



NEWS FROM THE CITY NEIGHBORS FOUNDATION

MAY/JUNE 2020

*An update on the work of City Neighbors Foundation, our City Neighbors schools,
and our work to impact public education everywhere*

This Moment

The murder of George Floyd, preceded by the murders of Breonna Taylor and Armaud Arbery--and far too many others--has rocked our national consciousness. And it's about time. This is about inequity, injustice, violence, police brutality, and murder. This is about white supremacy, white privilege, and institutional racism. This is about institutional violence that harms Black and Brown people. This is about the same story happening over and over and over and over again.

But, maybe--just maybe--this moment might be one of real awakening. Protests are sustained. News coverage continues to focus on real issues of systemic racism and violence. Language like "white supremacy," "white privilege," "institutional racism," and "anti-racism" can be heard in everyday media and conversations. Dr. Cornell West calls it "a turning point." Samuel L. Jackson says that the water has broken and that "we are starting the labor pains of this change that is about to happen." And, at George Floyd's funeral, Pastor Steve Wells told mourners that this moment has "awakened the conscience of a nation." This awakening, if it really is one, should have happened long ago. This moment may have galvanized a nation. But we have galvanized before and yet we still find ourselves here.

This time needs to be different. This time needs to be sustained, relentless, big. We need to lend our voices to create a powerful chorus and use our platforms to demand the kind of world we know is right, just, moral, and humane. But, the important words we say in these few weeks – including these – are simply not enough. We must act. And we must continue to act.

Each of us must individually act with urgency. Vote. Sign a petition. Use our social media accounts. Join a peaceful protest. Make demands of our lawmakers. Learn. Read history. Make history. Write. Learn more. Ask questions. Organize. Speak to those who will listen. Speak to those who won't listen, but should. Learn to listen to those voices that need to be heard more than ever. Hold out hands and invite others to join. Link arms. Some of it. All of it. Move. Act.

And we schools need to act with urgency. We need to ensure that our teaching and our schools are rooted in social justice, cultural relevancy, and anti-racist teaching. We need to create educational programming that highlights deep, quality work and thinking, and pushes back against quantification and the corporate educational machine. We need to create communities of students, teachers, and families that are supporting each other in modeling and striving for true democracy and the highest

good. In the words of Dr. Bettina Love, our Keynote Speaker at the 9th annual Progressive Education Summit, we must “teach for freedom.” We need to do this together.

City Neighbors humbly and strongly stands with all those who are committed to ending the systemic harm to Black and Brown people in our city and country. City Neighbors recommits to working hard and working in a sustained way to strive toward equity and justice. And City Neighbors will continue to stand firmly alongside all of those people and organizations who are committed to having this moment be the one that finally changes the world.

We are handing the mic to our students, families, and teachers who wish to add their voices to the chorus, and sharing their thoughts and experiences on the City Neighbors Foundation blog. The following is an excerpt from a blog entry from Brittany Brown, Middle School Language Arts teacher:



*.....Throughout my teaching career, I have valued social justice. I **feel that it is my duty**, not just the “right thing to do” or something we “should” do, to provide students with a social justice infused curriculum. If you come into Room 304 at City Neighbors Charter School, you will always see me advocating for social justice. Whether I am reading Bryan Stevenson’s *Just Mercy* with my seventh and eighth graders, making sure my library is stocked with culturally responsive texts, or having students write research papers about social justice movements, I am committed to an anti-racist*

curriculum. And this commitment has already inspired concrete action beyond the classroom. Last year, a student executed a protest action during the school day about gun violence. I am thankful that I am at a school that supports my social justice efforts and provides training on race-equity work. We aren’t perfect but we are making tremendous strides.

*But mostly, I am deeply committed to the work of deconstructing anti-black racism in my classroom because I take this personally. I know firsthand what happens when children are not taught about their history. I grew up in a small town in Calvert County, MD. I can count how many teachers of color that I had from K-12 on one hand. I can also count--on one hand--how many books written by people of color that I read at Huntingtown High School -- a blue ribbon school when I was a student. Yet **every single time** I signed up for an African American history class, it was never offered because there was not enough interest. I grew up where my neighbors cheered for my pain and ignorance.... [Read the full blog post here.](#)*

Rooted in our commitment to the grass-roots, cooperative nature of our school, our blog highlights voices from throughout our community. Check out the [latest blog entries.](#)

City Neighbors High School Students Honored

City Neighbors High School students continue to be recognized and honored for their hard work.

City Neighbors High School Senior, Valerie Reown, earned a full four-year scholarship to McDaniel College. Check out the scholarship announcement [here](#).



11th grade City Neighbors High School student, and City Neighbors Charter School alumni, Vaeh Alexander had [her poem published in Charm Lit Magazine](#).

And the City Neighbors High School Choir was featured for [BEMORE Fine Arts Week](#).

Congratulations to these students – and to all our City Neighbors High School students -- who continue to make their mark on the world.

Learning From a Distance

Like all of Maryland schools, City Neighbors Charter School, City Neighbors Hamilton, and City Neighbors Charter School closed its physical doors on March 13 as our state took unprecedented precaution to keep everyone safe in this time of Covid-19. As schools closed, we were faced with many questions. But one central question was how to you create authentic, meaningful learning experiences when we are never together in the same place. While we have not figured out the answer fully, our teachers have been creating, designing, considering, re-considering, and implementing some high quality authentic learning. Take a look!

Chem at the Crib, Tamara Jolly (High School Science)

*I have been making weekly **Chem at the Crib Episodes** to help teach new content and skills. They are just a fun and silly way to keep students engaged. Check out the theme song [here](#).*



*Also, I hosted a live **Stop Motion Showcase** to share students' Stop Motion PSAs art projects they did at home. The projects were so much fun and they really wowed us! We had a great turnout last Friday (students, parents, teachers, even my family joined in from across the country --haha). You can check out the slideshow with most movies included in it [here](#). I really encourage you to check a few out. I put a [few of my favorites](#) below as well.*

High School Photography Project, Jessica Thompson and Cindy Garcia (High School Art)

We had students study and gain an understanding of documentary photography, especially photographers like Devin Allen, who was not a household name until he documented the Baltimore Uprising and ended up with his photograph on the cover of Time Magazine. Students were then instructed in some simple mobile photography techniques and explored how to use their cell phone cameras in a more professional manner. Finally, we had students create a photo journal exploring their own covid19 experience using what they learned about documentary photography. Each student was asked to include 6 photographs, each contributing to an overall narrative about their experience. They were asked to title their photographs and give a brief explanation of the title and how the photographs show a piece of their story.

Mackenzie Lewis-

Title of Photograph #1: Untitled

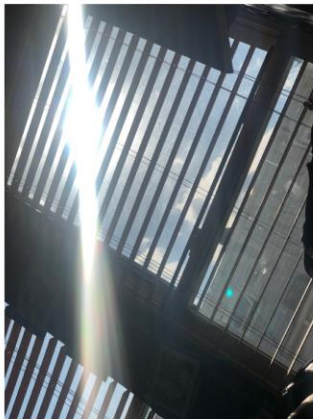


Explanation of title: I have spent most of my Covid19 on facetime with my cousin talking and laughing about how we feel about this coronavirus stuff and saying that we want this to be over with so we can leave the house and see each other.

Description of how this photograph tells the story of your Covid19 experience so far: This photograph highlights how we are distanced from each other and we can still talk to each other on the phone.

Dontasia Dudley-

Title of Photograph #1: **Light from God**



Explanation of title: light from god

Description of how this photograph tells the story of your Covid19 experience so far: I have been talking to god about how I've been treating myself since we have been locked in the house . He has been guiding me through this and helping me control my actions and decisions we have a tight bond and it may seem like I talk to myself but he keeps me company .

To'Daja Vickers-
Title of Photograph #1: Cover Up



Explanation of title: Now since there is a virus going on, people need to be more cautious being around other people so they need to cover up where the virus enters.

Description of how this photograph tells the story of your Covid19 experience so far:
This picture shows masks that my grandmother made since the CDC is now recommending that we wear cloth mask when we go out if we don't have the medical ones.

Kindergarten Bird Project Study, Stevie Dissinger and Vicki Almon (Kindergarten)

Kindergarten investigated local birds through a bird puppet study. After watching videos of the bird they chose to study, children created a puppet to represent the bird. It was encouraged that children re-watch the videos so that they could practice the call the bird makes, and create a movement with their puppet that tells about the bird. Puppets, calls, and movements were presented to the class in our Friday afternoon meeting.



Dale's turkey vulture and mallard duck puppets

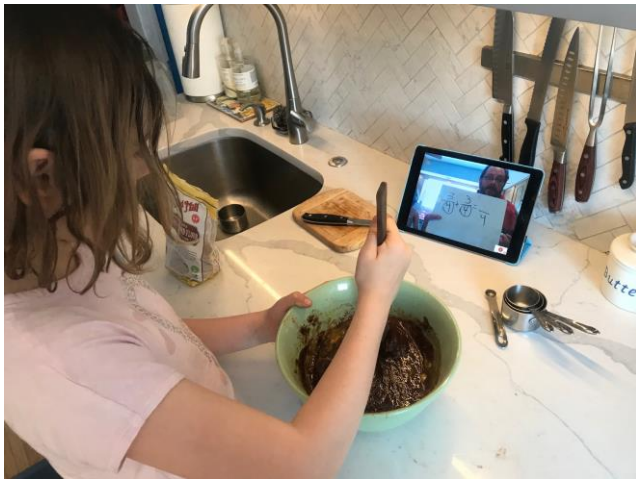
Dale made the hissing sound of a turkey vulture when he presented his puppet. He moved his arm to show how the bird dips its head when vocalizing.



Adem and his American robin puppet

4th and 5th grade Cooking and Fractions Project, Bob Dietzen (4th and 5th grade Math)

We were working on fractions units in 4-5 when we went out of school. At first, I tried continuing where we left off and doing virtual lectures but it was totally boring and there was no buy in. So I began doing a live baking demonstration each week. We then use the recipe to learn about calculating with fractions by doubling or tripling them, or totaling up the ingredients for different recipes. Some students bake along with me and some make the recipes later with their families. So far we've made pancakes, brownies, oatmeal cookies and chocolate cake and learned adding and subtracting with like and unlike fractions and multiplying fractions by whole numbers. We will use the last few weeks to learn recipes to round out a picnic (salads and entrees) and finish the year with a virtual picnic.



Drawing with Ms. Cohen, Hannah Cohen (K-8 Art)

One of the best experiences during distance learning has been the "Drawing with Ms. Cohen" class for students K-8. Each week there is a one-word prompt that we discuss as a group and brainstorm a list of ideas connected to the prompt. While drawing, students turn on their microphones to share their in-progress work, ask questions and talk with one another. With a makeshift document camera set up on my desk, students can see me drawing along with them.

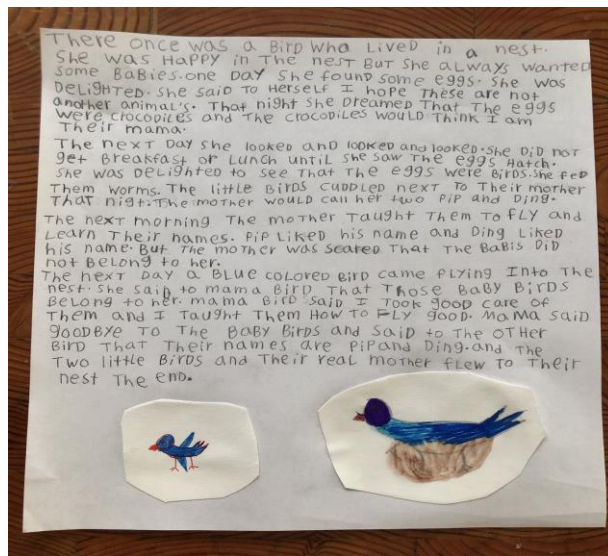


My sketchbook is projected into Google Meet using a DIY document camera. Students can see our ideas list as well as the drawing I am creating along side them.

Drawings created by 5th graders inspired by the prompt "gigantic".

1st Grade Project Study: "Does the Earth need protection?," LaShawn Gardner (1st Grade)

Students began the week with the question "Does the Earth Need Protection?." Students were then tasked with finding the answer. They engaged in a Nearpod interactive lesson on Earth Day, where they were introduced to photographs of the first Earth Day, and facts about its origin. Students then watched videos, listened to stories, and read articles to learn how the earth is harmed, and what ways we can reduce harm. They were then able to generate stories and writings of their own to express their thoughts. By midweek, students had their answer, a unanimous "Yes!" to the question: "Does the Earth Need Protection?." First graders then became advocates for the Earth. They participated in a poster challenge to convince others to save the earth. Students also created videos to share their knowledge of how they can help reduce harm. Through Flipgrid, students were able to post and view responses about the subject from their classmates.



High School Reading Response, Taj Singh (High School Science)

Responses relating to two articles we read, which investigate why minority populations are at higher risk for covid-19 and why there has been an increase in hate crimes towards Asian-Americans and how we are all involved. Here are some student responses:

Caitlyn McGuire: The first reason minority communities are being affected more by covid-19 is communication. In the AARP article, it says that they tend to get their information from local areas like barbershops rather than those with Ph.Ds or M.Ds. Since those types of places are closed down because of having to stay at home and social distancing, they are not able to get the info they need. This ends up giving them false information and myths about covid which can harm them. Another is medical conditions. Conditions like diabetes or heart disease are more common in minorities such as Hispanics. In minority communities the risks are higher for having a more severe case of covid-19. This is all because of these underlying health conditions.

Because of the coronavirus outbreak, Chinese and Asian Americans have been receiving a lot of hate crime toward them. The reason all of this hate is happening is because the coronavirus originated in China. People are just putting the blame of all of the stuff happening with having to stay at home and not being able to go anywhere anymore on Asian Americans and Chinese or anyone who appears Asian. This also most likely an excuse for those who are already really xenophobic to be hateful to these people more openly. In reality, none of this is their fault any of this is happening. Covid-19 could of started anywhere in the world and it just so happened to start in China. Yes, people can be angry or grump at what is going on, but they should not take it out on a group that had no control over. One way I can do to help stop this hate from happening never ever refer to the coronavirus as the "Chinese virus" or "Wuhan virus" and should either call it covid-19 or the coronavirus.

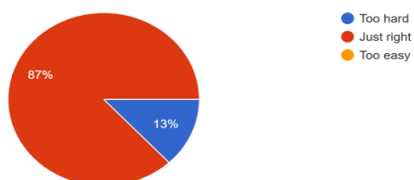
Making Evidence-Based Arguments, David FitzSimons (Middle School Math)

The middle school at CNCS are comparing two online platforms, Khan Academy and Freckle. They are trying each out first hand and answering survey questions about them. They will look over the compiled survey data and make evidence-based arguments to Ms. Seidl (the school principal) about whether we should or should not pay for a Freckle subscription for SY 2020-21 considering that we are likely to be partially online.

Dear Ms. Seidl,

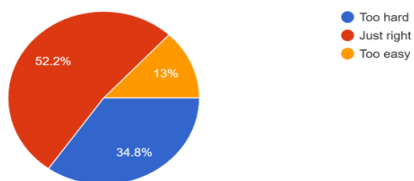
Over the last two weeks, we have been using a website called Freckle to do our math work. If we want to use it next school year, the school would have to pay for it. I have given it some thought, and I think we should pay for Freckle. Freckle can adjust to your level and still give you work that is challenging, and helping you grow. Our class took a survey about whether Freckle was too hard, too easy, or just right.

When you use Freckle, does the work seem too hard, too easy, or just right?
46 responses



As you can see, 87% of the responses were just right, proving my point that they adjust to your level. The same question was asked again on this survey, but about Khan academy.

Now think about Khan Academy. When you use Khan Academy, does the work seem too hard, too easy, or just right?
46 responses



As you can see, there are very mixed results. However, For the majority of students, freckle was just right for them. I believe that Freckle will help us become better young mathematicians. It has lots of fun features and I think it would be worth the money.

Sincerely, Mallory Lerch

Responding to Literature in 3rd grade, Charlene Butcher (3rd grade)

These 3rd grade project came after a class read-aloud of *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo. Students had a choice of ways to represent the positive things that came of the relationship in the book. Here are some student responses:

There were many positive things that happened in "Because of Winn-Dixie." The first positive thing that happened was that Opal found Winn-Dixie and took care of him. I thought that was great because she gave Winn-Dixie a home. Winn Dixie was very helpful to his friend Opal. Opal and Winn-Dixie became best friends. In the beginning of the story, Opal felt really lonely. Opal did not have many friends. Winn-Dixie was very kind and loving with Opal. Winn-Dixie helped Opal make many friends. Winn-Dixie was kind to everyone that Opal met and it helped her to make friends with them.



Opal was sad about not having her mother. Opal spoke with the preacher who told her many interesting things about her mother. Opal was happy to learn things about her mother and she wrote them down so that she would not forget them. Learning about her mother made her happy. Opal went to Gloria Dump's mistake tree and told her mother that she wouldn't think about her as much because she was happier and because she made friends. She was not lonely anymore because of her new friendships. Opal's life changed after she met Winn-Dixie. - Noah

I think the positive parts of the story were how more and more in the story Opal's dad starts to open up his shell. It was very positive that Opal gets to have Winn Dixie and I like how they have lots of fun together. I even liked how Winn Dixie shows all of his teeth and how happy he gets.

In this story Winn Dixie makes it possible for Opal to make new friends. Also I noticed Opal doesn't feel lonely after she makes new friends. Winn Dixie gave happiness to many people. - Mario



DIY PD at City Neighbors Goes Virtual



On May 21, City Neighbors hosted its first-ever virtual DIY PD at City Neighbors. This event, the fourth DIY PD of the year, gathers educators for a simple one hour of emergent professional development, with participants sharing best practices or problems of practice for consideration. At this session, we had four topics to choose from:

- Bringing Together Learning and Design Thinking: Ela Ben-Ur's Innovators' Compass, Sue Borchardt, Research Artist
- Sharing Effective Strategies for Teaching Math in the Virtual Classroom, Jennifer Lee (The Park School of Baltimore)
- Energizers to Help Increase Engagement in the Online Classroom, Kris Hanks (Triple E, Anne Arundel County)
- A Conversation on ["Teachers, We Cannot Go Back to the Way Things Were."](#)



The 10th Annual Progressive Education Summit: January 23, 2021



We have started planning for our 10th Annual Progressive Education Summit, which is set to take place on January 23, 2021. Whether live or virtual is yet to be determined, but the Summit will continue and celebrate this 10th year. Mark your calendars!

We are grateful to the Progressive Education Summit Steering Committee, a group of education thought partners who help to design our annual Summit:

- Cristina Duncan-Evans, Baltimore Teachers Union
- Simone Gibson, Morgan State University
- Charelle James, Urban Teachers
- Robyn Little, McDonogh School
- Vanessa Lopez, Maryland Institute/College of Art
- Patricia Porcarelli, The Park School of Baltimore
- Shyla Rao, City Neighbors Hamilton
- Sam Rather, Calvin Rodwell Elementary/Middle School
- Jessica Schiller, Towson University
- Dawn Shirey, Baltimore City Public Schools

Interested in Being a City Neighbors Educator, 2020-2021?

Teachers! Imagine the best school you can – in the heart of Baltimore City. Deep in-depth project studies. The Arts as an integral piece to all learning. The vision of children as creative, capable, powerful, and worthy of the deepest respect. A workshop model where students actively learn and teachers facilitate. A place where teachers co-create practice, policy and direction of the school. A community with parents as valuable and active partners in the work. An approach where standardized testing does not drive instruction. Interested in joining City Neighbors for the 2020-2021 school year? Check out our [website](#) and [email](#) your cover letter and resume.

Welcome to our New City Neighbors Teaching Fellows!

The City Neighbors Teaching Fellows Program is a program designed for soon-to-be or recently certified teachers who are seeking the opportunity to learn to teach in a progressive, student-centered way. Fellows participate in a two-year professional development curriculum, work closely with a lead teacher, attend seminars with outside experts, and participate fully in school-wide learning.

After a rigorous search, we are excited to welcome Gentry Harris and Sara Gaul to our new cohort of Teaching Fellows, launching in fall 2020.



Gentry Harris is a recent Morgan State University graduate. He hails from Augusta, GA. He is very excited to join the team!



Sara Gaul: I am so excited to join the City Neighbors community and expand my teaching through the fellowship. I have previous teaching experiences through the Peace Corps and at an after-school program in Baltimore, as well as a mix of other experiences in between those two positions. I love traveling, yoga, baking, and my cat, Solo. I also started a garden this year, so all gardening tips are welcome.

**Learn More About
City Neighbors Foundation!**

