



**October 2016**

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning @St. Aloysius Academy



Connecting the dots between one learning experience and another is critical in the cognitive development of children. Using our all-school summer read, “The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind” by William Kamkwamba, our teachers, across many disciplines, are using the book as a springboard to activities and discussions. Students learned that William was from Malawi, a land-locked, very

poor country in Africa’s southern region. Most of the population are farmers and live in small rural villages. When William was a young boy, a drought hit his village followed by famine. William poured through science textbooks at the library and read about windmills. Using scrap metal and bicycle parts, he built a windmill that would bring electricity and later, water to his village. Even though people called him crazy, he never gave up. This message of inventiveness, determination and grit was easily conveyed to our students because it truly was the Magis in action.

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8<sup>th</sup> graders constructed their own windmills using string, straws, tape and a paper cup. The challenge was to enable their windmill to lift a paper cup carrying three pennies. Some were successful. The experiment was followed by peer-to-peer design critique.

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Every student from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade tried their hand at African art which has been hanging in the library hallway for all to see. 3<sup>rd</sup> graders went a step further in art class by designing their own tribal ceremonial collars. Kindergarteners made the flag of Malawi.



As they read the chapters over the summer, 4<sup>th</sup> graders were asked to write down two questions per chapter that they wanted to ask. They shared these questions with their classmates which led to a lively book discussion.

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3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders chose four character traits that William possessed and then wrote justifications of their choice of traits all in the form of a windmill.

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In 6<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, students began their journey through the African continent being exposed to the people, the cultures, the economies and the governments using Malawi as a starting point.

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We had a dynamic presentation on electricity by The Franklin Institute, again tying in with William’s learning to produce electricity. Neurons, protons, open and closed circuits and static electricity were a few of the topics presented and, in some cases, demonstrated!



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This book was a perfect choice for everyone as there was a beautifully illustrated picture book for our youngsters, a youth edition for our intermediate students and a regular edition for everyone else. We are hoping many parents read the book also, so they could discuss its themes with their sons.



October is the Month of the Rosary in honor of Blessed Virgin Mary. As is our tradition, we had a very reverent and prayerful Rosary Walk on a beautiful fall day.

We prayed the Luminous Mysteries and stopped at the statue of Mary, Jesus, the Stations of the Cross, St. Aloysius, Our Lady of Fatima and St. Joseph.



From Africa to Outer Space – that is the journey the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is on. They read about the planets, they study the constellations and their stories, they do the math and they write about what they would do if they were an astronaut. They even sang a song about the planets on Grandparents Day. Later in the unit, they will partner with their 6<sup>th</sup> grade buddies for an outer space scavenger hunt and, of course, astronaut food and Tang!

Our 1<sup>st</sup> graders like to get up out of their seats. They are learning long and short vowels. They not only pronounce and hear the sound of each vowel, they see the vowel and use their bodies to act out the sound.



Our younger students not only have Physical Education class once a week, they also have another lesson in the gym devoted solely to karate each week. There is also Karate Club after school for students who just can't get enough karate. It is a great way to exercise and it teaches discipline and respect.

Our 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders were fortunate to visit the National Constitution Center and were thoroughly engaged in the featured exhibit, "Headed to the White House" which included artifacts, interactives and hands-on activities that took the students from the campaign trail into the Oval Office. At morning assembly and in the classrooms, we have discussed what the Catholic Church teaches as "Faithful Citizenship".



Our 8<sup>th</sup> graders are all contributing to research efforts for this year's Future City Competition. Future City is a project-based learning program where students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade imagine, research, design and build cities of the future. It is sponsored by national engineering foundations. This year's theme is public owned land use. Students present their solutions via a virtual city design using SimCity; a 1,500 word essay; a scale model; a project plan and a presentation to judges at Regional Competitions in January. This certainly gives our students a feeling if a career in engineering is for them.



Our new Art Room is the talk of the school with its original wooden ceiling, exposed brick walls, beautiful flooring, and most importantly, natural light. The students are loving it. Thank



everyone for your generosity and support of this very worthwhile project. The kiln is in place and Pottery Club will begin soon. Please feel free to come up and visit.