

PRESS RELEASE: For Immediate Release
Far Hill Country Day School
December 15, 2017

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The Sound of Music Strikes a Chord with Far Hills Second Grade's Study of Global Citizenship

Magazine Publishes Article on Cross-Curricular Approach Authored By Amy Burns, Sue Miller and Kathy Rubin

Far Hills, NJ —How might a cross-curricular approach to teaching Global Citizenship in second grade inspire empathy and increase the efficacy of a project-based study of immigration? For the answer, Far Hills (FH) second grade teachers Kathy Rubin and Sue Miller consulted with music teacher Amy Burns and proposed that an immigration project culminate with a musical performance.

Ms. Burns enthusiastically accepted the challenge. For performing arts educators, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a natural teaching method. For example, students create or connect to a piece of music through practice to prepare for a performance. Because the music had to be relatable to the second grade, the three teachers immediately thought of the von Trapp family whose members were both immigrants and performers. Many children are familiar with *The Sound of Music* movie version of the von Trapp story as it has grown to be an annual holiday favorite since its release in 1965. Students can also empathize with the plight of the von Trapp children as some were similar in age.

Empathy is at the heart of the Far Hills (FH) second grade curriculum and plays a critical role in the Project-Based Learning (PBL) study of global citizenship. Each student is asked to put themselves in the shoes of an immigrant to develop sensitivity to a world of diverse cultures and ethnicities and the challenges that may await an immigrant in a new and unfamiliar country.

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Grade 2 students are asked to answer the essential question “What is the experience of an immigrant?” According to Rubin and Miller, “Empathy is...important because it is the springboard to develop an understanding of cultures that might be different from ours or a ‘global awareness.’”

Skills employed in the cross-curricular project developed by the three teachers include research, role play, thinking maps and reflection. The curriculum combines reading, writing, performing and visual arts and technology. Each student creates a body of work that includes a scrapbook, a video, artistic interpretations of the Statue of Liberty and a live performance of several songs from *The Sound of Music*.

Ms. Burns notes that when students are asked which projects are the most meaningful to them, most impactful, many mention this immigration project that crosses boundaries into other classrooms. The three teachers co-authored an article “Project-Based Learning Across the Curriculum” that was published in the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) magazine, *Independent Teacher*, this past fall.

While the actual facts of the von Trapp family’s journey differ from the movie version, the students are able to put themselves in the shoes of an immigrant who might leave his or her homeland by climbing a mountain or by taking a train. Want to remember for yourself why the story of the von Trapp family generates our empathy? Watch *The Sound of Music* this Sunday, December 17 at 7:00 p.m. on ABC.

For more information about Far Hills, visit fhcds.org or contact Stacy Ducharme, Acting Director of Strategic Marketing & Communications at sducharme@fhcds.org or (908) 766-0622 ext. 1427.

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Far Hills inspires academic excellence and life skills such as resourcefulness, resilience, integrity, self-control, and a myriad of other invaluable traits that lay the foundation for lifelong success.

Our students don’t just learn answers. They develop the courage to challenge those answers. They learn not only problem solving, but also gain the confidence to stand by their solutions. They don’t simply learn to play a musical composition, they develop the self-esteem to stand up and perform. This is the balance that defines Far Hills—and sets our students apart.

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