

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL

*A Partnership Between Germantown Academy and Project H.O.M.E.*

**CURIOSITY • COURAGE • COMPASSION**

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## AT CPS, THE P IS FOR PARTNERSHIP

The students of Community Partnership School (CPS) are eager to embrace visitors, both figuratively and literally. It is just before lunch time, and after spending the morning with their new seventh grade buddies from Abington Friends School (AFS), CPS students hug the middle schoolers goodbye, with a chorus of voices asking, "When are you coming back to CPS??"

The AFS students' visit to CPS is part of a year-long collaboration between the two schools through AFS's Service Learning Program, whereby students partner with urban schools or organizations to learn more about the social context shaping the surrounding neighborhoods. This year, the seventh graders have served as teacher's aides in the classroom, working alongside and developing relationships with CPS students. They have done everything from working with students one-on-one with reading and math, to helping the kindergarten garden and plant seeds, to collaborating with the third grade on a "Timeline for Change" project.

"It's great because the children really learn from each other," says CPS second grade teacher Ms. Paula Budin of the program. "The children are so anxious to learn when young people come in to teach them; they get so excited. And I also think it's a great confidence booster for the AFS students because they get to show what they know, and the younger kids just adore them."

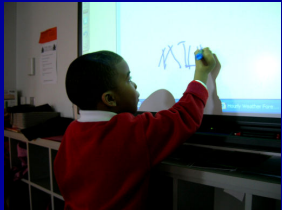
AFS is not the only school that partners with CPS on projects. This year, Germantown Academy (GA) students have traveled to CPS several times for exciting ventures, including a GA Middle School Chamber Ensemble performance and music lesson, as well as a joint science experiment that showed students how to extract DNA from strawberries. Not surprisingly, CPS students are still talking about these activities weeks and even months later!

Faculty members also benefit from the relationship between GA and CPS. This year, CPS and GA kindergarten teachers switched places for a day, allowing them the opportunity to observe and then apply different teaching practices. Ms. Devalina Guha-Roy, CPS kindergarten assistant teacher and technology instructor, says the visit gave her many new ideas, including the "Space Man," a tool she now uses with her class to teach them the correct spacing between words.

Visits from older students have already had a positive impact on CPS children. Third grader Namirh explains that when students from other schools visit, he gets to show them his work, like his anti-bullying poster, of which he is quite proud. "We have fun!" he exclaims about the AFS and GA student partnerships. He loves it when students from other schools visit because "they are older than us and can teach us a lot. We look up to them."



*An Abington Friends seventh grader happily lends her back to a CPS pre-k student.*



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#### A Note to our Readers:

*In these tough economic times, we are relying more than ever on our wonderful supporters. Please consider making a gift to CPS today in the enclosed envelope. These gifts enable us to provide a bright future for our students.*

**Thank you.**

#### MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE EXCITING UPCOMING EVENTS!

- May 3, 2009: Join Team CPS at the Annual Broad Street Run. See [www.cps-pk5.org](http://www.cps-pk5.org) for details on how to join or support the team!
- Oct. 24, 2009: "A Night of Comedy at the Kimmel Center"— a fundraiser to benefit Community Partnership School. Contact Jocelyn Hillman for more information: [j.hillman@communitypartnershipschool.org](mailto:j.hillman@communitypartnershipschool.org).

# Letter from the Head of School PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

The idea of partnership represents a core part of Community Partnership School's identity, so much so that it is prominently displayed in our name. The partnership ethic is most evident in interactions between our staff and parents, a relationship that's central to the school endeavor, but is too often fraught with unclear communication and suspicion. As Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot asserts in The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other, beneath the smooth surface of what is mostly polite exchange between parents and teachers lurk a set of complex and passionate dynamics that often have as much to do with the adults' desires and needs as with those of the children.

This is why CPS works hard to create and maintain strong, open, and respectful home-school connections. We start from a premise that says our students' first teachers are their parents/guardians. As such, we recognize that we have a lot to learn from the caregivers who entrust us with their most precious gifts: their children. Moms and Dads, Aunts and Uncles, and all those adults in a child's life who take responsibility for rearing him/her have insight into that child that we need to tap into. This information helps us understand the uniqueness of each individual student and, as such, do our jobs that much better.

And the reverse is true as well. Just think about it: the average CPS student spends between 9 and 10 hours at school, 5 days a week. Indeed, from September to mid-June, our students spend more of their waking hours with us at school than at home, providing us with an invaluable understanding of our students' abilities, idiosyncrasies, and overall talent.

So when healthy relationships exist between home and school, parents and teachers are empowered, and children are the primary beneficiaries. At CPS, whether through participation in our Parent Council, volunteering in classrooms, or attending various parent meetings, required or impromptu, fostering healthy partnerships with our parents and guardians is an essential ingredient in what we do. We believe in family, we believe in involvement, and we believe in inclusion at CPS. There is no secret handshake here. We realize that each of us is better when we work together; that's why Partnership is in our name.

For more insight into the area of parent-teacher relationships, I recommend The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other by Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot. This text served as our faculty/staff summer reading last year and provoked valuable introspection and conversation prior to our summer Home Visits and fall parent/teacher conferences.

-Eric Jones

## Donor Profile... BILLY AND MELANIE KING



Billy and Melanie King lend a hand in the second grade classroom during Reading Time.

Like many other CPS volunteers and donors, Billy and Melanie King were introduced to CPS through a friend. And it didn't take long before they became **very** involved. Melanie serves on the CPS Development Committee, where fundraising ideas and strategies are generated. Melanie also serves as an unofficial ambassador for CPS, gathering supporters wherever she goes, whether it's at her gym or one of her favorite downtown restaurants. She has even organized "Team CPS" to raise funds through the Broad Street Run this May. The level of involvement Billy and Melanie give to the charities they support is no small feat, especially given the fact that they have two small children, Natane, age 2, and Reggie, age 1. We recently had the opportunity to ask them a few questions:

### **How did you get involved with the Community Partnership School?**

**Billy:** My good friend from Duke University, Mark Korman, is a board member at CPS and told me that he thought I would be interested in the kind of impact

the school is having in North Philadelphia. Once Melanie and I came down for a tour, we were hooked. We saw that CPS is providing a curriculum from one of the area's best schools (Germantown Academy) to kids who would never have this type of opportunity right in their own neighborhood.

**Melanie:** We were also very impressed with how parents or caregivers are required to be so involved in their child's education. They sign a contract, pay tuition on a sliding scale and attend required parent education nights. Parents are so important in a child's education and CPS emphasizes this fact.

**You are both very involved in local philanthropy. Billy, you are on the board of Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation and have been very personally involved with both Alex and her parents. Melanie, you are on the board of Turning Points for Children and have run their annual gala. You've both even made the time to deliver baby goods to a local woman's shelter in person. In other words, you don't just write a check, you also give yourselves and your time.**

**Melanie:** We enjoy being hands-on philanthropists. Writing a check is important, but we also think we can make a larger impact by getting involved. We love being with the students here and helping as much as we can.

**Billy:** I see life as an opportunity to pay it forward. Someone in my life once helped me, so I'll help the next person. And hopefully, that person will go to help another, and so on. These CPS kids will one day be in the position to really make a difference. Also, if you let it, the news media can make you very callous. You can believe that everything is hopeless, so you turn your back on urban America. I think we all need to get involved to make our cities better and CPS is doing just that.

## CPS Family Spotlight **THE RICHARDS**



Pre-k student Nyla and her brother Asim (third grade) pose with their parents, Lamar Richards and Genise Richards-Thomas.

Lamar Richards and Genise Richards-Thomas have two children in their first year at Community Partnership School: Nyla (pre-k) and Asim (third grade). They spent some time talking with us about what the CPS experience has been like.

### **What have you enjoyed about CPS?**

It's been a great experience at CPS. We enjoy the community aspect of it and the small size of the school. This lets us really get to know the teachers. We know we can call the kids' teachers any time we need to— we've developed a great trust. The teachers also make learning fun, especially in pre-k. It's almost like they trick the kids into learning, but it works!

### **What effects do you think CPS has had on your children so far?**

With Nyla, we can already see how much CPS is helping her. She's so eager to learn, and she's gotten a great head start on her education. She's so confident now, and we're expecting such wonderful things from her.

For Asim, being at CPS has made him see how great he can be and has really built his confidence. At his old school, there were so many kids in the classroom that it seemed like the only children really getting attention were the ones with behavior problems. If you were quiet and well-mannered, like Asim, you were pretty much lost in the shuffle.

Here at CPS, they catch on to potential issues earlier, and the teachers help you develop a very specific action plan. Not just, "Asim's having problems reading," but "here are exercises you can do to help him with his long vowels." Before, we would visit the school and tell the teacher what our concerns were, but it was just so limited what she could do. She didn't have the time or the resources with thirty-three other kids to worry about. Now, we are able to talk with CPS teachers and really develop a plan all together. Since being at CPS, Asim's reading has definitely improved.

### **What hopes do you have for Asim and Nyla's future?**

We would love for them to go to independent schools in middle and high school, and ultimately get into great colleges. We just want to make sure they have the best. It's really hard out there. If we can't give them a great start... they can just be lost. We just want them to grow up and be the best they can be!

## Step Back, Bill Gates! **CPS STUDENTS TAKE ON TECHNOLOGY**

Corresponding with the President of the United States, conducting research online, creating power point presentations with animation and sound effects... all just another day in the life of a CPS student!

This year, CPS students are taking their technology skills to the next level under the guidance of Devalina Guha-Roy, who joined the staff this year as kindergarten assistant teacher and technology instructor.

The students have learned how to create timelines using MS Excel, use internet search engines to conduct research, check their spelling and find synonyms for words in MS Word, and create surveys online— all skills which will undoubtedly aid them in their education as they grow older.

Ms. Guha-Roy, who has a Master's degree in Learning Technologies from the University of Pennsylvania, has focused on increasing the students' exposure to a variety of internet and

software programs, as well as instilling them with confidence in their computer ability. "One of the best things about computers is that mistakes are easily fixed," she explains. "In technology, I want the children to feel free to

explore, make and correct mistakes, and not be intimidated by it all."

Third grader Na'Quan certainly is not intimidated by technology. It's one of his favorite subjects; he loves to use the computer. "I like learning about new websites in technology class. I also liked learning how long it takes to get to CPS from my house— five minutes!" he says, referring

to his class's recent Google Maps project.

Though students clearly enjoy using technology, Ms. Guha-Roy is careful to explain to them that the computer is just "a helper" in their learning. "We talk about how you should not depend solely on the computer," she explains. "It's important to think with your own brain first."



Ms. Guha-Roy helps a CPS student as she creates a power point presentation about dinosaurs.

### **Letter-Writing Project**

Second graders learned how to write and format letters with MS Word in Technology class, then practiced by writing letters to the new President.

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.  
Washington, DC-20500

Dear President Obama:

Congratulations, President Obama! I read about how Presidents help run the country.

One thing I think you should do for America is change the gun laws. This might help Americans stay safe.

I think this is important because some people use guns for the wrong reason.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Zahir B.  
Community Partnership School

# Up Close With **THE SPANISH PROGRAM**

On any given afternoon at CPS, the pre-kindergarten can be found joyously singing a song about amigos, while the third grade eagerly recites the months of the year in Spanish. With two Spanish teachers now on staff, CPS students are making great strides in learning a second language and are clearly having a lot of fun in the process.

CPS students begin learning Spanish in pre-kindergarten; pre-k teacher Ms. Katie Jamieson leads the instruction for both pre-k and kindergarten. Ms. Jamieson, who is also the Director of Academic Programs at CPS, launched the Spanish program in 2006, recognizing the many benefits of language instruction in the early years.

Starting early is key, as research shows that children have the best chance of becoming bilingual when they start instruction before the age of 8.

Ms. Linn Vaughters, who joined the faculty this winter, teaches Spanish to the first, second and third grade, and is known for using music, silly songs, and plenty of other fun activities in her class.

Ms. Vaughters began learning Spanish when

she was just six years old while traveling with her family. She asserts that learning a second language is a fantastic way to discover the world outside your neighborhood. "It broadens students' horizons, and hopefully learning Spanish will inspire the kids to travel and experience the greater world," she explains.

Learning a second language also helps children better understand their native language, and encourages "out of the box" thinking in their communication. "Kids can get stuck on how to say something when they realize they don't know a certain vocabulary word, but I encourage them to find a way to

talk around it," Ms. Vaughters says. "I'll ask 'Okay, what's another way to say it that we do know?' and then, they'll get it."

Third grader Nashay had plenty to say about why she likes learning Spanish. "I love learning new words in Spanish. Like, 'Senorita' is 'Mrs.' in Spanish. Right now, we're learning about Argentina, and some of the sports they play, like football. That's really soccer, they just call it football because you use your feet."

Argentina and "football" are just the tip of the iceberg. Ms. Vaughters plans to expose children to the cultures and traditions of all the Spanish-speaking countries in the world, from Argentina to Mexico to Uruguay. She also hopes to introduce the children to native Spanish speakers, who can answer questions about their home countries.

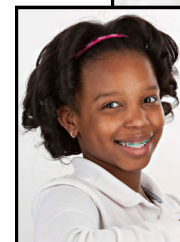
So far, she is encouraged by how eager the students are to learn Spanish. Children come to class filled with questions about Spanish words they heard on TV or read in a library book. "They have so many questions!" Ms. Vaughters exclaims. "It's great because now they are beginning to make connections with their lives, and are really taking charge of their learning."



*Ms. Vaughters reads a book featuring Spanish vocabulary words, such as "abuelo" (grandfather).*

## **Community Partnership School**

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