

Buckingham Browne & Nichols

The Link

November 2007

Spotlight Article

Seventh Graders Make Science Fun, Rube Goldberg Style

What do you get when you mix a croquet mallet, an ironing board, some old books, a rope, numerous other every day objects, add in some physics, and top it off with 80 savvy BB&N 7th graders? If you're Middle School Director Mary Dolbear, you get a whipped cream pie in the face.

Dolbear and three other lucky faculty members had the auspicious honor of being the last cogs in a giant Rube Goldberg machine—a device named after cartoonist Rube Goldberg's famous drawings of multiple step contraptions which result in a simple everyday action—in this case, a pie in the face.

“To be honest, I have never been a great fan of whipped cream,” joked Dolbear. “But the kids deserved some fun, and this was a perfect way to marry that to learning.”

The morning long event took place in the Upper School Nicholas Athletic center, allowing students ample space to build their machine, which stretched over multiple tennis courts in its pie slamming glory.

“We spent time in class learning about Rube Goldberg and preparing for the day a few weeks ahead of the event,” said Middle School Science Chair Wendy Svatek. “There was terrific energy in the classroom as students brainstormed materials and tasks and discussed ideas with their partners and the groups responsible for each step of the machine.”

In a curriculum change from past years in which the 7th grade took a field trip to the Hale Reservation for outdoor team building activities, the Rube Goldberg event emphasized the same themes but in a more relevant manner.

“After we made the decision to change the curriculum and begin the year focusing on scientific method and problem-solving, we brainstormed ideas for replacing the Hale trip,” says Svatek. “The concept and creation of Rube Goldberg machines actually sets us

up quite nicely for the other topics we study in seventh grade science: energy, structures and rocketry (Newton's Laws)."

Following the morning project, the afternoon presented a different set of challenges as the students were divided up by homeroom and given a box of every-day objects: papers clips, Styrofoam, straws, balloons, tape, pencils, etc.

Inside each box was also a list of four objectives:

--Design and build a vehicle to win a 2 meter race without being powered by human contact

--Design and build a catapult that can launch a marshmallow the furthest distance

--Design and build the highest tower possible that is capable of supporting an egg for 15 seconds.

--Design and build a contraption that will keep and dropped egg from breaking from three different heights.

As students brainstormed, designed, and built, the action drew a curious and enthralled crowd including many upper school students, faculty, and Head of School Rebecca T. Upham.

"This is exciting," said Upham as she and her friendly dog Leo strolled from group to group, inspecting the growing projects, "I love to see this sort of engaged learning taking place—it's what makes this place special."

When the projects were all completed, the groups squared off against each other with the results counting towards the standings in their year long 7th Grade Homeroom Olympics. Competing chants of homeroom names reverberated around the indoor athletic fields as students cheered for their group's design, and oohed or awed depending on the success of each design.

There were no losers on this day though, and students enjoyed the project so much that many of the faculty who helped out received genuine thank you letters from the 7th graders the next week.

"The students were totally engaged in this project and worked collaboratively in ways we often don't get to observe in a typical classroom setting," said Svatek. "There were many instances of creative problem-solving on the fly in order to achieve overall success for the class."

Articles

Inside The Classroom: Discovering the Joys of Learning with Beginners

There is barely one inch of white space on the walls adorned with colorful construction paper, posters, artwork and signs that read “We draw!”, “We glue!”, “We color!” as BB&N’s youngest students gather in the center of the classroom.

Beginner teachers Shera Selzer and Joselyn Chavez Dennis stand in front of an easel with a cutout picture of a pig as they begin the day’s lesson: learning all about pigs through a variety of different art projects, such as marble paintings, a “mud” station, and even their very own “pig sty” in the back corner of the room.

“Make sure you wet your hands before you dip them in,” reminds Selzer as she mixes the “mud”—a combination of different colors of paint in a large bucket. “Otherwise you’ll all end up with very sticky hands!”

While it may look like these students are engaging in simple child’s play, it is projects like these, Selzer says, that plant the seeds for these students to flourish in their years to come—at BB&N, and beyond.

“We aim to create an environment that encourages children to explore their surroundings,” says Selzer, who has been teaching early education for the past 23 years, her last five at BB&N. “Projects like these really play to their senses, hook them in, and help them formulate their own ideas, which is crucial at this stage.”

The Beginner curriculum, which is based off core principals from philosopher Jean Piaget, psychologist Lev Vygotsky and Howard Gardner’s book “Multiple Intelligence”, revolves mainly around a hands-on learning experience that encourages children to ask questions and develop social skills with their peers as well as adults. In addition to fundamental math and English skills, Beginners are now also getting a basic Spanish lesson a few times a month.

“It’s amazing to see how much these kids change by the end of the year,” Selzer says. “They come in with varying degrees of social skills, as some students are only children and others come from big families, but they all leave really understanding what it means to cooperate.”

Each classroom has two teachers, (Dorian Okano and Rania Melki teach the second Beginner class that kindly brought homemade biscuits over for snack time) allowing each

student to be extremely well-nurtured—a very important aspect since children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure, Selzer points out.

“Discovering the joys of learning is the primary goal in this first year of Beginners,” Selzer says. “The Beginners teachers place a great deal of trust in the young child’s innate curiosity and ability to construct their own knowledge. We make space in our curriculum for their ideas to emerge and fully develop, and we value the process of learning as much as any single end product.”

Having just returned from Mass. Audubon's Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary where they observed pigs as well as many other animals as part of their unit on harvests and farm life, Beginners are all too eager to jump into the mud pit.

Nathan Jae-Chan Kwon dips his hands into the slippery brown paint as he looks up and gleefully exclaims: “I’m a mud monster! Ewww, it feels gross!”

“I’d say it’s a good pig day in here because it’s a messy day,” Selzer responds, smiling.

BB&N Fall Sports Teams Primed for Playoffs

Football Undefeated So Far

The Knights enter into November in uncharted territory: they lead the ISL with an undefeated record with games upcoming against Thayer Academy and Roxbury Latin.

History was made this fall as the Knights overtook defending ISL champion Belmont Hill for the first time in 21 years in a 38-8 win. Quarterback Mike DiChiara led a 29-point second-quarter with two touchdowns and finished the game 11-of-17 for 203 yards. He helped on the ground by Derek Papagianopoulos, who scored on a 15-yard sweep in the second quarter and finished off the scoring for the Knights with a 2-yard plunge up the middle in the final minutes of play.

“To be honest, to win for the program after so many years is huge, not just for us but for everyone who has ever come through here, but we will try and treat it just like any other win,” said DiChiara to *The Boston Herald*. “Sure (my) stats look good, but the credit goes to the offensive line, I was able to see the whole field.”

A 40-yard field goal by Philippe Panico kicked off the scoring, and BB&N scored on its next four possessions as DiChiara's two strikes to Blake Barker and Andre Joseph were sandwiched between Papagianopoulos' first rushing touchdown and a 2-yard score by Steve Grassa.

Grassa was a star on both sides of the ball with a fumble recovery, an interception and eight tackles along with his touchdown, which came right at the halftime whistle to give the Knights a comfortable 32-0 lead at the break.

"Sometimes coaches overrate themselves and the X's and O's but it is really the 'Jimmys' and the 'Joes' and we have a bunch of great ones," said Papas to *The Herald*.

Boy's Soccer Sits Atop ISL

When Nobles goal keeper Jan Trnka-Amrhein watched two one-touch shots by Max Walker '08 streak by him during a 2-0 loss this season, Amrhein became only the latest in a series of goalies to be burned by the streaking BB&N Boys' Varsity soccer team.

With their 10-2 record (only one league loss), the Knights are atop the ISL standings, and hoping for a strong finish with both the league championship and Class A title well within their reach.

"As far as expectations, we always want to be over .500, and we strive to be top five each year, which almost guarantees postseason," says head coach Jesse Sarzana '93. "To be at the top of the table right now is great—but there is plenty of soccer left, and it's premature to talk about any championships."

The team has succeeded with contributions from all grade levels, including a precocious group of seven sophomores who according to Sarzana have "played major roles" all year. But the season has really turned on the stalwart achievements of its five seniors.

"This is a solid team, with great leadership from the seniors," Sarzana says. "Max Walker, leading the league in scoring, Pete Randall, four-year letterman, Tarek Eljahmi, three-year letterman, Dan Fleisher, three-year letterman, and Max Meyer, two years."

BB&N's last and only league championship came in 2004 when they also won the Class A title. The Knights hope to follow the example of that squad and take a page from the home team Red Sox by winning this year as well to give them two titles in four years.

“We are looking forward to finishing well, and look forward to hopefully getting a postseason bid.” Sarzana says. “A home game would be tremendous.”

Harkness Takes Hold at BB&N

The centerpieces of rooms 110 and 114 in newly opened Renaissance Hall are finely-crafted oval tables. Nothing too special about that, one might think at first glance.

But these tables carry with them a name, Harkness, that denotes not only a 75-year-old style of teaching embraced by a number of independent schools (probably most associated with Exeter), but also a commitment to fostering students’ critical thinking skills.

“If you value student-centered critical thinking, there is no more effective method than Harkness,” says Upper School English teacher Alda Farlow, who learned the art of Harkness teaching at her previous institution. “We have very bright children here and they can learn from each other.”

Both physically and philosophically, the Harkness table creates a classroom dynamic where every student is on equal footing with his/her classmates, and with the teacher. “When students can face each other, literally sharing a table co-equally,” says Farlow, “they can exchange ideas and reflect on them with an interpersonal understanding not always possible in other environments.”

Legend has it that the table’s originator, Edward Harkness, designed the table in an oval shape so that each participant would be able to look into the eyes of anyone around the table. History Department chair Leigh Hogan sees the logic: “It certainly makes it nearly impossible for a student to be out of view of the teacher,” he smiles.

Hogan, a newcomer to Harkness teaching, has appreciated the impact it has made in his U.S. in the Modern World I course this fall. “It really does a wonderful job of facilitating the difficult art of conversation,” he says.

“Harkness supports the kind of teaching and learning the humanities faculty want to encourage at BB&N,” says Hogan, “and these beautiful tables make a real statement on that institutional priority.”

While the tables themselves may be brand new, the underpinning philosophy has been present at BB&N far longer. The majority of humanities courses at the School are taught

in circular form, and faculty members, such as recently retired Roger Stacey, have long employed the style of teaching, albeit with makeshift arrangements of rectangular tables into quasi-circles.

Keeping You Up to Date

Nepalese Human Rights Activist Speaks at Upper School

Bishnu Pariyar, a Nepalese human rights activist, recently spoke to Upper School students about the plight of untouchables (Dalits) in the Hindu caste system, her experience as a Dalit woman, and her mission to empower Dalit women.

“Dalits are the lowest of the caste structure,” Pariyar said. “Dalit means oppressed, and the Dalits suffer from extreme forms of discrimination and exclusion because they are thought to be spiritually and physically impure. Women are considered the property of their husbands and his family.”

Pariyar witnessed caste discrimination at an early age by listening to her neighbor being abused by her husband. “It affected me so deeply and made me want to be educated and fight for change,” she said. Pariyar had to walk two hours each way to high school, and was forced to sit on the floor while other higher caste students sat in chairs, and was also not allowed to drink from the same water jug.

“They treated me like an animal,” she said. “I had to be a very strong person because I knew if I left school I would never be anything.”

Pariyar, who recently obtained her master’s degree from Clark University, began a women-led financial organization with the purpose of educating Dalit women called Empower Dalit Women of Nepal. Pariyar’s organization has helped over 1,500 Dalit women, and more than 700 children have been awarded scholarships to secondary school.

LS Teachers Gain Tech Savvy with Mini-Workshops

Don’t know what SKYPE or QUIA is? You use a digital camera, but what’s a Document Camera, and how would you ever use it in a classroom? Not sure about the new generation of overhead projectors (MimioBoards, SmartBoards)? Answers to those questions and more were covered at the Lower School’s teacher-led technology mini-workshops on October 17th. The workshop allowed teachers to share how they

are integrating technology regularly into the classroom with practical, realistic options.

The 15-minute snippets gave a taste of the possibilities, while the follow-up evaluation targeted areas for additional training and the need for hardware or equipment. The next step will be to offer more in-depth training for subjects that faculty found of interest, and then to use those skills and tools in the classroom. Special thanks to math teacher Kathy Dorkin, who came from the Middle School to lead a workshop, as well as the 12 Lower School teachers who shared their time and use of technology with colleagues.

Amanda George Awarded Certificate by U.S. Embassy in Russia

Senior Amanda George received a certificate in honor of her winning essay in a national contest sponsored by the U.S. Embassy and Mass. Historical Society. George, along with BB&N Russian teachers Armen Dedekian and Willa Chamberlain, attended a State House ceremony recognizing the 200-year-old—sometimes tumultuous—relationship between the U.S. and Russia. U.S. Ambassador to Russian William Burns and a representative from the Russian Embassy were present at the ceremony. While at the ceremony, Dedekian and the BB&N contingent ran into alums Jack Grinwold '53 and Lincoln Gamble '76. George's winning essay focused on U.S./Russian student exchanges.

Community Enjoys Iftar Dinner

Members of the BB&N community were treated to a variety of foods as well as several performances during the Iftar dinner, hosted by the Islamic Society in early October. Iftar, which refers to the evening meal for breaking the daily fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan, is traditionally done as a community right after sunset, with Muslims gathering to break their fast together.

While dining on traditional middle eastern fare such as falafel, grape leaves, hummus and lamb (as well as rice pudding and baklava for dessert), students, faculty and parents enjoyed performances from the Turkish band Dunya, a recitation of Arabic poetry by Tufts University Professor Mohammed Alwan, and a captivating Middle Eastern dance by BB&N senior Tarek Eljahmi.

One School-One World On Tap for November 17

One School-One World, BB&N's first all-campus multicultural festival, will take place on Saturday, November 17. The free event, which takes place from 11-2 PM at the Nicholas Athletic Center, will highlight and celebrate the depth and breadth of our student and faculty community.

OSOW will take on a vibrant street-fair atmosphere, complete with a main stage, student performances; a student run DJ booth; sports and game demos, and art work from all three campuses. The festival will offer foods reflecting the various cultures/histories of our BB&N families. Clubs, organizations, and programs will have informational tables.

Music, drama, and dance will be featured on the main stage. A large-screen TV will be set up to broadcast a slide show highlighting the faces and activities on all campuses. Attendees will have free access to computers uploading Skype and everyone will have the ability to connect with others throughout the world.

One School-One World will bring greater awareness of all the diversity programs and initiatives at the school, plus give everyone a chance to celebrate our community under one roof.

Family Science Saturday Soars

T-minus three...two...one...mission control...we have blast off! Lower School students and their parents attended Family Science Saturday on October 20 to learn about and build model rockets. The afternoon was an opportunity for kids to combine science, fun, and learning in an exciting activity.

The Family Science Saturday program occurs several times a year, covering different science topics in an engaging manner. For more information or to get the scoop on the next Family Science Saturday, contact Lower School Science Teacher, [Caitlin Drechsler](#).

Vegetable Oil-Powered Bus Visits Upper School

Last month, Upper School students were visited by a one-of-a-kind vehicle when the Creating a Climate for Change tour rolled into BB&N in a vegetable oil-powered bus. The tour, organized by the National Outdoor Leadership School, raises awareness of environmental ethics and drums up support for sustainable resource education.

“The bus engine is a replica of the original diesel engine built in 1892 by Rudolf Diesel,” said representative Andy Bassett. “He actually designed the engine to run on vegetable oil, but diesel fuel, a byproduct of oil processing, ultimately became a cheaper alternative.

“We aren’t trying to make people stop using gasoline, even vegetable oil is not sustainable as a fuel for all vehicles, but we do want people to realize that there are healthier alternatives to gasoline,” Bassett said. “Gasoline is a finite resource where as vegetable oil is a replenishable fuel.”

Bassett and his other team members spent a few hours talking to BB&N science classes about the Creating Climate for Change tour, and gave tours of the bus and its “magic” motor.

BB&N Holiday Fair at Upper School on November 2

The annual BB&N Holiday Fair will take place on November 2nd from 2:30 – 7:30 PM in the Upper School Community Room. Students and Faculty will be able to shop at the fair during G block. The Parents' Association volunteers have confirmed vendors that include jewelry of many different designs, bags of many kinds, dog accessories, henna tattoos, stationery, plants, fleece clothing, and they are working on many more.

All proceeds go to the financial aid program.

2007-2008 Community Directory Updates

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to access Round Three of the password-protected document listing updates for this year's Community Directory.

Spooky Soul Cake Tradition Delights LS Community

The lights went out in the Lower School Gymnasium, a gong sounded, and a single figure bearing a candle walked slowly to the front of the assembled crowd. Amidst hushed whispers of the LS students, and attentive stares of parents and faculty, LS Librarian Heather Lee recounted the spooky story of the early English tradition of Soul Cake. The tradition—which features storytelling, musical performances, and period garb—dates back generations to the Buckingham School.

BB&N Rows in 43rd Head of Charles Regatta

BB&N's boathouse dock was filled on a sun-soaked Sunday morning as parents, faculty, alumni/ae and friends gathered to cheer on Boys' and Girls' crew teams during the 43rd annual Head of the Charles Regatta.

The Boys' boat, led by Alex Rose '08, Miles Grimshaw '09, Mike Copacino '08, Nick Haas '08, and Will Hakim '09, came in 23rd out of 51. The Girls' team, led by Leslie Ahlstrand '08, Annie Streetman '08, Brooke Baumgartner '10, Jessica Mulligan '10, and Dorothy Thursday '08, came in 41 out of 51.

"ISL rules and academic commitments allow the student rowers to average only one training row per week in the few weeks leading up to the Head of the Charles," said Boy's Coach Peter Fiore. "The BB&N boys and girls who rowed can be especially proud of their accomplishment."

Olympic Torch Is Passed with Hiring of New Girls' Hockey Coach

The BB&N girls' varsity hockey team bid farewell to their two-time Olympian coach Courtney Kennedy '97 last year, but are thrilled to welcome another two-time Olympian to the helm in the person of Laurie Mutch. The two share a history of hockey as both rivals and teammates, and now share BB&N as another common bond.

Mutch, who grew up in Concord, squared off against Kennedy often throughout high school. "We didn't get along on the ice all that well as opponents in our early playing days," grins Mutch. "But getting to play with Courtney (Kennedy) on the Olympic team in 2002, we became good friends and still keep in touch frequently."

As the five-year starting center for the Women's U.S. National & Olympic Hockey Teams, Mutch competed at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City and the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan, where her team won Silver and Gold Medals respectively. It was in Salt Lake City where she partnered with Kennedy as teammates on the squad.

With her professional hockey career behind her, Mutch is excited to shift her focus to coaching, and carry on the proverbial torch for as the BB&N girls' hockey.

"Courtney (Kennedy) has done an unbelievable job cultivating the hockey program at

BB&N,” says Mutch. “It’s neat, coming from similar backgrounds and experiences, to expand on what she started and to keep the program moving forward.”

In addition to raising her one-year-old daughter, Mutch lists winning the gold with team U.S.A. in 1998 as the highlight of her hockey career, modestly failing to mention many of her individual achievements such as being named USA Hockey Female Player of the Year in 1997. Let’s hope there’s room on the list for a BB&N Independent School League title in the coming years.

3rd Annual Golf Tournament Tees Off for Financial Aid

The rolling fairways of the Blue Hills Country Club in Canton echoed with the tight click of plastic against titanium once again this fall when 102 golfers teed off in BB&N’s third annual Golf Tournament. Under a cloudless sky and perfect conditions, multiple score cards boasted negative numbers, but as is always the case with the annual tournament, the real winner was BB&N’s financial aid program.

“The BB&N golf tournament is one of the highlights of the year for me,” said BB&N parent and golfer Suzanne Panico (P ’07, ’09, ’11). “It’s so much fun seeing so many familiar faces, from our community, outside and enjoying themselves on the golf course—we couldn’t have asked for more perfect weather or a better cause.”

Highlights from the day included Kevin Gruning coming within two inches of a hole-in-one en route to the 7th hole “closest to the pin” competition, and former Red Sox catcher Rich Gedman roping a drive more than 300 yards to lock up the long-drive competition. If the first fairway had been Fenway Park, Gedman’s drive would have soared over the center field scoreboard.

Campus Voices

**Lower School
Jessica Evans
LS Math Teacher**

When I first found my way to my new classroom in August, I was struck by the twists and turns, and the nooks and crannies, that give the Markham building its decidedly unclassroom-like personality. The math classroom in the back of the second floor feels more like a converted apartment than the industrial concrete or brick schoolrooms in which I spent many of my years teaching. How appropriate, I thought, the math

department lives above the art department. This is the perfect environment to discover that math, just like art, is, at its most beautiful and satisfying, a discipline of creative problem solving.

Fifth and sixth graders at BB&N have the advantage of learning math in small, cooperative groups of approximately ten students. This allows teachers to set up an environment where students have the opportunity to delve into complex and challenging problems that help them construct meaningful understanding of mathematical concepts. Although many of us think of math as a linear process of learning algorithms and procedures and then applying the procedures to real world problems, higher level problem solving involves making sense out of complex problems and developing methods with which to solve them. With this notion in mind, our curricula allows the math teachers to be guides for students while they broaden their creative problem solving skills and comprehend mathematical algorithms at a deeper level. Ultimately, I think this gives our students an advantage when they take more advanced math and science courses.

I am reminded daily of how lucky I am to be able to teach at a school like BB&N, where it is clear every place I look—in classrooms, hallways and faculty spaces—that everyone here not only has the best interests of children in mind, but the school has committed its resources to ensure that the students have everything they need in order to succeed. The fifth and sixth graders that I have the pleasure to teach approach school as true students. They come into class ready to learn, eager to work with each other and seemingly excited to launch themselves into uncharted territory.

I have taught at several different kinds of schools—public, charter and independent—and it has been my experience that this approach to learning in the middle grades is not the norm. In fact, I think it is the environment created by the homeroom teachers at BB&N that foster a feeling of community among children from an early age. Students here not only have the opportunity to shine and show their brilliance, they are also comfortable taking risks and making mistakes—and in this way, the arduous path of learning is eased a little.

Middle School
Ethan Rossiter
MS English Teacher

In the first few weeks of the school year, I did a lesson with my seventh graders on the use of vivid language. I asked them, “How do you bring characters alive? A scene? A moment?” For the writing exercise, I wrote a terrible little story called “Tom’s Tuna

Fish.” It was about a man named Tom who ate the same tuna fish sandwich from his corner deli every Saturday afternoon. The sandwich was something Tom looked forward to all week. One Saturday Tom arrived at the deli and they were out of tuna. So he ordered roast beef, and, boom, Tom got a whole new outlook on life. “This,” I said, “is an awful story. You need to try to make it better using vivid language. This writing is dull and uninteresting. How can you make this terrible writing better?!”

The class was certainly up for the creative challenge, and we worked on different techniques to make the language more vivid. We talked about incorporating stronger verbs, figurative language, sentence variety, and a range of styles of imagery. Many students, in their attempts to be literary, employed metaphor, often with funny results. One boy compared the glowing sun during Tom’s walk to his deli, to the slice of provolone he would get in his sandwich. One girl skillfully played up the senses. She described the familiar smell of Tom’s block as he passed a bakery, the familiar faces of his neighborhood. She truly did bring Tom alive.

Having moved back to New England after six years in New York City, it is my senses that have recently brought *me* alive, or my memories alive, of my school years as a middle school student in Lincoln, Mass., and then to BB&N for high school. Coaching soccer this fall, I am reminded every day of when I was a 13-year-old soccer player. It is the smell of leaves and the feel of the sun while putting on my cleats that is so familiar. Last Friday there was the first Middle School dance of the year. On that afternoon I overheard a group of boys discussing the night’s event. Their excited chatter reminded me of those Friday afternoons before a dance when I would be filled with energy. I was always very careful about my outfits for these events. I clearly remember the feel of my thin gray argyle sweater (with maroon diamonds), and my new (glowing white) Nike sneakers.

Although I did not attend the Middle School, BB&N has always been a part of my life. My father has been an English Teacher at the Upper School, a place I graduated from in 1993, for more than 30 years. Being back in Cambridge, I am most excited by how much I am learning about teaching. The Middle School is filled with inspiring, energetic teachers who truly understand the challenges of enriching the lives of pre-teens. I am also reminded of how much I enjoy working with young people. There are frustrating moments every day, but those are not the ones I go home with. Instead, I take home the memory of the community and humor in my classroom.

I have always been a teacher who believes in the importance of humor. When used in the right way, it becomes a connection with my students. For example, my classes are filled

with lingo...your book is your “biscuit,” an A is an ace, B a baker, C a hook, and the dehumidifier in my basement classroom (which often interrupts our discussions) is named Melvin. Last week, a girl who had been struggling to remember her book each day, and had failed (F is a flag) a recent RQ (Reading Quiz), passed me in the hallway, and said with a smile, “Mr. Rossiter, I’ll have my biscuit tomorrow, I promise, *and* I’ll score an ace on the RQ!” We both laughed. It sounded totally ridiculous, but I knew exactly what she was talking about.

Upper School
Sarabih Levy-Brightman
US History/English Teacher

“Hinduism: It’s better than Harry Potter!” exclaimed one of my world religion students during a mind-bending conversation about Krishna’s theophany in the eleventh teaching of the *Bhagavadgita*.

At that moment I sat back and smiled. It wasn’t simply the catchy phrase that made me smile (though it was catchy indeed); rather, it was the fact that my students were taking this strange world into themselves and making sense of it. “No, No, No!” One student adamantly proclaimed during our first discussion of the *Gita*. “You’re forgetting that when Arjuna kills them he’s not killing them; they don’t die; not really. And he’s not killing; not really. He’s fulfilling his dharma and making good karma.” “Or,” another added, “if he’s doing it in a spirit of perfect discipline and renunciation, no karma.” “No karma?” another asked. “Why no karma?”

Teaching world religions at BB&N poses a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Having spent much of my time as an undergrad and all of my graduate school years studying religion, I have longed for the opportunity to teach a religion course. High schools, however, don’t abound in such course offerings. Thus when I first met with Leigh Hogan, chair of the History Department, about a possible position at BB&N, and he asked whether I would be interested in teaching a course in world religions, I nearly fell out of my seat. Would I be interested? Are there 330 million Hindu Gods? You bet!

But how, in six-and-a-half months, do you teach seven religions to a group of almost entirely secular 17 year olds? Feels like one of those riddles with a trick answer. Fortunately, it is not a riddle and there is no trick answer; the answer is as real as the fruits it yields.

Over the summer, I assembled primary and secondary sources that introduce students to a set of fundamental ideas and issues in each faith. For instance, when we study Christianity we will follow a line of thinking by reading the Pauline letters, excerpts from Augustine's *City of God* and sermons by Martin Luther. In doing so, we will trace the development of a certain Protestant understanding of the human will. When we study Judaism (which, in this course, comes after Christianity) we will consider how differently rabbinic scholars read some of the same biblical texts we saw handled by Christian theologians and explore the different anthropologies that arise through different interpretive strategies. Heady stuff, no doubt. But it is also stuff that engages more than the just head.

"I had the best conversation with my mother last night," a student announced at the beginning of a recent class. "I was explaining the idea of reincarnation and we really started talking about what we think, and feel, and believe. I think it was the most serious conversation we've ever had about religion." Studying world religions not only requires drawing on an array of academic skills or ways of thinking (literary, historical, philosophical, aesthetic, sociological, to name some), it demands that we seriously engage ideas radically alien to our own; that we open ourselves to complex ideas and behaviors which might initially repel us ideas and consider how, through them, people experience (and explore) being human. Thus there is something both deeply personal and deeply unsettling about studying an array of religions. Something which, when coupled with rigorous academic inquiry, sets students on fire and broadens their understanding of the world, human nature, and themselves.

All School
Charlie Ruopp
Assistant Head for Academic Affairs

As some of you may know, before assuming the position as Assistant Head of School for Academic Affairs this academic year, I spent most of my professional career in public education. (I did spend my high school years, however, at Westtown School, a Quaker boarding school outside of Philadelphia.) I taught Biology and Anatomy and Physiology for more than a decade before becoming a middle school and then high school principal.

These classroom and administrative experiences have hopefully prepared me for the work ahead at BB&N at all three campuses. I strongly believe that one of the most intriguing and exciting aspects of this position will be the ability to interact with the staff and view firsthand the exemplary teaching occurring within classrooms, as well as in the outside activities of each school. It has been my experience that getting into classrooms is a

valuable way to witness the vitality and transformative power of a school. My intention, then, is to spend time watching our teachers practice the art of teaching, in addition to observing and participating in after school activities, athletic events, or any other venues that include interaction with students.

I am truly interested in how BB&N makes academics come alive, and what we value as we go about doing the real work of schools. As my colleagues in education, Jon Saphier, Matt King, and John D'Auria, have stated, "Nothing is as important for student learning as the individual teacher and what that person knows, believes, and can do." I eagerly anticipate continuing these conversations about teaching and learning at BB&N.

Given my professional background, one question that many have asked me concerns the differences I see between public and private school education. Beyond the more obvious differences such as smaller class sizes, fewer mandates by federal and state authorities, and greater sources of funding, I honestly believe that the differences are far more subtle. My initial impression, although informed by just a few months, is that building and establishing a positive community to meet the needs of BB&N's students is a high priority here, one that frames most of what takes place in our schools. I suspect there is parity in educational and social goals; yet in conversations with many of the teachers, it is clear they are especially committed to breathing life into these ideals. My sense is that their beliefs in our mission statement and motto of honor, scholarship, and kindness are not simply words – they appear to be the engine that drives the high quality of teaching. I am incredibly excited to become part of a school moving into the future with such positive energy. This energy does, indeed, set this school apart.

One wonderful aspect of this new position is traveling among the three campuses and both observing and participating in the daily activities that define the exemplary nature of this school. These "small" moments, both inside and outside the classroom, may go unnoticed, but to my new eyes they signify the energy and vitality that permeates teaching and learning here. These moments include:

- standing with a parent at Head of the Charles at the BB&N boathouse as our stellar crew team rowed by, and listening to her description of how well-prepared her daughter was for the rigors of college upon graduating;
- attending a middle school faculty meeting after school, where the entire agenda was devoted to examining and discussing the educational needs of individual children; each staff member participated in problem-solving to support every child's academic and social development;

- watching and listening to the fifth and sixth grade student cluster assembly as they were led through a 100-person exercise to help expand understanding of their place in our global community; the assembly ended with a group rendition of *We Are the World*, a song that resonates remarkably with younger students despite being performed 22 years ago.

These “small” moments, in fact, add a great deal to my initial impressions that BB&N is a school that has much to celebrate. I feel most fortunate to be included in the lives of students and teachers here as they grow and learn together. My role is to assist teachers and administrators in continuing to support and improve the quality of the academic program. Given my initial observations, I both embrace and look forward to the challenge.

Giving Update

Lower School Grandfriends Day on November 21

WHAT: Lower School Grandfriends Day

WHO: All Lower School students and their invited grandfriend(s)

WHEN: Wednesday, November 21 from 8:15AM-12PM

WHERE: Lower School campus, 10 Buckingham Street, Cambridge

WHY: To offer an opportunity to all Lower School children to share a condensed version of their BB&N daily experience with their special grandfriend(s) AND to provide a day for grandfriends to embrace the BB&N experience through the eyes of their young host, faculty, and specialists who will lead the day's events.

So, notify your grandfriend(s) and ask them to save the date for Wednesday, November 21!

For more information, contact Jo-Ann Lovejoy, director of annual giving, at 617-800-2723 or jo-ann_lovejoy@bbns.org.

2007-2008 Annual Fund and Senior Parents' Gift Off to Strong Start

Parent and alumni/ae volunteers are gearing up for a busy fall of calling and outreach to other parents and classmates seeking gifts and pledges for the 2007-2008 Annual Fund. Achieving this year's goal of \$2.35 million is essential to provide critical funds to close the \$5,736 gap between tuition and the true cost of educating a student at BB&N today. Look for a letter and envelope in the mail or make your gift online at www.bbns.org/donate.

The 2008 Senior Parents' Gift Committee has also begun calls to seek support for the Class of 2008 Faculty Endowment Fund. Parents of Seniors should expect to receive a call soon!

Opening Minds Campaign Tops \$47 million

BB&N is thrilled to report that the Opening Minds Campaign has topped \$47 million toward its goal of \$62 million. Key to the success of the Campaign to date was the completion of the anonymous \$10 Million Challenge, received in Spring 2003, which matched all new commitments for endowment and the Upper School Building Project on a one-for-two basis and generated the first \$30 million of the Campaign. \$14 million received in response to the Challenge was in gifts of \$1 million or more, another condition of the Challenge and a new highlight in BB&N fund raising.

Gifts in response to the \$10 Million Challenge have provided crucial funds for the Upper School Building Project and endowment for faculty, financial aid, and other programs. The successful completion of this Challenge has stimulated three other exciting challenges: the Alumni/ae Challenge nearing completion, the Faculty Challenge launched this spring, and a new George Serries Theater Challenge.

Equally exciting is that the Annual Fund-another important priority of the Opening Minds Campaign - exceeded its \$2.125 million goal in 2006-07 and will provide more than \$2.2 million in operating support this year for faculty, financial aid, academic programs, and all areas of the School's operating budget. This sets a new record in yearly support and we are deeply grateful to the many parents, alumni/ae, and friends who made this possible.

Look for more details about this year's fund-raising successes in the Annual Report of Gifts, in your mail in mid-November.