

DIRECTIONS NEWSLETTER



SPRUCE
STREET
SCHOOL

SUMMER
2018



NEWS from School to Community





URBAN LEARNING



DIVERSITY



MULTI-AGE

DELVING INTO DIVERSITY

By Briel Schmitz, Head of School



Diversity has been a core value of Spruce Street School since its founding. Over the years the school has welcomed and supported diversity of all kinds. From supporting students with different learning styles and needs to being on the forefront of gender diversity to striving to be an inclusive school for families who look different, speak different languages, follow different beliefs and come from different backgrounds, the school community has consistently challenged itself to fully engage in the complex work of diversity.

Since joining this community sixteen years ago I have had the privilege of engaging in deep work inspired by this word: diversity. Most of this work has been internal, with faculty, staff and students. Some of the work has included parents and our broader community. This year the Board of Trustees began its work on understanding diversity.

Led by Alison Park, an outside consultant, board members faced their fears, hopes and many questions while delving into diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Board members were inspired to lead the organization by first improving and expanding their own understanding of DEI and its role in the school. After many hours of discussion, reflection and learning, the board ends the year with additional knowledge, even more questions and a desire to continue on the journey.

I am inspired by the way students and families are respected and included for their unique selves at school every day. I am challenged by the questions and complex thinking of faculty and staff as they support students and families. I am encouraged by the commitment of the board members to further their understanding of diversity and lead the school forward. While sometimes messy and complicated, I am motivated to build our experience and capacity as a community with diversity, equity and inclusion. This is the most important work we can do for the future of our students, families and larger community.



**SPRUCE
STREET
SCHOOL**

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.

UPDATE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

By Geoff Harris, Board Chair



Last May the Spruce Street School Board of Trustees approved a new strategic plan, which will guide the Board's work for 2017–2020. 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. We have made significant progress on the campaign over the last year and are approaching our initial \$1.5M goal. The work now transitions to how to maximize the impact of those funds for financial aid.
- **Diversity.** Spruce Street School wants to be a leader among independent schools in fostering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). This year the board spent significant time, including our entire board retreat, on coming to a common framework for discussing DEI. During the next school year, the board will focus on determining which aspects of DEI we choose to measure and develop an action plan in collaboration with the larger school community.
- **Urban Identity.** The school's urban location is a key differentiator and a critical element of the school's educational program and community. The strategic plan will continue the work to secure the school's urban home. This year teachers and staff engaged with and learned from other like-minded urban schools nationally, and continued working on plans to deepen the use of our unique urban location throughout the curriculum.

Below you can read an article about each of these pillars of the strategic plan in greater depth. 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 wonderful summer!

STAFF

Briel Schmitz
Head of School

Guy Fineout
Assistant Head of School/Admissions

Jane Davis-Ward
Business Manager

Megan Schmidt
Development Director

Shannon Orton
Communications Director

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SEEDING OUR FUTURE CAMPAIGN FUNDS IN ACTION

By **Alexa Carver, Board Member**



As we end the school year and our second year of the capital campaign, I wanted to share an update of how this fund has already impacted our community.

This year families eligible for financial aid were also eligible for reduced extended day and summer camp fees. For families trying to balance the demands of work and school schedules, this added support has a huge impact.

I encourage you to look at the financial aid section of the school web site. There you will see new informational graphics that help all families understand the cost, and available aid, when choosing Spruce Street School. These graphics were created in response to feedback we had heard that the admissions and financial aid process could be both confusing and daunting to prospective families. Hopefully we are helping to make this process more easily understandable and accessible to a wider range of families.

Both of these important operational changes come as a result of the school's strategic focus on making Spruce Street School more accessible. They are just some of the foundational pieces that support the successful Seeding Our Future campaign that our school has been working on for the past three years.

Through this campaign we will enable 35% of our students to receive financial aid. Already over \$30,000 was added to this year's financial aid budget to support students, with more in the budget for next year.

Raising money is only a part of this campaign. More important are the institutional changes and the school commitment to accessibility and support. If you would like to hear more about Seeding our Future, and what role you can play in this important community endeavor, please contact the school.



COMMUNITY CONNECTED CLASSROOM

Daron Henry, Teacher



As life-long learners, we, the staff of Spruce Street School strive to improve our skills and knowledge of the educational world around us. To that end, in the winter of 2017, Guy Fineout and I visited the Winchester Thurston School in Pittsburgh to expand our understanding of community-based education. We met with teachers and administrators about our shared goals of using our communities to create opportunities for students to experience an authentic and integrated education.

Inspired by our trip the staff began the task of revisiting one of the school's core values: community. Working with an outside consulting firm, we decided to focus on three key goals: examine the work we already do that connects our students to the community, expand that work so it is integrated and connects each level, and formalize our community-based program by giving it a name.

Throughout the year we used these goals to dive deep. First, the staff conducted in-depth interviews with key constituents, including students, families, and community members to ascertain the current impact of our community connected curriculum. Using this information, we isolated several projects we felt allowed our students to broaden their academic understanding through experiences in our neighborhood, such as service learning, artists-in-residence and the Community Connector, a magazine written by Moving On students. After much thought and discussion, we decided to focus on the Community Connector project. This led us to systematizing how our students learn to conduct interviews. We began exploring how to integrate this process across the levels, from the youngest level asking their buddies about camp, the mid-level interviewing the oldest level about the intricacies of putting on a play, the Moving Up students interviewing parents about their jobs, to the culminating interviews of the Moving On students with community members in the neighborhood about their careers and workplaces.

Our last goal was to formalize and name our approach to community-based learning. After brainstorming and debating, we decided the name **Community Connected Classroom** encapsulated our core value of developing students who can be contributing citizens and inclusive leaders.

Through the generosity of our parent community, a team of nine of our teachers will return this June to Pittsburgh to share our expertise of the **Community Connected Classroom** as well as learn from other schools from across the nation. In this way, we continue the goal of broadening our community beyond the confines of 914 Virginia into the educational landscapes beyond.

The Moving On class of 2018 after playing a community concert at Denny Park





Class of 2010 L-R: Levi Homman, Isabel Bennett, Adlai Fong, Zach Tsiakalis-Brown, Sadie Chaplan, Ema Bargeron

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 19 students attending 12 different middle schools: Asa Mercer Middle School, Billings Middle School, The Bush School, Eastside Prep, Evergreen, Hamilton Middle School, Lakeside, The Northwest School, Seattle Academy, Seattle Girls' School, TOPS, 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 2015 and 2011, 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, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and had fun remembering their own experiences in Shakespeare productions during their final years at Spruce Street School. Like this year's fifth graders, alums from the class of 2011 will be attending a wide range of schools in the fall, including Georgetown University, Lawrence University, Morehouse College, and Stanford University. Others are choosing gap years and world travel. We wish them all the best in their adventures!

If you are an alumni student please visit us on our fan page on Facebook or contact us at 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 2015 L-R: Wesley Kotas, Torin Bashore, Leo Strober-Cohen, Effie Fong, Roshann Purcell, Lucy Carlin, Poppy DeArmond-MacLeod, Myan Ngo, Julian Wilson, Charlie Hazel Pon, Jonah Tannen, Sage Fontecchio, Ollie Loeser, Maxwell Canavan, Dakin Robinson



SPRUCE STREET SCHOOL MOVING ON CLASS OF 2018



L-R front: Mateo Morales-Teicher, Sascha Fontecchio, Ellis Bernau, Eneko Gerard, Mason Hoffman, Colin Becker, Denali Jenkins, Stella Harman

L-R back: Asher Merenda, Roan Leslie, Tessabell Sheldon, Leila Lakhali, Iris Kaufman, Zack Simonsen, Bea Murray, Lyan Ngo, ZIQi Chau, Kaia McCready, Riley Harris

FROM THEIR MOVING ON SPEECHES:

“ One of the best parts of Spruce Street School has been math, especially computation groups. I love doing division problems and learning new algorithms. These strategies have not always been easy for me and I would not understand them if it weren't for my teachers at Spruce Street School.

Kaia McCready ”

“ A challenge I faced at school is learning to lead. I have learned how to be a good listener. Friendship is a big part of learning to lead. As a leader you have to learn how to make friends with new people and solve problems between friends.

Roan Leslie ”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

Camp Seymour, Camp Kirby, and Naturebridge • **The Fall Festival** • The Mesopotamia Research Conference • **Reading Buddies** • Electives • **Publishing Parties** • Singing songs at All School Meeting • **Visiting Mirabella** • Cascade Park • **All of the plays: Finding Pluie, The Epic of Gilgamesh, and A Midsummer Night's Dream** • Contrast in Arts Week • **Safety Patrol** • The Winter Walk • **Performing on the marimbas and making conversation at Elders' Tea** • Creating the Community Connector • **The Moving On students performing on the marimbas at Denny Park** • Pool Day