

## The Road Report - 9-20-2006

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Amherst, NH Master's Academy. Besides being located in one of the most beautiful parts of the country to visit this time of year, this school is also a beautiful example of a well-built second year program and is a beautiful picture of team work.

This was my first school visit and what a great way to start. I arrived in the middle of the first hour of their Master's Institute classes. This is their first year of having Master's Institute classes and they are offering a Stage Production Class, Drama Performance Class and a Writing and Med/Renaissance Literature. Kathy Thompson, also the Master's drama teacher, is teaching the Stage Production class and on the day I visited was covering the various responsibilities and jobs that need to be filled in order to make a theater production happen. She had a great hand out describing the duties of each of the necessary jobs and the preparation that they require. This class was full of students 13 and up who will be working on various aspects of this year's Shakespeare production. Immediately following the production class, Kathy teaches the drama performance class where they are working toward the auditions for the Shakespeare production.

I can't wait to see what this group of young people performs at the end of this year. Simultaneously, during second period, Kathy Rentz, also the history teacher at Master's, teaches a writing class full of 5 boys and 4 girls all of whom are 10 or 11 years old. What a creative bunch of students! They are working on journals, story starters and using all the source material that life makes available to them. Kathy will also be covering some of the time period related literature (medieval/renaissance) during this class and they are creating a website that will feature some of the students writing just as soon as they come up with a medieval/renaissance name for their site.

Master's rotation classes started at 12:30 and with such a smooth and organized process. Each student arrived and went straight to their first classroom where their teacher aides were waiting for them. This was only the second week and yet all the children knew where to go. Wow! This week's class topics revolved around Japan and the orient.

What was so noticeable about this group was that each teacher seemed very aware of what the other teachers were teaching that day so that the consistency in the subject matter and theme for the day was evident and definitely made an impression on the students. Art focused on Japanese drawing techniques and style, music learned about oriental music and its foundation which is the pentatonic scale, drama's topic included some of the literature of the orient and of course, in history, Japan and its great national history were discussed.

During classes, each of the teacher aides helps with classroom management. In addition, they fill out a brief summary of what was covered in each class and any "homework" or supplies that are needed for the next week. These are given to a volunteer mom who compiles them and sends it out to all the parents each week. This is in addition and in follow up to the syllabus material that each of the families received at parent orientation at the beginning of the year. If you are reading this section, you have found the question of the month. Answer this correctly and be the first one to

email me your answer and you will win the gift certificate described in the introductory letter. What year did Vivian Doublestein start Master's Academy?

Some great ideas that came from this trip that you may benefit from knowing:

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Mrs. Shaw did a musical knowledge survey with each of her music classes so that she knew what level of musical knowledge each of her students and her classes as a whole were beginning the year with and what she did NOT need to cover and what she did need to teach. (how's that for a run on sentence) In addition, her composer of the day was a great match for the oriental history topic as was her use of hands on reinforcement of the pentatonic scale using various Orff instruments.

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Mrs. Arel, the new art teacher, used the drawing of oriental and exotic birds to teach various basics in the elements of art. Step by step, she led the students through drawing a bird with its backgrounds of bamboo, flowers etc. All the students left feeling successful and you can view some of their work in the pages of the upcoming staff and parent newsletter (as soon as I receive parental permission) and on the MAFA website.

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Mrs. Thompson used her engaging personality and passion for her subject of drama to teach not only the topic of the day but also drew in basics of the breathing and posture for good projection in drama performance. Her enthusiasm for her subject is catching to her students.

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Mrs. Rentz was showing a topic related video the day I visited. This video gave her students a glimpse into the history of and life in Japan a topic that often does not get covered in our usual approach to American theater. Her personable demeanor with her students is encouraging and draws out their opinions and ideas. This was evident in the writing class that she taught earlier in the day.

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The program is led by one of the most organized and yet most peaceful ladies that I have ever met and her calm and peaceful spirit is seen in every aspect of the program. The students are excited and yet peaceful, there is a spirit of order and calm with the teachers and in the classroom and it is clear that this starts from the top and filters its way down. Janyne Hornung has done a beautiful job of making the Master's Academy of Amherst a perfect example of second year program.

Janyne heard about Master's through a friend who saw the Master's link on a classical homeschool website and told Janyne because she knew of Janyne's art background. Janyne has leaned heavily on God's guidance and as always, God has brought the perfect team together to make this program what it needs to be to meet the needs of its community.

Master's Academy of Amherst has at its disposal some incredible field trip opportunities including Boston Symphony concerts, Boston Pops concerts, incredible historical sites and wonderful art museums and theater performances. A wonderful parent volunteer heads up the field trip portion of the program and sets up the scheduling and the registration for the trips. Another wonderful volunteer handles the yearbook. YES! This second year academy had a yearbook its very FIRST year. Parents submitted all of the pictures of both their individual child and of various group activities this year so that the parents could make this yearbook an integral part of their yearly portfolio.

One thing that was so "cool" to me as a first time observer at Amherst, was to see how the Master's

program duplicates so easily and is so relatable and NEEDED in various areas of the country. It was funny to see kids in Amherst who reminded me of kids and personalities that I had encountered in my classroom and directing at Master's of Gwinnett. I realized that we all live in different areas of the country but many of the needs, situations, personalities have so much in common with other academies and we can learn SO MUCH from each other.

Don't forget...we are encouraging, STRONGLY encouraging all directors and their staff to take their OWN field trip to visit another Master's Academy this year. Obviously, this is easier to do in the Georgia, Alabama area, but if at all possible, everyone should try and give it a shot. I've learned so much in my past visits to Hampton, Athens, Marietta and Duluth...and we all need to be "freshened up" from time to time. Make it a date on your calendar now, early in the year, before the year sneaks away from us.

Congratulations to Janyne Hornung and her awesome staff for creating such a great school so quickly. I know that with the quality of this program, they will HAVE to have a new location for next year. Already this year they had to turn people away, so, I'm sure that a change in location is just around the corner. God has certainly blessed Janyne's vision, leadership and servant's heart in this location. God is being glorified by the excellence in the arts in the Master's of Amherst program.