

THE LP BULLETIN

NOTES, QUOTES, AND LOST COATS

The LP Bulletin #19
January 5th, 2017

UPCOMING LP EVENTS

Thursday, January 5th - Admissions Open House - 4:00 pm
Tuesday, January 10th - 3rd Grade to MFA - 9:00 am
Friday, January 13th - 1st & 4th Ice Skating at Frog Pond - 10:00
Monday, January 16th - No School - In observance of MLK, Jr. Day
Friday, January 20th - Read-a-Thon 6:30 pm.
Monday, January 23rd - Quarter 3 After School Begins
Monday, January 23rd - Kindergarten Conference Day
Tuesday, January 24th - 1st Grade Conference Day
Wednesday, January 25th - 2nd Grade Conference Day
Thursday, January 26th - 3rd Grade Conference Day
Friday, January 27th - 4th Grade Conference Day
Friday, January 27th - 2nd and 5th Ice Skating at Frog Pond - 10:00
Monday, January 30th - 5th Grade Conference Day
Tuesday, January 31st - 6th Grade Conference Day

HEADLINES

A Happy Return

As I chatted with children who were waiting to go up the stairs on Tuesday morning, most seemed more happy than sleepy or grumpy, and none appeared bereft or entirely miserable about the abrupt end of vacation. Several children, if a tad begrudgingly, even acknowledged that returning was not all that difficult.

I checked in with a few teachers later about energy levels and re-adjustment times and overall it seemed all the children quickly got back into the swing of things. That speaks, I believe, to the sustaining power of routines that are well established in each classroom by our teachers in the fall. Routines save us from having to figure out anew each time how to do a regular task of lesser intellectual challenge so we reserve our time and brain effort for tasks of more complexity and greater intellectual import.

That said, a creature of habit and routine and expecting the school week to start on a Monday, I spent Tuesday needing repeated reminders that it wasn't Monday. Even if a bit confusing to the less flexible among us, a shortened school week has some (marginal) benefit for children after a long vacation with different sleep rhythms and quite a different energy output

CURRENT 'HABIT OF THE HEAD, THE HEART, AND THE HAND'

Community

WORD OF THE WEEK

Curtail
Advocate
Flourish
Compromise
Apply
Concede
Responsibility
Indulge
Predicament
Dawdle
Germinate
Tarnish
Flounder
Maneuver
Artifact
Prompt

ATTACHMENTS

[Chess Sign Up](#)

[After School - Q3 Changes Form](#)

[January 2017 Calendar](#)

[Read-A-Thon Pledge Sheet](#)

than a regular school day. By the end of this week, our children will be more tired than usual, and so it is well that the week ends a day 'early.' Well, actually, it will still end on Friday! All so confounding, isn't it?

Next year we'll have another Monday Holiday and a four day week again after Winter Break but after that not again for the next 173 years--just kidding! I haven't bothered to check. What will be will be!

A Busy Time

January always seems like a particularly hectic time here at The LP. We have the upcoming Intern Switch; Head Teachers will be doing a round of their own visits to other classrooms; we have Parent Conferences starting soon; several Committee Meetings and the traditional January Board Meeting (where the Board passes the budget for next year and sets tuition;) admissions visits are ramping up; the outplacement process for our sixth graders is in high gear and our second LampPost for the year is being written and pushed toward layout.

On the student activity front we have our annual Film Festival, Frog Pond skating trips, the ski trip, the Read-a-Thon (several described elsewhere,) and betwixt and between, occasional dollops of more traditional classroom learning. (Nothing too stressful, of course!)



Back to School! Sixth Graders hard at work on form sculptures in Art. Below, First Graders explore motion and physics in Science with Ms. Garcia!



An Enormous 'Thank You.'

Our Winter Concert may now seem like a distant memory, but, if you would like to re-experience that glorious moment, it's incredibly easy to do so, thanks to Allen Nasseh (father of Darian in second grade). Allen single-handedly made a *sensational* video of the entire concert--with three different camera positions (including a hand held,) smooth edits, several special effects, and some really excellent recorded sound. He's got it all on tape--the magnificent choral singing of a group of gorgeous children, who occasionally yawn or scratch or stretch or let their eyes wander away from Ms. Hill, or allowed a shirt tail to slip out or a necktie to twist awkwardly out of place. These are *real* children--even wonderful in their imperfections-- who worked very hard in preparation, who wanted you to enjoy their performance, and who were pleased (and maybe a bit scared, too!) that so many of you came to watch.

Ms. Hill has been showing excerpts of Allen's video in her music classes. I observed one class, the fifth grade, completely enthralled, and, noted, also, Ms. Hill using the experience as a teaching moment by calling their attention to their good posture, their lush harmonies, their crisp beginnings and pauses, and their excellent articulation.

If you want to have a wonderful evening of family entertainment, watch some of this video (located in the Parent Portal) with your child. Doing so will underscore for your child the value you place on the time they spend on music in school, and on the importance of music as part of our lives. And the video also tells the story of a community of children working together on a common goal. As once described elsewhere, we *are* 'a singing school.'

A Concert Review

Here is an excerpt of an email from a graduate of the school, Ethan Pond, '10, who attended the Concert and wrote to us about it appreciatively.

"What a great time tonight! What a thrill to see the development of the young kids on display through their voices tonight. Some say that the singing voice is the most powerful voice that you have, and this new LP era sure sounded pretty powerful, really channeling expression through the music selections tonight. It was wonderful for me, a former Boston City Singer, to see that. Keep that music flowing! I think the new group at The LP . . . is going to be full of hard workers and people who are going to rise to the occasion and make a great impact. It's definitely something I saw tonight, the determination in the evening. It was really great!"

A Glimpse Into Two Classrooms

Even in busy times, I try to get 'out and about,' if but for a brief period every day. Yesterday I stopped into the sixth grade and then wandered across the hall into fifth. Sixth grade had just started a transition up to art. By the time I arrived, they'd been given the signal to clean up their desks and transition, and here is the remarkable sequence of events I observed: Children were quickly putting away their materials; none was talking, all were tending to their business purposefully and efficiently. After pushing in their chairs (Who does that anymore? At The LP, children do!,) the sixth graders gathered in line at the door, and when they received the signal to leave they walked themselves, without adult supervision, up to the Art Studio.

Impressed with the self-control and the quickness and ease of the transition, I asked Mr. Gerstenlauer and Ms. Ayres how they managed to get a group of "crazed, out-of-control pre-adolescent sixth graders" (I was only half joking) to do what I just observed.

"Training," Mr. Gerstenlauer replied.

"Ah, yes," I intoned, turning to leave to bother the fifth graders.

In the fifth grade classroom the experience I encountered was equally impressive, though entirely different. It was more about a 'higher level thinking' activity than about chair etiquette and silent transitions, though let me be clear that I do not mean to denigrate the latter because that level of 'training' is the prelude to the former: individual productivity or fabulous class discussions. And that precisely is what I observed going into the fifth grade classroom.

When I arrived in fifth, Ms. Michalow was 'on the prowl,' firing questions at her students, prodding them to think ever more deeply. Later I learned the context. The students have been studying 'The Civil War,' and they are about to shift to Greek Myths. (Talk about a shift that would awaken the most somnambulant student!) Shortly before I arrived, Ms. Michalow had explained to the fifth graders that they'd be reading *several* versions of the same myth, and variations would have to do with author choice and perspective. Making a connection (a sign of a brain at work) a student evidently had asked a question that a less experienced educator might have interpreted as 'not germane.' Why, this child wanted to know, was 'our' Civil War known as '*The Civil War*,' and not '*The American Civil War*'?

The class was now thinking deeply about perspective--about who tells the story--and Ms. Michalow saw her opening and as I stepped into the classroom, using the 'selective calling' technique, she was probing, provoking and challenging the students with a series of questions, like a seasoned detective or intensely focused lawyer questioning a witness. They were all eager to think about her questions and to share answers, and a few hands still waved in the air (although we're trying to break ourselves of that habit so every child is preparing to be called on and not taking time off from thinking.) The questions came rapid fire: Who writes history? And why? Who puts labels (e.g., 'The Civil War') on things and why? Who has power? And why? What was unique about the 2008 election and the 2016 election. . . and why? Whose voices and perspective are often not at the table? And why?

Wow!! It was an intellectual firestorm in fifth grade

Both the 'firestorm' and the calm and silent transition, you see, are essential components of a lively,

dynamic, 'let's-not-waste-valuable-time' school. I have no doubt that on a different visit at a different moment in the class schedule, I could see a smooth and efficient transition in fifth grade and a whiz-bang, intellect-expanding teachable moment in sixth. Each is an important piece of the whole, complementing one another--and often in under-appreciated ways. Deep classroom learning is irreparably compromised by disorder. Yet, order, alone, is no guarantee that learning is occurring. Great direct teaching and skilled facilitation of intellectual work is the critical catalyst and our teachers regularly provide that, as well as setting an 'orderly garden plot' where learning can flourish without a profusion of weeds to strangle its growth.

Film Month

For quite a number of years, January has been 'film month' at The LP--a time when different classes watch age appropriate films related in some way to our school wide exploration of Equity and Justice. We've actually shortened the time frame from a month to two weeks, so starting today, and twice next week, the children will be 'going to the movies' for those three sessions. And we will be talking with them about the critical moments in the film that fall within the rubric of Equity and Justice, and we will talk, also, about film as an artistic medium--and the technical choices a producer makes to convey feelings, interpretations and messages. This year:

K is watching "People."

Grades 1-3 are watching "Balto."

Grades 4-6 are watching, "Remember the Titans"

In January, in the context of our Equity and Justice program, the whole school traditionally watches the "I Have a Dream Speech." The children never seem to tire of it, nor do the rest of us.

Parent Conference (excerpted from last January's LPB)

Parent Conferences are scheduled to begin on January 23rd, and, as in the fall, are scheduled for half an hour. A few quick reminders:-

1. Please make every effort to come at your scheduled time. Unnecessary cancellations are an unnecessary inconvenience to busy teachers and difficult to reschedule.
2. Think in advance about your questions/concerns, and write them down so you don't forget to bring them up.
3. Students in grades two and up are included in part of the conference. We do this as a way to send them the message that they, chiefly, are responsible for their own education and so should share in the responsibility to report to you on their performance. In the younger grades, their participation might be only for five minutes; in the older grades it might be for all but five minutes of the conference. Help us to reinforce the overriding message that an education is something you "make" -- not "get."

There is additional information about Conferences in the Parent Handbook.

Read-a-Thon

Our Annual Read-a-thon, as you may have noted on the January calendar, is coming right up: Friday, **January 20th from 6:30-8:30pm** here at school. (Yesterday your child might have brought home a pledge form.) Please put this event onto your personal calendar now as it is an evening your child will not want to miss, if at all possible.

For those of you who are new to our community, here is a description of the Read-a-Thon largely lifted from an earlier Bulletin:

The Read-a-Thon is a pledge driven fundraiser that we have done for 17 years. It was conceived by the faculty of that era who wanted to offer an evening of their time to help the school's annual fund raising efforts.

What happens is that children, in grades K- 6, collect pledges from family and friends on a pledge sheet and on a cold winter's night they come to school to "earn" their pledge money by reading. (K's and other beginning readers mostly look at books and hear stories read to them.) The evening lasts for two hours and it is all great fun! (AND, sometimes parents make a short evening of it together in or around the Back Bay!) The proceeds of this grand event have gone in a variety of directions. Initially the plan was to use half of the money to plant trees in Boston, which we have done regularly and did again last year. The other half of the money was earmarked to buy books for our school, and we have also done that. In recent years, Read-a-Thon money has occasionally gone to support various relief causes of particular interest to our children. One year we sent the entire amount to the Red Cross to help the people devastated by the Tsunami in southeast Asia; we've similarly made contributions to help people in New Orleans or Haiti after devastating hurricanes. Two years ago, we donated \$8,000 to the Boston Public Library Foundation in recognition of the new children's room and in appreciation for our four decades of having the BPL as our "school library." We have also made gifts to the Back Bay Garden Club in appreciation of their care of our garden out front, and last year we paid for one of the new gingko trees along Clarendon Street.

A portion of the Read-a-Thon money (\$500) is also provided for the stewardship of the Sixth Graders. At the end of their tenure with us in June, they are organized to function as a Philanthropic Foundation. In that capacity, the class is responsible for researching and deciding collaboratively on one or more charities to which they will allocate Read-a-Thon proceeds on behalf of their schoolmates. It is a large responsibility, and one our sixth graders take quite seriously. Last year's class added to the standard \$500 another \$1480 which was 'left over' from the D.C. fundraising, and the elected to donate \$990 to "Not for Sale" an organization dedicated to ending slavery and human trafficking, and \$990 to The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

On the evening of the Read-a-Thon, children in grades K-6 will re-gather at school at 6:30pm, bringing with them, if they so wish, their pajamas or other comfy clothes, their slippers, their stuffed animals, their pillows and blankets and, of course, their books. We will use the ballroom downstairs for the Kindergarteners. And they read and read and read. Younger ones get "read to" for part of the time, and everyone has a snack break. The children raise a lot of money (several thousand dollars believe it or not!) and they have a fabulous time.

The pledge sheet (one for each LP child) is a way to build not just pledges but also engagement of the child. One of the 'hidden benefits' of our Read-a-Thon occurs when the child calls the neighbor, or family friend, or grand mom and explains what the Read-a-Thon is about, why its being done, and asks for a pledge. We don't want to lose that benefit by doing it all for the child, or by not making the pledge form central to this exercise. And if you need another one (pledge sheet not child) call Claire and she'll send one home.

Each student will read for a maximum of two hours. We count snack (milk and a cookie) as part of the larger "reading experience." Students may ask family, friends and neighbors to sponsor them. A teacher will then sign the form at the Read-a-Thon and return the signed form to the child so he or she can collect pledges.

Our goal, always, is to have 100% participation. Children who are unable to be here on the night of the Read-a-Thon because of travel, etc., are welcome to participate 'off location' and to feel at least a distant connection to the event at school and help with this worthy community effort.

Staff Update

Over the Winter Break I received an email from Maggie Seitz, our Fundraising, Publications and Events Coordinator for the past year, informing me that she had given the job some thought over Break and had decided to resign, effective immediately. The Administrative Team met on Tuesday morning and, for the moment, we have divided up Maggie's responsibilities among ourselves until we find her replacement. Rachel Hajj has kindly volunteered to help us out with some data processing work on Fridays. The job listing, updated, was posted yesterday.

Maggie worked hard, was unfailingly pleasant and enjoyed by the children, and will be missed. We wish her

well and hope she stays in touch.

Referrals of candidates are most welcome. In the interim, please forgive us if the phone doesn't get picked up on the second or third ring!

We've Googleized

We have for many years hosted our own e-mail on an in-house server using Microsoft software. While initially the cheapest option, it had become increasingly glitchy for our all Mac environment. "I hate Outlook" had become a refrain, at least on the first floor. Going Google made sense. We already had a free (and closed to the outside world) Google Apps for Education account for student document sharing. All that was missing was time to execute. With the addition of John Krewson, as our new Tech Coordinator able to help with the transition, we grabbed the opportunity of December break to have the school's IT Consultant, Mark Travers implement the small job of expanding our existing account to accommodate access to the outside world by our staff, and the very large job of migrating our individual data sets to Google. A task that is almost complete.

Although we were "down" for about 24 hours over break and may have bounced a few emails, the transition has been pretty seamless. All of our email addresses are the same as before, and nothing much changes for 'the outside. Some bugs are still being identified and, as I understand the process, they are being kindly removed from the building and released. Meanwhile, it's possible that some important e-mails got lost by us during the time we couldn't use email, and if you suspect that was the case (haven't heard back) please resend.

Quote

"It has always seemed strange to me. The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding and feeling, are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest, are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first they love the produce of the second."

John Steinbeck - *Cannery Row*

Word of the Week: Curtail:

To reduce in extent or quantity; impose a restriction on. "Civil liberties were further curtailed."

Michael

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Financial Aid for 2017-2018

I apologize that I neglected to get a notice of the Financial Assistance calendar in a December LP Bulletin.

The Financial Aid application process is open, with a January 30 deadline for applying. The school uses the School and Student Service (SSS) of the National Association of Independent Schools to collect and analyze family data in determining need. The first step in this process is to complete the Parents Financial Statement (PFS) on line at SSS, and submit to me final 2016 pay stubs, W2 forms, a Form 4506-T and the supplemental Financial Aid form, all due on January 30, 2017. Your completed 2016 Federal tax forms are due on **February 16**.

Full information is available at

<http://www.learningproject.org/wp-content/uploads/TA-Cover-2017.pdf>

Returning students not currently receiving assistance are eligible to apply. Let me know if you have any questions, emccord@learningproject.org, and certainly if this deadline would be a problem for you.

Elisabeth

Sign-Up for Chess with Igor

Our chess enthusiasts will be happy to hear that Igor is back! He is excited to resume his usual After School Chess Club at The LP starting **Thursday, January 26th**. Please see the attached form (in the Attachments box) for details and return it to Ms. Mellen no later than **January 17th**.

Winter Adventure Trip: Ski/Snowboard Trip to Pat's Peak

Now that we are fully in the swing of admissions "season", we need lots of parent help! In particular, we are seeking volunteers to sit with prospective parents during kindergarten visits (8:15- 9:15, most Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays throughout January and February). Please sign up here if you're available to help out, and thank you! <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30eod4aaca828a6fb6-winter>

More Admissions Volunteers Needed through the Winter

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After School - Quarter 3

A reminder that any families wishing to make changes to Quarter 3 after school should have their requests to Claire by **January 9th**. The after school changes form can be found in the attachment box.

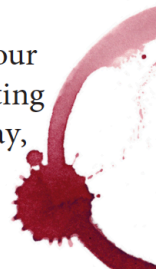
First Auction Meeting Scheduled!

Black and White, with a Splash of Red! The LP Annual Auction is scheduled for **March 31, 2017**.

We are looking for volunteers to assist in the planning of this year's Auction. All those interested should plan on attending the first Auction Committee Meeting on **Wednesday, January 11th**, at The Learning Project. If you cannot make the meeting, and are still interested in volunteering, please email Chris Kandus-Fisher, Auction Chair, at ckandusfisher@berklee.edu. Hope you can join us!



Want to be a part of the planning? Please attend our Auction Committee meeting at 7:45 a.m. on Wednesday, 1/11, at The LP.

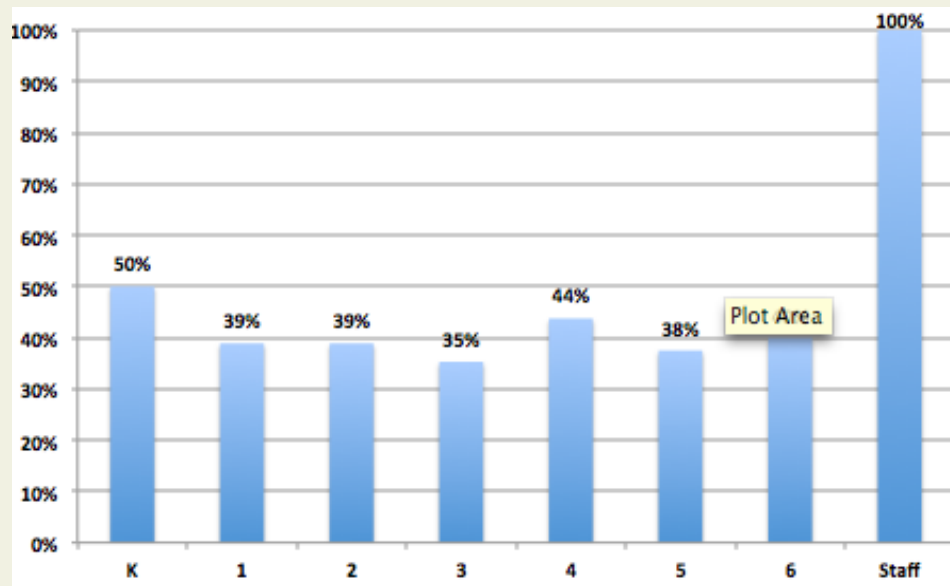


"Join Hands" Campaign Update

Our Annual Fund campaign is a vital part of what we do each year - vital because it provides the funds we need annually to close the gap between the school's expenses and its revenues. As at most schools, tuition here does not cover all of our costs, and so we appeal to the generosity of parents, alumni, Board Members, faculty and friends to help us "close the gap."

Many thanks to those of you who have already given, and this - a gentle reminder to those who haven't yet. We strive to reach 100% parent participation; last year, we hit 98%! So very close. Please keep in mind that this year we have an anonymous donor who will contribute \$1,000 for each class that reaches 100% participation. Any amount at all helps us reach this goal. We're well on our way!

The following graph will be a regular feature of The LP Bulletin. I hope we all have the opportunity to see our community close the gap between where we are today in January and the 100% target by the end of June. Checks can be made out to The Learning Project and dropped off in the front office, or donations can be made online at www.learningproject.org/support/donate.



ARTISTS OF THE WEEK

Mondrian-Inspired Assemblages

For this project, the First Grade students continued their examination of the color wheel. We looked at the primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) and discussed that all other colors are derived by mixing the primary colors together. We looked at the work of Piet Mondrian and his use of only the primary colors and black and white in his work. The students observed Mondrian's piece entitled "Broadway Boogie Woogie" and noticed that he used the placement of the primary colors to represent the movement of a city. For their project, the children were given the primary colors and pieces of cardboard. They listened to boogie-envoking music and painted as they danced. They assembled their cardboard pieces to create a composition similar to Mondrian's work.



Rahni Patel, First Grad

Mickalene Thomas Portrait Collages

This project is a continuation of the second grade study of texture. We looked at the work of contemporary artist Mickalene Thomas and observed the non-traditional materials (sequins, rhinestones, textiles) she uses to give her portraits a sense of texture. The students first examined themselves in the mirror and painted their self-portraits. They then added clothes and collaged a colorful background using various patterned paper and fabric.



Paul Tompros, Second Grade

Landscapes Showing Depth

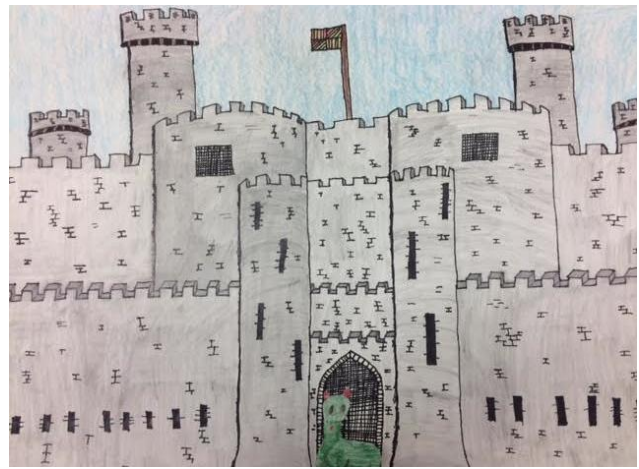
For this project, the third grade class studied the landscape paintings of Albert Bierstadt. They noticed that he used multiple overlapping layers, and the four parts of a landscape (foreground, middle ground, background, and horizon line) to achieve a sense of depth in his work. Inspired by this, the students used a variety of materials, and collage and painting techniques, to create a landscape of their choice that demonstrates the idea that objects look big when they are close up and small when they are far away.



Nayan Seetharam, Third Grade

Medieval Pop-Up Landscape

This project is an extension of the Fourth Grade history unit on medieval culture. The students read about life during the middle ages and examined beautiful medieval tapestries displaying mythological creatures and pastoral life. They looked at pictures of knights, castles, dragons, lords, pheasants, and other images associated with the middle ages, and created a landscape displaying three-dimensional pop-up features inspired by what they observed.



Oliver Grant, Fourth Grade

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