BLACK PINE CIRCLE SCHOOL
A SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

A newsletter of the
Black Pine Circle School
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CIRCULAR

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THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM" AND OUTSIDE THE 8:30AM-3PM DAY

Many powerful educational moments are taking place beyond the spotlight. At Black Pine Circle School, we often refer to these exchanges as the "hidden curriculum." But the word hidden doesn't quite fit in this case. We don't mean to hide these things, they just might not happen between 8:30am and 3:00pm or on our campus.

My unusual hours at BPC allow me to see what others seldom witness: The 7:45am band rehearsal when Mr. Kennedy and Carver Fitzgerald lock into a groove so smooth they both can't help but smile, the 5:15pm laughter coming from the 7/8th Grade Science room as Ms. Mytko uses candy corn to demonstrate how a Plasmodium uses its contractile vacuole to eat, the Diversity Committee meeting wrapping-up after 9:30pm during which an 8th Grader, a school administrator, and a group of parents have shared deep emotion and ideas around the shame of exclusion and the power of inclusion.

Connecting One Mile at a Time:

In mid-November, I heard about an extraordinary exchange between a teacher and a 6th Grade student at Black Pine Circle School. As many of you know, Meg Wood offers a running club for kids who want to do a non-team, non-competitive sport. There is no experience necessary, and the club always fills up. One of running club's core traditions is to invite participants to join Ms. Wood in a 5-10K race at the end of the ten week trimester. As usual, Meg put out the call for participants. This time, the race happened to fall on a day when the rain wouldn't stop. Meg honestly thought that none of the kids would show up, and that she, too, would be spared from running on a cold, bleak, and soggy morning. But...no.....Layla Kaye showed up! She not only came, she decided to run, and Meg ran the 3.5 miles, right alongside her. As she ran, Layla huffed, puffed, and laughed and smiled. Her broad smile inspired bystanders to authentically ask her, "Where did you get that amazing smile?" Layla just kept running. When it was all said and done, a connection, perhaps lifelong, had been made between a teacher and a student that may far outshine what they will ever do together in the 6th Grade Math/Science classroom. This is why our school is different....Teachers and students pushing each other to be their best selves. This is part of the "hidden curriculum."

What's Your Word Count?

NaNoWriMo is a phenomenon at BPC. The Office of Letters and Light's National Novel Writing Month has found a school that shares a passion for creativity, curiosity, and, of course, candy! Our students have written over 300,000 words. Not because they have to, but because they want to. How many adults do you know, who are pushing themselves to write or express themselves in original ways, each day? In *The Artists' Way*, author Julia Cameron reminds us that daily writing is at the very seat of intellectual growth and developmental reflection. Our kids know this, they teach us about the power of writing and the need to stretch ourselves through the NaNoWriMo process. This is, indeed, the "hidden curriculum."

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THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM" **UNVEILED**

WHY OUR ADMINISTRATORS TEACH

Lesley Jones talks with John Carlstroem, Head of School, Laura Wolff, Head of Lower School & William Webb, Head of Upper School

John Carlstroem: I teach a 7th Grade Ethics class with Mr.Webb. The class allows me to get to know the 7's in a meaningful way, while also giving them some important background information and practice for our 8th Grade Philosophy class. The class is a combination of understanding what the study of ethics encompasses...and activities/games/scenarios relating to ethical dilemmas.

I also teach an 8th Grade History of Philosophy Course. This course allows me to get to know and spend time with the 8's. The curriculum is a combination of a historical understanding of Western philosophy's role in the world we now live in and....a Socratic course in questioning, critical thinking, and making sense of the modern world through the eyes of philosophers.

John Carlstroem, Laura Wolff & William Webb

The students are the reason I came to BPC, and the reason I stay. They are bright, warm, clever, and hilarious. Their freshness always inspires me. I also believe it's critical to role model for the students that everyone who works at a school is a teacher. I came into this profession as an educator, and I never want to let go of that aspect of my life. It's the very essence of my being.

In our 8th Grade class, one student surprised me be expressing how sometimes looking at issues of perception, reality, existence, etc., makes her feel uneasy...like the world she's built for herself no longer makes sense. It's critical for me to remember, when I'm teaching 13 and 14 year olds, that they're still kids, and that philosophy's messiness can sometimes be overwhelming! When it all comes down to it, I think we all feel like that a lot, too!

Laura Wolff: For years I have taught a "Manners Class" to 1st Grade, which came out of an annual Parent Education night I used to do, and parents asked for it to be part of the curriculum. It is really a social skills class focusing on how to be a good friend, how to play nicely with others in a variety of situations, and how to act in various social situations (weddings, parties, family dinners, etc.). The Ancient Egypt Unit I teach to 3rd Grade is part of their Social Studies curriculum about ancient cultures. I have taught that curriculum for almost 15 years (previously at Bentley). It's a passion of mine, and teachers have always welcomed me into the classroom to teach it. I used to offer it as a summer school class, but again, the parents requested it be every year. It covers the history of Egypt, the culture, religion, mythology, architecture and government. It includes making both fish mummies and a doll mummy and tomb, as well as the trip to the Rosicrucian Museum in San Jose. I have also taught the Kindergarten computer class in past years, which is being revamped for next semester.

Teaching, while also being an Administrator, is important for so many reasons: I think it sets an example to the staff of commitment to the curriculum and the craft of teaching; it conveys to the students that I am more than just a Principal - I care about who they are as individuals and as learners; it demonstrates to the parents that I have a desire to get to know their children and want to make the time to share my knowledge; it creates a sense of empathy with the staff that they know we continue to acknowledge the challenges of teaching; and I love having the chance to just be around the kids! It keeps me challenged and aware!

Teaching helps me continually learn new things: I am expanding my "Manners Class" to integrate the social customs of a variety of cultures and family configurations and traditions. I have recognized that it can be challenging to have "good manners" in a culture that doesn't always value them! With computers, I am

learning all the time in a race to keep up with the level of knowledge that our children begin elementary school with each year! It is amazing to me how this generation is already so computer savvy at such an early age. But I am also learning about their individual learning styles, and how the students approach new challenges. With Egypt, I learn something new each year as students research their reports and new archaeological finds are discovered. I also discover more about learning styles when we work on those reports, uncovering areas that may need greater attention, so that they are ready for the challenges of 4th and 5th Grade report writing.

I feel fortunate that, as an Administrator, I have the opportunity to spend this time with the students.

William Webb: I teach because that is where the work is needed. It would be foolish and unwise to lead, show or create from a place of not-knowing and naiveté. I want to be in the rhythm of the school, I want to be where the students are growing and stretching. Ultimately, it is a selfish desire to want to be in the classroom - I simply like being in the space of learning. If this were years ago and we sat under trees with clay tablets, I am sure I would seek out teaching trees and piles of used clay. As it is, I like tables, I like books, I like desks, I like chairs pushed back and questions on walls.

There are many spaces to occupy in one's lifetime. There are buildings, offices, conference rooms, courtrooms, libraries, farms, studios and stadiums. I do believe that sometimes we end up doing the work we do because the spaces and the sounds, the textures and the language of that work appeal to us. That is true for me. I like the language of teaching, the sounds of questions and conversation, the materials; paper, pens and blackboards. I like being inside and outside in a group, sitting on the floor or at a table, studying a book or pondering an equation. I like learning in a community.

I am teaching a class on World Religions to the 8th Graders. We started with a very sophisticated question, "What does it mean to put faith in words?" We have read *The Book of Genesis* and are now reading parts of the *Koran*. We have rearranged the room for our learning. We push tables and chairs against the wall so we can sit in a circle facing each other. I like a class that is writing-based so we write in response to questions generated from the text we are studying. We share our writing out loud to each other and often find that the questions brought into the room have created more questions to answer. We scribble and share some more.

Teaching is hard; it requires unlimited patience and flexibility. Sometimes, when we are in the classroom together, I want the students to go to a place they are not ready to visit, I want the text to reveal something original, I want to hear new and creative insight. I want a lot. And then I relax and trust that we will be guided where we need to go, knowing that we are continuing a tradition that began many centuries ago when young people first began to ask questions of themselves and the world they live in. This is ancient work, nurturing the mind to be hungry for wisdom. This is the space of maturing.

THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM" AND OUTSIDE THE 8:30AM-3PM DAY

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"Mom, Did You See Me Shoot That Lay-up?"

We have officially entered basketball season at BPC, and I'm struck at what this kind of athletic experience can bring to a person's life. Many of our students haven't played on a basketball team before, and many may never play on a competitive team again. These years are critical in "trying-on" the lenses of a Basketball Player (or of an Artist, Physicist, Composer, Mathematician, etc.). Think back to that time you first heard a coach say, "Number seventy-eight, you're going into the game...are your laces tight, is your shirt tucked in?" What a moment! Your heart rate mimics a hummingbird's, your mouth gets dry, and your eyes widen as you scan the bleachers to see if your parents left work early to make it to your game. Maybe you drop the first two passes, and flub the lay-up, but you had that moment where you were on the court, you could feel the hardwood under your hightops, the referee was watching you dribble, and the crowd was calling your name. Now that's a visceral learning experience, and, in the BPC tradition, an amazing chance to develop your metaphorical voice as an athlete, or just a member of a community/team. Even if this young person never plays another game of basketball, they'll always be able to say they "laced em' up, on a team." That's the "hidden curriculum."

So, read on: In this issue of the Circular, our goal is to draw back the curtain on moments that are difficult to see during the course of a parent visit. There is so much intellectual and emotional richness in every day at Black Pine Circle School. We hope these articles and stories make these moments a lot less hidden.

John Carlstroem,
Head of School, November 2011

WHAT EDUCATORS ARE **TALKING ABOUT**

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

by Laura Wolff, Head of Lower School

Think about the last time you planned a family vacation. What were the many details you needed to think about and organize for that trip to be successful: your destination, your budget, transportation, accommodations, maps, meals, activities, etc. Now add, remembering to stop the mail/newspaper, alerting neighbors or friends, arranging for pet care, and of course, asking for the time off. Even the simplest of weekend trips can be a disaster if these details are not addressed. Planning a trip is one of the easiest ways to think about a concern many educators have these days: how to develop executive functioning skills in our students. All the steps and skills needed to plan a trip are similar to planning a report or project, doing homework, cooperating with others, and just functioning in the day-to-day world of a student. These are typical skills that most students develop through the years. And yet, some students find it difficult to manage their school experience because their executive functioning is lacking.

"Executive functioning skills" has been a popular phrase over the past few years, as neurologists learn more about how the brain works and how children learn. The most basic of these skills include organizing, planning, prioritizing, initiating tasks, problem solving, managing self and resources, flexibility, accessing memory and evaluating one's progress. We expect that by 5th Grade, most students have developed these skills sufficiently to prepare them for Middle School. However, there are times when we notice that skills are lacking and students need extra support in these areas. When students consistently have difficulty remembering and following directions, solving multi-step problems, working with others and compromising, keeping track of homework and materials, planning and following through on a project or report, and reflecting on and learning from their progress, behavior and mistakes, then we suspect that executive dysfunction is occurring.

How do teachers help develop these skills in children? As we are learning more about this area of research, techniques have been developed to prepare students for the expectations of school. Teachers have found that most of these strategies are good for an entire class and each student can benefit from them. Examples include:

- breaking down tasks into smaller steps
- providing clear rules and expectations
- using visual or graphic organizers
- reviewing schedules and due dates
- using multiple forms of directions
- organizing workspace and minimizing clutter
- using planners and binders
- meeting with a child regularly to reflect on progress and needs
- using group activities to bolster confidence and develop compromise.

These strategies take time and consistency to make a difference. But, students developing these skills will find greater success, not only in their school experience, but also throughout their adulthood.

How can parents help? It isn't uncommon for a teacher describing areas of executive dysfunction in a student to his/her parent, to have that parent admit their own frustrations in organizing home and work. We do not know what behaviors are inherited or learned in this area, but either way, parents can model success with executive functioning when they become more aware of how to develop these skills in their children. Similar to the techniques teachers use, parents can help their child's organization with the use of a planner or calendar for events and assignments, as well as lists to check off expected tasks and chores. Keeping a neat, quiet work area for homework, which is supplied with needed materials, is always important. Another key to success is encouraging your children to talk with you at regular intervals about their school experience, their needs and your mutual expectations. Helping children be more reflective of, and accountable for, their efforts in school is also important. Communicating with teachers on a regular basis as well, will help clarify assignment needs.

For the parents of younger children...the key to developing executive functioning skills has been the discovery of the importance of unstructured playtime! Children's ability to create imaginary scenarios and act them out (dress up and fantasy play), to plan and build something, to make up and tell a story, and to do these things with other children, helps support children's learning in specific ways. The planning and executing of children's fantasy play are key to developing later skills. Even more important, though, is the "private speech" employed by children as they play in these scenarios. As children talk to themselves, they are organizing their ideas and carrying out their plans for play. Second, is the development of self-regulation, which is the ability of children to control their emotions and behavior, resist impulses and exert self-control and discipline. Again, giving children the opportunity to play with their peers, with minimal adult supervision, will help children develop these skills. Fortunately, our Kindergarten and 1st Grade classrooms allow time for centers and games, in addition to recess.

Recently, we had a staff workshop on ways to help support children of all ages develop these skills. This will be an area that BPC will continue to examine and develop techniques for improving, to ensure the success of all BPC students.

WHAT IS A SOCRATIC SEMINAR?

by Tim Ogburn, 5th Grade Head Teacher

In Socratic Seminar, students either discuss a question or analyze a text. If they are discussing a question, it will usually be an important one related to a book or topic we are studying. For example, "Why would the thirteen colonies want to break away from British rule?" "Should we regard Bilbo Baggins from "The Hobbit' as a hero? Why or why not?" A text-based seminar would deal with paraphrasing and analyzing a challenging text, like a poem, historical document, or scene from Shakespeare. In either case, the teacher's role is to facilitate discussion and help students practice clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness.

Socratic Seminars follow the same basic format. The students arrange their desks in a circle so that they may speak face to face. In a class experienced in the method, hands are rarely raised, and things are more free, conversational, and natural. The teacher asks follow-up questions and tries to draw out reticent students. A scribe takes notes so that there is a record of the discussion. Afterwards, all students fill out a self-evaluation.

What 5th Graders Like About Socratic Seminars.....

"I like the eye contact.
You let others know you're listening that way.
I like to listen directly and speak directly."
Declan

"I like that it's a conversation."
Sage

"Socratic Seminar allows me to think about things in new ways when I talk about them with other people."
Daniel

"I like to be part of the whole.
Everyone gets to put something in."
Sophia

"I like to learn what other people think about the subject. I get to hear other people's perspectives, not just my own."
Sam

ETHAN, 6TH GRADE TALKS TO WILLIAM WEBB ABOUT GOING FOR GOLD IN CHINA

Ethan and I met on Thursday lunchtime to talk about his recent success at a Math Competition in Bejing, China. Ethan came into my office with some tacos that his Dad, George, had brought him, and I sat with my "Nourish You" lasagna and orange slices and we began to talk. Ethan, it turns out, is quite a competitor: he has competed in (and won!) local swimming meets, in chess tournaments, and is preparing for a piano competition. Ethan talks about the medals he won in China the same way he talks about his other pursuits; they are fun, he enjoys competing against others and he loves what he loves. He has an open face, a big grin and his energy is contagious. We laughed a lot over lunch, and I scribbled to keep up with his enthusiasm.

Ethan returned from China to school a few weeks ago with a USA team gold (the top 10 national teams out of 500 win a gold medal), and an individual bronze out of 536 world-wide competitors. About Bejing, Ethan said, "It was REALLY crowded, the food is REALLY good, the pollution is REALLY bad, and the people are REALLY nice. I got to see the best part of Bejing, I did not have time to see the rest."

Ethan is nonchalant about his victories. "The funny thing is," he said, "when Team USA won the gold, we were the only team that screamed for joy, none of the other teams cheered when they won. It was not about winning, though that was the second thing on my mind, I just wanted to have fun!" And he loved Bejing - though he was sorry that he did not get to see more of China. "Something that was weird is that I thought people at the competition would just be like robots saying "math," "math," "math," and that they would only think about math 24/7. But, we were all just kids together. We would play at night a lot — especially in the arcade at the hotel. We would eat You Taio (fried bread on a stick) and play games together." And, as only the wisdom of an 11 year old can attest, "When you solve a math problem you have to have fun, if you are not having fun, you cannot solve the problem. It is just like that. It is not really what you do or what competition you go to — it's about how much fun you can have."

Ethan started competing in Math competitions when he was in 4th Grade and joined the Berkeley Math Circle when he was in 5th Grade. He still attends BPC's Math Club once a week. It was in 3rd Grade, when he was taught by a Math master from China, that he learned he loved problem solving, "Especially algebraic formulas." He was late to lunch because of this love, he was busy in Meg Wood's room solving a problem, "And," he announced proudly, as he sat down, "the answer is 592!"

I asked Ethan for advice for people like me who struggle with math. "My Dad told me, that, when he was a kid in Taipei, his Mom just said to him, 'To be good at math in problem solving, you must find that ah-ha! moment, you must feel it and you must want it!'" Ethan is serious about his love, "Don't fool around with math." And Ethan's favorite math problems to solve are, "Geometry combined with prime numbers."

This after a bite of taco, a truth about Mr. G's class: "You have to commit yourself," and as the bell rang, "Remember, it is no good if you are not having fun!"

WHERE ARE THEY **NOW**

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Alum, Gwen Hornig (11th Grade) remembers her middle school years at BPC

Alum, Gwen Hornig

"7th Grade was the year that everything seemed to come together. I had teachers like Ms. Chun and Mr. G, who as two of the best teachers at the school, taught two of the most intimidating classes. Ms. Chun pushed our thinking and analyzing of text, challenging our thoughts and opinions so that we could really round out our conclusions and solidify our points of view. When I talk to my high school friends about Mr. G's Math class, the one word I use to describe it is: "insane."His passion for math is so strong, it is impossible not to learn from him. In the two years that they taught me, both of these incredible teachers prepared me, and in some ways, over-prepared me for high school classes. As a freshman, I was in a sophomore/junior level Math class, doing Junior AP level English, in Spanish 3 honors, and a sophomore World History class. And, I was excelling in all of them, thanks to everything that I learned while at BPC.

8th grade was the best year, by far. My class had really become a family. I still had my small group of friends, but there was a real sense of camaraderie among the class and a high level of respect for one another. Raising my hand in class didn't seem so daunting. I had really found myself, and Mr. C and Ms. Greco played a huge part in that. They made me feel like I had a special place at BPC, and created an environment for me that allowed me to finally learn how to speak my mind, and be comfortable doing so. When Ms. Marziano cast me as Maria in West Side Story, that opened my eyes to another world, and on top of that, it opened my eyes to what I was capable of within that world. I figured out that performing was something that I had a true passion for, something that I could not live without.....

Now that 11 year old geeky girl is 16. She's a junior at Skyline High School. The drama kids are her family. Her love of learning, that was so fostered at BPC, is still strong. Again, that's me. My goal is to go to Tisch School of the Arts and NYU, and after that, I dream of booking a Broadway show. This dream would not even have entered my mind if it wasn't for BPC! I would still be shy, quiet, and uncomfortable with who I am. But BPC gave me a huge gift – myself, and the confidence to discover who I am as a person, and accept myself and go out into the world as a successful individual."

In December, Gwen performed a leading role in the musical Hairspray *as part of the Skyline High Performance Arts program.*

SELF-PORTRAIT POEMS

Who I Am
by Miriam, 8th Grade

I am from Jewishfullness and acceptance.
From a green family with no TV and reusable everything.
From questions like, "Is this problem little, medium, or big?"
I am from a devoted Mormon Great Grandfather to my Grandma with two PhDs.

I am from teachers and perfectionists wanting only to be the best.
From athletes in photo albums to athletes right now.
From dozens of scrapbooks lining the walls in my house.

I am from old faded toys, gardens and a willow tree around the yard.

I am from a Chavurah, secrets told and secrets made.
From a spy organization created by cousins.
Full Belly Farm Camp where it's a million degrees.
I am from the chip of metal in my daddy's thumb.

From sun cakes at Solstice covered in artificial sugar to the short bread I eat at Christmas made by my grandmother.
I am from Europe, then both the East Coast and West Coast, and finally me.

I am from a Chicken Coop house that is no longer filled with chickens, only love.

Self-Portrait
Adrianna, 7th Grade

Self-Portrait Collage,
Jasper, 4th Grade

THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM" **UNVEILED**

I AM FROM
by Cyrus, 8th Grade

I am from Kung Fu, from spears and swords,
the arsenal of weapons in the living-room,
and from Northern Shaolin, Kajukenbo,
and just a bit of wushu.

I am from music, of guitar and piano, of the
harsh and unique sound of metal,
and I am from singing, vocals, and
composing my own music.

I am from Albert and Yvonne, and the Clan of Ng,
and the thousands of years of Chinese,
their stories, their culture, heritage and pride,
and from being an American Born Chinese.

I am from noodles, eggs, and rice, from all the
unique dishes of Chinese food, ignoring those
who criticize my culture.

I am from Hayward, California,
though I was born in America, I am from a connection
to my ancestors' land, and Hong Kong too.

I am from a silent neighborhood in San Leandro,
only sometimes interrupted by passing cars,
and from neighbors who wave from a distance.

I am from being original, random, and unique,
unlike all those thousands out there
who listen to the same music, and dress
exactly the same way, trying my best to be unique.

I am from Christianity, from God, to trust in him,
whose power always wins, and I am from being strong,
making me who I am today.

I am from art, a pencil and eraser in each hand,
ready to create something into the world of paper,
and I am from imagination, full of ideas, but not enough ways
to give them to the world.

Self-Portrait,
Linnea, 7th Grade

Self-Portrait Collage,
Talia, 4th Grade

MICHAEL, 7TH GRADE, WINS 1ST PLACE

At the beginning of December, Michael came in 1st place in the State Grade-Level Chess Championship in Santa Clara. Michael plays chess at the Berkeley Chess School, alongside some wonderful BPC adult alums.

The Berkeley Chess School runs a Chess Club at BPC after school on Wednesdays for 1st-5th Graders.

THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM" **UNVEILED**

I SAY "NANO", YOU SAY "WRIMO"

4th & 5th Graders share thoughts about writing a novel in a month:

"I've never had the experience where I could just write my own story. Before November I was really nervous and I didn't want to do it, and I had no idea what to write about and thought that I wouldn't be able to write anything or get any words down. But now I see that I can do it and I can write more than I think I can."

Pia, 4th Grade

"I like sharing my story with other people, and with my family at home. I like achieving writing a bunch of words in a month, because it shows me that I can do more than I actually think I can."

Sam, 5th Grade

"NaNoWriMo is really fun because you get to write about your own ideas and anything that comes to your mind. The challenging part is getting your word count every day, because sometimes, if you run out of ideas and have trouble finding new ones, then it can be challenging to keep writing, not so much getting words, but keeping it flowing. For somebody who likes to write, it's a really fun thing to do. NaNoWriMo's awesome!"

George, 5th Grade

"The easy part is when in school you get to do word sprints. They're exhilarating and competitive. NaNoWriMo is the funnest subject in school, other than PE."

Daniel, 5th Grade

"What makes it really fun is that you can just write about whatever you want, and it doesn't matter if it really sort of makes sense or not because it's a way to say your feelings in your story. You can come up with characters and then they come to life and you think about them a lot. What makes it challenging is if you're stuck at a certain point, what to write next, sometimes you can just think what situation your characters are in and then you have to come up with what happens next. It's fun to see how many words you can write and put down your milestones and feel really good about it."

Talia, 4th Grade

"NaNoWriMo really helps you get all of your ideas out, like if you ever wanted to write something, and you've thought of it but you've never actually written it down, it just comes out in your story. Even if it's not part of your plot, it helps your story."

Iona, 4th Grade

4th & 5th Graders at an after school write- in in the Library

WHY WE **GIVE**

WHY WE GIVE TO BPC

Trish Stolle

"In deciding on a school for our son, there were no reservations in our minds about choosing BPC. We were instantly drawn for so many personal reasons, but mainly because of the overall teaching philosophy, its close community and the personal attention given towards each individual student.

Within the first year at BPC, we realized that philanthropic support has always been a significant factor in making BPC the exceptional academic institution and community it is today. We believe our regular contribution helps financially strengthen the school and provides it with a competitive edge to help attract a strong faculty. In addition, a financially sound BPC allows it to continue to provide the students with a well-rounded arts and academic education, broadens the diversity of its student body (both culturally and socially), and expands all the students' horizons.

I am fortunate that my employer, Adelante Capital Management LLC, encourages its employees to participate in their Matching Gift Program, which allows me to maximize my contribution to, and support of, BPC. "

Trish Stolle

SUPPORT THE ANNUAL FUND CAMPAIGN

The 2011-2012 Black Pine Circle School Annual Fund Campaign launched in October.

Last academic year the Annual Fund raised over $100,000. Our goal this year is $125,000.

To give now, visit www.bpcweb.net/donate. If you have any questions about the Annual Fund, or would like to discuss payment options, please contact John Ormsby, Director of Development, at jormsby@blackpinecircle.org or (510) 644-1023 x 15.

Thanks to all for all you do and for loving our school.

Erik Price

"My association with Black Pine Circle School goes back to 1972-73 when I was a student in one of the first Kindergarten classes. At that time, the school was located in the basement of a church on Parker Street. In the mid-1970s, the school moved to the current location of the Lower School, a former stained glass factory whose lovely windows still line the classrooms. Later, in the 1980s, by the time I had moved on to high school and my younger brothers had enrolled at BPC, the school expanded once again, crossing the street and creating a separate middle school for older students.

Each step in this transformation was the direct result of a partnership between the school's visionary leaders and its committed, engaged parents.

When my two kids reached elementary school age, it was my turn to start giving back to the school. I started out early as a Room Parent, a prospective family tour guide, and a dad who tried to go on as many field trips as possible. With the help of several other families, we started the Soiree, a gala that recognized the incredibly loyal and talented teachers at the school, but that also doubled as a fundraising event. In the early 2000s, I served as Co-Chair of the Capital Campaign and, together, we built the beautiful building that houses the library and 4th and 5th grade classrooms. Later, I began serving as Chair of the school's Development Committee, to help ensure that philanthropic giving to the school continued to grow. Just last month, I had the honor of being named to the school's Board of Directors, where I will be replacing my father, one of the school's original parents, a volunteer and a source of boundless energy.

Perhaps it was something about my personality that made me do all of this, but it was also the realization that everything I learned in high school, college, graduate school, and beyond was built on what I had learned as a Black Pine Circler. And I am not talking in total abstractions here, I am talking about logical deduction, rational thinking, appreciation of art and music, the power and importance of writing, how to ask questions, how to respect different points of view, and, yes, how to always be fun, quirky, and irreverent. I wanted my kids to have that experience, plain and simple, and, to a great extent, they did. Ten years later, I want that legacy to last for your children and theirs.

The great thing about giving to Black Pine Circle is that it tends to give it all right back. Please join me."

Erik Price

THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM" **UNVEILED**

WHAT ARE TOWN HALL AND STUDENT COUNCIL ALL ABOUT?

The Upper School meets together in the theatre once a week for Town Hall. This is when we talk about school issues and upcoming events. Sometimes we use the time for Upper School-wide silent reading or study hall, other times we bring in guest speakers such as Tim Jahnigen of One World Futbol Project, and sometimes we celebrate together. Town Hall is our time to nurture and sustain our community.

Silent reading on the yard

Andra Marziano (Upper School Drama Teacher) runs Student Council. It is group of students from every grade level, 6th-8th who get together once a week to create and support school spirit. The Student Council also holds fundraisers and organizes special events. - William Webb, Upper School Head

TOWN HALL

by Nahom, 7th Grade

The One World Futbol project creator, Tim Jahnigen, came to a recent Town Hall Meeting to tell Upper School students about the One World Furbol project. The main thing we learned was, that if we buy one of their special durable football, then another football will be donated to a war zone or a disaster area somewhere around the world.

Tim said his inspiration for making the football was watching or hearing about a disaster area, where the children had nothing to do. He also stated that the U.N. believes that playing is more important than education in disaster areas when people have to start over.

Tim told us that the One World Futbol football is so durable that it is able to withstand most objects that can destroy a regular soccer ball. *The speech Tim gave inspired me to follow my dreams, just like he did. I think Tim came to BPC to inspire kids to follow their dreams, make a difference in the world, and to never give up.*

STUDENT COUNCIL

by Allie, Annika, & Esmee, 8th Grade

In Student Council, we discuss ways to improve our school, such as creating Study Halls during some Town Halls. We organized the first dance of the school year and we decorate the FAD for the dances. We sold ice cream to benefit an organization called Village To Village. This organization goes to villages in Asia, distributing food to people in need. Student Council has an affiliation with Harrison House, a local shelter for the homeless, and we help organize activities such as the Holiday Tree Decorating party and the spring barbecue.

Last year, we worked with the faculty to make the end-of-year Games Day fun for all grade levels. We also sent two representatives to the Student Leadership Conference at Head-Royce. The representatives learned new ideas for the school and brought them back to share with others.

HOW FUNNY CAN IT BE? IMPROV CLUB IS A RIOT!

I always look forward to Monday afternoons: the days I have Improv Club! Run by Ms.Mytko, this club is a great way to express all my ideas. Most students will agree that, by 3:15pm, we are rather voracious. Luckily, Ms. Mytko reliably brings a substantial snack, usually consisting of cookies and fresh fruit. But, as important as food is, snack is by far overshadowed by the improv that this club is all about.

This is a theatrical art that contains no script or props, just the performers having a blast. I started attending this club when I came to the school in 6th Grade. I immediately learned that the key to hilarious improv is to not try to be funny. Just do something humorous and act like it wasn't meant to be funny. When we enter the theater, everyone participates in a warm-up of some sort. Then, we play fun improv games until the bitter end. A typical game is usually a scene with a twist to it, specified by what game is being played. It's a riot, whether I'm on or offstage. I don't have a clue how I survived before 6th grade without a weekly dose of improv, like the one supplied by BPC Improv Club and Ms. Mytko!

by Ross, 7th Grade

Improv is a club that I really enjoy. It's crazy fun. Not only are we 100% hilarious, but we enjoy each other. We laugh at each other, talk to each other, and care for each other. Everyone learns some random tidbit every time. I think it's a great way to meet other people in different grades. We even have inter-grade inside jokes. We all know everybody's name. It's super cool. We're like a little family. And the amazing snickerdoodles and endless running to get first in line for another one is only part of the package.

by Jessica, 8th Grade

YOSEMITE UNVEILED

THE 8TH GRADE CLASS TAKES AN ALMOST WEEK-LONG TRIP TO YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK IN THE FALL AS PART OF THE OUTDOOR EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Entering a Native American shadow cave

"When we went to Yosemite, I figured that all we would do was look at the rock formations and do some activities, kind of like the Headlands. But what we got was completely different. The air seemed fresher and the views felt like a calm dream. Also, we hiked off trail most of the time and did things most people would pass by, without exploring.

My group, called the "Tree Bunnies," hiked through one meadow that literally felt like a painting. As well as that, Yosemite Falls looked amazing, like a giant landscape with water going down, and you could follow the water all the way to the base.

Another great part of the trip was learning about the history of Yosemite's formation: the way giant icebergs carved a giant "U" into the valley. But the coolest part of the history was on the trail. In one area, the posts marked the 1997 flood level, and it was easily four feet taller than my instructor.

I really enjoyed the group activities, such as maneuvering through the Native American shadow caves. When one person couldn't make it, another cheered them on so they could get through. At the end, a large area where Native Americans built fires, surprised and welcomed us. Another challenging activity was navigating through the spider caves, a pitch-black tunnel system. The amount of teamwork that went into that was insane: while getting directions from the person ahead of you, you gave directions to the person behind.

At the end of the trip, we had a giant snowball fight with our instructor, and it so was fun, it felt like a dream. Because of the way Yosemite captured my love of it, the day I got back, I wanted to go again."

by Jarret, 8th Grade

"Since I just joined BPC in 8th Grade, I didn't know any of the kids in my class very well, and I admit that I was more than a little apprehensive about a four day-three night trip with a bunch of teachers and kids I didn't feel close to! Having to wake up at six o'clock on the departure day – which was the morning after Halloween, was a whole other problem!

After the bus ride, during which I played my ukelele the whole time, I was already feeling more comfortable with the kids in my class. Hiking through Yosemite, trying to stay warm as temperatures plummeted, we shared many things as a class on this trip, and I'm happy to say that, because I went to Yosemite, I feel closer with the whole community."

by Elazar, 8th Grade

Yosemite in the snow

LIBRARY LOVERS

In addition to regular class time visits, the BPC Library is open for drop-in use during most morning and lunch recess periods. Librarians Sharon Taylor and Kathleen McNulty asked students, *"Why do you like to visit the BPC Library during recess time?"*

"Because sometimes it's not library day with my class and still want to check out a book." Luca, K

"It's fun, you get to learn a lot, and there are fewer people at recess." Simone, 1st Grade

"I like reading and because it's also good for your brain." Mila, 2nd Grade

"Because I love books, so I want to spend as much time as I can with books." Kate, 3rd Grade

"I love to have a quiet place to read." Jasper, 4th Grade

"I always go into the library at recess so I can leave the cold, read, draw, and tell jokes. Sometimes it's like a club with different members every time." Rafi, 5th Grade

"It lets me be immersed in a different world where I don't need to worry about anything but the troubles of the characters in the books I'm reading." Marina, 5th Grade

GRATITUDE ABOUNDS

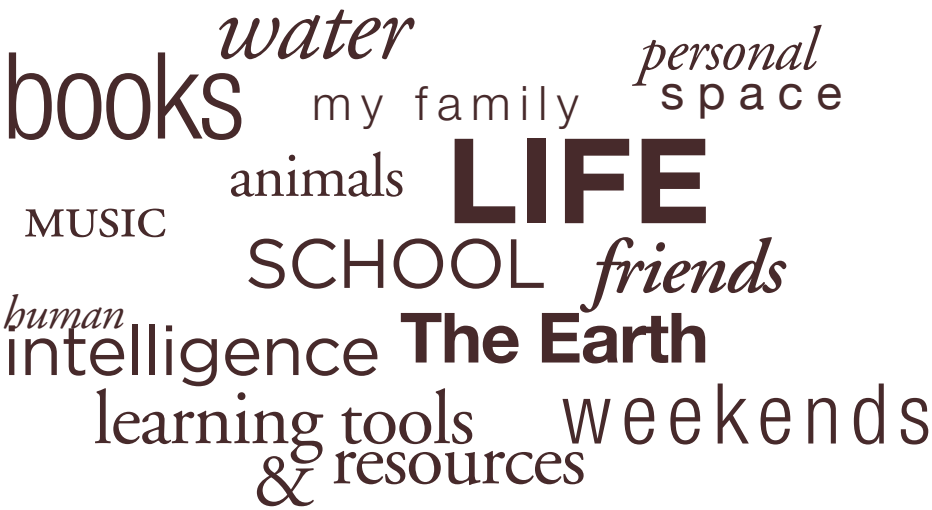
by Eleni Gekas (Spanish Teacher K-4)

After reading the article, *The Neuroscience of Why Gratitude Makes Us Healthier,* by Ocean Robbins, and *Teaching Children to be Grateful* by Wayne Parker, I decided to do a Gratitude Mandala* project in Spanish class with 1st-4th Graders during this Thanksgiving season. We talked about what we are grateful for, building our Spanish vocabulary, and then through colors and symbols, we created our Mandalas.

*A Mandala is a sacred space, often a circle, which reveals some inner truth about you or the world around you. In Sanskrit Mandala means both circle and center.

4th Grade making Gratitude Mandalas

WHAT 4TH GRADERS ARE THANKFUL FOR



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