

BUCKINGHAM BROWNE & NICHOLS
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Spotlight Article

Upper School Chorale Takes Memorable Trip to Italy

Upper School music teacher Joe Horning offers a recap of the Chorale's memorable trip to Italy this past summer:

Once a year, esteemed Upper School Russian Teacher Armen Dedekian dons his United Nations tie, plunks his array of mini-flags on the podium, and introduces the foreign languages assembly with the phrase “foreign languages, your passport to the world!”

There’s no question he’s right, as the diverse array and popularity of BB&N foreign language trips attests; but I always want to add to Armen’s mantra that if you can play the fiddle, strum the guitar, or sing a few well-rehearsed bars of your favorite song, you’ll make quick friends in a foreign country—even if you can't speak a word of the native language.

Such was the case this past June, when Brigitte Tournier, Doug Neuman, and I led 44 members of the Upper School Chorale on a 12-day concert tour of Italy. We heard a little bit of French used at our transfer point in Paris’ Charles de Gaulle airport, a smattering of Spanish once in Italy, as BB&N students learned that the Italians could understand more of what they said in that language than in English. There was even an eloquent string of Latin employed by Senior Chris Richards in his conversation with an elderly Italian priest following our participation in a Sunday Mass in Arezzo.

The students’ most effective language, not surprisingly, was music.

The Chorale worked hard all spring on a full one-hour program that introduced many new pieces into their repertoire. These included a heavy percentage of religious music, which is only fitting since the majority of the concerts were held in churches and cathedrals. An example is “Hark I Hear the Harps Eternal,” a hymn that BB&N singers hadn't performed in years.

In addition, however, the group did incorporate some secular pieces into the program such as the folk song “Shenandoah,” which they had sung only days earlier at the BB&N graduation ceremony.

With seven performances on the itinerary, singing was very much at the forefront of the trip. That didn't prevent opportunities for fun and culture, however, as the group traveled to locales such as Viterbo, Siena, Florence, and Rome, and saw sights including the Museum of Medieval and Modern Art, the Colosseum, and the Vatican.

Brigitte Tournier, one of the chaperones, says, “For me, the highlights of the trip were the impromptu moments when the Chorale gathered spontaneously in public places and surprised the crowd around them with a few songs from their repertoire.”

Madame Tournier adds, “The students were not only amazing representatives of how talented, intelligent, and open to the world BB&N students are, but truly impressive ambassadors of American youth today.”

(Much of the reporting in this piece is credited to Ariel Levin '10.)

Articles

Inside The Classroom: Exploring Life through Art with John Norton

When most students look out the east window of Upper School Art Teacher John Norton’s studio classroom they see only the new courtyard in the center of the campus. But when Norton looks out the same window he sees more—he sees a blank canvas for the students to create on.

“It will be interesting to see how the students adapt to this new space...I can’t wait for the first snow fall to see what sort of activities and sculptures appear out there,” Norton says. “These kids come up with some amazing stuff.”

It’s a statement befitting of Norton, who for 24 years has been striving to empower BB&N students to look beyond first appearances through art.

“It’s a matter of perspective...I often tell students, I know you in a way that you don’t even know you,” Norton says. “I know what you look like from behind, or I know what the back of your head looks like, and you don’t...there are many ways to see something or someone—art forces you to explore that.”

This year Norton is more excited than ever about that exploration, due in large part to his new studio created when the School expanded the Upper School campus. Watching Norton in this new space during his Advanced Studio Art class this Fall, is akin to watching a kid in a roomful of new toys.

“All the furniture is on wheels to allow flexibility in layout and set up, there’s great light...I even have enough room for a resources library,” Norton exclaims, pointing toward a low bookshelf spanning a wall below a series of tall windows. “And check out this circular drawing space!”

In the brightest space in the room, eight wooden drawing benches are arranged around a modeling platform. Styled after a Parisian invention called the Bozarth bench, Norton and Wood Working Teacher Paul Ruhlmann designed and built the benches to adjust to different drawing positions, including standing and sitting.

“To me it’s the right way to build a community because it actively positions people in an open circle, and the build of the bench makes students get their entire body involved in the drawing or painting,” Norton says. “Students aren’t just sitting at a flat table; they have to put more into the act of creation.”

As the class convenes, there is an easy but focused camaraderie around the drawing table where Norton and his nine students have gathered. Emerson College radio plays softly in the background while Norton explains their next assignment. Taking inspiration from the famous drawings of New York City artist Saul Steinberg, students will create their own interpretation of Renaissance Hall, the new US wing.

“Steinberg was so interesting because he thought like an adult, but drew like a child,” interjects Norton suddenly, and pauses letting the words sit for a moment, before diving back into an explanation of the assignment. A Norton class is rife with unscripted revelations like this, and it is in these moments that Norton is at his best as a teacher. “Picasso said ‘art is a lie that we take to be truth.’ ... isn’t that liberating?” asks Norton at one point of junior Andrew Adams as he works on a sketch of the ceiling. “You aren’t drawing the truth, you’re drawing what’s true to you.”

As Adams ponders this, Norton looks over Adams’ work and points to one area in particular. “It’s at the edge where one line meets another that you have to be clear in your work. Lines are like superhighways, where they merge, you need clearly marked intersections,” says Norton before spinning off to check on another student.

No more than five minutes later Norton comes careening back with a book of sketches by artist Joseph Nicoletti he has found in his art library. “Look at this,” he points out to Adams excitedly. “You and Nicoletti have the same issue with lines.” Norton proceeds to point out how Nicoletti treated the problem.

At another point in the class, sophomore Jessica Brodsky is having difficulty with a sketch. Norton, seized by a thought, grabs her drawing and holds it up for her to look at—then he turns it upside down and has her look at again. Immediately Brodsky notices a problem with horizon lines that she had been sensing, but hadn’t been able to put her finger on.

“I love that moment when something clicks and a student sees something they weren’t seeing before,” Norton says. “You pick up on the kids’ energy and help them to go where they want to go with their work.”

Norton’s students pick up on his energy as well, and have taken to the new studio just as quickly.

“I think the drawing teachers here (Norton and Miklos Pogany) are two of the best teachers at the School,” says Adams. “And this studio is great, it feels like art is a much more balanced part of the School now, and you feel like you’re doing more legitimate work.”

Even after the students meander out of the studio, Norton is still excited about the class and talks about their energy and potential. “Art is like a catalytic converter. It synthesizes kids lives...it takes their energy, skills, mindset, and focuses it all into one act or product,” Norton says. “I try to capture the idea that art is connected to everything else these students are learning.”

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Later on in the day, while picking up his studio for the next class, Norton stops often to point out student art work on the walls that he is impressed with as well features of the new space. He seems like a creature completely at home with his surroundings.

“You know, after two master’s degrees, I came to BB&N thinking I’d only stay for three or four years,” Norton says, and shrugs his shoulders with a smile. “...this will be my 24th year.”

Sounds like a match made in Cambridge.

Lower Schoolers Enjoy Inaugural ChessFest

The inaugural Back-to-School ChessFest was a big success, with close to 30 Lower School students testing their skills against a national master, taking part in a problem-solving contest, learning about BB&N’s after-school programs and its perennially successful scholastic chess teams, and generally enjoying an afternoon of chess-related activities.

Life Master Lou Mercuri gave the simultaneous exhibition, defeating all comers except for third-grader Max Wiegand, who achieved a draw. Another master, BB&N parent Leonid Rasin, ran the popular problem-solving corner. And International Grandmaster Larry Christiansen made an appearance to sign autographs and to meet and chat with youngsters and parents.

[Larry Eldridge](#) and [Maryanne Reilly](#), who teach the after-school program under the auspices of ASAP4kids, were also on hand to talk about this program as well as the opportunities for children so inclined to play for BB&N teams in scholastic competitions. Prizes and medals were awarded to winners in the problem-solving event and to all participants in the simul. Books, equipment, t-shirts, etc., were also on sale, and fliers were distributed giving the schedule of upcoming chess events in the area.

Each year, Lower Schoolers have the opportunity to participate in local and regional tournaments, and this year BB&N also hopes to send teams to play in two national scholastic tournaments: the National K-12 Championships in Houston in early December, and the Bert Lerner Elementary Championships in Pittsburgh in May.

Grades 9 and 12 Enjoy Spirited Kickoff Gatherings

Seniors and Parents Welcome the Year at Annual Dinner:

The annual Senior Parent/Student Dinner always serves as an informal kickoff to the year, allowing students and their parents a chance to gather together and celebrate their last hurrah at BB&N. As the seniors and their parents feasted at this year's dinner, various teachers and administrators took the podium to spur on the class and allay any early jitters they might have about their final campaign at the School.

Head of School Rebecca T. Upham opened the evening with an interesting fact, underscoring the type of community that BB&N fosters.

"Almost one third of you have been here since the Lower School," Upham said drawing cheers from the audience. "The heart of the School would not be what it is without the students, particularly the class of 2008 which has already given so much to this community through the past few years."

Upper School Director Jack Knapp captured his excitement appropriately when he said: "This is the easiest job a speaker ever had, to praise the class of 2008." Knapp also noted the energy he has noticed in the class, and throughout the corridors of the newly named Founders Hall, before turning the proceedings over to the real stars of the evening, the students.

Co-chairs for the Senior class gift committee, Eric Schwartz '08 and Carly Schuster '08, spoke to their classmates, explaining the importance of the class gift and urging 100 percent participation from everyone.

"It's not the amount you give, but the fact that you're giving at all that matters," said Schwartz.

Closing out the evening was Upper School History Teacher Louise Makrauer who encouraged Seniors to look past the pressures of college applications, and their last year at BB&N.

"This is a year of self-definition created by college essays and yearbook pages...and there can be a sense that this self you create will be judged," said Makrauer. "But it will work out, and you will survive."

Ninth Grade Parents Welcomed to Upper School Community:

While their children were away at Bivouac, ninth grade parents enjoyed cupcakes and other desserts as a welcome to BB&N's Upper School. Many parents were eager to share stories and enjoyed a slide show of their children in the midst of their two-week adventure at Bivouac, as a live singer provided the perfect background music with festive South American tunes.

Head of School Rebecca T. Upham welcomed parents as new members of the Upper School, adding that the evening was intended to be a place for “getting together to have some desserts and have some fun with other adults” while students were away.

After observing ninth graders in action earlier that week, Upper School Director Jack Knapp assured parents that “everybody was just fine,” and gave them advice about what to expect when their children step off the bus to return home.

“They want, in order of importance: 1. the shower and a warm towel; 2. their bed; and 3. their favorite meal,” he said. “They also want you to feel proud of what they have accomplished—that’s the greatest gift you can give them.”

Keeping You Up to Date

Introducing Renaissance Hall!

Renaissance Hall was introduced to the BB&N community during a sun-soaked Opening Doors ceremony held in the Upper School's magnificent new courtyard on September 29. In a day that featured student art displays, trumpeters, homecoming games, and mini-classroom sessions for visitors, the new building stole the show as alumni/ae and parents took in the state-of-the-art facility.

Head of School Rebecca T. Upham and a group of people integral to the building's creation—Steve Woodsum, Laura Hodges Taylor, Gary Gut, Rick Kobus, Jack Knapp, Thom Greenlaw, Jim Childress, Peter Campot, Jim Childress, Leslie Ahlstrand '08, and Paul Mannix '08—presided over the ceremonial ribbon cutting that officially welcomed Renaissance Hall into the School community.

“I can't imagine a more glorious celebration than this one here today,” said BB&N parent and former board chairman Steve Woodsum. “So many people have come up to me over the past few weeks to say how dramatically this building has transformed the life of this School.”

The building's name was the result of a community-wide competition and vote that took place in September. More than 1,400 votes were cast, with Renaissance Hall being the top choice of students, parents, and faculty.

Science Essayists Awarded

Two BB&N sophomores were honored in June by the Massachusetts Society for Medical Research for their outstanding essays submitted for competition. In the high school division, Sarah Gottlieb '10 was awarded Second Place in Massachusetts for her essay, “Cyberkinetics Neurotechnology Systems, Inc.: Restoring Function to Paralyzed People.” Paxton Maeder-York '10 was awarded Honorable Mention for essay, “Mending a Broken

Heart.” Students were directed to write about groundbreaking research being investigated at a New England institution. The competition resulted in 104 submissions from 23 public and private schools across the state.

2007-2008 Community Directory Updates

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

Safe House Program Starts Up

The Upper School Parents' Association is pleased to announce an important safety initiative for the 2007-2008 year: the establishment of a Safe House program at both the Upper and Middle Schools. Directors Jack Knapp and Mary Dolbear have endorsed this initiative as a way to promote the safety of our students at an age when risky behavior can become a serious issue. The program is an agreement by parents hosting a gathering on their private property to be present to chaperone, to prohibit the use of alcohol and/or drugs, and to secure any firearms. This agreement is viewed as an important means of promoting health, safety, and open communications among BB&N parents and students. [CLICK HERE](#) to access Knightline and review the current list of Middle and Upper School parents who are participating in the program.

The Safe House Program Agreement resides [HERE](#) on Knightline. If you have not already done so, please review and return to be included on the list.

Middle School Ice Cream Social

Middle School students, faculty, and parents gathered last month for what has become the most delicious rite of passage known to BB&N, the ice cream social. Amidst laughter and chatter, everyone partook of the homemade sundae bar as they celebrated the upcoming School year.

Fine Woodworking Magazine Targets One of BB&N's Finest

When US Wood Working Teacher Paul Ruhlmann traveled to Victoria, British Columbia this summer to present at a furniture maker's conference, he did not expect to be targeted by a film crew. But after his speech on Multiple Spline Miter Joints, a video producer for *Fine Woodworking Magazine* approached him in hopes of shooting a segment about Ruhlmann's latest innovation in the field.

“I came up with a jig that attaches to a tool called a biscuit joiner, it allows the students to make these joints accurately, and safely,” says Ruhlmann of the multiple spline miter joint he has engineered. “They are a dovetail type technique, and are one of the first cabinet joints the students learn how to make a piece with.”

The multiple spline miter joint has become something of a revelation in the field of woodworking education, testified to by the incredible interest other teachers and publications in the field have shown.

“It’s an extraordinarily safe, fast and strong technique, and it’s fail proof, which is very different from doing something with hand cut dovetails,” Ruhlmann says. “Also there are a lot of aesthetic possibilities.”

His technique has led to numerous works by BB&N students, including mirror frames, cabinets, and collectable boxes.

Ruhlmann has written articles for the *Fine Woodworking Magazine* before and even completed an instructional videotape on woodworking techniques, so he was not nervous when the magazine sent a film crew to his wood shop this September.

The footage will be used this fall by the magazine, but until then, more on Ruhlmann and some examples of his work can be seen on [their website](#).

2007-08 Head's Award Recipient: Bev Malone

Congratulations to Bev Malone, Director of the Teacher Training Institute, who is the sole recipient of the Head’s Awards for the 2007-08 academic year. The purpose of these awards is to recognize senior faculty for their years of service to the School by reducing their responsibilities to allow them to pursue an activity related to their own professional development or a project to benefit the School.

Malone, who is excited about the opportunity, knows exactly how she’ll use her Head’s Award.

“Since the Teachers Training Institute was started in 1977, there has been no formal alumni/ae office,” explains Malone. “I want to track as many of the graduates through the years as possible and see what they are doing.”

The benefits of this will be numerous as it will allow Malone to create a network of resources for current teaching interns in the program, as well as graduates looking to change jobs or careers.

“My hope is to put the infrastructure in place to allow mentoring, professional development opportunities, networking, and hopefully some reunions,” she said.

Sixth Graders Work Together to Build Sukkah

Karolyn Feeks’ sixth grade homeroom spent a few days this fall working on a Sukkah (SUH-kah), an ancient shelter that was built in a field and then used during harvest times by Jewish farmers and shepherds during the festival of Sukkot (Sue-COAT) which lasts for seven days.

“At harvest time they thought it would be better to build shelters in the fields because a lot of time was wasted walking back and forth (from their villages),” Feeks says. “This was done to enable maximum time spent harvesting the crops and also as a way of being more profitable. For the festival of Sukkot, modern people build models of these temporary structures in yards and on porches.”

Feeks’ class is currently studying various types of harvest festivals and plans to adorn their Sukkah with symbols and decorations of harvest festivals from around the world.

Middle School Updates Library

The Middle School Library was renovated this summer to create a modern, more efficient space for studying and research. Library consultant Rolf Erickson worked with Middle School Librarian Beth Brooks to formulate a library that now includes new lighting, carpeting, a lounge area, ceiling tile, new furniture and best of all, expanded teaching space. To go along with the contemporary feel of the library, out-of-date books were replaced with current prints including a smaller, more modern collection of fiction, and a selection of non-fiction print that was chosen to mirror the Middle School curriculum.

“The renovation of the library has made a world of difference,” Brooks says. “It is brighter and it feels much more spacious. It’s much easier to locate and access resources because it is so much less cluttered than it was.”

Two Talented Artists Visit Upper School

A handful of students and arts faculty enjoyed the work of two accomplished Boston area artists who visited the Upper School as part of BB&N’s ongoing visiting artist program. Donna Rae Marder, a painter and multimedia artist, and Stephen DiRado, a photographer, discussed their particular techniques, their inspirations and shared interesting slides of their recent projects.

Marder, who uses materials that range from coffee filters to bark paper to tea bags, encouraged the aspiring young artists to not be so rigid in their ideas, and said many of her best pieces were brought about by “weird accidents.”

“I love what I do and I love thinking up ideas, but there is a point where this is actually work,” she says.

Athletic Liaison Letter

Peter Martino (P ’11) is the PA liaison between BB&N’s Athletic Office and the parent population. Martino has written a letter packed with useful athletics information, policies, tips, and reminders. [CLICK HERE](#) to read the letter on the BB&N Athletics website.

Caso Learns Firsthand About Service Learning

Upper School Spanish teacher Maggie Caso raves about her experience this summer during a trip to the Dominican Republic that “educated educators” about service learning. “It was a fabulous trip,” says Caso, who has taught at BB&N for five years. “Not only do I feel now like I really know about service learning, but I also felt a personal connection with that community that was really special to me.”

The 10-day trip, sponsored by a Vermont-based organization called LiveLearning, sent teachers to the Dominican Republic for 10 days, where they participated in service learning workshops at the Centro Regional Estudios de Alternativas Rurales. There, the teachers were trained in sustainable agriculture—learning skills that Caso has brought back to the BB&N campus, where she and a few students have started a small garden in space in front of the Wood Shop.

Service learning, Caso points out, is similar to community service, but much more powerful as it develops “mutually beneficial relationships between individuals and a community—relationships that can be sustained long-term.” Caso, in fact, is hoping to sustain the relationships with LiveLearning and the Dominican Republic by traveling back to the country with BB&N students for the Spanish trip in June.

Bivouac Photo Gallery

For the 55th year in a row, BB&N freshmen headed up to the woods of southern New Hampshire for Bivouac last month. The 12-day-long program has been a favorite mainstay in the curriculum because of the lifelong lessons and class unity it fosters. [CLICK HERE](#) to view a photo gallery of this year’s Bivouac adventure on Knightline, the password-protected portion of the BB&N’s website.

Campus Voices

Lower School

Rebecca Thomas Geary

LS Assistant Director of Curriculum & Studies

To paraphrase a quote by Microsoft founder Bill Gates, “We at *the BB&N Lower School* strongly believe that the single most important use of information technology is to improve education.”

Technology is not simply our future but our present and a gateway to our past. Presently, at the Lower School campus, teachers are embracing and using technology in a variety of ways that draw students’ interest and showcase their talent and creativity. Starting as a Beginner, when children learn there are mice that don’t breathe, to pre-teens in the 5th and 6th grades, our challenge is not to keep them off of the ’net (or computers), but to teach them to use the Internet responsibly and safely, with a critical eye as they search accurate information, and develop the ability to use the limitless tools available to them.

Parents at the Morse Building “Back to School Night” were treated to PowerPoint presentations from a ‘Day in the Life of a BOM Beginner’ when Rania Melki, Dorian Okano, and Katie Bergman gave them a glimpse into their children’s world at BB&N, to reading specialist Anne Mackay’s highlights of the key reading components taught at each stage.

A collaborative project that has been expanded this year to include technology as the presentation medium is a study of three-to-four French, Spanish, and American artists from the pre-, post-, and impressionist periods. BB&N/MFA Partnership coordinator and LS art teacher, Sharen Bowden, will guide students as they create works of art in the style of the artists. Teachers will then lead visits to the Museum of Fine Arts in small directed tours, where students discuss the impressionist paintings on exhibit. (French students tour *en Français*; Spanish students *en Español*). The Spanish (Cristina Carrion), French (Soizick Munir), English Seminar (Aisha Banks) and Homeroom teachers (Ken McLaughlin, Karolyn Feeks, and Kathryn Provonsil) provide students time and skills to research, write and prepare their projects. Academic Technology Specialist Megan Haddadi and the Information Science teacher, Heather Lee, add technical expertise. The culminating DVD will be shown at an assembly, preceded by individual project presentations in classrooms where students sharpen their public speaking skills.

Lower School teachers use technology in various ways, from PowerPoint to Smart boards, and keeping up with the innovations and creative uses is essential to providing the best for our students. To that task, in mid-October the technology department is hosting a “for teachers, by teachers” faculty training and sharing of ideas, projects, and lessons that span subject and grade levels. The Middle School is invited to participate for cross-campus cooperation and transition. The ultimate goal is to learn from each other, to be inspired and motivated by new or different perspectives, and to improve education at the Lower School through the increased integration of technology. The future is now, and our students benefit from that realization.

Middle School

Betsy Canaday

MS English Department Chair

For three weeks every fall, seventh grade English students find themselves doing something quite unexpected in an English classroom. They spend most of their class time observing slides of visual portraits. In a darkened room, teachers project images of these rich and complex images on the screen and ask three basic, but clearly defined questions: “What do you see? What do make of what you see? What can you understand about the artist’s choices?” Students study paintings by El Greco, Copley, Sargent, Wilson, Van Gogh, Jordaens, and others. As they answer the questions together, students create a thorough understanding of the painting on both concrete and more analytic levels. They learn that hasty observation leads to superficial, sometimes unsupportable inferences. Careful, thoughtful, energetic observation leads to interesting, imaginative insights. We ask students to be clear, thorough, and precise in their thinking. This requires that we do something countercultural; we slow down. During class we may spend up to forty

minutes examining, studying, and collectively inquiring about a single image. It's hard work, and it leads students to the satisfaction of knowing something deeply.

What students come to realize is that we are practicing literary analysis by studying visual art rather than by reading a written text. They hone their close reading skills by observing, making inferences about, and analyzing visual portraits. This approach to teaching reading began several years ago when my colleagues and I were discussing typical seventh grade obstacles to close reading. Students tend to skim, get the gist, and miss key details that would provide deeper insight into the text. Another major difficulty young readers encounter is their skepticism that key details in a text can signify more than their most concrete meaning. "The clock on the dresser doesn't tell us anything about the character. It was just there." They are incredulous that these details are anything more than accidents or inevitabilities in the piece of fiction. So, by replacing written text with a visual one, we offer students a way to practice their critical thinking in another medium. Throughout this process, the students write about what they see, and they find that sloppy, imprecise language is inadequate to describe the complexity of what they understand. They find that they must choose words carefully in order to express their ideas accurately.

The culmination of this work is our November trip to the Museum of Fine Arts. After a teacher-guided tour of European and American painting galleries, students choose a single portrait to study for the entire hour that we are in the museum. Often students will find themselves alone in a gallery, sitting on the floor (or if they are lucky, on a bench), carefully learning about this image. They take notes and sketch, often discovering that their time in the museum is too short; the more time they spend with the painting the more interesting it becomes. Their homework assignment is to review their notes and sketches, reflect on what they have come to understand about the subject, and write a story from this person's point of view that illustrates something about his/her character.

Ultimately, this work with portraits forms the intellectual touchstone for the remainder of our work together with stories, novels, and poems. The most exciting moments for me, however, are those in the classroom when observing slides of portraits a student "gets it" and realizes the power of learning comes from taking the time to explore a subject deeply.

Upper School
Awais Ahsan
US Math & Arabic Teacher

As you may know, last year marked the first time that BB&N offered a course in Arabic, making it one of only a handful of secondary schools in the United States to do so.

In light of recent developments and the strained relationship between the United States and the Middle East, the cultural aspect of the class proved to be just as important as the language itself.

One of the most valuable pieces from last year's Arabic course was a short film entitled *Reel Bad Arabs*. Based on the book by Dr. Jack Shaheen, the film reviews over 900 movies produced in Hollywood that feed off (and often add to) the everyday stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims.

This stereotyping can be found everywhere, including in films with big name actors and actresses that are viewed by people all over the world. Perhaps most responsible for distorting our outlook of people in the Middle East, however, are those films which shape our views early on in our youth. The Disney movie *Aladdin*, for instance, has a song called "Arabian Nights" that sets the tone of the movie in the opening scene:

"Oh I come from a land...where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but hey, it's home."

Furthermore, the name of the city that the narrator introduces us to is called Aghraba. In Arabic, *aghrab*, أغرب , is a word in the superlative form, meaning the *strangest*, or the *oddest*.

As we discussed in class, the consequences of such words are extremely powerful. A child who watches this movie will not come away with an appreciation for the food, customs, and hospitality Arabs are well-known for. Instead, they will think of this part of the world as one they cannot relate to, one that is backwards and hostile, full of flying carpets, belly dancers, and genies. Several students came to me and told me that "this was a truly eye-opening experience."

Because much of the Arab world is Muslim, it was inevitable that we also came across some surprises about Islam as well. A section of our textbook focuses on the family tree of the Prophet Muhammad. This prompted students to ask about the importance of Jesus in Islam. Students were surprised to learn that the name of Jesus in Arabic, *Esa*, عيسى , is mentioned in the Qur'an more than any other prophet. Additionally, in a chapter dedicated to Mary, the Qur'an gives a detailed description of the birth of baby Jesus.

So I guess the moral of the story is that in order to successfully change how we perceive people in other parts of the world (not just the Arab world), and vice versa, we must focus on the commonalities that we have rather than the differences. Every student, regardless of gender, race, or religion, desires (and is entitled to) a good education and life's basic necessities. At the end of the day, people all over the world have the same ambitions and dreams that we do.

It is my hope that as the 2007-08 school year is underway, you and you son(s) and/or daughter(s) will enjoy a great year full of many opportunities to embrace diversity and keep the quest alive to learn as much as you can about all the different cultures this world has to offer.

**All School
Geordie Mitchell**

Director of Enrollment Management

I love my job! As director of enrollment management, I spend time on all three campuses each week, sometimes on the same day. Because I interview students and families for every grade, I have to be conversant with regard to the curriculum and extra- and co-curricular programs on each campus, and I need to know how each grade and division builds on the work of the previous grade or division. I enjoy telling people that doing admission work is a license to be a professional know-it-all.

This is a challenging assignment at BB&N, but I have enjoyed every minute. Fortunately for me, because we are always looking for new and innovative ways to educate and because the curriculum is constantly evolving, and it is unlikely I will ever have to take a final exam. For example, did you know that this year we have added Spanish at the Lower School and that we are introducing foreign language to Beginners? Did you know that our Upper School history curriculum has recently been revamped after thoughtful research and discussion?

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to interact with the faculty and students on all three campuses on a regular basis, to see the students at each developmental level appropriately challenged by teachers who love what they do. Giving tours and conducting interviews allows the admission staff to witness the magic that happens on our campuses on a daily basis, and reminds us, through the words of those who wish to join our community, why BB&N is considered not only one of the best schools in Boston, but in the country.

The freshmen have returned from Bivouac, the Beginners have settled into their classroom routines, and the colleges have begun visiting campus in the hopes of attracting attention from our seniors—all sure signs that the BB&N admission process is about to hit full stride. During the coming year, about 2,500 families will request admission information and approximately 1,000 of those families will come to campus for a tour and interview. As our current parents (and some of our current students) no doubt remember, this is an intense, sometimes nerve-wracking process with the desired outcome that every family and student find the school that is the best fit.

All current members of the BB&N community—students, parents, faculty—play a vital role in this process. Research consistently shows that word of mouth is an independent school's most powerful marketing tool, and I believe that current students and parents are the best resource for interested families. Therefore, I deputize all of you as members of the admission team. Your first assignment is to recall the reasons you chose to join the BB&N community. Second, make sure you are up-to-date on what is happening at the school—read *The Link*, attend events, volunteer at Open House on October 27 or come just for a refresher course. And last, but most important, share your experience with your friends and neighbors and encourage them to give the admission office a call.

Have a great year!

Giving Update

Lower School Grandfriends Day Is Coming!

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.

HOW: 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.

Senior Parents' and Senior Class Gift Campaigns Kick Off

2008 Senior Parents' Gift co-chairs Marie and Mark Schwartz and Chris and Dick Wood launched this year's Senior Parents' Gift Campaign at the Senior Kick-Off Dinner on September 17. They introduced the committee members who will speak with other parents this fall about the class gift, and reported the results of the ballot to determine the designation of that gift. With the votes all counted, it has been decided that the 2008 class gift will support faculty compensation and professional development endowment. As Chris Wood noted in her remarks, "We all know that it is the quality of teaching that makes a school great, and the designation of our gift sends a powerful message to our faculty that we value and support their work on our children's behalf."

Senior Class Gift co-chairs Carly Schuster and Eric Schwartz also kicked off their fundraising campaign at the dinner and announced that their committee is currently in formation. Seniors approach classmates to contribute to their own class gift which supports an area of the Annual Fund of their choosing.

For more information about the Opening Minds Campaign, contact [Janet Rosen](#).

Parents' Association News

Parents' Association News, and Why You Need a Password for Knightline

You may wonder why Parents' Association portions of *The Link* are password protected. Here's a brief explanation about why. The main reason comes down to keeping private the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of parents who have volunteered to organize events for our children, host potlucks, coordinate community service projects, and the myriad other projects that involve the PA. If the PA portions of *The Link* were not password-protected, then the volunteers' personal information would be in the public domain, available to be found on a Google search of their names.

Parent volunteers give so willingly and generously of their time and energy, we don't want to penalize them by increasing the "cost" of their volunteering—by having their personal information floating around the Internet and cached for indefinite use. Although some parent volunteers may not care about this potential breach in their privacy, others do.

Ensuring volunteers' Internet privacy means a bit more effort for all parents to log in to Knightline in order to see the PA portions of *The Link*. We hope that parents will do so; most computers have a preference setting so that the username and password are entered only once, and the computer "remembers" the information on subsequent visits to the website (this feature is sometimes called "autofill").

By the way, Knightline—the password-protected portion of BB&N's website—contains valuable information that will be of use to parents throughout the year. In addition to other PA information, such as minutes of campus PA meetings, information about PIN (Parents of Independent Schools Network) events and meetings, and information about Athletics and the Circus, the School and teachers also post information on Knightline.

[CLICK HERE](#) to check out Knightline. The username and password can be found in the email you received that contained the weblink to this month's issue of *The Link*.