

Buckingham Browne & Nichols

The Link

May 2008

Spotlight Article

BB&N Teachers Take Center Stage at April 11 Celebration

“This feels like Strawberry Night for Faculty!” said one of the 200 teachers present at the Celebration of Teaching Excellence held at the Nicholas Athletic Center on April 11.

Indeed, a spirit of reunion and appreciation marked this first-of-its-kind celebration, which brought together current and former faculty, alumni/ae, parents past and present, and other friends of the School to honor the immeasurable contributions of hundreds of BB&N teachers through the years.

Throughout the evening, the festively decorated John H. Etter Gymnasium in the Nicholas Athletic Center was filled with joyful reunions, “catching up after all these years” conversations, and even a bit of dancing.

“I applaud you,” said keynote speaker, MIT President Elizabeth Hockfield, “for setting out an event that celebrates teaching, to recognize it as a signature of the BB&N education, and for making the subjects you teach come alive for the students of this remarkable school.”

The loudest applause came when Head of School Rebecca T. Upham asked all faculty members to stand and be acknowledged by the crowd numbering close to 550 people, some of whom came from as far as Seattle. The ensuing ovation lasted for nearly two minutes.

“When I think about great teachers,” said Dr. Hockfield, “I think about people who have set their lives and understand their careers as a voyage that makes them grow more curious, that makes them grow more eager to learn, and fills them with more wonder, not less. Teachers who are so inspiring that biology, or computer science, or calculus, or physics cease to be just courses that you take, and start to be the course of your life. Teachers, like the ones at some point in each of our lives, who inspire us and lift us from the confines of our own classrooms and set us on the roads to our futures.”

Two of BB&N's seven Rhodes Scholar graduates followed Dr. Hockfield to the podium and delivered their own heartwarming and inspiring takes on the qualities that make up great teaching at BB&N. Sarah Light '91 pointed to four qualities that made the teachers at BB&N stand out: finding ways to help students discover their passions; holding students to high standards; a commitment to teaching that transcends the typical school day; and giving students the room to lead.

Light peppered her remarks with specific examples of life-changing teachers and programs, such as kindergarten teacher Luisa Field, who somehow managed to remember, 22 years later, exactly how Leo Muellner held his pencil, and Project Reason and Bivouac, which helped transform a young woman from a decidedly "unenvironmental" family into a U.S. Attorney practicing environmental law.

John Simon '80 spoke of the ability of BB&N teachers to create "worlds of difference" for their students. He cited three in particular: by introducing students to new worlds of learning, by focusing on the individual world of each child, and by modeling and providing access to a world of service which our children will increasingly inhabit, influence, and eventually lead.

"For me," said Simon about the first world of difference, "in Mr. Sargent's math class, in Mr. Leith's English class, and in Mr. Quain's chemistry class, I experienced teachers who made their subjects come alive – because *they* were alive with their subjects. Their enthusiasm for their worlds of learning was contagious."

During the program, a nostalgic video was shown to the audience, quilting together photos of scores of BB&N faculty members with audio reflections on the art of teaching as it has been practiced for so many years at Buckingham Browne & Nichols. Each time a new face came into view on the screen, applause and whoops arose from devotees in the crowd.

To see the faculty tribute video, [CLICK HERE](#).

To see a brief video of event highlights, [CLICK HERE](#).

To view more photos from the celebration, [CLICK HERE](#).

Inside The Classroom: Mastering the Angles with Chip Rollinson

Asymptotes, absolute values, quadratics and common ratios. They're all in a day's work for the students in Chip Rollinson's Honors Geometry class.

"My question for you is: why? Why are we doing this?" Rollinson asks at the start of a lesson – a question his students, from the looks on their faces, are still not accustomed to hearing in math class. "One thing you're going to be doing tonight is figuring out a problem where it says E times as big... Let's figure out why some of this is working, and why it's doing what it's doing."

Figuring out the why is crucial to both teaching and understanding math, Rollinson says. At least, it's always been that way for him.

"I'm not going to be a teacher that just tells them how to do a problem," he says. "What I want is for the students to understand why it's done, not just how it's done. That's my big thing. It's very easy to do rote learning—to just do these steps to get to the answer. I think I'm doing them an injustice if I teach problem solving that way."

Born and raised in a rural area of New Jersey, Rollinson grew up with a passion for math and enjoyed his summers working with kids as a camp counselor in his hometown. After graduating from Cornell, he decided to start teaching while figuring out his "real" career path.

"I liked school, I liked being in school, so one thing that came across my mind was teaching," he says. "I thought it was something that I'd do for a couple years."

His first job was at a private middle school in New Jersey. But after four years, he was lured to Wall Street by the dot-com boom of the mid-90s.

"I was watching my friends working in finance for dot-coms, and they were all enjoying the financial booms happening around that time," he remembers.

After six months of selling bonds on Wall Street, though, Rollinson realized how much he missed the classroom. He found a new teaching job at Beaver Country Day, then returned to graduate school at Harvard University for a Master's in Education. He arrived at BB&N in 2005, where he now teaches "a little bit of everything" in the math department, including Honors Algebra II, Pre-calculus, and Honors Geometry.

“The kids are strong,” he says. “It’s always a balance for me to give them a good challenge but also give them the support they need. I want to push them hard but not so hard that they don’t appreciate what they’re learning. It’s a fine line.”

One of the ways Rollinson balances his lessons is through group tests and quizzes. First introduced into the curriculum by math teacher Mark Fidler, group testing allows students to solve high level problems by working together in a cohesive group.

“When you give students group quizzes that are challenging and usually way beyond what you would give a (single) student, it pushes them to another level and they end up understanding much more complex work,” Rollinson says. “It challenges them to learn from each other and really push each other and question each other, and those are things that are really important. When you get into real life a lot of things are done in groups and working well together is paramount.”

Indeed, Rollinson knows that perpendicular bisectors and p-values probably won’t mean much to his students after they graduate. But if they can remember to ask why when faced with a complex challenge, he’ll have done his job.

“What I want is for them is to leave my class as good problem solvers, confident in their abilities, and to be good thinkers,” he says. “I want them to be ready to come across a problem they might not have seen before and figure out ways of attacking it. That will help them to figure it out.”

Family Science Saturday Connects Campuses

BB&N’s oldest students had a chance to flex their science muscles and get to know their younger counterparts during a recent Family Science Saturday held at the Upper School.

“The Family Science Saturday was a great experience because it was very rewarding to introduce kids to applied sciences and get them thinking about how the world works,” said Jessica Brodsky ’10, one of the Upper School volunteers.

Put into groups of four, Lower School students joined their older peers for two simple experiments—creating a hand game with an electrical circuit where the object is to pass an eyelet along a bare wire without touching the edges; and another to demonstrate buoyancy with balloon “divers” in a bottle filled with water.

“Both of these concepts are not easy for young kids to understand but, by the end, the kids were zealously explaining them to their parents,” Brodsky said. “My group was all second grade boys and they were the most mature second graders I have ever met.

They were eager to build the projects, asked thoughtful questions, and carefully followed each instruction. They helped each other in a friendly manner and were truly excited when their experiments worked. At the end, one of the boys informed me that he planned on sharing his experiment with his friends and teaching them all about it.”

Organizers and science teachers Caitlin Drechsler and Leah Cataldo agreed the event allowed Upper School students to set a positive example for Lower School students and show them how much fun science can be.

“The LS students were attentive and seemed to be having fun as the Upper School students were walking them through their science activities and the Upper School students really enjoyed working with the younger students,” said Cataldo, who also led several Lower School families who had not seen the construction at the Upper School on a tour of the new facilities.

The Upper School volunteers were also excited to give the kids a preview of what’s in store for their BB&N future.

“These type of events are great ways to get younger kids excited about science and hopefully that enthusiasm will carry over to their Upper School years,” said Emily Daggett ’09. “In addition to all that the children learned, it was great for the Upper Schoolers to learn some skills important in working with and teaching young kids. I look forward to participating in another one of these Science Saturdays in the future.”

Research Team Presents Achievement Study Findings

Findings from the yearlong Achievement Study at BB&N have been presented to faculty and administrators in recent months. The study, funded by E.E. Ford Foundation, was conducted during the 2006-07 school year. It was led by Dr. Lisa Gonsalves of UMass Boston and coordinated by Ross Clark, Upper School faculty member.

“This study,” reads the report’s executive summary, “resulted in a richly textured portrait of achievement at BB&N.” The portrait emerged from a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data that included interviews of 39 teachers and administrators, 26 parents,

and surveys completed by 79 faculty members and 527 students from grades seven through twelve.

These types of studies have historically been conducted in public schools or religious private schools. There is virtually no precedent for a similar study at a nonsectarian private school, which places BB&N in a potentially pioneering role when it comes to strategies and approaches for shrinking the achievement gaps that exist at BB&N in particular, and independent schools in general.

“This is an extremely important topic, and not just at BB&N,” said Head of School Rebecca T. Upham during a recent presentation to faculty. “It is a foremost concern for us as educators that every one of our students is being well served by the School. Although it can be a little unnerving for all of us to undertake a study such as this, one of the great things about BB&N is the ability and the resolve to look closely at things that might not always be comfortable.”

At this time, we share with you below some of the key findings and recommendations from the report. Please be aware this is a mere snapshot of a much larger and more textured report. *(For some selected excerpts, [CLICK HERE](#). More will be available at a later date, as will forum(s) for in-depth discussion.)*

--The BB&N student body scores higher than their national and independent school peers on all national standardized measures of achievement.

--Black and Latino students at BB&N score higher on the SAT than white students in the general population. Within BB&N, average SAT scores for black and Latino students are lower than average SAT scores for white and Asian students. This is consistent with national trends.

--The average GPA of black students in the 2004-2007 graduating classes was 2.72. The average GPA for the remainder of students was 3.27.

--Course-taking patterns at the Upper School reveal themselves to be significantly different for black and Latino students as compared to white and Asian students. In all four class years, and especially the last two, white and Asian students take significantly more (60% more by senior year) language courses, electives, and independent studies than black and Latino students. This pattern is caused by a higher percentage of black and Latino students being placed in lower level math & science courses upon entering the

Upper School. And because grades in elective courses are higher for all ethnic groups, these course-taking patterns have an impact on GPA performance.

--BB&N students in grades 5-8 taking the standardized ERB test score just below or above the 90th percentile in all areas when compared to students nationally. Within BB&N, Latino students perform as well on the ERB as white students; black students do not perform as well on the ERB as students of other races/ethnicities.

--At the Lower School, all students in grades 2-6 score in at least the 77th percentile nationally in each area of the Gates MacGinitie Reading Exam.

--The average GPA for black and Latino graduates who entered BB&N at the early Lower School grades (B-1) is higher than the average GPA for black and Latino graduates who entered at later grades.

--The majority of BB&N Upper School students report spending between 16-25 hours per week on homework. For white students, the amount of time they spend on homework tends to correlate to higher GPAs. For black and Asian students, time spent on homework tends to have no impact on GPAs. For Latino students, completing more hours of homework actually has an adverse impact on GPAs, unless they spend more than 25 hours a week.

--More than 60% of Upper School students spend more than 10 hours a day at school; long commute times are a fact of many students' daily lives: 47% of black students and 30% of white students spend more than 30 minutes commuting each way. This factor likely has an impact on academic achievement.

--Survey data shows that black and Latino students are less likely to ask teachers for help than white or Asian students; the data also shows that the level of comfort in asking for help correlates to higher GPAs.

--Of all the racial and ethnic groups at BB&N, Asian students report the most difficulty "fitting in" and are the least satisfied with their relationships with teachers; yet they experience the highest academic achievement.

Recommendations offered by Dr. Gonsalves and the research team include:

--Revise the way students are placed into math and science classes in 9th grade.

--Create bridge and summer programs for students who enter BB&N with crucial gaps in their academic knowledge or students who are not progressing academically as quickly as the School might expect.

--Provide professional development for faculty based on the “efficacy” model, which structures teaching, learning, and assessment around the idea that learning is effort-based, not talent driven; therefore all students can be taught the tools of success.

--Align the curriculum across grade and campus levels.

--Recruit more teachers of color.

--Increase recruitment of black and Latino students at Middle School level.

--Enhance communication between parents, teachers, and administrators; increase parents’ direct access to teachers.

Now, BB&N enters the most exciting and rewarding part of the study as it convenes a “think tank” of faculty and administrators who will be charged over the coming months with reviewing the report and its recommendations, and developing a program of action to address the issues raised in the study.

As Dr. Gonsalves writes in her report, “There is every reason to expect increased success in leveling achievement at BB&N. As was said at a recent meeting, ‘If anyone can do this, BB&N can.’”

Fifth Grade Fun with Annual State Fair

Once a year the Lower School gymnasium sheds its utilitarian clothing and dons a coat bespeckled with Americana for the annual Fifth Grade State Fair. The plain walls and open space are filled by colorful, informative display booths of the 50 states, and the faded basketball court yields to the excited footsteps of lower school students and parents as they learn about their country from the informed fifth grade students manning the displays.

As a culmination of their colonial studies curriculum, fifth grade students chose a U.S. state or territory and create informative and interactive projects to show off their

knowledge. Each display includes a fun interactive game relating to the state, and in most cases, prizes indigenous to the state are handed out. Whether digging for plastic crabs in a sand box while learning about Maryland, or tossing rings onto a Mardi Gras mannequin for plastic beads ala Louisiana, the marriage of fun and learning makes for a great event.

“It has become increasingly easier to motivate the kids to make wonderful displays and creative games, since they see what others have done over the years before they ever have to do it themselves,” says fifth grade teacher Jack Denny-Brown. “The kids really put a lot of work into this, and that pride comes through in the final product.”

The State Fair tradition was begun in 1989 by former fifth grade teacher Lynda Dugas, P’17, as a take off on the World’s Fair. Denny-Brown took the reins later and created the current beloved incarnation.

“When Lynda switched to Grade Four, I picked up the idea and changed it to a State Fair, because I felt that would be more in line with our colonial studies curriculum,” said Denny-Brown. “In the years that followed, we added the interactive games.”

The games are a big part of the Fair’s success, but they were not always the focus.

“Originally the visiting classes would walk about and talk to the presenters about their state, but we felt there needed to be some game component, so we came up with the idea of state games—and the food followed closely behind,” explains Denny-Brown.

This year featured the usual well thought out displays and offered fun and facts to the many visitors. Some of the highlights included:

Austin Clapp studied Puerto Rico and learned that it is a territory, not a state, having twice voted down a chance for statehood (most recently in 1998).

Amy Roberts learned about Nevada—“my favorite part was reading about all of the different landscapes within the state, including the lake created by the Hoover Dam,” said Roberts. “It’s very varied.”

During her study of Georgia, Chloe Tiffany learned about ‘The Varsity’, the largest fast-food restaurant in the country. “It serves over 2 miles worth of hot dogs every day!” exclaimed Tiffany.

Amanda Lifford took on New York, home to many landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building. “It’s a special state for me because my parents met there,” said Lifford.

Alaska piqued the interest Sebastien Ridore who learned that it holds the tallest mountain in the country, Mount McKinley.

William Marshall researched North Carolina, home to Salem, the first English colony in America. “It was also the home to the Wright brothers, the fathers of modern flight and the airplane,” said Marshall.

Istvan Chung now knows that Virginia is home to the Big Eared Bat, and holds the 12th largest population in the country.

Kentucky holds the heart of Amanda Madigan who informed visitors that it is the home of the Kentucky Derby—“and my grandparents!”

Sophia Applbaum wanted to choose a state with a rich cultural background and studied Alabama, the home to the civil rights movement. “Rosa Parks was from Alabama,” said Applbaum.

Jonathan Brudnick studied Texas—“the oil capital of the country.” Brudnick set up an inventive game where visitors had to drill for oil with a toy helicopter.

For a photo gallery of the State Fair, [CLICK HERE](#).

Keeping You Up to Date

BB&N Celebrates the Arts

Students, faculty, and parents gathered in Renaissance Hall the last weekend of April to celebrate the arts at BB&N. With the wide, light-filled hallways transformed into art galleries of student work (much of which was inspired by pieces at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts), and with music from student performances floating out of the new rehearsal spaces, the sunny afternoon became an exhilarating experience of sight and sound.

The day focused not only on recognizing the arts at BB&N, but on exploring art through interactive means, and many students left with masterpieces of their own

making when the celebration ended.

This year marked the 15th anniversary of the School's collaboration with the MFA; due to that institution's current renovations, however, the annual celebratory event was tweaked and moved on-campus this year. As the many happy guests would attest, the result was an artistic success of Michelangelo-ic proportions. Through the hard work of many faculty members, particularly Lower School Arts Chair Sharen Bowden, the event was befitting of the profound arts programs at BB&N. [CLICK HERE](#) for a photo gallery of the day.

Behind the Mask Comes to Lower School

Lower Schoolers participated in a unique educational performing arts event with Behind the Mask, a theater company that "scours the modern & folk traditions of the world looking for tales that can be turned into lavish productions of storytelling, mask, song, dance, and puppetry," according to Eric Bornstein, founder and artistic director of the company. Students were mesmerized by their latest production, *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*, a story about a beautiful and mysterious woman with magical powers who is exiled from her mountain village. The performance, which was done in Spanish and English, was brought to BB&N by the Young Audiences of Massachusetts and was made possible by the Maureen Baker Fund.

Maeder-York Thrives in Robotics Challenge

Paxton Maeder-York '10 was at the center of a thrilling robotics clash in late March; the sophomore was a member of a team of high schoolers that battled to the very last heat of the championship round of the regional FIRST Robotics Competition, before falling just short. The competition was staged in front of a raucous crowd of 4,500 people at Boston University's Agganis Arena. FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is an organization started by legendary engineer and inventor Dean Kamen, which challenges young men and women to work in teams to build robots that compete in a set of obstacles and trials designed by engineering professionals. In addition to intense competition, the event included a speech by Mayor Thomas Menino and an inspiring presentation by Colin Angle, CEO of industry leader iRobot.

Kotter Wins Scholastic Award

Caroline Kotter '08 was recently honored in the *Boston Globe* Scholastic Art awards contest, winning the prestigious Gold Key award and the chance to compete nationally for her digital photograph, "Where Have All the Young Men Gone?" Several other Upper School students were also given Scholastic Art awards including Ariel Levin '09 who won a Silver Key for a digital photo of her synagogue in Beacon Hill. Isis Kayiga '08, Andrew Billingsley '08, and Jake Kahane '09 also received Honorable Mention in the competition, which boasted 75,000 participants in its Arts and Writing section and is currently in its 85th year as a national program.

Third Issue of *Caption* Arriving Soon

The eagerly anticipated third issue of *Caption* is in production and will arrive this month. The brainchild of senior David Seliger, *Caption* came to life last year as a student publication that combined elements of both graphic novels and comic books. "I wanted a publication that was a collaborative effort like Vanguard but had art and various interesting/amusing things in it," says Seliger.

He certainly succeeded on the "collaborative" front—he and co-editor Jess Brodsky '10 worked on production with assistance from art teacher John Norton, and a total of 36 individuals contributed content for the upcoming issue, which includes both a magazine and an attached CD. Seliger also succeeded on the "interesting & amusing" front: this year's issue includes a brief personal history of Armen Dedekian's life in the USSR, two different "flip books", Doug Neuman's Thanksgiving speech illustrated by six students, and "an apparently superb cake recipe from John Norton."

Those interested in obtaining a copy should [CLICK HERE](#) to contact co-editor David Seliger.

57th Annual BB&N Circus: Saturday, May 3

Join all your friends at the Lower School Campus on May 3rd—10AM to 3PM—for an exhilarating blast of games, rides, food, and fun at the BB&N Circus. All proceeds from the non-stop fun benefit the School's financial aid program.

Perennial favorites back this year include the moon bounce, the obstacle course, the dunk tank, lots of games of skill and chance, several crafts tables, and face painting. As always, the Market Bazaar will offer books, sports equipment, and toys. Donated items are needed and welcome, or just come to browse and find a great bargain.

The Silent Auction is a great opportunity to bid on unique vacations, catered parties, gourmet items, sports tickets, and more. Hope to see you there!

Faxon '07 Performs at BB&N with Yale Singing Group

Hilary Faxon '07 returned to BB&N's Lower and Upper School campuses to perform with her Yale University a capella group, The New Blue. Founded when Yale first admitted women in 1969, New Blue has maintained its reputation as one of the finest collegiate singing groups in the nation, receiving the Contemporary A Cappella Society's award for Best Female Collegiate Album. Highlights included a strong rendition of Tracey Chapman's *Fast Car* and James Taylor's *Fire and Rain*.

Old and Young Combine in Art Sharing

In a scene apropos to *Make Way for Ducklings*, a line of Beginners paraded through the Upper School Commons this March, drawing "ohhs" and "ahhs" from smitten older students. The explanation behind this intrepid foray into the Upper School? An art sharing exercise between the Lower and Upper School campuses.

"It's so neat for the Beginners to get a sense of how art is used by older students and to get the two different campuses involved with one another," said Beginner art teacher Maria Lindberg who helped organize the visit. "And the older kids love seeing the Beginners!"

After their exciting walk through the Upper School campus, the Beginner students talked to Drawing Teacher Miklos Pogany before sitting in on a studio art class of John Norton's. Sitting cross-legged on the art studio floor, the older students relished the chance to look at their work through younger eyes as Norton facilitated a discussion and some interactive art projects. As the visit drew to a close, it was difficult to tell who was having more fun—the Upper School students, the Beginners, or Norton and Lindberg themselves!

Middle School Springs into Reading

Books, books, and more books were the theme at the Middle School this month as the student community wrapped up a month-long "Spring into Reading" read-a-thon, in which dozens of students logged more than 700 hours of reading time to raise \$1,300 to help promote literacy training and basic education for Guatemalan children

through the Safe Passage program. The read-a-thon was capped by an April 25 visit from Marcella Pixley, author of the popular young adult novel, *Freak*. Pixley spoke to Middle Schoolers at a special assembly and stayed to sign books and chat with her fans at a reception which celebrated the Middle School's newly renovated library. The facility has met with great acclaim—an upcoming book by Kim Bolan, *More Teen Spaces*, will include reference to it as an exemplary teen library.

Sudanese Ex-Slave Speaks at Middle School

Middle School students gained insight into the harsh reality of slavery in Africa when ex-slave Francis Buk spoke at a recent assembly. Born in a small village in southern Sudan, Buk was only seven years old when he was forced into slavery after being abducted from the market near his village where he was selling eggs and peanuts for his mother.

“I had to put myself in God’s hands,” he explains. “Everything else was taken away from me except my faith.” His captors forced Buk to be a goat herder. He lived and slept with the animals and was fed only one meal per day for ten years.

In 1996, at the age of 17, Buk escaped and reported his story to the police. Instead of helping, though, the officers forced him to work and sleep in the kitchen. Buk ran away after being locked inside the station for two months. Three years after his escape from slavery, Buk flew to North Dakota to start his new life as a UN refugee and speaker for the American Anti-Slavery Group.

In 2000, he spoke about Sudan to senators and congressmen in Washington. Since then, Buk has given speeches alongside Coretta Scott King and was the first ex-slave to testify before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He was also present at the signing of the Sudan Peace Act with President George W. Bush.

Howard Gardner Speaks to Faculty and Parents

Last month BB&N was privileged to welcome famed sociologist Dr. Howard Gardner, P'04, to the School for two talks about education. Gardner, the author of more than 20 books and a MacArthur Grant winner, spoke about his most recent book, *Five Minds for the Future*, before fielding questions and extrapolating his research in relation to BB&N.

Most famous for his ground-breaking theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner spoke to an all-school faculty audience in the afternoon and to a parent audience that same night. Through a subdued yet engaging and humorous style, Gardner expounded on many topics of interest such as the effects of globalization on education and the crumbling state of ethics in the younger generation.

“With the speed at which change is occurring, education has to be a life-long pursuit now,” said Gardner. “No one can rest on their laurels just because they completed school or college.” Gardner also stressed the importance of ethics: “I would keep in mind the words of (Ralph Waldo) Emerson, who said, ‘character is more important than intellect.’”

Middle School Chorus Attends Music Festival

Middle School Chorus members and director Kathi Gellar had the privilege of attending a Chorus Festival held at the Rivers School in Weston. “It was a totally cool event since we got a ton of time with the clinician, Nick Page. He is an extremely well known clinician, (worldwide, in fact!), energetic, knowledgeable, and just amazing!” Gellar says. “The kids were singing, moving, and conducting. We sang some Zulu songs, learned conducting skills, and then sang two songs from our current repertoire. Rivers sang two songs as well. Nick coached each group, offering suggestions and working with both the students and the adults.”

Upper School Students Reach Out Through Community Service

Many Upper School students and parents recently have been dedicating their time on weekends and after school to give back to neighboring communities through hands-on service projects.

Organized by the US parent committee, a group of students recently worked with the Special Olympics and the Greater Boston Food Bank. Twenty-one students and parents went to two different Special Olympic events—bowling in Shrewsbury and basketball in Worcester. This past Saturday, a group of US students and parents traveled to the Greater Boston Food Bank, the largest hunger-relief organization in New England and one of the largest food banks in the country.

“We had about 20 volunteers who sorted and packed enough food for 2,268 meals,” said Robin Gilbert, one of the many parents who helped organize the family community service event.

Also of note is a group of US students recently awarded a PIN (Parents Independent School Network) Community Service Grant for their efforts at the Tobin School in Cambridge, where they worked with younger students on after-school science projects.

“This is a wonderful award and you should all be very proud,” said parent Amy Sassoon. “You are the first BB&N students who have ever received the award from PIN. Good job and thank you for making a difference in the lives of Tobin School children.”

[CLICK HERE](#) to see the new Upper School Community Service website pages, full of helpful resources.

Dobson's Work on Exhibit

Upper School Photography Teacher and Arts Chair Parrish Dobson, P'07, recently opened a photography show at the Domaine Gallery in Portland, Maine. The exhibit features many of Dobson's works from more than 20 years of photography along the Maine coast, a favorite subject of hers. The exhibit features both color and black-and-white photos, and runs through the summer. For more information, please [CLICK HERE](#).

Senior Project Places Erdos in Company of Champions

Elleree Erdos '08 enjoyed an exciting and high-visibility spring project last month as she volunteered at the John Hancock Elite Athlete Village leading up to the 112th Boston Marathon. Her duties included writing a blog for the WBZ Channel 4 website, where she recorded her experiences before, during, and after the race. As she writes in the blog, “Few high school seniors can say they've had the opportunity to interview world-class athletes at a press conference, carry an eternal flame from the city where the marathon originated, or eat dinner with now four-time Boston Marathon winner Robert Cheruiyot!” [CLICK HERE](#) to read Erdos' blog.

Campus Voices

Lower School
Anna Tonry
Grade 3 Teacher

Spring is an exciting time of year for everyone. The trees are more colorful, the weather feels warmer, and the students have grown wiser. (We hope!) It is the time of year that we test our third graders on their math and social skills through creative student-run business projects. This fun and successful activity came together thanks to an idea that third grade teacher Sheika Luc brought with her from her teaching years in New York City. Students come up with their own businesses and gain knowledge about trading, saving, competition, maintaining a budget, personal relationships, and of course making change!

Why do eight and nine year olds need to be thrown into the grown-up world of economics? It's a great question. Sheika and I have put together a project where students are not only asked to practice their money skills, but also are challenged to make difficult decisions and to take risks. The students quickly understand the basics of the business: "I have an idea, I need to buy supplies, I need to rent space, I need to make and sell my product, and I need to make enough money to be able to keep my business open."

What the students may not anticipate are the difficulties along the way: "What do I do when the cost of supplies is more than I can afford?", "How do I help my business partner understand my idea?", "Why doesn't anyone want to buy my product?", "What do I do when my idea isn't working out as I had planned?" The project generates excellent discussions and we enjoy guiding students by reminding them of events throughout the year where we have problem-solved together to come to solutions. The students are extremely self-motivated and feel a great sense of pride and ownership throughout the unit.

This year, the students will be busy planning and producing their goods during the first two weeks of May. They will be open for business during the last two weeks of school during designated times. We invite our second grade buddies to shop first, and then our fourth grade neighbors in the New Wing will swing by later. Finally, we invite faculty to shop at any of our open business times during the two weeks.

Last year, businesses included photography, puppets, painted pencils and pottery, books, comics, pillows, jewelry, door hangers, and little creatures made of erasers and pom-poms. This year we hope to expand the imagination to include offering services or selling ideas such as, "I can teach you how to...." We have also made changes in the project to

make a stronger connection to the real world by assigning students a range of careers and salaries. We hope by doing so that we will engage in rich discussion about decisions and challenges that people face every day. A future third grade parent also suggested adding not-for-profit businesses into the mix as well. We love new ideas and we enjoy taking the time to make the project stronger every year.

Stop by the New Wing to see our entrepreneurs in action!

Middle School
Rachel Jamison
English Teacher

Because I grew up in academia during the burgeoning of the Internet, technology has always been at the forefront of my teaching as well as in my life. Now that I am a thirtysomething, there is a significant age difference between me and my students, but I would like to think that I can still find a way to reach them in meaningful and reflective ways without sacrificing my integrity or that of my discipline.

In my work as a middle school English teacher, I have had the opportunity and support to research and experiment with methods of incorporating the technology that surrounds and sometimes consumes our students. In doing so, I have examined my own discipline through a technology lens, to revitalize our ideals and to generate a solution to the question lingering over pedagogy these days—how do we, as educators, address, acknowledge and embrace the ever-evolving idea of “literacy.” Literacy as we used to know it is changing, and our idea of it needs to be flexible and relevant; it is a fine balance for educators to negotiate. After a few years of work researching, testing and drafting, I have written a unit that effectively addresses the “literacy” discussion, as this project seamlessly incorporates an exciting technology project into our seventh grade curriculum.

In this unit, students are asked to re-envision the idea of “story” and the construction of meaning. The seventh grade curriculum revolves around the idea of “Portraits” in all senses; students study and deconstruct portraits of different media throughout the year to learn and master skills of observation, inference and analysis. The culmination of this exploration is “The Radio Essay,” a project that marries the traditional print story composition and workshop method with the versatility and creativity of a self-produced multimedia production.

As the culmination of the English curriculum this spring, “The Radio Essay” combines the autobiographical writing concepts of the Family Portrait Sketchbook and the creative memoir narratives of *The House on Mango Street*. To bridge the gap between those units, students will be exploring the genre of creative non-fiction through readings, recorded examples, and class discussions. Once students distinguish the difference between stories to be read and stories to be listened to, students will rewrite a Sketchbook piece or compose a totally new narrative to record as a three-to-five minute Radio Essay.

Once the piece is written, students rehearse and record their own piece. After they record, students will use GarageBand to edit their recording, to mix the story with sound effects and/or music, and then produce their digital narrative into an MP3 file or a Podcast. Students will be given class CDs, and later this spring we will publish the best three seventh-grade essays on the BB&N website.

Upper School
Willa Chamberlain
Russian Teacher

BB&N Russian students took home Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals at this year’s 32nd New England Russian Spoken Olympiada, held at BB&N on April 27. Russian Four students Grace Taylor ’08 and Brian Stearns ’08 were among the five winners in the Non-Heritage Speaker division, and Rachel Sipser ’10 cleaned up in first place in the Heritage Speaker division. Both Taylor, finishing in third place, and Sipser won a three-week educational trip to Vladimir, located in Russia’s “Golden Ring” of historical towns and cities.

Each year during the month of April, BB&N Russian students have been preparing for this big event, in which they stand before a jury of Russians, who judge them on their conversational skills, geographical knowledge, and poetry recitation abilities. This past Sunday, students of Russian from BB&N and a number of other New England schools congregated in the Upper School Commons, where they proceeded through a rotation of judges, who were happy with what they saw. “It is just wonderful that these students want to spend their free time practicing Russian,” stated one of the judges.

Level One, Two, and Three students pass through the first category, conversing about themselves and their lives in school and at home. For the second category, students recite or sing poetry. Second-year student Jamie Axelrod ’09 sang the poem *The Fir Tree*, and reported that his judge “broke into song and she sang right along with me!”

The third category concerns geography. Students spend hours at home designing a map of Russia, and then, before the jury, they identify the former Soviet Republics and their capitals, Russian rivers, mountain ranges, external and internal seas, biomes, and major cities. “The hardest part is learning the five ‘Stans’ like ‘Kyrgyzstan’ and its capital, ‘Bishkek,’” states Russian One student, Wilson Helman ’11. These maps enter the Map Contest, in which BB&N students usually dominate the competition. First-place Map winner Matthew Castaldo ’11 lit up his map with Christmas tree lights, which designated the cities.

Four-year Olympiada veteran Amanda George ’08 comments: “The Olympiada has helped greatly with conversational Russian, and it has been a memorable part of my Russian experience at BB&N.”

The Olympiada is sponsored by American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR).

All School
Woodie Haskins
Assistant Head of School, External Affairs

What a delight it was to see so many in our community at our recent event to celebrate the tradition of teaching excellence at BB&N. When we gather at such events, there is a genuine level of excitement at the opportunity to visit with friends across our three campuses and to appreciate what a special school community we have here. The mere fact that so many parents, former parents, and alumni/ae gathered to honor both current and past faculty is an indication of the admiration these constituents share for the BB&N faculty. For those who were not able to attend, you might want to [CLICK HERE](#) to view the short video showing highlights from the celebration. What an extraordinary night it was for BB&N!

As John Simon ’80, one of our Rhode scholar speakers stated, “Great teachers at BB&N provide much more than instruction or lesson plans or curricula...they offer students much more. They create and provide our children with ‘worlds of difference.’” Indeed, they do. For generations of alumni/ae and parents, the BB&N experience has been about the life-changing connections with superbly talented teachers.

As we look to the future, attracting and retaining the quality of faculty who have earned the school its reputation for academic excellence will require sustained, systematic efforts as well as a significant commitment of financial resources. We have spent the better part

of this school year communicating with all our constituents about the effects of the looming national teacher shortage across the country. BB&N will see the same sobering statistics and will face the pressure to identify and hire new faculty who are superbly trained, endlessly curious, in love with their subject, and devoted to the age group they teach. Accordingly, we are focusing on a program that will enable us to be financially competitive with other area schools, public and private, in the recruitment process.

We have made steady progress in recent years thanks to the generosity of those in the BB&N family through the Annual Fund and the Opening Minds Campaign. However, our modest endowment and dependence on tuition have prevented us from approaching the levels of compensation we would like to offer. The astronomical cost of housing in and around Cambridge only exacerbates the challenge. Our current Faculty Challenge Initiative seeks to raise \$12 million in endowed funds to provide more competitive compensation levels, to increase the budget and opportunities for faculty professional development, and to provide a flexible range of benefits to improve the quality of life for faculty members at various stages of life. Our faculty deserves these enhancements in their overall compensation program. A successful Challenge Initiative will greatly assist us achieving these goals.

Thanks to all who have already made a generous commitment to this important endeavor (there is need for more) and for your willingness to help sustain the reputation for academic excellence for which BB&N is known.

Giving Update

THE ANNUAL FUND NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT TO REACH ITS GOAL

GOAL : \$2,350,000

77% TO DATE

The Annual Fund will close on June 30, 2008. Annual Fund giving is critical to BB&N as it fills the GAP between tuition and the actual cost of a BB&N education. These are the funds which support 8% of the school's operating budget and ensure the excellence that has come to define a BB&N education. We are pleased to report that we have raised **77% of this year's \$2,350,000 goal**, and wish to thank the community for its support and participation thus far.

You have doubtless received a phone call, letter, or email from an enthusiastic member of our Annual Fund Committee or Phonathon caller. We have been overwhelmed by the continued generous support of BB&N families, and we particularly want to thank our team for their work this year. [Click here to see the list of volunteers.](#)

Our job is nearly complete, and we are still hard at work as we strive to achieve **100% Participation in all grades for the Annual Fund.**

Parent Participation	Grade
67%	B
76%	K
90%	1st
69%	2nd
56%	3rd
76%	4th
79%	5th
80%	6th
87%	7th
67%	8th
55%	9th
74%	10th
80%	11th

Your gift to the Annual Fund is essential to the well being of the school. Please join the members of the BB&N community who are helping to make our numbers grow each day. **EVERY GIFT COUNTS.** [CLICK HERE](#) to make your gift online; send a check to BB&N, Office of External Affairs, 80 Gerry's Landing Road, Cambridge, MA 02138-5512; or contact Jo-Ann Lovejoy at jo-ann_lovejoy@bbns.org or 617-800-2723. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and valued participation.

Opening Minds Campaign Surges Past \$50 Million

In a surprise announcement at the end of the April 11 Celebration of Teaching Excellence program, BB&N Board of Trustees Chair Laura Hodges Taylor '74 shared the exciting news that thanks to two extraordinary commitments received by the School earlier that week, the Opening Minds Campaign has now surpassed the \$50 million mark in capital and annual gifts and pledges.

The loud applause that greeted this news is symbolic of the deep appreciation which can be felt throughout the BB&N community, as the impact of this generosity can be seen every day on all three campuses: a new Upper School Building for arts, academics, and gathering spaces; a stronger endowment for faculty, financial aid, and academic

programs; and continued growth of the Annual Fund which provides critical support for all areas of the operating budget.

With an overall goal of \$62 million, there are still many opportunities for those who have not yet participated in the Opening Minds Campaign to make a difference in BB&N's financial strength, both current and future. For more information on how you can help, contact Janet Rosen at janet_rosen@bbns.org or 617-800-2729.