



# An Authorized International Baccalaureate World School!



On Tuesday, March 26, 2019, Cultural Arts Academy Charter School was authorized to offer the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate. This was a 5-year transformational process that is a testament to the school’s perseverance and dedication to delivering the best possible education for our scholars.

Our school had to learn how to teach through inquiry, focus on conceptual understanding, teach the learner profile traits, focus on international mindedness, and schedule for effective teamwork and collaboration.

IB scholars are empowered with the skills, values and knowledge to create a better and more peaceful world. We recognize the importance of addressing the equity gap in New York City education, and we believe granting our scholars access to this program is a step in the right direction.

### The Benefits of the PYP for our Scholars

The PYP’s inquiry-approach to learning affords our scholars

opportunities to learn to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning.

By developing the attributes of the IB learner profile, our scholars also learn how to demonstrate respect for themselves and others, develop international-mindedness and take positive action for change.

### The Benefits of the PYP for our Staff

Our instructional staff is recognized for the additional work and dedication required of IB educators. They are supported by transformative professional development experiences and are gaining experience to later apply to IBEN roles if they should so choose.

### The Benefits for our Community

In the PYP, parents and the wider school community are also considered learners and valued as essential partners in students’ learning.

## VOL. 6, MARCH 2019

### Inquiry and ELA Test Prep



Read about how at CAACS we build knowledge and curiosity in our central ideas while simultaneously teaching ELA test prep strategies in grades 2-5.

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### Success at Debate Tournament



4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>h</sup> graders from CAACS placed high at the 2019 Great American Debate League Spring Classic Tournament.

3

### Parent Association Movie Night



CAACS’s Parent Association hosted a highly attended movie night that showcased the film Spider Man: Into the Spider-Verse, which was a huge success!

4

### Sharing the Planet in Grade K



Our Kindergarten scholars in Cornell and Howard University have completed projects about habitats of their choice.

5

“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.” -Pelé

# Balancing Inquiry with ELA Test Prep

In preparation for the New York State Exams in English and Language Arts, our 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders needed to practice their test taking strategies for reading comprehension. They needed to practice how to answer multiple choice, short answer, and extended response questions.

CAACS has adopted school-wide strategies for ELA tests. Dean Doerrlamm, our English Language Arts Specialist for grades K-5 emphasized, "A major short answer test prep strategy is R.A.F.F.T. which stands for Restate, Answer, Fact 1, Fact 2, Tie it up. Close reading strategies include writing, highlighting, annotating, and using symbols so that it is easy for the reader to go back to the text. Close reading and R.A.F.F.T. are two of our most effective strategies."



Our instructional team utilized News ELA to find articles related to the central ideas of each grade level so that scholars could practice their reading comprehension and test taking skills, while also deepening their knowledge and curiosity about their transdisciplinary IB theme and central ideas.

An example was in our third grade classes who are currently studying the central idea: humans adapt to an environment of ever changing technology. A lesson was created with an objective that addressed the standard of finding details in informational texts based on a need identified in the results of a recent mock exam. A News ELA article about cars that drive themselves to make pizza deliveries was used for the mini-lesson, and guided practice. For the independent practice, scholars were able to choose an article either about a new technology in art museums or delivery drones. News ELA also offered the texts on



different reading levels so the scholar's selection was aligned with their Recent Running Record results. Finally, scholars who scored highly and exemplified strategies were **presented with close reading awards.**



Another example was in our 4<sup>th</sup> grade, which used the same structure for their lesson, but with the central idea: human bodies are made up of systems. The article selected for their mini lesson was about ice cream headaches and the nervous system. The options for their independent practice included articles about the digestive and skeletal systems.

A third example was in our fifth grade whose central idea is currently: People have advocated for our rights and responsibilities. The article selected for their mini lesson was about advocating for the rights of disabled persons. The options for independent practice included articles about either women's rights or children's rights.

In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Professor McBride explained, "We saw an improvement in our multiple choice scores after using close reading techniques. We were able to slow down and dissect

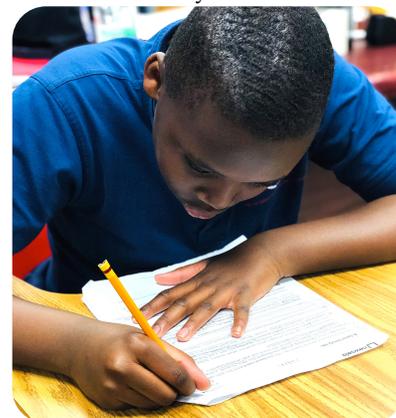
texts and identify where we found answers by using annotation marks. Those scholars who had annotation marks scored significantly higher than those who did not."

Our 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders aren't the only ones enjoying the benefits of the CAACS test taking strategies. Our second grade class, Juilliard University, has been starting each day with reviewing these strategies. Their lead teacher, Professor Wilson,



clarifies, "Test preparation is extremely important as we prepare our scholars for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I only have three months left with my scholars in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and I want my class to master these skills like R.A.F.F.T. now. I think it is important to expose my class to three page texts, so that next year they will feel prepared and not surprised."

As a public charter school that is held accountable to taking New York state exams and International Baccalaureate standards, Cultural Arts Academy is creating a model to do both effectively.



## CAACS's Scholars have Success at the American Debate League Spring Classic Tournament

The 2019 American Debate League's Spring Classic Tournament was held on Saturday March 30<sup>th</sup> from 8:30am-4:00pm at PS-91 in Ridgewood, Queens. Cultural Arts Academy Charter School was represented by seven 4<sup>th</sup> grader scholars and four 5<sup>th</sup> grade scholars. Our scholars were prepared by their classroom debate teacher, Professor Aguilar, who also served as a director of the event. Our scholars were coached by Dean Mercaldo, who also served as a judge of other schools at the tournament. Breakfast and lunch were provided for all in the form of bagels and pizza.

All of the scholars at this tournament were debating whether or not animals should be used for scientific testing. To score high, debaters had to be prepared to cite evidence and speak convincingly on both sides of the argument.



Debaters were graded on their ability to: show good posture and paper placement, volume, eye contact, hand gestures, pronunciation/diction of speech, and command of the room.

There was stiff competition as this tournament included not only District 18, but rather the entire greater New York City area. There were two elementary divisions: beginner and novice. There was a great amount of diversity in the elementary debaters race, culture, and ethnicities but they all shared one

commonality: all debaters were well prepared and had a passion for debate.

The day ended with an award ceremony that saw Cultural Arts Academy Charter School's scholars receive 1 medal for individual scholar in top 15 in beginner division, 1 medal for 5<sup>th</sup> place overall in beginner division, and three trophies (one for each scholar) for 3<sup>rd</sup> best debate team in beginner division.

Once again, our debate scholars have brought honor to our school through their performances, and there are bright futures for each of our young debaters.



## Women's History Month

The month of March is international women's month. In honor of women, we required our professors to update their hallway bulletin board displays and are pleased to share the results.

Our Spanish language teacher for grades K-2, Professor Morales, has a bulletin board on display that is a favorite of the scholars in her hallway.

When questioned about her bulletin board, Professor Morales explained, "I chose Simone Biles because I thought

she was someone the scholars would identify with because many do gymnastics, and she is inspirational. Sonia Sotomayor was selected because the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is currently studying about laws in their current inquiry unit, and she is also an important figure in the Latin world to make history. Sonia makes me proud both as a woman and because of my Hispanic heritage. Women's History month is important to me

because it allows me to recognize women who have inspired me."



## Parent Association Movie Night

### SPIDER-MAN

On Friday, March 29, 2019 Cultural Arts Academy's Parent Association hosted its first movie night of the school year, and it was a huge success! Our own Dean Scott, raved, "It was one of our most successful events. It was highly attended and great fun was had by all. We will be doing it again but the date for the next movie night is still to be determined."

The event took place in our Makerspace that was transformed to include seating, concessions, and a step and repeat banner for family photos taken by our own Dean Francis.

PA President Maza Myrie and PA member Ana Bezio Smith did a lot of the legwork with setting up the concessions and planning for the event. Ms. Myrie had this to say about the event, "The evening began with a screening of the short Oscar award winning film, *Bao*, followed by the film, *Spider-Man*:



*Into the Spider-Verse*. Concessions included, nachos, popcorn, three types of patties including a vegan option, traditional hotdogs, turkey hotdogs, chips, candy, water, juice, and sodas."

PA President, Ms. Myrie went on to thank the entire CAACS Parent Association, Dean Jefferson, Mr. Hernandez, and Dean Francis for helping with the event. She said the event was a great success, and raised a lot of money. 112 people attended the sold out event, but the greatest challenge was that more

wanted to attend the event. The venue could only accommodate so many.

Overall this level of parent and family involvement is a terrific sign for our school. As a school that offers the Primary Years Programme, we are constantly seeking new ways to incorporate the entire school community into the learning process.



## I Married an Angel CAACS Goes to City Theatre

On Tuesday, March 19, 2019 a 35-seat bus full of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade scholars, art professors and deans embarked on an extended learning experience to the New York City Center. The purpose of the trip was to view Rodgers and Hart's *I Married An Angel* ballet/musical.

The play itself was a remake from the 1930s that starred Sara Mearns of the New York City ballet as the angel. "It is a light-hearted, love story that weds balletic grace with drawing-room comedic charm. Count Willy Palaffi (Mark Evans), a jaded banker swears off women claiming the bride for him would have to be an angel. When he

eventually ties the knot with an actual celestial being, there are chaotic and hilarious consequences that compel Willy's shrewd sister, Countess Peggy Palaffi, to save him from his wife's otherworldly innocence" (NY City Center).

Dean Jones, our Director of the Fine Arts, explains, "We wanted our visual and performing arts scholars to see how a dress rehearsal is conducted in professional theatre and for them to see a musical. By attending, scholars can visualize themselves in the role of performers, as they continue to be exposed to the arts."



"An original, fresh, and beautiful piece of work; musical comedy has met its masters."

– *The New York Times*, reviewing the original 1938 Broadway production

# Kindergarten Theme: Sharing the Planet

**Central Idea: People can respect the earth to preserve habitats.**

Our Kindergarten classes, Howard and Cornell University have spent the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter working on their 3<sup>rd</sup> inquiry unit. The theme for this unit is *Sharing the planet* and the central idea is: People can respect the earth to preserve habitats.

Our Kindergarten professors and special professors met in collaborative meetings with our school's IB librarian and PYP Coordinator to plan learning experiences about the life cycle and four major habitats: rainforest, desert, marine, and arctic.

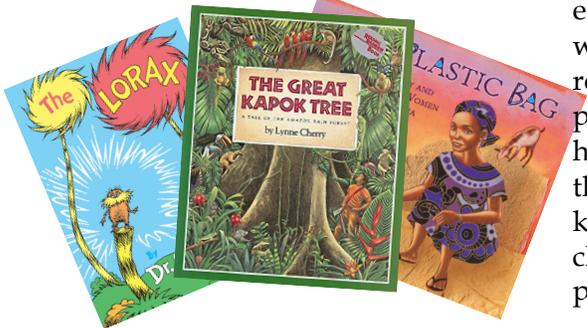
Preliminary lessons to build student curiosity included the read aloud of books like the Great Kapok Tree, The Lorax, One Plastic Bag, Magic Trash, Ivan and the Magical Stones.

teaching about instruments made with recyclables. Our health/physical education professors made connections by teaching about how pollution effects lungs and breathing, and our dance professor made connections by teaching a rainforest dance.

Finally it was time for the Kindergarten scholars to begin work on their summative project. Through guided inquiry scholars created their wonder wall by selecting one of four habitats to study further. For their summative project, scholars created either a 3D shoebox model or a poster complete with glued on pictures of the plants, animals, and terrain of their habitat. Scholars who exceeded standards went as far to research the common pollutants of their habitat and educated the class about how to keep their habitat clean in their class presentations.

Cornell University's Professor Hong, explained, "The scholars applied their knowledge of habitats and created a presentation that

displayed what they new about the habitat of their choice. The scholars also compared and contrasted what made their habitat different or alike from other habitats."



Our Spanish language professor for grades K-2 was able to integrate by teaching the names of the animals of the four habitats in Spanish. Our music professor was able to connect to the unit by



## CAACS GLOBE

Cultural Arts Academy Charter School  
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## Cultural Arts Academy Charter School's Attendance

**CAACS Attendance Rate for March 2019: 97.2%**