



SCHOOL NEWS

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## GROWING WITH GOURDS



COLUMBIA — The garden is tilled and the fifth-graders begin pushing the enriched soil into mounds, planting their various specimens of gourd plants near the fence outside their classroom building. The process is an annual rite for the youngest students in Heathwood Hall's Intermediate/Middle School as they plant the seeds of a cycle of growing and learning for next year's fifth grade.

Gardening is just one component of the arts/enrichment project dubbed "Growing with Gourds," which engages students in numerous hands-on activities and helps them connect their studies in art, science, math, writing and history. The project's centerpieces are the curiously shaped gourds grown by the students on the Heathwood Hall campus, three dimensional canvases on which fifth graders paint images and symbols from their immediate environment and from their study of the ancient Incan, Mayan, and Aztec civilizations.

An art lesson springs forth as the fifth graders begin designing their gourds with black and gold paint, concentrating on positive and negative space, line, pattern, and repetition. Artist and object form a special bond as each student transforms his rough and dirty gourd into an object of unique beauty and history. The seeds of students' creative writing pieces begin to sprout as related discussions in humanities classes help them understand the power of ancient myths and legends and lead them to write original stories of their own. In science, the children learn about the genetics of the gourd plant. The garden's symmetry, dimensions and geometry highlight a lesson in mathematics. Add the history of ancient cultures, writing and artistic principles, and a presentation from a local gourd artist and you have a comprehensive two-week project that helps young people grow artistically and academically.