Glen Ridge Middle School

G & T Newsletter

June 2020

Escape Room Field Trip

Way back in January our MS G&T students got to enjoy a change of scenery and spend an afternoon offsite at **Escapology** in Garwood. In teams, along with a teacher chaperone, they entered one of the themed escape rooms to face a myriad of interesting challenges. Working against the clock, they had to search, decode, analyze, calculate, decipher and sometimes backtrack to find the clues and their way out. And most importantly they had to work together!

Antidote - Pictured left is the team of 7th graders who had to search an abandoned lab to secure the antidote for a man-made virus before it fell into enemy hands!

COD3 - Pictured right is the team of 7th graders had to uncover a secret code in the chaotic apartment of an evil hacker in time to foil his diabolical plan to drain millions from people's bank accounts!

Budapest Express - Pictured left is the team of 8th graders who had to find a murderer on board their train before they reached the Budapest station and the killer had the chance to escape!

Under Pressure - Pictured right is the team of 8th graders had to find their way out of a WWII submarine before the oxygen ran out!

Designing Escape Rooms

For months students worked in teams each week to design and build escape rooms of their own. This required a great deal of planning and coordination, and lots of trial and error to perfect the flow of individual challenges. They created story boards to plan how participants would find their way from one station to the next, until they "escaped" from whatever predicament they were in.

Our **8th graders** designed escape rooms involving audio and video opening sequences, riddles, scrambled words, jigsaw puzzles, hidden messages, complex calculations, secret decoder glasses, computer programming, morse code, hollowed out books, and various locked boxes (toolboxes, lunch boxes, etc). The themes they chose to build their designs around included:

Encompassed in Space - Unlock the toolbox and repair the fuel tank or remain lost in space!

Gas in the Class - Get out of the classroom before gas comes in through the vents and fills the room!

Prison Break - Work with accomplices outside the prison to escape before the guards change shifts!

Our **7th graders** designed escape rooms involving audio and video opening sequences, riddles, math problems, locked boxes, trivia, hidden messages, invisible ink, decoder glasses, a giant pumpkin head, and computer programming. The themes they chose were:

Albert Einstein's Formula - Find Einstein's formula and get out of the room!

Minecraft - Navigate your way out of a Minecraft world and get back to the surface in time!

Nuclear Annihilation - Stop a fighter jet from taking off and dropping nuclear weapons!
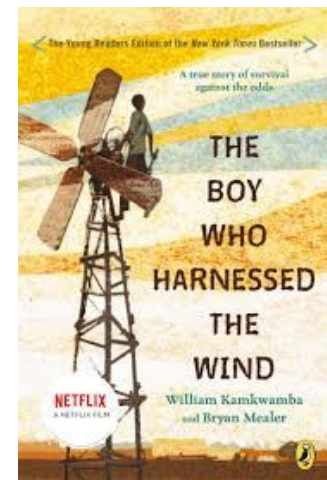
Saving Christmas - Free Santa from the Grinch and save Christmas before it's too late!

Just before school was unexpectedly shut down, students were testing their escape rooms and perfecting them for classmates and guests to try. Unfortunately not everyone got to have others experience their escape room, but hopefully the challenge of designing them was still rewarding.

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind

As we adjusted to distance learning, students read and discussed a book about a boy close to their own age living in a poor African village, who despite lack of formal education, perseveres in making electricity a reality by building a windmill out of scraps.

Discussion questions and activities provided opportunities for students to not only react to the story, but to interact with each other and reflect on their own lives and our current situation.

Filling the Void - One week students were asked to share what they have been doing to fill their days now that they find themselves in a situation similar to the main character in the book being unable to physically attend school for the time being. Here are some of the interesting things they shared that they are doing to pass the time and stimulate their minds:

- Drawing, digital art
- Running, working out
- Gardening, baking
- Video games, Netflix
- Reading, writing
- Puzzles, playing card, board games

- Building a PC & editing videos
- Biking, basketball
- Music, piano, drums, mashups
- Tinkering with electronics
- Challenging online math problems
- Spending time with family & pets

Travel Wish List - After the main character in <u>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</u> travels from his village for the first time to a attend a conference in NYC he talks of all the places he hopes to travel. Our students were asked to share some of the places they hope to be able to see in the future. I think we all enjoyed the opportunity to dream about when we can get out and explore again. Here are some of the interesting and varied responses I got from our 7th & 8th grade students:

- China, Japan
- Singapore, Philippines
- Spain, Italy, Ireland
- Australia, Galapagos Islands
- London, Paris, Rome
- Mexico, Brazil, Peru
- Dubai, Mumbai
- Alaska, Hawaii, Fiji

- Bangladesh, Vietnam
- Yosemite, Alcatraz, California
- Greece, Pyramids, Parethenon,
- Stonehenge, Mount Everest
- Norway, Denmark
- Montana, Arizona, Grand Canyon
- Salar de Uyuni, Easter Island, Morocco
- Russia, Antactica

SUMMER OF LEARNING

This summer in particular your children might find themselves with more time on their hands to continue learning. Here are some ideas and free resources that might help keep them inspired:

- [NJ Dept of Ed and NJ Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC)](#) - Recommended sites for G&T students. Includes various levels and content areas so scroll through to see what you might find of interest.
- Of course summer is always a great time to encourage your child to read! Check out the [Mensa for Kids Excellence in Reading Program](#) which offers reading checklists and rewards.

If you are looking for online camps and courses at a cost, you might consider one of the following:

- [GATE](#) - Live interactive Zoom classes for G&T students grades 3-11 offered by Michigan State University. Offerings include Short Story Writing, Computer Music, Digital Art and more.
- [ID Online Tech Camps](#) - Small group interactive sessions as well as private classes on a variety of tech topics such as Minecraft and Roblox as well as coding courses on Python, Java, C++, etc.
- [Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth](#) - Offering many high interest live web-based courses such as Aeronautical Engineering, Bioethics in the Age of Pandemics, Game Design, Statistical Reasoning in Sports and many more.