



St. Clare of Assisi School
Principal Kim Vangel's Blog

October 29, 2017

During the week of October 16th I was able to see two of our St. Clare classes on field trips, both of which demonstrated some of the unusually good things happening at St. Clare of Assisi School. There were Facebook posts about both of these excursions, and the pictures are fun to see, but I'd like to talk about what made them both extraordinary.

First, our 4th Grade took an all-day trip to enhance their science and social studies learning by spending their morning at the Challenger Learning Center, and their afternoon at the original State of Missouri Capitol Building in St. Charles, Missouri. Fourth Grade Science includes study of the Earth and the Solar System and the kids read about space, they use models of the planets, and they do projects – all good means of learning. But when our students go to the Challenger Learning Center, they become astronauts in a “real” space shuttle. They are tasked with a mission, they are asked to carry out experiments, collect and analyze data, and form conclusions. They work as a team, they solve problems, and they use their new knowledge about the earth and solar system to help them with their mission. This is 21st Century Learning at its best, and it is far superior to memorizing facts from a textbook and spitting them back out on a test!

On to St. Charles where our 4th Graders saw the history of Missouri come to life! Reading about history can be pretty dry when you're 9 or 10 years old, but hearing stories, seeing artifacts, and being in the place where the history actually took place can spark a 9 year old's imagination in new and different ways.

Later in the week our 3rd Graders attended a performance of *The Wizard of Oz* at the Touhill Center on the campus of UMSL. This production was put on by Variety Childrens Theatre, a local group dedicated to offering musical theater performance opportunities for people of ALL abilities. Our 3rd Grade attended to support their classmate who is disabled and was part of the production. This was extraordinary on a couple of levels. First, the cast and crew integrated kids and teens with physical and other disabilities seamlessly into the musical numbers, on the light board, and backstage. It seemed perfectly normal to see cast members in wheelchairs mixed in with all the other performers – what a beautiful and extraordinary thing! The audience was filled with students of all abilities and no one was made to feel they did not belong there. Second, our 3rd Graders were excited beyond words to see their classmate on stage, and squealed and pointed with delight every time she appeared. This is extraordinary because they don't see the differences that adults see. Our children don't care that some kids use walkers and some kids have different skin and some kids learn differently. This

was inclusion and equality at its best, and we adults could all learn from the pure love and acceptance that was evident from our 3rd Grade students!