

## BB&N: The Link Newsletter November 2009

### *Feature Stories*

#### ***Spotlight Article: BB&N Announces Faculty Chair Recipients***

BB&N is proud to announce the inaugural recipients of the School's first-ever endowed teaching chairs and instructorship. The faculty recipients of these three endowed positions were introduced on Tuesday, October 6, at a special celebratory reception for The 1974 Leadership Society.

The recipients are:

- Rob Leith is the recipient of The Founding Paideia Master Teacher Chair;
- Margaret Hardy is the recipient of the Jeanette Markham Master Teacher Chair;
- Caitlin Drechsler is the recipient of the Marian W. Vaillant Future Leader Instructorship.

**1) The Founding Paideia Master Teacher Chair** takes its name from the ancient Greek noun *paideia* meaning “education” or “training,” and comes from the verb *paideuo* which means “to teach.” *Paideia* was the process of educating humans into their true form, the real and genuine human nature. Since self-government was important to the Greeks, *paideia*, combined with *ethos* (habits), made a man good and made him capable as a citizen or a king. This education was not about learning a trade or an art but was about training for liberty (freedom) and nobility (the beautiful). *Paideia* connotes the cultural heritage that is continued through the generations.

As noted in BB&N's Mission Statement, “The connections between our faculty and students are at the heart of our School.” In establishing the Founding Paideia Master Teacher Chair, the donors have recognized the importance of the life of the mind, and the essential role that BB&N faculty have played in the life of the School since its founding by training young minds for the future.

**Rob Leith** is the first recipient of The Founding Paideia Master Teacher Chair. The term “Renaissance Man” somehow manages to under-represent the talents of this multitalented teacher. He is an acknowledged expert on American artist Henry Roderick Newman, about whom he has written and lectured. His most recent publication, for the Clark Point Gallery, is *Harold B. Warren and Mount Desert Island*. It says something about Rob's interests and his teaching that he pulled in former student and current senior Karen Su to do the layout and design. Since his arrival at Gerry's Landing in 1979, Rob has been one of the brightest lights in BB&N's teaching firmament. The roles played by Rob these past 30 years have been legion: English teacher, instructor of the History of Art course—widely regarded as a crown jewel in BB&N's curriculum, Vanguard advisor, crew coach, author and art history expert, bassoonist extraordinaire, and stalwart performer in the legendary *12 Days of Christmas* recital staged each year by Upper School faculty. Gentle in demeanor but demanding in his expectations for students, he fosters throughout his

round table in Room 370 a chemistry in which the whole invariably ends up being greater than the sum of its parts. Rob was recently described by an alumnus as “someone who gave his students a real sense of camaraderie and mission; who never talked down to us, but engaged us as equals, all of which was very bracing and exciting.” Rob’s sons also have a BB&N connection: Billy was a BB&N student from Beginners through Grade 9 and Tom is a member of the Class of 2011.

“This is the greatest honor I have ever received, and the greatest honor I could ever imagine receiving,” said Rob Leith at the October 6 reception. In his remarks, he described the journey that his senior English class has taken during the first month of this school year: “Last Friday we finished the 660-page novel, *All the Kings’ Men*, and nearly every class along the way featured vigorous discussion about a wide range of subjects, from teenage love to the nature of the good. I have been reminded once again that there is no experience more thrilling than teaching a good class.”

**2) The Jeanette Markham Master Teacher Chair** honors the founder of the Buckingham School in 1889, who also served as its first Headmistress until 1901. Miss Markham is remembered as both wise and witty; her imagination, humor, candor, and boldness were unusual in that era. Among her progressive ideas was the belief that a school could be a place where children not only worked but lived, a place as much for their delight as for their instruction. As a colleague reflected, “Miss Markham had very high ideals, and pupils and teachers felt compelled to come up to them. She was also extremely particular about details; nothing was passed unless it was the very best that she could do, and Miss Markham had confidence that you could do whatever was asked.”

In establishing the Jeanette Markham Master Teacher Chair, BB&N recognizes the impact this Buckingham legend had on its earliest students and their families. More than anything, Miss Markham was known as an extraordinary teacher. Through the Markham Chair, BB&N celebrates and recognizes this legacy of teaching excellence that lives on at our School today.

**Margaret Hardy** is the inaugural recipient of the Jeanette Markham Master Teacher Chair. In the eyes of countless alumni/ae who moved into young adulthood while at 80 Sparks Street, Margaret herself is virtually indistinguishable from the Middle School experience—warm, nurturing, and inspiring. A Buckingham School alumna (1961) and the parent of two graduates (Alexander ’89 and Wren ’91), Margaret joined the Middle School in 1979 as a foreign language teacher, and has worn many hats during her time there, including special advisor to the Director, chair of the MS World Languages Department, author of curriculum guides for all MS language classes, and collaborator on the development of MFA program, the S&R program, and the MS Co-curriculum. Her enthusiasm, her cheerfulness, and her ability to work with different learning styles are three qualities that are often cited by those who have had the good fortune to study French, Spanish, or Latin under her tutelage during the past 30 years.

Margaret’s dedication to teaching is highlighted by the testimonial of an alumna, now a junior at Wellesley College, who writes, “When I met Mrs. Hardy the summer before my

first year at BB&N, she told me that I had failed the School's written Spanish evaluation. Mrs. Hardy met with me for many hours that summer out of her own good will to teach me a Spanish language crash course. Her dedication to my improvement in Spanish made me realize for the first time that there are teachers who care deeply about making a positive impact on students' lives." And what a positive impact Margaret has had on a great many lives, including the life of this School.

"This is an amazing honor, perhaps the greatest a teacher could have," said Margaret Hardy at the October 6 reception. In her remarks, she explained that her "job as a teacher is to make my students realize how good they really are." One trick of the trade she described was making students append the word "yet" to the end of any negative assessments they make of their own abilities. So, "I can't roll my r's" becomes "I can't roll my r's YET."

**3) The Marian W. Vaillant Future Leader Instructorship** honors the third Headmistress of The Buckingham School who served the School with intellect and passion, dignity, and grace of spirit from 1935 to 1962. Miss Vaillant took each student seriously, holding each to the highest standards of behavior and teaching all the value of participation and engagement in the world beyond oneself. Among the many things for which she is remembered are her dedication to helping others through an active community service program, her lively interest in the School's dramatic productions, and Monday morning assemblies in which she put students' lives in a larger context through discussion of current events.

The Marian W. Vaillant Future Leader Instructorship recognizes the special contributions that promising early and mid-career faculty have made to the School community, their academic accomplishments, and evidence of personal growth. We know that it is this group of faculty who will become the next generation of master teachers and will sustain BB&N's academic excellence for decades to come.

**Caitlin Drechsler** is the first recipient of the Marian W. Vaillant Future Leader Instructorship. Caitlin joined BB&N Lower School in 2005 as a science teacher for Grade 5 and 6. Her work in the classroom and laboratory has been simply superb. She has been a trailblazer in her use of technology in her classes and her connection with students is outstanding—the kids simply love her classes. And this teaching magic isn't contained merely to weekdays: she is the coordinator of the very popular Science Saturday program at the Lower School, which brings to life her strong belief in the merits of hands-on instruction. This belief was reflected as well in Caitlin's rewriting of the Grade 6 science curriculum and the introduction of Project O, a marine science and environmental education program, into the Grade 5 curriculum.

Held in high esteem as a supportive colleague and a steadfast friend to new faculty at the Lower School, Caitlin is a role model for young teachers in the way she has eagerly embraced schoolwide leadership opportunities, such as her work with the NEASC reaccreditation and the website redesign committees.

“I thank you for all that you do at BB&N to help foster the kind of learning that takes place on all three campuses,” said Caitlin Drechsler to the attendees of the October 6 reception. In her remarks, she shared the story of a recent “a-ha” moment when her 6th grade class was wrestling with the question of how one determines that something is a living organism, and a student experienced “that wonderful moment when he realizes that the way he had previously seen the world has just been challenged.”

“With these endowed positions,” said Head of School Rebecca T. Upham at the October 6 celebration, “BB&N has gained an important, tangible way to celebrate the outstanding dedication and talent of our finest teachers and future leaders, and to recognize the exceptionally valuable contributions these faculty members have made to the life of the School.

“The boost that these endowed chairs and instructorship provide to the teaching and learning environment at BB&N is simply tremendous,” said Upham. “The BB&N community owes great thanks to the extraordinary generosity of three early, anonymous donors to our Opening Minds Campaign. We extend our deepest gratitude for their support of the mission of our School.”

### ***Inside the Classroom: Algebra + Sports + Laughs with Jesse Sarzana '93***

A careful look at the walls of Jesse Sarzana’s classroom tells you everything you need to know about the Middle School math teacher and varsity soccer coach. Sports memorabilia, framed pictures of teams he’s coached, posters of Albert Einstein, calculators, student art, and inspirational sayings; Sarzana '93 wears his passions on his walls and on his sleeve.

“I love teaching Middle School students, and I love coaching,” says Sarzana. “I even loved school as a kid—from pretty early on I had an idea that I wanted to teach, even as a high school student at BB&N, I had a hunch.”

That love is never more evident than when he is in front of a class, trying to find the correct balance of fun and pedagogy. On this Tuesday as Sarzana holds court in his eighth grade Algebra I class, the scene is a blend of wise-guy humor and serious math.

Having just finished going over last night’s homework, Sarzana prowls the room snapping the homework assignments out of students’ hands.

“You’re going to rip it!” shrieks Natalia Claro.

“I’ve been doing this for years, never ripped one once,” fires back Sarzana, to the amusement of nearby student, Steve Bissainthe. Sarzana spins to face him, “What are you laughing at wise guy?”

Then a huge grin spreads from ear to ear on Sarzana's face, and the class breaks out in laughter.

"My class is a safe place where kids can make mistakes, and laugh as well as learn," Sarzana explains. "Consistency is important, so at the start of the year I layout my teaching style to them so the students know what to expect."

In Sarzana's class, students have to stay sharp—one minute his back is to the white board, diagramming a slope intercept equation, and the next he's pointing to someone with a joke or calling on them for an unexpected answer.

"I keep them on their toes, but we stay focused," Sarzana says. "My goal at this level is not only teaching the subject matter, but to get everyone involved and focus on creating good habits and learning styles."

His focus on life skills in addition to math skills is not unique to his BB&N tenure. After graduating from Brandeis University, he worked at West Roxbury High School as a career counselor of sorts, helping students prepare for the transition from high school to the real world—whether it be college or a job.

These well-rounded teaching principles extend to the playing field as well. In his nine years at BB&N, Sarzana has been an assistant varsity coach on three ISL champion baseball teams, and the head varsity coach of two ISL champion soccer teams. With this year's varsity soccer team off to perhaps their best start ever—(8-0-2)—there could be a third title looming.

"I take a similar approach to coaching as I do to teaching—I focus on basics, techniques, and skills you need to be successful," says Sarzana.

According to colleague and Middle School History Chair Bill Rogers, that approach has paid off:

"I have watched all the soccer coaches at BB&N since I came here myself to coach soccer in 1974, and Jesse is the most gifted soccer coach we have ever had. He is himself an exceptional player, and has a complete understanding of the technical side of the game," Rogers says. "His players love to play for him because of his commitment to them as individuals—and of equal note, Jesse is one of the most respected members in the Middle School, as a colleague, advisor, and teacher."

If Sarzana's colleagues speak highly of him, the feeling is mutual.

"The Middle School camaraderie is great. I've become really close with my colleagues in my time here," Sarzana says. "It feels like a big family, which creates a really safe and comfortable atmosphere—I think the students feel that as well."

As his Algebra I class winds down, there's one difficult concept that the class is struggling with.

"I'm looking out and I'm seeing some blank stares, a little confusion," Sarzana announces. "That's okay, let's pause and get this together."

He searches for another way of presenting the concept, this time drawing a diagram of the problem to explain it differently.

"Think of it like a Christmas tree, watch how it branches out here," Sarzana says as he graphs coordinates on the board to illustrate. "So this makes sense now? We're good?"

"Yes!" comes the rousing reply.

This is part of the joy of teaching for Sarzana; finding the best way to present material, figuring out how his students best learn it, and watching that understanding dawn on them.

"Mr. Sarzana, can I sharpen my pencil?" asks Mike McCaffrey.

Sarzana eyes the pencil, and then the class with a wink, "it's sharp enough...sit down."

Everyone laughs. A little fun never hurt either.

### **Rube Goldberg Inspires Collaboration for 7<sup>th</sup> Graders**

"Our Latin teacher is really fun, but this a much cooler way to use the textbook," says Beth Young '15 as she watches Jeremiah Blacklow '15 send a matchbox car zooming around a loop and through the air into a cup.

Instead of using their heavy, hardcopy Latin text for homework, the two BB&N seventh graders have turned it into the foundation for a pulley system that holds two cups on a string—an integral part of the giant Rube Goldberg machine they and their classmates have built.

Named after cartoonist Rube Goldberg's famous drawings of multiple step contraptions which result in a simple everyday action—the Rube Goldberg machine has become an annual favorite activity for the Middle School. The class is divided into six groups, each of which must use everyday objects to design and build a device whose chain reaction results in a whipped cream pie in the face of a faculty member.

As a three-time recipient of the Rube Goldberg pie-in-the-face finale, Middle School Director Mary Dolbear knows first-hand of what she speaks:

“This is a fun one,” says Dolbear. “The kids get really excited about it, and it brings together so many different applications for what they are learning in class.”

Now in its third year the Rube Goldberg event has had a dynamic effect on the science curriculum, allowing students a chance to work collaboratively on a fun project while still focusing on relevant physics and science ideas.

“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),” says Middle School Science Chair Wendy Svatek.

“Every year, we spend time in class learning about Rube Goldberg and preparing for the day a few weeks ahead of the event,” Svatek says. “There’s always terrific energy in the classroom as students brainstorm materials and tasks and discuss ideas for each step of the machine.”

Tynan Friend ’15 and Van Chung ’15 are members of one of the groups working on the final phase of the machine. They’re having trouble getting a tennis ball to bounce in the correct direction off of a cymbal, but Friend seems to think it’s nothing a little duck tape can’t fix.

“The ball bounces off the cymbal, rolls down to these lacrosse balls which weigh down the trigger of this remote control car, which drives up this ramp and knocks another tennis ball down this pipe,” explains Tynan excitedly. “It’s a little fuzzy from there, but we’ll figure it out.”

And eventually, they do. Students cheer and yell as the various machines swing, roll, topple, and chug along, until the pie eventually connects with a lucky teacher, bringing a delicious and messy end to a fun-filled day of science.

### **See You at One School-One World on November 14<sup>th</sup>!**

BB&N’s triumphantly successful all-campus multicultural festival, One School-One World, returns for its eagerly awaited encore appearance on Saturday, November 14. The free event will be held from 11-2 PM at the Nicholas Athletic Center and will highlight and celebrate the depth and breadth of our student and faculty community.

One School-One World will once again 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. All clubs, organizations, and programs have been invited to set up informational tables.

One School-One World is organized by Lewis Bryant, Director of Multicultural Services, and parent Kate O'Kelly, event producer. As Bryant described the first year of One School-One World, "The festival not only brought greater awareness of all the diversity programs and initiatives at the school, it also gave everyone a chance to celebrate our community under one roof."

We look forward to seeing you at this marvelous event!

### ***Keeping You Up to Date***

#### **Boston Magazine Corrects its "Best Schools" Rankings**

In its November issue, *Boston Magazine* published a correction to its ranking of private schools two months prior. The magazine cited reporting error in its usage of incorrect information for BB&N Upper School in three categories of its rating chart: student-teacher ratio (5.6 to 1 is the correct ratio); financial aid percentage (29%); and SAT scores (aggregate 2040). The magazine had also used incorrect data in the categories of average class size (11.2) and number of college counselors (4).

"When the correct data were input," wrote *Boston Magazine* in its correction, "BB&N's overall ranking for excellence among private schools rose from 27 to 5."

"We are pleased to hear that *Boston Magazine* has run the correction," wrote Head of School Rebecca T. Upham, "and we hope that the content of this correction helps remove the sting that many in our community felt when the original rankings came out last month. Nevertheless, I must emphasize that BB&N's return to the 'Top 5' status to which we are accustomed doesn't change by even one iota our feelings that this ranking exercise serves nobody well—schools, parents, or students.

"Lastly, I would like to extend kudos to *Vanguard* junior editor Lindsay Ellis, whose excellent and determined reporting work on the rankings story played a crucial part in spurring *Boston Magazine* to take the actions described above. Well done, Lindsay!"

#### ***Vanguard Wins Gold Medal***

Congratulations to BB&N's *Vanguard* newspaper, which has won a gold medal for overall excellence from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. Based on a judge's thorough critique of six issues from the 2008-2009 school year, the award puts *The Vanguard* in the top tier of school newspapers in the country. "Most of those newspapers are produced within public school journalism classes," points out *Vanguard* advisor and Upper School English teacher Sharon Krauss. "I've always been proud that our students accomplish what they do on their own time, on top of everything else they do."

#### **Spooky Soul Cake Delights Lower School**

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.

### **Knights Football Team Garners Honors**

With a couple of games still remaining on the schedule, BB&N's undefeated varsity football team continues to rack up honors this fall. For several weeks, the Knights have been ranked as the #1 prep school football team in the USA by MaxPreps ([click here to visit the site.](#)).

“God bless our kids,” says Head Coach John Papis. “Thirty-four players on the varsity and this type of accomplishment is truly amazing. I’m so proud of them all! Still have a long way to go.”

In late October, the Patriots All Access television show selected BB&N as its Team of the Week, which included a visit by the show to film practice and interview some players.

### **BB&N Donates Uniforms to Hoops 4 Hope**

BB&N has donated basketball uniforms to Hoops 4 Hope, a global not-for-profit organization that has supported youth development and structured teams and leagues that deliver valuable life skills for kids in disadvantaged communities of Zimbabwe and South Africa for the past 15 years.

### **2009-10 Community Directory Updates**

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to access a password-protected document listing the second round of updates for the 2009-10 BB&N Community Directory.

### **Wang '10 Earns Recognition from Siemens Foundation**

BB&N senior Elizabeth Wang was one of eight Massachusetts students who recently earned semifinalist recognition from the Siemens Foundation. Wang was recognized for her work this past summer at the MIT Research Science Institute, titled “Increased Activation of the Dorsal Anterior Cingulate Cortex in Preparation for a Hard vs. an Easy Task Shown by Functional MRI.” The study involved examining modulation in blood supply to specific parts of the brain when tasks of varying difficulties were executed.

The Siemens Competition, administered annually by the College Board, is regarded as the nation's leading original research competition in math, science, and technology for high school students. A record number of 1,348 projects were received this year for the competition.

Wang has also submitted her work to the American Academy of Neurology for consideration in its 2010 Neuroscience Research Prize.

### **BB&N Rows in Head of the Charles Regatta**

BB&N's boathouse dock was filled on a rainy Sunday morning as parents, faculty, alumni/ae and friends gathered to cheer on Boys' and Girls' crew teams during the 45th annual Head of the Charles Regatta.

### **Emma Raynes '00 Displays Photos at Upper School**

Emma Raynes '00 is showcasing her photography exhibit entitled, *Pai, Estou Te Esperando / Father, I Am Waiting for You* focusing on the lives of Brazilian sugarcane migrant workers and their families at the Upper School campus this fall. Raynes graduated from Bowdoin College in 2004 where she studied at the International Center for Photography and was a fellow at Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies before moving to New York City to pursue a master's in cultural anthropology at the New School for Social Research.

"While working on this project I lived with families whose lives and experiences are reflected in these photographs. The work was driven by their openness, generosity, and enthusiasm," Raynes said. "Though this project is focused on particular migrant workers and their families in one region of Brazil, I believe that the voices and images of these Brazilians raise important issues facing migrant workers and their families in North Carolina, the United States, and other parts of the world."

### **New Grandfriends Event on Tap for November 14th**

Each year BB&N has the unique opportunity to invite members of our Grandfriend community to visit our campus and share the richness that your children experience each day as BB&N students.

This year, we are pleased to begin a new tradition as we invite members of our Grandfriend community from all three campuses, and their grandchild(ren), for a Breakfast Event to be held on Saturday, November 14th from 9 to 11 am at the Upper School Commons. Following the breakfast is the option to attend BB&N's One School-One World event, to be held at the Nicholas Athletic Center.

This new tradition is substituting this year for the Grandfriends Day that is typically held on the Lower School campus on the day before Thanksgiving.

The Grandfriends Breakfast, followed by One School-One World, promises to be a fun morning and an opportunity for all Grandfriends to gather with their grandchild(ren) and share yet another dimension of the BB&N community. Welcoming remarks will be from Head of School Rebecca T. Upham. We hope you and your family will enjoy participating in this festive event!

Please reply by November 7th to [events@bbns.org](mailto:events@bbns.org) or call Rachel Loughran at 617-800-2726.

### **Cabaret Night Dazzles Audience**

Hannah Kauders '11 and Harrison Hill '12 were two of the students who performed alongside a number of alumni/ae at BB&N's annual Cabaret Night, which was held at Renaissance Hall on October 23.

### **Gellar Song Published in New Songbook**

*For You Shall Go Out*, a song written by Middle School music teacher Kathi Gellar, was published this summer as part of a new contemporary Christian worship songbook titled *Sing! Prayer and Praise*. The publisher, Pilgrim Press, is one of the oldest religious publishers in the country. Pilgrim plans to release a full accompaniment book and a fully orchestrated musical download of the piece later this fall.

### **Community Service Afternoon**

Each fall during Mud Week, US students are provided the opportunity to participate in an afternoon of community service with their peers. Students will leave after dismissal and return to campus in the late afternoon. (*Times vary depending on the site.*) Sign-up sheets will be posted in the academic building beginning Monday, November 2.

Permission slips will be available at school and are due back by Tuesday, November 17. Please encourage your child to grab a friend and sign up! Students will be awarded three hours of community service credit for this work.

This year, students will be traveling to: Associated Early Care and Education, Cambridge Community Center, Charles River Conservancy, Community Servings, Ellis Memorial and Eldredge House, Greater Boston Food Bank, Haley House, Sancta Maria Nursing Facility, Somerville Boys and Girls Club, West Cambridge Youth Center, West End House, and Women's Lunch Place. Should you have any questions, please contact Faculty Community Service Coordinator Gabriela Gonzenbach or parent organizers Robin Gilbert, and Lynda Ceremsak.

## ***Campus Voices***

### **Lower School**

#### **Jaime Bard '98**

#### **Language Arts Teacher**

Sixth Grade, for students, is the end of life as we know it. No longer a kid and yet not quite a teen, most Sixth Graders feel like they don't fit in anywhere. The landscape shifts with each step forward and it's hard not to feel shell-shocked and utterly baffled by the constant change. These nerves and jitters, however, are the ideal fuel for our literary ride together.

As the Language Arts teacher, I like to imagine myself as a conductor upon a neon supergalactic time, space and perspective machine. My job is to facilitate a year-long wild and powerful adventure for my students. Through literature, we journey from ancient China and the Great Depression to urban Cleveland and the far fantastical 'North.' Ultimately,

when we reach our destination in the spring, every one of my students will realize that they have what it takes to become a leader. Leadership, after all, is not a mystical quality; leadership is about the right frame of mind and a strong sense of self.

Our trek began a few weeks ago in Epiphany, New York with *The View From Saturday*, by E.L. Konigsburg. Each chapter is written from a different Sixth Grader's perspective and several of our protagonists feel like outcasts. Last week, I asked my students to hold up the figurative mirror and ask themselves: what are the differences between how you see yourself and how others see you?

When we do these sorts of activities together, I feel like I'm handing out the mid-flight snack on our first leg of the journey together—the tidbits will take a while to mull over and digest as we continue on our adventure together. I can't wait for a few more weeks to pass so that the Sixth Graders will see that Julian, the geeky Indian character with the knee-high socks, is actually our story's hero because he brings people together and helps them become proud of their quirks.

Literature is just the best. It's so exciting to venture with Sixth Graders in my neon supergalactic time, space and perspective leadership machine. For sure, there will be some turbulence along the way – but there is no greater joy than to watch each Sixth Grader figure out how to use the landing gear to smoothly and confidently arrive at his/her own feet.

**Middle School**  
**Christa Crewdson**  
**Theater Teacher**

As a theater teacher new to BB&N, I knew I would face certain challenges during the year. Coming from Boston Latin School, I assumed those challenges would include adjusting to the difference between a public and private school environment, getting to know my co-workers, and meeting my new students. During the first week the faculty and staff welcomed me with open arms, and I soon discovered that the students were just as welcoming. While breathing a sigh of relief, I also realized a challenge I hadn't really thought about: the Middle School musical as a class.

Over the summer I had secured the rights to the recent Broadway show *13* for my youth theatre company, Un-Common Theatre. As fall approached, I decided it would be wonderful to direct it at BB&N since it concerns the challenges students face in middle school. I was given the rights for BB&N as well, and was thrilled that we would be the first school to produce the show since it closed on Broadway. When I told my students they looked both excited and scared. Kathi Gellar, the chorus teacher who teaches the class with me, looked at me with the same wide-eyed enthusiasm and a hint of trepidation. During auditions, I myself understood the meaning behind that look.

In all my years of directing musicals with young actors it dawned on me that I'd never directed a production that was also structured as a class. At Boston Latin and Un-Common Theatre, all the actors who auditioned for the show did so as an after-school activity. I have always had many actors to choose from (sometimes even as many as one hundred), most with years of performing under their belts. Here, I only had twenty-two eighth graders, many who'd never been in a show, let alone a demanding Broadway-style musical. I did my best to match the students with the vocal ranges and characters in the show and held my breath. I was relieved to find that the show seemed to be cast well. Then came the hard part: rehearsals.

While some students drove right in and highlighted all their lines the first day, others that hadn't even signed up to be in a musical needed more help. In addition, many of them had never been on the stage before and basic movement and projection were quickly becoming an issue. After the third week of school I was wondering if I had made a huge mistake in trying to pull off a musical of this difficulty.

Then in the middle of one rehearsal I took a moment to step back and see what was happening around me. On the stage were seven eighth-grade boys rehearsing the choreography to a song and having fun! The three leads came up from the music room where they had been working with Ms. Gellar, and asked if they could sing the song they had just worked on for the class. As they stood on stage and sang *a capella*, you could hear a pin drop. When they finished, the class burst into applause. We became a united cast in that moment. Tears welled up in my eyes. I knew we had a show! We were going to do it! And we still have until January 20th (shameless plug) to get it right!

**Upper School**  
**Wes Williams**  
**English Teacher**

My drawing skills are awful.

Luckily it is not my art that matters this morning, so my primitive two-dimensional pictographs on the board suffice—they give my juniors an idea of what I'm saying.

Our discussion this morning has veered into very fertile ground, ground that yields things strange and wondrous as well as the expected crop of thoughtful answers. During a fairly heady discussion of narrative structure and metaphor in the novel we're currently reading, we encounter a very real and very problematic question: What if we have imposed our "deduced" meaning on the book? What if the author never meant the book to convey what we, after our very careful and rigorous analysis, are claiming it does? What if, you know, it is just a story; that is, how can we tell what the author wanted us to think?

Heck of a question, or a Huck of a question, or, even better, a question of Huck.

Every English teacher can expect this moment; it is the “How do we really know for sure?” moment. How do we know that This Object in the book is the Major Symbol you say it is? Maybe it is just a pigment-challenged whale. How can we say This is an Important Theme in the play? Maybe it’s just a story about a confused Scandinavian prince. Or, here, today in class with my juniors, are we justified in claiming that Twain creates a multi-layered narrative structure to comment on society? The more complicated the analytical moment, the more strident the question can be.

It is a familiar question, “How do we know?”, and students often use it for one of two purposes: to give up, or to dig deeper. Some trumpet the question as an excuse to cease the exploration of literature’s inherent power; others murmur it to find new avenues for intellectual growth. Some students are eager to establish the inaccessibility of certainty when engaged in literary analysis, to give up on trying to find the meaning (or, sometimes, any meaning), because it is all futile. If we cannot ultimately know what an author intends, they ask, then why bother analyzing? Why not read for plot? Such sentiments emerge from a stance that privileges the role and authority of the author. Of course, we cannot expect high school students to realize that such inquiry has been treated by enormously brilliant minds in the past century in the fields of literary and cultural criticism. So I find myself with this question and inevitably wonder which purpose the question serves, what type of student I have before me.

It’s not clear which I have on my hands right now. It will be soon.

On the board I draw stick figures and shapeless blobs and arrows pointing in and out and across that somehow represent the relationship between artist, art, and audience. The arrows’ directionality comes from my students’ assertions and suggestions. I ask and prod, accept and undermine. Who creates which meaning? Where does the meaning of the art exist? They think they know. Then they realize they may not. And I see that I have the open-minded scholars here. The discussion becomes lively as they argue across the table about the issue. We don’t want to let go of the primacy of the artist, but we don’t want to rob art of any meaning we may bring to it. I’m done drawing and can sit down for a while in the background.

Time’s up. As the students head out the door, I think about how we did not finish plumbing the depths of the assigned reading for the day. Pity, there are some amazing things in the text. Maybe I’ll use them for a pop quiz tomorrow.

Oh, and if any of my students happen to stumble across this column, I offer extra credit if you can explain what I meant by writing it. Of course, you’d better be right.

**All School**  
**Ki Perry**  
**Director of Development**

It feels as though so many of my experiences, both personal and professional, have led me to my current role at BB&N. Many of the qualities and values intrinsic in this institution are personal: its urban location, diverse populations, and mission of self-reliance, independence, risk-taking, and community.

I was raised in Brooklyn, NY, for most of my life and then moved to Southern New Jersey where I attended a private school. Suddenly the meaning of diversity changed. In Brooklyn, diversity meant a world of different ethnicities, languages, socioeconomic positions, and races; In NJ, it referred only to racial diversity. I did, however, discover the meaning of community at my new private school, Moorestown Friends. Although I only attended from 10th-12th grade, the school enrolled students beginning in pre-K, and the impact of that continuous experience is one I witnessed and envied.

I was also raised by a single mother much of my life and, as the oldest, household tasks often fell to me. I had no choice but to become independent and self-reliant. Now, having been given the opportunity to go to not only a private secondary school, but a great college and business school, I have a passion for and belief in the power of education. I also have a yearning to give back, and I am proud of BB&N's efforts related to both diversity and community service.

At the moment, my primary extracurricular activity, is raising my three-year-old son, Emmett. So far, my husband and I have chosen to raise our own family in the city. Every time we think we need more space and contemplate a move to the suburbs, we have another amazing, completely unanticipated experience simply walking around the neighborhood: police cars, fire engines and ambulances abound, and moving statues, cranes, and interesting people provide tons of both learning and entertainment. Each of these experiences brings out something new in my 3-year-old son and sometimes my thirty-something year-old husband. To me, this openness to the world and its infinite possibilities brings to mind what is special about BB&N: noticing each child's individual interests and talents and allowing them to flourish into engaged citizens, aware and involved in their world, however big or small it may be defined.

As I begin to meet with alumni/ae, it is clear that BB&N did exactly this for so many of them when they were students. I look forward to getting to know them on an individual basis as well. My responsibilities at BB&N include helping Woodie Haskins run the internal operations of the External Affairs office as well as spearheading the alumni giving efforts. One of the things that most attracted me to this job was the tremendous opportunity that exists among the alumni/ae body. Woodie and his team have created an incredible platform to build upon. Parents have been remarkably generous, and their volunteer leadership is exemplary. I look forward to leveraging existing programs, harnessing the enthusiasm and commitment of current alumni/ae leaders, and creating a real structure that makes engagement easy for both volunteers and donors. We saw great success in this arena during my time at Nobles, and I see no reason why the same strategies and programs wouldn't work at BB&N.

Following this year's theme of "connectedness", our office has two ongoing goals: to integrate our staff and our work with the larger School community; and to be the link among different BB&N constituencies (alumni/ae, parents, faculty, staff, students, and friends) since, as we all know, it is the power of these connections that make our individual experiences, as well as the overall institution, truly meaningful.

### ***Giving Update***

#### **2009-2010 Annual Fund Reaches 41% of \$2,250,000 Goal!**

With an enthusiastic team of volunteers in place, the Annual Fund is off to a positive start having reached 41% of the 2009-2010 goal in combined gifts and pledges to date. The Annual Fund is BB&N's annual fund-raising program with a goal of raising those funds necessary to bridge the "gap" in the operating budget created between tuition, and the actual cost of a BB&N education. This year, the "gap" per student is \$6,680.

All gifts of all amounts are of critical value and necessary if we are to achieve our financial and participation goals. The Annual Fund underlies all independent education and is necessary to sustain the program of excellence that has come to define BB&N. The Annual Fund supports Arts, Athletics, Academic Programs, Financial Aid, Faculty Professional Development, and Technology.

The BB&N community of Parents, Alumni/ae, Past Parents, Grandparents, Faculty, Staff, Current Seniors and Friends, all play a significant role each year in helping to achieve this critical and necessary goal. Parent volunteers are currently in the process of reaching out to every family in our community in hopes of obtaining support and the elusive goal of 100% participation. We are extraordinarily grateful for the early and enthusiastic Annual Fund support BB&N has received to date. Alumni/ae Class Agents reach out to their classmates through letters and emails. Past Parents and Grandparents share their enthusiasm for the experiences of their children and grandchildren through personal letters. Faculty and Staff continue to give back to BB&N and may take advantage of our employee Annual Fund payroll deduction and automatic renewal program. Each year, the Senior class votes to direct their Annual Fund class gift and sets an early goal to achieve before graduation. We continue to have the long term support of Friends of the BB&N community who believe in our mission and have elected to make BB&N a giving priority each year.

We invite your participation in this year's Annual Fund. Your early gift or pledge will provide additional savings to BB&N by limiting the amount of contacts necessary to reach our goal by April 30, 2010. Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration.

You may give online at [www.bbns.org/donate](http://www.bbns.org/donate). Please contact Jo-Ann Lovejoy, Director of Annual Giving at 617-800-2723 or email [jo-ann\\_lovejoy@bbns.org](mailto:jo-ann_lovejoy@bbns.org) for further information, questions about giving, or to learn about ways in which you may become involved as an Annual Fund volunteer.