



# ROUND TABLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF MASON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Charleston, SC

SPRING 2018

## FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL



**WE ARE VERY PROUD** of all that we do at Mason Prep. Our teachers work diligently and creatively to provide our students with an outstanding educational experience that will send them on to the next level well-prepared to find success in high school and beyond. However, we know that it is essential to constantly strive for improvement in order to remain a vital and relevant institution. A critical part of Mason Prep's efforts toward continuous improvement involves our participation in the re-accreditation process.

Mason Prep was first accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 1993, and we must apply for re-accreditation every five years. Beginning in 2003, we have received dual accreditation from the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) along with SACS and its K-12 successor, AdvancEd. SAIS states that "to earn accreditation, schools must meet quality standards, be evaluated by an outside group of peer professionals, and implement a school plan focused on strategic improvement and student performance." Our re-accreditation efforts occupy about eighteen months out of every five-year period, and we have always found this to be time well spent. I am proud to let you know that we have been unanimously recommended for re-accreditation by the SAIS visiting committee that spent three days at Mason Prep in March.

Our re-accreditation efforts began in the fall of 2016 when we asked students, parents, teachers, trustees, and alumni parents to participate in the SAIS Value Narrative Survey. We appreciate the insights and opinions that nearly 400 of these stakeholders shared with us. Data from this and other surveys were presented to our faculty and staff in brainstorming sessions in the spring of 2017; working groups then identified eleven potential institutional goals for improvement, which were also shared with our Board of Trustees. After a faculty survey and further discussion later that spring, two areas were selected as our institutional goals for our 2018-2023 accreditation period: implementing differentiated instruction and increasing opportunities for teaching and learning in the STEM areas (science, technology, engineering, and math).

In the fall of 2017, subcommittees of teachers and staff collaborated to address four critical questions for each of our institutional goals:

- Where is Mason Prep today?
- Where does the school envision it will be in the future?
- What is the school's plan to get there? and
- What measures will the school use to chart its progress?

The subcommittees shared their findings and recommendations with the full faculty and staff throughout the fall, and this work was incorporated into Mason Prep's final self-study report, which was submitted to SAIS in January 2018.

We were exceptionally proud to show off our school when our visiting team of four educators selected by SAIS arrived at Mason Prep in March. Over three days, the team members observed nearly all of our teachers in action; talked about our school over lunch with students and dinner with teachers, administrators, and trustees; and met with small groups of students, parents, teachers, and alumni. The visiting team's report, containing its commendations for what our school does well and its recommendations about how we can be an even better school, will arrive later this spring.

Our work did not end when we submitted our self-study report in January. Our teachers and staff have developed plans for improvement in our two goal areas, along with timelines for implementation. These plans for improvement include a variety of professional development activities in the areas of STEM and differentiated instruction. In keeping with our increased emphasis on differentiated instruction, our teachers are encouraged to strengthen their skills in ways that suit their own learning styles. For example, one teacher may attend a national conference, another may take an online graduate course, while a third may visit classrooms in other high-performing schools.

Two recommendations from our visiting re-accreditation team provide areas where our parents and other members of the Mason Prep family can help. First, the committee recommended "engaging parents and community members as experts in fields to achieve authentic learning goals in a STEM-infused curriculum". Second, the team encouraged Mason Prep to "develop collaborative networks with community resources (medicine, aeronautics, automation, and Silicon Harbor) to achieve authentic learning goals in a STEM-infused curriculum". Our parents and alumni should prove to be invaluable resources for our school in these efforts, and we plan to actively seek their participation.

Through our data analysis, reflection, brainstorming, and discussions throughout the re-accreditation process, we have gained a great deal of knowledge about what Mason Prep does well and how we can do even better. Our efforts have resulted in successfully earning the re-accreditation that we sought, and those efforts now turn to putting our plans into action. We look forward to offering our students more opportunities for differentiated learning, which may be based on their strengths, interests, or creative abilities. We also look forward to challenging our students through participation in a wider variety of cross-curricular STEM-infused activities, particularly those that emphasize the design thinking process. These efforts will only strengthen our dedication to our school's mission, especially our commitment to the education of the whole child and to the development of productive citizens of a global community. I am excited about what the future holds for Mason Prep and our students!



## 2nd & 3rd Quarters STUDENT HONORS

### HEADMASTER'S LIST

Students with no subject grade below 93 for that reporting period.

5th grade:  
Kathryn Brisson (Q2,Q3), Hannah Finley (Q2,S1,Q3), Meredith Finley (Q2,S1,Q3), Alexia Garman (Q2,S1), James Iannotti (Q2,S1), Sarah Oswald (Q2,S1,Q3), Blynn Roumillat (Q2,S1), Brennan Teufel (Q2,S1), Brooks Wetmore (Q2,S1,Q3)

6th grade:  
Jay Bearden (Q2,S1,Q3), Benjamin Brock (Q2,S1,Q3), William Craig (Q2,S1,Q3), Manny Gottlieb (S1), Max Opoulos (S1,Q3), Celia Powers (Q2,S1), Isabella Ragucci (Q2,S1,Q3), Sophia Ragucci (Q2,S1,Q3), Tawes Wenz (S1)

7th grade:  
Emily Benasutti (S1,Q3), Mateu Bordas (Q3), Georgia Dempsey (S1), Kelly Enright (Q3), Niko Fokas (Q3), Jack Houseal (S1,Q3), Anna Hope Jordan (Q2,S1,Q3), Jake Koster (Q3), Peyton Maney (Q3), Alexis Manos (Q3), Daniel McFee (Q2,S1,Q3), Elizabeth Mood (S1), Andrew Nichols (S1,Q3), Martha Noble (Q2,S1), Hannah Roark (S1,Q3), Darden Shuman (Q2,S1,Q3), Alec Skipper (Q3), Susanna Snider (Q3), Holden Teufel (Q2,S1,Q3)

8th grade:  
Claudia Baicu (Q2,S1,Q3), Caleb Cayouette (Q2,S1,Q3), Bowen Enright (S1), Anna Graves (Q3), William Jones (Q2,S1,Q3), Alma Lutas (Q2,S1,Q3), Jett McGrath (Q2), Zoe Mintz (Q2,S1,Q3), Ella Small (Q2,S1,Q3), Claire Vaughan (Q3), Evie Wells (Q2,S1,Q3), Leah Zimlich (Q2,S1,Q3)

### FACULTY LIST

Students who maintain an overall average of 93 or higher with no subject grade lower than an 85.

5th grade:  
Madelyn Barth (Q2,S1,Q3), Kathryn Brisson (S1), Talula Enright (Q2,S1,Q3), Campbell Fennell (Q2,S1,Q3), Alexia Garman (Q3), Felix Hagar (Q2,S1,Q3), James Iannotti (Q3), James Jefferies (Q2,S1,Q3), Finn Marenakos (Q2,S1,Q3), Gray Murphy (Q2), Andrew Palmer (S1), Brennan Teufel (Q3), Tristan Ward (Q2), Harper Warrick (Q2,S1,Q3), Preston Wells (Q2,S1,Q3)

6th grade:  
Simmons Dority (Q2,S1), Manny Gottlieb (Q2,Q3), Wesley Klump (S1,Q3), Amelia McMarlin (Q2,S1,Q3), Max Opoulos (Q2), Celia Powers (Q3), Mary Gail Riley (Q2,S1,Q3), Rutledge Sander (Q2,S1,Q3), Jane McCrae Sanders (S1,Q3), Tawes Wenz (Q2,Q3), Fiona Yang (Q2,S1,Q3)

7th grade:  
Harris Ayers (Q2,S1,Q3), Emily Benasutti (Q2), Mateu Bordas (Q2,S1), Neil Brown (Q2,S1,Q3), Caroline Cochran (Q2,S1,Q3), Chet Connolly (Q3), Georgia Dempsey (Q2,Q3), Kelly Enright (S1), Gannon Gottlieb (S1,Q3), Jonah Haller (Q2,S1,Q3), Jack Houseal (Q2), Jake Koster (S1), Owen Kreutner (Q2,S1,Q3), Peyton Maney (S1), Alexis Manos (Q2,S1), Elizabeth Mood (Q2,Q3), Andrew Nichols (Q2), Martha Noble (Q3), Hannah Roark (Q2), Jonathan Savage (S1,Q3), Alec Skipper (Q2,S1), Susanna Snider (Q2,S1), Evan Waldeck (Q3)

8th grade:  
Raegan Badger (Q2,Q3), Sophia Colby (Q2,S1,Q3), Bowen Enright (Q2,Q3), Ansley Gianoukos (Q2,S1,Q3), Anna Graves (Q2,S1), Sam Laro (Q2,S1), Robert Mallard (Q2,S1,Q3), Jett McGrath (S1), Ella Schar (Q2,S1,Q3), Cathryn Shippee (Q2,S1,Q3), Zachary Skipper (S1,Q3), Hope-Elaine Stowell (Q2,S1,Q3), Claire Vaughan (Q2,S1)

### HONOR ROLL

Students who maintain an overall average of 90-92 with no subject grade lower than an 85.

5th grade:  
Ada Hester (Q2,S1), Mary Caroline Kiger (Q2,Q3), Grace Koster (Q2,S1,Q3), Gray Murphy (S1,Q3), Andrew Palmer (Q3), Thea Ragnestaal (Q3), Madeline Waldeck (S1), Tristan Ward (S1)

6th grade:  
Trip Calloway (S1,Q3), Simmons Dority (Q3), Bryson Eaton (Q3), Analeise Gustafson (Q3), Jake Hester (Q2,S1,Q3), Wesley Klump (Q2), Clyde Mauldin (Q2,S1), Jane McCrae Sanders (Q2), Adeline Shaddrix (Q2,Q3), Grant Tingley (Q3)

7th grade:  
Chet Connolly (Q2,S1), Niko Fokas (Q2,S1), Laura Hamilton (S1), Jessica Klump (Q3), Jake Koster (Q2), Peyton Maney (Q2), Will Meany (Q2,S1,Q3), Gracie Philp (Q2,S1,Q3), Will Popelka (Q3), Gabriel Runza (Q3), Jonathan Savage (Q2), Molly Stafford (S1,Q3), Jackson Turrentine (Q3)

8th grade:  
Raegan Badger (S1), Robert Barrineau (Q3), Lilly Bridges (Q2,S1,Q3), Nicholas Brown (Q3), Callie Costa (Q3), Sam Laro (Q3), Wallace Pettus (Q2), Colin Philp (Q2,S1), Elliott Sanders (Q3), Zachary Skipper (Q2)

### NICE KNIGHTS

Sophia Colby, Addie Legette, Brennan Teufel, Logan Tronoski, Starke Sydnor, Jane McCrae Sanders, Connor Dantzler, Fiona Yang, Max Thibault, Rex Nacey, Brooks Wetmore, Henry Yonce, Jonathan Savage, Mason Murphy, Maddie Skukan, Nick Brown, McKenzie Barth, Max Opoulos, Pamela Yonce, Thea Ragnestaal, Charlie Stafford, Sims Ervin, Amelia Lewis, Andrew Palmer, Stewart Sydnor, Ellen Baker, Ella Winkler, Jay Bearden, Rosie Lotz, Holden Teufel, Gia Iannotti, Hannah Finley, Whit Friedman, Helms Sander, Will Meany, Rawley Hudnall, Charlotte Alexandre, Clara Anderson, Kelly Enright, Finn Marenakos, Edgar Buck, Elliott Sanders, Ansley Dickerson, Isabella Ragucci, Lainey Foxhall, Patrick Verner, Samantha Star, Martha Noble, Thomas DiNovo, Griffin Arnett, Zoe Mintz, Grace Popelka, Vivi McAuliffe, Will Davis, Miles Skukan, Anna Simmons, Will Lamoreaux, Benjamin Brock, Claire Vaughan, Henry Smith, Josephine Broome, Isabella Steele, Meredith Finley, Cole Peters, William Jones, Lucas Shortreed, Will Craig, Olivia DiCampli, Wallace Bates, Hampton Turrentine

### WRITING AWARDS

Cannon Draper, Jennings Foxhall, Luke Foxhall, Presley Walker, Lana Evans, Mahlon Kline, Wyatt Lipp, James Oliver, Nicholas Leite, Ben Plunkett, Lizzy Small, Ava Walker, Liam Jones, Cody Lenhardt, Matthew Silvia, Patrick Verner, Campbell Fennell, Meredith Finley, Finn Marenakos, Sarah Oswald, Simmons Dority, Analeise Gustafson, Mary Gail Riley, Grant Tingley, Caroline Cochran, Alexis Manos, Martha Noble, Susanna Snider, Molly Stafford, Claudia Baicu, Anna Graves, Jacob Hochman, Sam Laro, Gunnar Schachte, Gabriel Cooney, Leah King, Liam Caskie, Rosie Lotz, Will Oswald, Neely Thomas, Joslyn Leaf, Ella Winkler, Hank Houseal, Mason Murphy, Iva Jones, Jackson Popper, Leah Bagg, Ava Dion, Thomas Nguyen, Crosby Averill, Thea Ragnestaal, Harper Warrick, Talula Enright, Brennan Teufel, Benjamin Brock, Celia Powers, Will Craig, Jane McCrae Sanders, Hannah Roark, Anna Hope Jordan, Harris Ayers, Alma Lutas, William Jones



## KNIGHTS KNOW 2018 - ONE WORLD, MANY STORIES

### Knights KNOW!



#### Kind

Knights know how to be kind.

#### Nurturing

Knights know how to be nurturing, by caring for other people.

#### Optimistic

Knights know how to be optimistic, by thinking positively about the world around them.

#### Wise

Knights know how to make wise decisions.

One of the highlights of Knights KNOW week was a panel discussion held for students in grades five through eight. The panel was comprised of students, a teacher, a parent, and alumni who are now in high school. There was a productive energy in the room as not only the panel members but also audience members shared their experiences. Points of discussion included:

*Making good decisions.*

“Imagine your grandfather, your pen pal, or someone else you respect can see what you are doing – would they be proud of you?”

*Accepting differences.*

“One person’s strength is another person’s weakness. We all fit together like a puzzle and are stronger when we work together.”

*Being a good friend.*

“You don’t always know what someone is going through. Be there for your friends and listen to them. Sometimes you just need someone to listen.”

Younger students participated in activities also, many of which asked them to think about the Knights KNOW values. They were asked to share how they were Kind, Nurturing, Optimistic and Wise, and what those words meant to them. Some responses:

“Kindness means to be caring and helping someone who is not in the best situation right now.”

“I show kindness by helping my cat feel at home by giving him toys and a litter box, food, and water.”

“Nurturing is to help somebody up and not to push somebody down.”

“Knowing how to be wise can be hard, but if you stop and think before you do anything, you have already passed the first test of being wise.”

*Teaching and reinforcing these values is an important part of the Mason Prep curriculum. We often hear that both our current students and our graduates are kind and respectful, and we are proud to play a part in developing caring citizens who will have positive impacts on our community.*



# STEM AND DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING AT MASON PREP

Incorporating more STEM lessons and enhancing our use of differentiated teaching techniques are two of our institutional goals for the next five years.  
(see Mr. Kreutner's letter on page one)

## STEM: Science – Technology – Engineering – Math

“STEM education is an interdisciplinary approach to learning that removes the traditional barriers separating the four disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and integrates them into real-world, rigorous, and relevant learning experiences for students.”  
*STEM Lesson Essentials, Grades 3-8: Integrating Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics* by Vasquez, Comer and Snieder

More than simply teaching additional lessons in math or completing experiments in science, STEM is a way of teaching that helps prepare students for learning and working in the real world by focusing on problem solving. Concepts and skills learned in multiple classes are used to solve the given problem, and, since the problem is a real-world problem to which students can relate, teachers do not hear, “Why do I need to learn this?”

### In a STEM lesson:

- students focus on solving engaging real-world problems or engineering challenges.
- students work in teams to plan, design, and create prototypes and products. They then test and evaluate these plans and plan how to improve.
- failure is regarded as a natural part of the design process and an essential step toward creating an improved or successful solution.

*To better understand what a STEM lesson is, consider this example (a true story): Ms. Rizzo's class is solving a real-life problem.*

New construction near their school is allowing large amounts of sediment to wash into a nearby stream. Students have already studied the value of watersheds in science and they can see how the sediment flowing from this stream and into the watershed damages the environment. They are working in teams to design barriers to slow the rate at which sediment is flowing out of their model streambeds. Each team sends a liter of water down a model streambed containing sand, clocks the amount of time this takes, and measures the amount of sand that washes past the barriers and enters the model watershed (a bucket at the end of the streambed).

whether to redesign the barrier system to hold back more sediment. Several teams discover their barrier system does not work well. Ms. Rizzo reassures them that failure is a normal part of the engineering process and that they can use what they learn to redesign their barrier systems.

Mr. Curtis, the math teacher, enters the room. He has been teaching students about flow rate and has come to check on their progress. One of the students says to him, “Mr. Curtis, do you remember when I asked you why we needed to learn how to calculate rates? Well, now I know. We need to use flow rates to solve this engineering problem. It's like we're combining math and science.”

Students use this data to calculate the sediment flow rate and decide

It is these “lightbulb moments” that make STEM lessons so impactful. As schools embrace curricula that incorporate STEM, their students:

- enhance their understanding of important science and mathematics concepts
- become innovative critical thinkers
- understand how to approach and solve problems
- develop good collaboration skills



- become more technologically literate
- develop a sense of ethics and a social conscience
- understand how their STEM coursework opens the door to future careers

Source: *STEM by Design, Strategies and Activities for Grades 4-8* by Anne Jolly

## Differentiated Learning

More than a century ago, teachers in one-room schoolhouses faced the challenge of teaching students of various ages and various abilities. That challenge still exists today as teachers ask themselves, “How do I divide my time, resources, and myself so that I am an effective catalyst for maximizing talent in all my students?”

The differentiated classroom seeks to answer this question. Teachers in differentiated classrooms accept and act on the premise that they must be ready to engage students in instruction through different approaches to learning, by appealing to a range of interests, and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity and differing support systems.

### The Philosophy of Differentiation

- Regarding diversity as normal and valuable
- Seeing every learner's potential for academic success
- Accepting responsibility for maximizing each learner's progress
- Recognizing and removing barriers that deny many learners equal access to excellence

*Students in differentiated classrooms tackle assignments differently than those in more traditional classrooms.*

For example, fifth graders at Sullins Elementary explore the concept of “famous people.” In Mr. Elliott's class, each student chooses a subject, researches their chosen person, and writes a report which is graded according to the rubric given to the whole class.

In Mrs. May's class, the process is much different. First, Mrs. May spotlights several famous people, explaining to her class that famous people come from many fields and cultures. Students are encouraged to think about areas in which they are interested (i.e., sports, art, music, science) and choose a person who is famous in that area. Students work with the school media specialist to learn about various

resources available for research. Students work with Mrs. May to learn about various ways to take notes and organize information (i.e., webs, outlines, and storyboards) and which methods may work better for each student. The class discusses the ways they can express what they learn: through essays, historical fiction, monologues, or character sketches.

As the assignment continues, Mrs. May works with individuals and small groups to assess their progress and understanding and to provide personal coaching. In the end, each student's work is assessed according to their personal rubric and goals for the project.

In a differentiated classroom, students:

- are given alternative methods for learning as deeply as possible and as quickly as possible
- are held to high standards



- compete against themselves as they grow and develop more than against each other
- come to believe learning involves risk, error and personal triumph

Source: *The Differentiated Classroom, Responding to the Needs of All Learners* by Carol Ann Tomlinson

To help in the realization of these goals, the Mason Prep Foundation has raised

**\$152,975** to support:

(via the Annual Fund as of April 12)

teacher training and professional development



stand-up desks and “wobbly” chairs to help students who have difficulty sitting for long stretches of class



easily configured desks that facilitate group work



## SERVICE LEARNING

### Sixth Grade Service Learning Project: Battling Plastic Pollution

Every grade at Mason Prep completes a Service Learning Project over the school year as part of that grade level's curriculum. Each grade chooses a project and teachers weave the work and lessons learned from these projects through several areas of study over the course of the year. This allows students to explore the issues and challenges around their project, as well as the impact of their efforts, more fully than is typical with more traditional community service initiatives.

This year, the sixth grade has taken on the problem of plastic pollution. Students, working solo or in groups, chose a specific topic having to do with plastic pollution. They researched their topic, developed an action plan, and implemented their plan. Said sixth grade science teacher Ms. Cindy Renkas, "I saw articles last summer in the Post and Courier about the South Carolina Aquarium's plans to work on plastic pollution and thought it would be something sixth graders would be excited to

tackle. I have been thrilled to see how the ripples of the students' work to increase public awareness around this issue have already begun spreading."

The results have been impressive. Area restaurants are displaying student-created posters and flyers about problems caused by plastic straws. Three students, who had their letter to the editor published in the Post and Courier, have had responses from a reader in North Carolina telling them to keep up the good work. Eleven local marinas are distributing and posting flyers about the dangers of abandoned crab traps. The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission is displaying student-created posters about the dangers of cigarette littering at 13 area boat landings. And right here at Mason Prep, our PTO is forming a committee to see how they can help our school limit our plastic consumption.

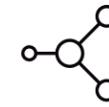
"I learned there is a lot more plastic pollution in the world than I thought, and it's more harmful for the environment than I expected. After doing this project, my mom has stopped using plastic straws – she pays me \$5.00 every time she uses a plastic straw."  
Will Craig, sixth grade student

*Service Learning Projects help our students see that they can have a positive impact on their world. Part of Mason Prep's mission is the goal of developing "productive citizens of a global community." Projects such as these instill in our students a sense of responsibility for their environment which contributes to the realization of that goal.*

"Once we did the research and put our projects together to see the whole picture of plastic pollution, I couldn't believe how bad it was for the environment. There is so much plastic and it's all over the world. We tell people how bad it is, but sometimes they don't listen."  
Kristina Kakalev, sixth grade student



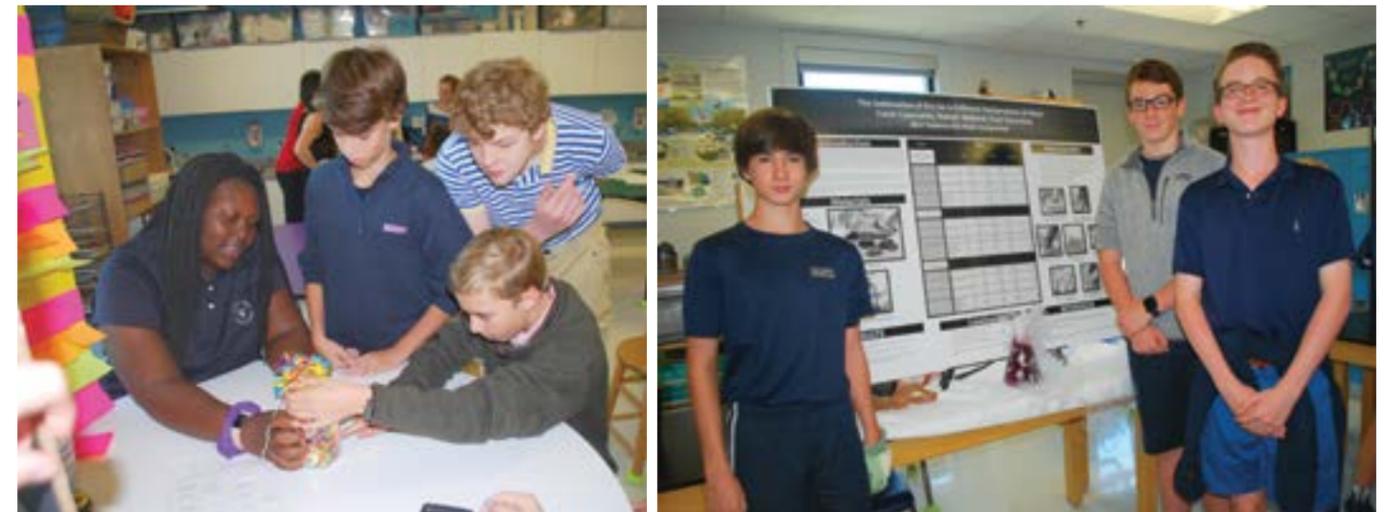
Clockwise from top left: flyer at Wappoo Creek boat landing, flyer at Starbucks, neighborhood door hanger, letter to the editor, flyer at Rodney Scott's BBQ



## FOCUS ON MATH & SCIENCE

### Math & Science Symposium

Seventh and eighth graders participated in the Math and Science Symposium this year. The Symposium is modeled after a professional symposium, with a focus on peer-to-peer education. Eighth-grade presenters chose their topic and presentation mode. Each project included a mathematical analysis of data or was itself a mathematical experiment; for example, "The Sublimation of Dry Ice in Different Temperatures of Water." On Symposium day, eighth graders presented their results to a seventh-grade audience.

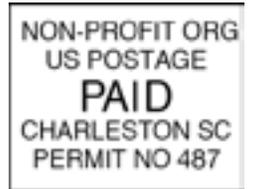


### Innovation Days

Fourth, fifth and sixth graders put their science, math, and engineering ideas to work as they participated in two separate Math and Science Innovation Days. On the first Innovation Day, sixth graders became the teachers for fifth graders as students measured the length of each other's smiles, matched liquid amounts in differently shaped containers, and constructed robotic arms capable of grasping a marble, a wing nut, and a straw.

On the second Innovation Day, the fifth graders became the teachers, helping fourth graders learn the basics of building bridges spanning a 12-foot "gorge" and create simple electrical circuits wired into homemade switches and buzzers. The fifth graders, having completed the same challenging activities earlier by themselves, were very impressed by the persistence and innovative creations of their fourth-grade students.





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Or Current Resident

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## ANNUAL FUND 2017-18

### Casino Knight Proceeds Total Nearly \$50,000 to Benefit Mason Prep Annual Fund



Thank you to everyone who helped to make the Casino Knight Auction and Gala a success! Whether you signed on as an event sponsor, donated an auction item, volunteered your time or simply attended the Gala - your support is so appreciated and makes an incredible difference at our school.

Together we raised a net \$48,200 to benefit the Mason Prep Annual Fund, which supports special initiatives not covered by tuition income. This year, the Annual Fund will make it possible to provide enhanced professional development for faculty and purchase needed classroom furniture that facilitates differentiated learning experiences for our students.

*Thank you to the many families and friends whose generosity enables Mason Prep to continue to provide the best possible learning experience for our children!*