

# DIRECTIONS NEWSLETTER



SPRUCE  
STREET  
SCHOOL

SUMMER  
2017



NEWS from School to Community





**URBAN LEARNING**



**DIVERSITY**



**MULTI-AGE**

# PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

By Briel Schmitz, Head of School



This year I had the chance to spend time reflecting on my own experience and the past history of the school. In May, we held our first big alumni party in over 12 years (the last one was when we found our current building—some of you may remember the *Meet Virginia* party).

Before the party, I spent time talking with the school's founder, Harvey Sadis. He shared stories, successes and challenges. Then, I had lunch with long-time teacher (and Director of the school for a few years), Brenda Swidler. She and I talked about how the school moved forward to the time that I was hired. She filled in gaps and we reminded ourselves of some of our favorite moments together (we worked together for six years).

Through these conversations, I found a number of strong threads that have tied this school together between different buildings, various leaders and 35 years. A commitment to serving a broad range of students, consistent support for financial aid, an excellent program and an emphasis on the arts and marimba are all constants in our story.

As the most recent school leader, I have woven in my own story. Any accomplishments during my time here have come from collaboration and shared leadership. In particular, I have had the support of outstanding board members. I have worked with eight different board chairs, six of whom were at the alumni party (including my very first board chair, Sondra Kornblatt). Being surrounded by them was a vivid reminder of the power of partnership; I owe a great deal of my success to these incredibly generous volunteers.

One strength that I have helped bring to the school is financial stability. Over the past 10 years the school has built up its reserves, operated with a surplus and used a strategic financial plan to drive decision-making. This is a remarkable achievement and one that allows us to truly dream big as we look to the future.

As I reflect, here, at the end of my 15<sup>th</sup> year, it is clear to me that we will be able to continue forward with the longstanding strengths of the school, using the current financial stability to leverage an exciting future. A future where, I hope, this school will continue to innovate and build community with every family.



## MISSION STATEMENT

Spruce Street School is a nurturing educational community that instills in a broad range of children the social, emotional, and intellectual skills for lifelong participation in a diverse society.



# NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

By Brian Leslie, Board Member



In May the Spruce Street School Board of Trustees approved a new strategic plan, which will guide the Board's work for 2017–2020. Over the past year, the Board and the Strategic Planning Committee engaged with school leadership, teachers, staff, and parents, assessing prior strategic plans and the ongoing work of the school. Not surprisingly we found that the school is in a very strong position. The new strategic plan seeks to build on what makes the school successful and unique in order to achieve the school's mission, core values, and the 2035 Vision.

The 2017–2020 Strategic Plan includes three initiatives:

- **Seeding Our Future Campaign.** In 2016, the school launched the campaign to raise \$1.5M for financial aid. This will enable the school to provide 35% of families with aid, almost twice the national average, and provide an additional 100 aid packages over the next 20 years. Under the new strategic plan the Board and Campaign Committee will finish the work to raise funding, deploy new financial aid, and support the ongoing work of the school in outreach, recruitment and nurturing for mission-appropriate families.
- **Diversity.** Spruce Street School wants to be a leader among independent schools in fostering diversity and a sense of belonging. As part of the new strategic plan the Board and staff will deepen its understanding of diversity and issues of equity, and will identify opportunities to increase the community's capacity to achieve and live our diversity core value.
- **Urban Identity.** The school's urban location is a key differentiator and a critical element of the school's educational program and community. The new strategic plan will continue the work to secure the school's urban home. The plan also supports teachers and staff in their efforts to engage with and learn from other like-minded urban schools nationally, and enhance the urban identity and community as a classroom.

We invite you to read the 2017–2020 Strategic Plan on the school's website, and if you have questions about the plan, or ideas for how the school can achieve its goals, please reach out to a member of the Board of Trustees or school staff.

From everyone on the Board of Trustees, we wish you a fantastic summer!

## STAFF

Briel Schmitz  
Head of School

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Jane Davis-Ward  
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Megan Schmidt  
Development Director

Shannon Orton  
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## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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# ALL TOGETHER NOW

By Megan Schmidt, Development Director



On Sunday, May 21, the school opened its doors to all adult alumni and parents. We now have over 400 alumni! This gathering was an opportunity for all former Spruce Street School families to reconnect with the community and to learn about the current capital campaign. It was an afternoon filled with memories and laughter. We were honored to have so many wonderful people in attendance, including past teachers, board chairs, current teachers and the school's founder Harvey Sadis.

Geoff Harris, the current board chair and one of the capital campaign chairs, spoke along with his two campaign co-chairs Alexa Carver and Ashley McCready. Between the three of them, they have seven current and former Spruce Street School students! They shared why they are so passionate about the school today. Briel, our Head of School was also on hand to tell us how far we have come. We are fully enrolled and financially secure, with an amazing staff and strong program.

Our campaign is unique in that we have decided to invest in people. The money raised will help us reach our goal of being the highest quality, most financially accessible K-5 independent school of it's kind, able to admit children who would thrive in our educational program and community, regardless of their families' ability to pay. Through this campaign, we are truly living our mission.

## CAMPAIGN CHAIRS



Ashley McCready



Geoff Harris



Alexa Carver

# DEEP DIVE INTO SCIENCE

By Erica Greenberg, Teacher



Each year, the Spruce Street School staff sets a different professional development goal, often centering on an academic content area. This year we focused on science, with the purposes of familiarizing ourselves with the newly released science standards (Next Generation Science Standards or NGSS), improving our instruction and modifying the document we use to communicate about science with our families.

Our work began back in August when we began to explore the standards with the help of a local teaching expert. Throughout the fall, we collaborated to learn about other science teaching resources that could enhance how we currently teach science. One particular concept that stuck with teachers was the idea of teaching based on a puzzling phenomenon. For example, why do cracked stripes appear in ice masses or how does a seed travel from one island to another?

Throughout the year we experimented with different ways to teach science related to our learning as educators. One highlight was during our annual science elective share. Typically, teachers work on their own and teach one lesson to multiple groups of students about a science concept. This year, however, teachers worked in small groups to conduct a short science unit consisting of several lessons based on new resources, reflecting together about the experience. This model was a powerful way for us to learn alongside each other about new ways of thinking about and teaching science.

To wrap up our year in science professional development, we discussed our new learning in light of how we communicate our science program to families. We looked back at our previous science document and decided to make changes based on what we value as educators as well as emphases from NGSS. The result is a new and improved science document that we are pleased to share with our community.

It is important for us as educators to take time to learn from the wider education community and reflect on our individual and collective practice. Our work in science this year allowed us to do just that!



Spruce Street School students develop the skills and scientific practices to become curious, critical, life-long science learners and problem-solvers. They observe natural phenomena carefully, ask questions, gather data, and articulate ideas and theories based on evidence. They participate actively in a community of student scientists, and continually reexamine and revise their thinking. They apply their scientific learning to real world problems, using science and engineering as vital means of understanding our world and making it a better place.



Class of 2010 **L-R front:** Zara Wiley, Margaret Henry, Max Dixon  
**L-R back:** Mac Snyders, Wynn O'Donnell, Erik Rinn

# ALUMNI NEWS

By Shannon Orton, Communications Director



Each year, Spruce Street School graduates move on to a wide variety of middle schools. This speaks clearly to the school's mission to serve a broad range of students; each class is a diverse group, comprised of students who will be best served by different kinds of middle schools.

This year's group is a prime example of this diversity, with 18 students attending 9 different middle schools: The Academy for Precision Learning, Billings Middle School, The Bush School, Hamlin Robinson, Mercer International Middle School, The Northwest School, Seattle Academy, Seattle Girls School, and University Prep. We look forward to hearing all about their adventures at their new schools.

In May we held one of our favorite events, our annual Alumni Night. Students from the classes of 2014 and 2010, who are graduating from middle and high school this spring, enjoyed dinner with current faculty while reminiscing about the past and sharing plans for the future. Many even stayed to see the oldest level's play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and had fun remembering their own experiences in Shakespeare productions during their final years at Spruce Street School. Like this year's fifth graders, alumni from the class of 2014 will be attending a wide range of schools in the fall, including Ballard High School, Nathan Hale High School, The Northwest School, Seattle Academy, and University Prep. Schools chosen by the students from the class of 2010 include Drexel University, The Evergreen State College, Gonzaga University, Western Washington University, and the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

If you are an alumni student please visit us on our fan page on Facebook or contact us at [alum@sprucestreetschool.org](mailto:alum@sprucestreetschool.org). You may also update us with your current contact information by taking our Alumni Survey, found as a link on our website on our Alumni page under *Our Community*. We look forward to hearing from you!

Class of 2014 **L-R front:** Mags Tsiakalis-Brown, Natalie Graham, Nadia Matthews-Stamm, Wally Bargeron, Laila Rhenifel  
**L-R back:** Finlay Bennett, Charlie Burton, Amy Pottharst, Oscar Morrison, Sam Klem, Robin Stump, Jasper Schwartz



# SPRUCE STREET SCHOOL MOVING ON CLASS OF 2017



**L-R front:** Daniel Moynihan, Maximo Avalone, Gunvor Langhout, Sabine Henry, Ella Hurtado, Kelsey Hamilton

**L-R middle:** Sophie Yang, Cooper Holland, Luc Koenig, Leo Carlin, Julianne Ingram, Hugo Manier.

**L-R back:** Anna Klem, Indigo Conner, Adelaide Darling, Danny Pottharst, Jay Senstra, Tesla Dunne

## FROM THEIR MOVING ON SPEECHES:

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Out of all my classes I have always loved and enjoyed art and math. Both incorporate beauty and creativity. In art, I love being able to express my ideas in drawings, paintings and color schemes, and coming up with new ways to bring beauty into the world feels amazing. In math, I enjoy seeing the patterns and how beautiful they look on paper.

**Adelaide Darling**

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My success is making friends because I made close friends with all sorts of people: boys, girls, and kids with different interests and backgrounds. What I look for in a friend is kindness, loyalty, generosity, honesty and fun, and Spruce Street School helped to bring that out in me.

**Sophie Yang**

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

Camp Seymour, Camp Kirby, and Port Townsend • **The Fall Festival** • The Ancient Greece Research Conference • **Reading Buddies** • Electives • **Publishing Parties** • Singing songs at All School Meeting • **Visiting Mirabella** • Cascade Park • **All of the plays: Anansi Stories, The Odyssey, and Much Ado About Nothing** • Stories in Arts Week • **Safety Patrol** • The Winter Walk • **The Presidents Study** • Performing on the marimbas and making conversation at Elders' Tea • **Creating the Community Connector** • The Moving On students performing on the marimbas at the Folklife Festival • **Pool Day**