

## #2

### **Building Green in Central New Jersey**

*"That which is not good for the bee-hive cannot be good for the bees."*

*--Marcus Aurelius*

A new and vital field is emerging in the landscape and construction worlds—eco-friendly development, or constructing residences and other buildings that fit into the landscape and impact habitat as little as possible. Back to Nature is a landscape architecture firm that is a pioneer in this promising world of design and construction. It is also a local company whose founder and president is very excited to work with us in exploring the field of green landscape architecture.

We will visit neighborhoods that Back to Nature developed and spend days in the field observing, often directly engaged in the planning and development of green landscapes and buildings. If you have an interest or desire to learn more about eco-friendly buildings and landscapes, this Spring Unit will engage you in challenging and rewarding activities.

A trip to New York City's Central Park is already planned. There we can observe the imaginative and monumental design and work of Frederick Law Olmsted, one of the visionaries of green landscape. We will also visit the nearby Willow School and learn about its environmentally responsible construction and mission. We will gain insight into how living systems can guide us toward sustainable, restorative, and even regenerative residential and commercial development.

#### Evaluative Criteria:

- Journal/Notebook
- Teamwork in Research and Field Activities
- Final Project/Presentation

Optimum Number of Students: 8-10

Estimated Cost per Student: \$175

## The Spring Unit

The Spring Unit encourages students to use, improve, and extend the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the regular curriculum. Led by one or more teachers, students engage in project-based learning. Much of this learning is explicitly cooperative with students organized into groups or teams with specific research and reporting goals. This arrangement offers unparalleled opportunities for interdisciplinary study as well.

Field trips and overnight excursions involving a few to several days in the region of study enable the students to apply and enhance their skills and knowledge through guided on-site and field experiences. Spring Unit each year offers at least one opportunity for students to study and travel in another country with one or more of our teachers – perhaps exploring classical civilizations in Greece or Italy or the rain forest, eco-tourism and sustainability in Costa Rica. Another Spring Unit may involve students in the politics of culinary arts under the guidance of ethnic cuisine chefs and activists in the Slow Food Movement. In other Spring Units students might learn about telecommunications, visiting ATT headquarters to see the “big board” and traveling to Maryland to tour an Atlantic cable-laying ship; or write and perform plays and poetry under the guidance of playwrights and poets. Still others may explore solar energy and wind energy or green landscaping and regenerative residential and commercial construction.

The Spring Unit is an important element of Gill St. Bernard’s curriculum and educational philosophy. It crosses disciplinary boundaries. It challenges students to think critically and practically, to offer the best of themselves in the service of others, to cooperate with others in learning and doing, and to become conscious of themselves in the world around them. In myriad ways the Spring Unit celebrates the educated imagination, the capacity in each of us to perceive the arresting beauty and endless possibilities of the world we share.

Gill St. Bernard’s motto, ‘The World is Our Classroom,’ takes on unique and exciting educational dimensions in the middle of May when the Spring Unit begins.

### **Spring Unit International Study/Travel Programs:**

2007 – Greece

2008 – British Isles

2009 – Peru (Cuzco to Machu Picchu) or Costa Rica (Rain Forest)

**Note: Only 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> graders may travel internationally.**



Anthony,

This is my second note to you, and now that I have your actual mailing address, you should get it.

First, thank you for sharing your time and expertise with me in October. The course has six students - all male - and that seems a good number to me. I am sending you a description of the unit in general as well as the course I described to you. I did not write

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the course description, but the teacher who did used my notes. I believe it reflects the essence of our discussion.

"Building Green in Central New Jersey" starts Monday, 21 May. I am beginning to make specific plans now that I know the course is a "go." I will call your office in February to ask again for your help. Your involvement on any level is most welcome!

I am very grateful for all the information you gave me.

Sincerely,  
Ronna Storm