



MUSIC TO THEIR EARS

Stroll down the 5th and 6th grade hallway on any given day, and you're likely to hear more than the strains of children's voices. In the classroom of teacher Jane Karolczak, you're as likely to hear a catchy tune with lyrics describing the classification of rocks, or a jaunty song listing the elements in the Periodic Table.

"I've learned over the years that kids learn infinitely easier— and have a better time doing so – if I can find a song that helps explain or solidify the lesson," says Mrs. Karolczak. "My role as a teacher is to learn how to connect with my students, and it's obvious that one key ingredient is music."

Mrs. Karolczak trolls the internet, YouTube, and old Schoolhouse Rock hits to find tunes with lyrics that work with her lesson plans, then broadcasts them in the classroom using her SMARTboard and stereo speakers. The 'Electromagnetic Spectrum Song' has made physical science infinitely more interesting, while the They Might Be Giants tune, 'How does the Sun Shine?' has helped the kids tackle an otherwise difficult concept. 'The Bible Song' has enabled her students to memorize and recite all 73 books of the Catholic Bible- in order- without batting an eye. The vintage tune 'Cherokee People' gives the students insight

5th Grade teacher uses music to enhance learning and fun



and empathy into their Social Studies lesson on Native Americans.

"Like it or not, there are always uninspiring parts of a class curriculum," says Mrs. Karolczak. However, if I can find a way to pleasantly drum the facts into the students' heads, it makes all things possible. The kids perk up, get excited, and drop everything to sing along!"

This 'teaching by music' technique is clearly working. Year upon year, the 5th grade students enjoy a genuine lift in their grade point averages, even in

their standardized test scores. Students gain confidence in their new- found abilities to organize their time and learn new concepts, and they enter junior high well equipped to face the challenges it brings.

Originally from Madison, Wisconsin, Mrs. Karolczak came to Cleveland with her husband and two young children in 1998. She toured all the local Catholic schools, but was sold immediately on St. Dominic.

"I love teaching students of this age group," (10-12 yrs.) says Mrs. Karolczak. "The students really begin connecting ideas, and pick up concepts like sponges. Their excitement to learn is palpable." ☩

UPPING THE ANTE

Third graders at St. Dominic are hitting the big leagues

Each year of school brings its own unique challenges, but in terms of leaping toward independence, 3rd grade at St. Dominic is a watershed. Students leave behind the picture books and adult-driven learning of the lower grades and begin to explore, to organize and to think for themselves. "It's an exciting year of elementary school," says 3rd grade teacher Ann Taddeo. "Students begin really connecting the themes of their learning across the curriculum."

Miss Taddeo's method of teaching includes a variety of cross-curricular learning opportunities and a strong emphasis on Language Arts. Her students must develop and present a book report every month, each in a different literary genre. September's theme was biography. October's theme was mystery – and required the students to develop a 'mystery box' including clues to solving the story. In November, the students will select a historical fiction story about Native Americans and early American culture, and their reports will take the form of letters written to characters in their story.



Miss Taddeo, who holds a Master's in Education with a specialty in Reading, feels it's imperative to appeal to the children's imaginations while encouraging reading. "In 3rd grade, the students have gone from reading books with many pictures to books with no pictures at all," she says. "Thus, it's important that they engage in the reading, and really form pictures in their heads."

Miss Taddeo taught St. Dominic's 4th grade class last year, and is still acclimating to the changed pace of 3rd graders. "There's more emphasis on phonics and context clues at this level of reading, which is rewarding for me as a teacher. I get to see the progress as they progress toward independent thinking. Really, what could be better than that?" ☩

POWERFUL LESSONS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

Appreciation for the many gifts God gives is an important theme at St. Dominic, but never was this more powerfully presented than to the St. Dominic 8th Graders at their annual retreat last month. The day, filled with lively discussion, hands-on activities and more than a little soul searching, will be one they remember for many years to come.

Pastoral Associate, Russ Petrus, began the retreat by randomly distributing chocolate bars of different sizes to the students. Petrus used the opportunity to explain that in life, possessions aren't always given out equally. Next, the students were broken up into 'families' of 4 and were each given \$10 – the average amount an impoverished family in America has to spend on food for the day. The families were then dispatched to take the rapid to Heinen's, and figure out how to feed 4 people in as healthy a way as possible without spending more than their allowance. The students studied the coupon pages and carefully reviewed the store's specials, but still realized how difficult the task could be. "It was embarrassing to have to put items back because we couldn't afford them," said Brianna McElrath. "It really taught me to be grateful for what we have," said Francis O'Brien. "I learned how to put others' needs before my own," said Greg Jones.

Back at the school, the students were given mock scenarios and had to create a living budget based on criteria given. Some situations were relatively easy – where the salaries were high, and the income could cover all necessary costs. Some situations were far more difficult but equally realistic, such as a single parent raising children on an income just above the poverty line. The students quickly realized how easy it was to neglect important considerations such as charitable contributions.

After a service project for the Thea Bowman Center and a frank discussion of the poverty levels in our country, the students played a game in which they were challenged



to combat social injustice through a simple mantra: See, Judge, Act. They learned how their own actions – or more commonly, own failure to act in the face of injustice – were leading them away from God. And they were inspired to pick one area where they could begin making a difference, and taking steps to improve life for all of God's people. The event ended with a Mass with Fr. Tom and their parents, and a class full of students whose view of life would be forever changed. It was a day when it was clear to all exactly what a Catholic education can mean. ☩

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Notable News About St. Dominic Grads

In the Beaumont School class of 2010, an astonishing 9 out of 10 girls who were nominated for the National Honors Society were graduates of St. Dominic School. Congratulations to the **St. Dominic Class of 2006** for achieving such a spectacular honor.

Thumbs up to St. Dominic graduate **Emily Brett** (SDS '09) who was selected from a pool of hundreds of international candidates to attend a Semester Away program with the School for Ethics in Washington D.C. This prestigious program offers a one-of-a kind opportunity to an elite group of high school students to study ethical issues in leadership while also following a rigorous academic curriculum with the help of distinguished world leaders.

Congratulations to **Peter Amaddio** (SDS '07), who was accepted and is now in his first semester at the Air Force Academy. Congratulations too to his brother, **Tony Amaddio, Jr.** (SDS '05) who also attends the Air Force Academy and is studying Civil Engineering, now in his Junior year. ☩

