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CURIOSITY • COURAGE • COMPASSION

Community Partnership School

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Not Your Regular, Run of the Mill PTA

To say the Community Partnership School Parent Council takes on a lot would be an understatement. On any given day, the Parent Council can be found in the midst of organizing an event to welcome new parents, selling coupon books and pretzels to raise money for the school, researching and selecting speakers for Parent Nights, or chaperoning field trips—to name just a few of their activities.

After a much-needed summer break, the Parent Council hit the ground running, calling its first meeting even before school opened. Many topics line the Parent Council's agenda this year; at the top of the list is a big goal: participation in the Council from 100% of CPS families.

Ms. Elvira Savage, the Parent Council president and parent to a first grade student, urges all families to get involved in any way they can: "Every CPS parent/caregiver is automatically a member of Parent Council. Even if parents can't physically be here for meetings or day-time volunteering, they can still be active by making phone calls, sending e-mails, or just giving feedback for ideas."

The Council meets once a month, varying the meeting time between early mornings, Saturdays, and weekday evenings to accommodate caregivers' varied schedules. Meeting minutes are distributed to all parents to keep them informed of upcoming events and advertise opportunities to get involved—which are plentiful.

Some of the council initiatives this year include: promoting the school to prospective families through the Admissions Committee, organizing volunteer projects through the Community Service Committee, acknowledging every student's birthday and supporting families during illnesses, and, through the newly-created Dad's Committee, strengthening connections between male guardians and CPS students.

Head of School Eric Jones is excited about the new Dads' Committee and the opportunity for father figures in the community to positively influence not just their own children, but the wider CPS student body, as well.

"It is just vital to have positive role models, especially males" Mr. Jones explained. "At this point in their lives, the kids are following our examples. Adults show children what it means to be

responsible, what it means to have fun, and what it means to be a good person."

At CPS, the faculty and administration are quick to emphasize that forging alliances and partnerships is key to ensuring that children receive the best education possible, which makes the work of the Parent Council all the more valuable. As Mr. Jones summarized it, "We believe in family, we believe in involvement, and we believe in inclusion. We realize that each of us is better when we work together."



Members of the Parent Council gather after an early-morning meeting. Row 1: Tobo Houessau-Adin. Row 2 (left-right) President Elvira Savage, Vice President Latasha Collins, Secretary Yvonne O'Neill, Tonetta Graham, & Kijuana Drayton

DID YOU KNOW.....

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Watch for our Annual Fund Letter!

Keep your eyes peeled for our Annual Fund letter, coming soon to a mailbox near you! Help us meet our goal to provide an amazing independent school education for the children of North Central Philadelphia.

Shaping Good People: Character Education at CPS and the Resiliency

As important as reading, writing, and arithmetic are in shaping a school's purpose, our work at fostering healthy growth in our young people cannot be defined strictly by intellectual pursuits. Indeed, shaping young people who become sufficiently invested and informed leaders and citizens involves molding not just the head, but the hand and heart as well.

To that end, there are certain virtues that are core elements of our philosophy at Community Partnership School. Our focus on shaping high-achieving students who will have broadened skills and, as a result, broadened life options as they grow is just a part of who we are and what we do. Just as important to us is our work at shaping good people and, as we begin a new school year, we are proud and excited to share with you our commitment to incorporating the Resiliency Model into our curriculum and school mission. What is resilience? It can be defined as the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. It is an innate quality we all possess, and a skill we can all learn. An environment that fosters resilience encourages high expectations and maximizes participation. Resilient students display qualities such as social competence, autonomy, grit, and a sense of purpose for the task at hand.

There is substantial research documenting the fact that resilient students have higher self-concepts and educational aspirations. Resilient children tend to feel more internally controlled, and enjoy more meaningful interactions with their parents as well.

The staff and faculty of CPS began training in the Resiliency Model during the summer under the direction of Robert Hunt, a licensed family therapist and friend of CPS and Germantown Academy. Mr. Hunt will continue working with CPS employees and families throughout the 2008-2009 school year. Our goal is to fully incorporate the Resiliency Model into the mission, vision and core values of our school, and you will be able to see the Resiliency Model in action in our classrooms and hallways. Along with values such as curiosity, courage and compassion, we are committed to working intentionally toward shaping an environment where resilience serves as a core part of our identity, informs our decisions, and inspires us to keep going.

—Eric Jones

Donor Profile... **The Stratton Foundation**



Art teacher Audrey Jakab guides second grade students as they construct paper dolls of themselves. CPS was able to hire Ms. Jakab through a generous grant from the Stratton Foundation.

If you look around the Honickman Learning Center activity room during Audrey Jakab's art class, you will see children busily cutting, pasting and painting, all the while listening to their teacher's gentle guidance. You will see children admiring each other's work and children completely absorbed in creating their own "masterpiece."

Most of all, you will see the impact of a generous grant from the Stratton Foundation, making the Community Partnership School art program possible. With their three-year grant, the Stratton Foundation has laid the foundation for CPS to initiate and grow an art program that addresses the critical need for children to explore their world through the creative process.

Part-time art teacher Audrey Jakab came to CPS as a volunteer last year. After graduating from the Philadelphia College of Art and earning her M.F.A. from Yale University, Ms. Jakab lived in New York City where she exhibited her sculptures at various non-profit galleries. While in New York, Ms. Jakab worked at the American Museum of Natural History where she used her sculpture skills to maintain the large dioramas and taught a sculpture class to the visually impaired. She has also worked with the Philadelphia Mural Arts

program. In 2007, Ms. Jakab brought her extensive experience in both teaching and the creation of art to the After School Program, introducing CPS students to a wonderful world of color, light, shapes and yes, even art styles.

Ms. Jakab knew that she wanted to be able to spend more time with the extraordinary CPS children – that she wanted to expand her role as a volunteer and make the position "official." Thanks to the Stratton Foundation, this year, Community Partnership School was able to offer Ms. Jakab a paid teaching position, along with funding for art supplies.

The Stratton Foundation is a local foundation that focuses on building stronger communities. Sue McGinnis, a trustee of the foundation, said that funding the CPS art program was an easy decision for the Stratton Foundation. "We recognized that art is a vital part of teaching children how to express themselves and critical to the education process," she stated. "Besides all of that, its fun!" And, now, thanks to the foundation's generosity, there are about sixty young students who have the opportunity to agree with her.

Up Close With the CPS Third Grade Class



It is early in the school year, and projects have already begun to line the third grade classroom bulletin boards: meticulously-printed essays on what it means to be a peacemaker, an ever-growing vocabulary wall where students add definitions of words they learn in class and colorful poster presentations about famous African-American figures, like talk show host Oprah Winfrey and astronaut Mae Jemison.

The children have also set their sights on a more long-term goal—attending college. Recently, the class visited the Honickman Learning Center Library to research colleges around the country. “I wanted to show them why we work so hard, and what it will lead to in the future,” Ms. Stokes said. Students discussed the benefits of earning a higher degree, as well as how what they are learning now in the third grade relates to the future. After studying admissions brochures and materials, students recorded which colleges stood out to them in their journals selecting a variety of universities, including Harvard University, Temple University, Haverford College and Rutgers University.

“I wanted to show them why we work so hard and what it will lead to in the future”

—Ms. Stokes on the third grade’s college research project

Jonelle Stokes and Adam Lamay, the third grade teachers, have many big goals for their young, imaginative students. The precocious eight and nine-year-olds began practicing their public speaking skills this year with speeches in front of the whole class. “They have so many ideas they really want to share.... I want them to be able to present their work and take pride in it,” Ms. Stokes explained.

Although college is still a few years away, the third grade students are the oldest students at CPS, and as the leaders of the school, much is expected from them. Most importantly, they are charged with setting a positive example for their younger cohorts.

Peacemakers Project: Class-wide Reflections

“Everyone wants to be loved, to be a part of a community and to not be judged for what they believe.”

“The world would be at peace if everyone made right choices.”

The class is known for being vivacious with a flare for the dramatic, and Ms. Stokes enjoys harnessing their creative and social energy into learning activities. For example, to build both literacy skills and historical knowledge, the class has started performing plays that focus on African-American cultural and

To this end, throughout September, the class focused on building community and discussed how to be both leaders and peacemakers in their community. According to third-grade student Danielle, “Making peace means making the right choices.”

In an attempt to show others how to make these right choices, the third grade eats lunch with the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes everyday and escorts all of the younger students to each Friday’s school-wide Community Meeting. At the start of school, each third grader stood and introduced a member of the incoming pre-kindergarten class to the whole school, giving them a warm welcome.

historical figures.

The students like to tackle these creative projects as a class. Currently, they are creating a class “encyclopedia” to teach the rest of the school the new things they learn; it will contain classmate biographies along with lots of pictures, presentations and other class work.

Although it is a large responsibility to be school-wide role models, the students are definitely up for the task. “I like being the leaders of the school,” Destiny commented. Kendi chimed in, “I like for the little kids to look up to me.”

Third Grade By the Numbers

- 12 third-grade students
- 8 have family members at CPS
- 9 at CPS since opening day

What they say about themselves:

- 9 math-lovers
- 4 talented singers
- 4 great basketball players
- 2 wonderful dancers
- 3 can not wait to learn to write in cursive this year!



The CPS third grade class takes a break from reading *The Never Ending Story* to pose with teachers Adam Lamay and Jonelle Stokes.

What is it like to be a third-grader at CPS?

- I like being the leaders of the school —Destiny
- I like for the little kids to look up to me —Kendi
- More homework! —Nasir
- We get to be role models —Na’Quan

Meet the New CPS Team Members

Community Partnership School is happy to welcome the following new members of its staff:



Devalina Guha-Roy, the new kindergarten assistant teacher and technology teacher, recently completed her MS.Ed at the University of Pennsylvania, specializing in Learning Technologies in Education. Previously, she taught for three years at Belmont & Family Charter School's Head Start Program in West Philadelphia. Her love of working with children was truly cemented, however, while volunteering at Mother Teresa's Orphanage in Kolkata, India. Ms. Guha-Roy said, "I love the CPS children and families. The small class sizes are wonderful."

Jonelle Stokes, the new third grade teacher, recently moved to Philadelphia after teaching elementary special education in the South Bronx for two years. She completed her bachelor's degree at Baylor University in Texas and



her master's degree in urban education at Mercy College in New York. In her free time, she enjoys writing children's stories and plays. Ms. Stokes is "in love with CPS. I love the small community environment, the smart boards, the kids, everything!"



Starsha Jordan joined CPS in June as the administrative assistant. Ms. Jordan is a graduate of Gettysburg College, where she majored in sociology and was involved in the local chapter of NAACP. Previously, Ms. Jordan volunteered at an after-school ESL program for children of migrant workers and worked with toddlers at a day-care center. She enjoys interacting with the CPS students, who often draw her pictures for her desk. "I like everyone who works here," Ms. Jordan said. "It's great to be part of such a close-knit family."

Angie McCole joined the staff in August as the development assistant. Originally from Pittsburgh,



she is a graduate of Haverford College, where she majored in English and was active in diversity and alliance-building work. Previously, Ms. McCole worked for the Anti-Defamation League's anti-bias education program, *No Place for Hate*. In her free time, Ms. McCole enjoys writing poetry, blogging, and taking advantage of Philadelphia's many restaurants. According to Ms. McCole, "I am excited to join such a positive, dedicated and hard-working staff, where everyone is focused on leading our students to success."



Takiyah Harris, the new first grade assistant teacher, is a Philadelphia native and an alumna of the College of Holy Cross in Massachusetts. Previously, she spent four years teaching pre-kindergarten at Tower Hill School in Wilmington, Delaware. Outside of school, Mrs. Harris leads youth ministry programs at her church and spends time with her husband Keith, Sr. and one-year-old son, Keith, Jr. Mrs. Harris is looking forward to "enriching the young and eager minds of CPS students."



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