Learning Resource Spotlight: Jane Hile

Jane Hile, on staff since 1999 in many teaching roles, now teaches 3-4-5 Technology and after-school math and computer science. The difference, you ask? In technology class, the students use the computer as a tool, whereas, computer science is less about the tool and more about writing code.

Jane’s with ten half-classes (so all 5 of our middle grades once a week) to work on keyboarding and word processing and presentation software and tables, charts, etc., as part of the arts choice curriculum. You may see your students working on Scratch projects or on Hour of Code which integrate with Blockley (a puzzle-piece style of programming blocks). “This is the way they teach programming in beginning classes at some universities,” says Jane. “It’s a great way to start programming without getting bogged down in all the detail. Underneath the puzzle piece (e.g. move 10 steps) is the code. So kids can get in and see what they can do, then start learning the code.”

Most of the summer you can find Jane around campus as Professor McGonagall in Summer at Stanley’s popular Hogwarts program. Jane started the camp – the first in Denver – 14 years ago, and this year there will be eight sessions. “Before I read Harry Potter, I saw a class of Steve de Beer’s [then a Stanley 3-4-5 teaching and dramatics fixture] perform an original play version of one of the books. I remember kids were zooming around on broomsticks on rollerblades in the ballroom!”

Jane was inspired to read the books, and – never afraid of a challenge – thought they would make a great specialty camp. Jane started planning, brought LeAnne Dudley in to partner as Professor Sprout, and hired stage craft majors from DSA to set the scenes: Hogsmeade, The Great Hall, Platform 9¾ … “Everyone has to have read ‘the canon,’ so it makes the atmosphere like Williamsburg for Harry Potter fans.”

Acting through the rotation of the volumes puts the kids in store for the final book for the second time this summer. “We promise no spoilers and don’t go too deep into the dark stuff, and we make it enough like the books that the readers get it – and really get into it.”

Jane started teaching while still in school. “As an elementary student, I was a classroom assistant reading stories, tying shoes and finding lost mittens. In junior and high school, I was a peer math tutor. In 1971 when I started college, the philosophy was to have education majors start working and teaching in neighboring schools with every class they took.” Her home state of Michigan was developing High Scope, which involved learning-by-doing and age-appropriate, integrated thematic curriculum. “That all made perfect sense to me. It also is the basics of Stanley's philosophy too.”

Jane found Stanley in the fall of 1988 while searching for a kindergarten for her then 5-year-old daughter who had started hiding the fact that she could read from her peers! “I wanted a place where she could continue to learn, and Stanley was perfect. It was a perfect match for my philosophy of teaching and my children. In 1999, after subbing with Betsy through the years, she asked me to be her sub while taking maternity leave with Daisy.”

A favorite quote of Jane’s, “The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery,” comes from Mark Van Doren. “I feel similarly,” says Jane. “I set things up so students discover things, as discovery brings excitement and makes memories.” To Jane, Stanley’s hallmark is choice: “It’s a life skill – the ability to make choices and evaluate if they are wonderful, good or not such a hot idea. To have your choices respected by yourself and others builds confidence.”
“I like watching children make connections,” adds Jane, “between their world, their lives, each other, what they learn, random odd facts.” Jane, too, is always learning and sharing new ideas. Currently in her non-professional life, she works for Knitting for Peace and runs a knitting group every Friday afternoon at the Villages at Lowry in their craft room (from 2:30-3:30, every 2nd and 4th Friday, if you’re so inclined).

Jane’s also very involved her church’s Daybreak Café, a Sunday morning coffee and doughnut spot at St. Paul United Methodist at 16th & Ogden for the homeless and hungry. Daybreak serves up to 48 gallons of coffee a morning to 300 people every week. In Jane’s way – both effortless and emphatic – she’s leading the effort to collect community donations to move the service from paper to reusable mugs. “This way we can wash and reuse them instead of creating more trash,” says Jane. “It’s a win-win for all. Anyway, if you have any old mugs, I’ll have a collection box by the front desk and a box in the computer lab.” Drop by and say hello to Professor McGonagall while you’re there!