dismissal, to School-at-Home for the remainder of the year. A core value of the Hiland Hall School is the relationship between school and family, and we now find ourselves navigating this connection in new ways. As teachers, we have entered the family home in a way that is new and different, and families find themselves interacting with their children as students in unfamiliar ways. However, our goals remain the same: to partner with families in the development of our students intellectually, socially, aesthetically, physically, and morally.



Tractor by Robbie, age 6



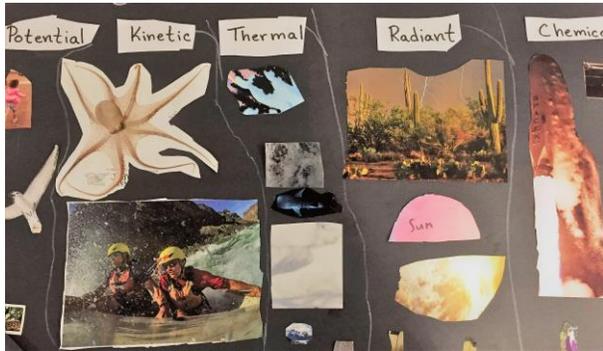
Fairy legends by Kelly, age 14



In the Classroom

Notes from Brennan on Planetary Health

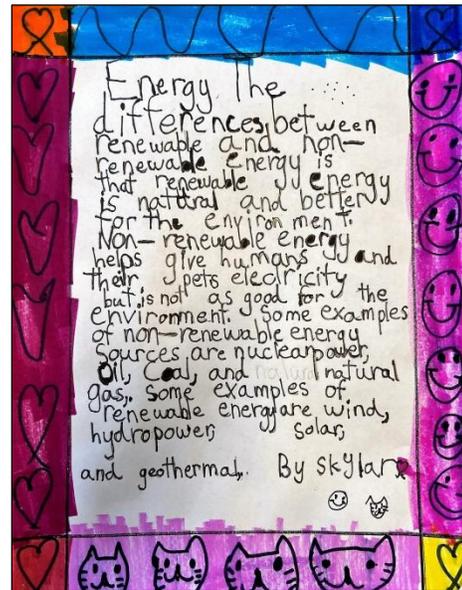
Last term, we focused as a school on how to keep our community and planet clean and healthy. Students really drove this conversation, and identified improvements we could all make when dealing with waste, litter, recycling and composting. This included creating new jobs (the Composter, the Sorter) and collection vessels (plastic bags we can return in-person). This term, Quena and I will turn our focus to Energy, both renewable and non-renewable, in an effort to learn more about how we can most responsibly consume energy and resources, both individually and as a community.



Planetary Health poster by Calla, age 9



Marlo, Gianna and Calla
recording recycling data for Planetary Health



Planetary health statement by Skylar, age 9

Adventure

It is my opinion that the 2020 Mars Rover should be named "Adventure," because the rover's mission is to discover if there is water on Mars, and a mission to go to Mars is rather Adventurous! If this mission turns up positive information, it could mean that the first of the human race could set foot on Mars!

*If humans could begin to live on Mars, that would mean less people on Earth, which could mean that we could slow down, perhaps even stop climate change! Humans on Mars could be the first step into an Intergalactic time for us! I feel that **Adventure** is a good name for something that begins the start of that. Adventure is defined as "engaging in hazardous and exciting activity, especially the exploration of unknown territory."*

*That is why I think that **Adventure** is a good name for the Mars 2020 Rover.*

- Linus, age 11



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Writing and Reflection are core values in our School Curriculum.

This spring seniors at the Hiland Hall School joined with professional theatre educators from the **Dorset Theatre Festival** in their “Young Playwrights” program.

Also of note, two Middle School students recently received awards for their essays. Lily Hutcheson won third place in her region in **Hildene’s 2020 Lincoln Essay Competition** for her essay calling for a bill restricting or banning plastic bottles in Vermont. And Oliver Viglas won second runner up in **Junior Scholastic’s Eyewitness to History** contest for his interview with Chris Williams, a family friend, about his experiences as a civil rights activist in Mississippi in the 1960s.

Independent Studies



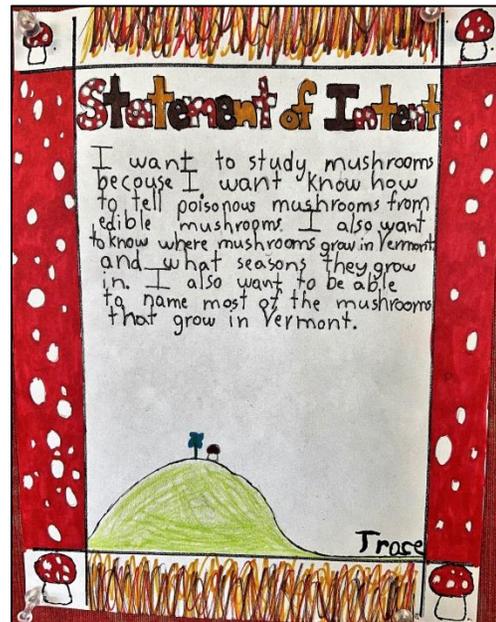
I plan on studying the history of rockets. I am interested in rockets because they go to space. Also I think that is cool. I want to know how they are built. I plan on building a scale model rocket.
- Iver, age 9



Ben Quiet Reading

Morning Meeting email from Quena

A thread of our curriculum that we have been emphasizing to students and families is Reflection and there is a reason for this. Reflecting on activities expands and builds upon a person’s previous knowledge, which enables them to make meaning of their experiences. It also helps a person notice what is important and meaningful to them. We stress making “connections” between experiences to the students often as they untangle the web of human experience in their own unique ways.



Independent Study Statement of Intent
- Trace, age 9



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The Hiland Hall School Seniors 2020
Kelly, Grace, Gianna and Lily



A note of thanks from a parent

Just wanted to say a quick thank you to you all. I have been so very pleased and impressed with how all of the teachers and staff at HHS have handled recent events. I appreciate the variety of activities and means of communication. A Zoom conference with Nancy, phone calls and daily emails from Quena, pics and comments in Google Docs from Brennan, art projects, suggestions for cooking endeavors, Spanish videos, reading, and hands-on math; I have been impressed by the thoughtful balance that has been created. Thank you!

Perhaps even more significant is the way you all have prepared my children to be independent learners who truly value their education. Thank you for putting these foundational values and skills in place to allow them to be successful regardless of the challenges. I feel very grateful my children and I are part of such an amazing community!

HHS alumna college application essay (excerpts)

There's a certain magic in computing. But not just with the technology, the hard science, it's the problem solving. ...

I've been asked why I became so interested in technology, or programming, and the answer always boils down to one main idea: I like knowing how everything works. The process, the 'why', it's incredibly interesting to me. I remember that when I was young I was obsessed with anything with buttons. I liked to play around with them, take some time to try different combinations and see how they work. I never really stopped the habit, I just changed to applying it to everything around me instead of just technology. I feel that I can learn so much about 'anything', just by interacting with and observing it. These little systems, the small processes, drive everything, and it makes up this incredibly complex pattern that forms an amazing whole.

When searching around for a term to describe my point more succinctly, I thought of tinkering, which I believe could be described as a combination of discovery and play. ... The whole process, learning by discovery, is what makes it so fun and compelling.

The thing is, none of this is isolated. I can observe something, play around with it, everything I can understand is based off of what I knew before. The more I know, the more I can learn. This is why I love reading and researching so much, it gives you the tools you need to make connections, to fit things together and discover new concepts and ideas. ...

- Jack Ganger Spivak



Jack on his HHS Graduation Day, 2016