

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

# 2017 WINTER REPORT



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**STATE OF THE SCHOOL** 

### COMING SOON AIM FOR THE STARS GALA

We hope you will join us to celebrate the AIM Experience at our **AIM for the Stars Gala** on Thursday, April 20th where we will recognize **Senator Bob Casey** with our AIM Institute for Learning & Research Leadership Award and

**Jarrod Kahn**, president of the Accessories Division for Global Brands Group, with the Sally L. Smith

Founders Award.



Jarrod Kahn President Accessories Division Global Brands Group

**Senator Bob Casey** Pennsylvania

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### LETTER FROM PAT & NANCY



When we wrote our back to school message last August, we shared with our AIM families that the theme for the school year would be **One School**. **One Community. Home.** We knew then that by the end of the year, we would very likely be homeowners of our entire school campus at 1200 River Road.

On January 30, the goal of assuring AIM's future by purchasing the 4.5acre River Park 2 property outright became a reality.

We are truly home.

"Now that we own the campus, we have secured the legacy of AIM Academy and have started to build upon the foundation for the best research-to-practice academic environment in the country," said AIM Board chair Matthew Naylor.

We are excited to look toward the future as we seek to provide even more opportunities for professionals to learn about literacy instruction, watch faculty members become leaders and participate in research and of course help our students discover their passion as they learn and grow.

This winter State of the School report is filled with examples of the many ways innovative teachers educate our fearless learners every day as well as first-person reflections answering the question Why AIM?

Pat Roberts Executive Director

Pat Rabert

Nancy Blair Associate Director



Since opening our doors 11 years ago, we have worked to provide as many children as possible with an AIM Academy education. As we have grown from 26 to 315 students, we have continued to work to meet the financial needs of families wishing to join our community.

With the recent receipt of an anonymous \$1 million donor, AIM has launched the AIM Scholarship Fund. The **\$1 million donation** will support need-based scholarships over the next three years, with \$700,000 of the gift being used to launch the scholarship endowment campaign.

"This donation will help remove the barriers to an AIM Academy education for both current and future students and will help increase overall diversity at the school by attracting new students and families," the donor said. "I urge others to support the scholarship initiative so that any child who learns differently can access AIM's specialized services regardless of financial circumstances."

"Generous AIM supporters already contribute tax money to EITC/OSTC scholarships that enable 45 of our 79 scholarship students to attend AIM Academy," said Nancy Blair. "The establishment of this endowed fund will allow us to culturally enrich our community by welcoming even more students."

The AIM Scholarship Endowment Fund greatly enhances AIM's standing commitment to scholarship. The campaign's goal is to raise \$1 million annually towards \$10 Million endowment by year 2021, with a projected yield of \$250,000 toward yearly scholarships.

### MAKING THE AIM COMMUNITY CENTER HOME



Since the opening of the AIM Community Center last spring, our students and staff have quickly made the building, which house our arts programs and a full-size gymnasium, home.

In December, a generous AIM family made an additional \$617,000 milestone leadership gift to our AIM Community Center Capital Campaign 2 bringing their family's total gift for this effort to \$1 million!

"We watched our child flourish at AIM and believe that the education and experiences AIM provides should be available for generations of students to come," the donor said.

This generous donation to the ACC campaign means we are just \$400,000 from reaching our campaign goal of \$8,000,000 by the end of the year.

Thanks to this third \$1 million generous gift and the gifts of the many others who have supported this ACC campaign, we have enjoyed hosting events at home, on the AIM campus

whether watching our high schoolers take the stage with Broadway stars in October, live-streaming the Lower School Winter Concert in December, cheering on basketball players during February Frenzy or planning for our March 13th Research to Practice Symposium which will include more than 200 people attending in person and even more following along online.

We hope to see you at an ACC event soon.



### Broadway Comes to the ACC

In late October, eight professional performers, transported a packed ACC to Broadway during AIM's **Tribute to Broadway** event. The family-friendly event, which celebrated the new school stage and community center, featured a musical revue with performers who have performed on Broadway in musicals such as Les Miserables, Cats, Evita, Tale of Two Cities and In the Heights.

As part of this unique event, 23 AIM Upper School students and three alumni also prepared songs to perform with the professionals on stage in their "Broadway" debut. The students enjoyed a special master class with the actor, including individual sessions and said the feedback they received from the performers was constructive and invaluable.

The entire ensemble's finale performance of One More Day from *Les Misérables* brought the house down.

## **IN THE CLASSROOMS**

Student Monologue Awarded First-Place in Young Playwrights Competition



AlM junior Liam Feeney's award-winning monologue started with a quirky question. While sitting in his Improv Drama class with Ms. Maryanne Yoshida as his classmates worked on monologues around him, Liam wondered aloud: "I wonder what happens when you shave a kiwi."

After getting encouragement to write about the idea from Ms. Yoshida, positive feedback from his classmates and finding videos online of people actually shaving kiwi fruit, Liam took this question, created a fantastical, postapocalyptic world and wrote his monologue submission for the **Philadelphia Young Playwrights Young Voices Monologue Competition**.

Earlier this month he learned that his monologue, **The Kiwi Comeback**, had been selected as one of 18 first place winners out of almost 450 submissions in the competition!

Over the next few months, Liam, who arrived at AIM in 4th grade, will work with a professional actor, director and dramaturg to get the monologue ready for the stage and the April 13th-22nd festival performances at the Drake Theatre in Philadelphia.

This is the first year that AIM has competed in the high school level of the Young Playwrights competition.

Liam Feeney, AIM Junior

I find it so amazing that our kids who struggle so much with writing are up winning awards in competition with students from great schools in the Philadelphia area," said Yoshida, who invited a visiting artist to school this fall to give feedback to students submitting their monologues. Other first-place awards in this year's competition are students at school such as Friends Select, Germantown Academy, Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy, Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts and the Julia R. Masterman School. "I'm interested in understanding what Mrs. Yoshida goes through every fall and spring directing plays," Liam said.



#### **Robotics - Minecraft Education**

4th grader robotics students have begun exploring and inventing using a new STEAM program that is popular in homes everywhere. The newly released Minecraft Education Edition features brand-new software made JUST for schools, explained Maker Space Teacher **Doug Markgraf**.

"Students will have the opportunity to explore and create ways of thinking and learning in this immensely-popular computer game." Markgraf said. "In particular, Minecraft Edu enables students to build, invent, and collaborate with one another in a colorful, customizable, virtual environment. While students are building their own unique structures in the game, they will make be learning advanced STEAM concepts such as coding, physics, optics, sound, and general logic."

#### Entrepreneurship - Middle School Entrepreneurs

After five years watching Upper School students to explore their talents for problem solving, innovation and collaboration in our Start Up Corps entrepreneurship program, AIM launched its **Middle School Startup Entrepreneurship** program this fall.

Fifteen 7th and 8th graders have been working with Start Up director **PJ Raduta** to identify and solve problems, learn the basics of business fundamentals such as problem solving, innovation, finance, market research, and sales. As part of the program, every student will launch at least one venture, solving a problem or meeting a need for a specific target market. You can support these young entrepreneurs by visiting an Etsy page where students can sell online. https://www.etsy.com/shop/SchoolyardVentures

### Why AIM

Something that significantly stood out to both me and my husband when we were looking at schools is I really felt that AIM, early on, finds a child's passion and taps into their talents and really helps that blossom. I love that there is a 100% college acceptance rate, but I also like that AIM doesn't just teach them how to get in to college but it taps into things early on for them to think about as careers and what they're going to do after college.

**Tiffany Silbert** is the parent of an AIM 2nd Grader.

## IN THE CLASSROOMS (CONTINUED...)

### College Prep - Dual Enrollment Opportunities for AIM Artists and Entrepreneurs

Providing AIM seniors with the opportunity to experience college first-hand, earn credits and learn to advocate for themselves, has been a key part of our curriculum since our first group of AIM seniors enrolled at Cabrini College in 2011 As AIM's reputation has grown and we branch out into the community to continue exploring the unique opportunities that our students have come to expect, it is no surprise we are finding many universities eager to partner with AIM.

In December and January, AIM announced dual-enrollment partnerships with **The University of the Arts** and **Drexel University's Close School of Entrepreneurship** to begin in Fall 2017. These partnerships will provide select AIM seniors headed in a more specialized direction of study such as the arts or entrepreneurship to prepare for what comes next, explained Head of Upper School **Chris Herman**.

For AIM entrepreneurs, the Drexel program will allow students to spend time learning the ins and outs of business, marketing, prototyping, sales, and distribution all within an innovative start up environment.

"With a curriculum focused on the 4Cs of 21st Century skills and a program and philosophy named a national exemplary by P21, AIM is clearly the kind of partner that suits the Close School's Startup spirit," Herman explained.

In the same manner, AIM's curriculum that has always been grounded in the Arts and in the power of learning by doing, makes AIM a partner that suits the spirit and mission of the University of the Arts.







## Why AIM

AIM is the reason I can write, read, have my passion of entrepreneurship and so much more. The way I learn and the way I think everyone should learn is really focus on what you love. AIM is where I found my passion and came to understand my learning style.

Andrew Rosenstein, Class of 2017. Published his book, A Millennial World: Understanding the Drive of a Rising Generation in August. His story and AIM experience was featured on 6ABC News in October.



Andrew Rosenstein, Class of 2017

#### **Puppy Power**

Smiles spread across the faces of students and faculty alike last month when they arrived in the GRC to see three service dogs on hand to help ease students' anxiety during mid-terms.

Soon students will be able to experience canine affection everyday when **Kelly**, a black lab mix trained by local organization **Paws and Affection** officially joins the AIM family as our school therapy dog. Kelly will live with her

handler (an AIM staff member) and be present at school during the day. Studies show that petting animals can reduce anxiety and that some children who struggle with reading or are self-conscious reading aloud are calmer and more confident when they read to a dog. From I to r. Nancy Blair, Paws and Affection's Susie Daily and Laura O'Kane, AIM 7th grader Jared Goodman and Pat Roberts with Kelly.

#### Learning to Lead

As our Upper School students develop their communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills they are also learning to become leaders, both within school and their communities.

This fall AIM became the only high school in Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia area to operate a chapter of **Eye** to **Eye**, a national LD/ADHD mentoring program. Upper School chapter leaders work weekly on art projects with students with learning differences at nearby AMY Northwest Middle School in Philadelphia. AIM chapter leaders **Sam M**. and **Chloe F**. have shared their experience with Board Members and at a meeting of the National Network for Schools in Partnership. "For us to be able to go to these schools and work with these mentees who maybe are having trouble in school or just not getting it and saying it will be ok and that ... your disability will not handicap your future is huge," Sam M. explained.

And in December, six Upper School students, accompanied by Athletics Director **Mike Brooks**, took part in a transformational experience attending the Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC) in Atlanta. During the event, which was a part of the People of Color Conference (PoCC) presented by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), our AIM students listened to speakers (like Hank Aaron), took part in workshops, and met new friends from over 1,600 other independent school students from 42 states. They were able to discuss the importance of diversity and inclusiveness as it relates to race, gender, and orientation. But, more importantly they were taught strategies and techniques to assess, reflect, and enact positive change in the AIM community and the world.



### **ATHLETICS & FITNESS**

Whether they are learning the basics for establishing an exercise routine in our new ACC Fitness Center, competing in individual sports outside of school, or working with teammates to represent AIM Academy during Tri-County Athletic League playoff and championship events, AIM students of all ages are showing their athletic skills, team work and collaboration on the field, track, rink, court and more.



This fall, **Varsity Soccer** players **Dallen M.**, **Grant K.**, and **Austin M.** were selected to compete in the Tri County League All Star Game, our Middle School soccer team had a nearly perfect season and AlM's co-ed **Varsity Cross Country** team took second place over all at the Tri-County League's championship meet.

In January our Boys Varsity Basketball team, playing for the first season in the ACC gym clinched a spot in the league playoffs. Our new gym has also been the site this year of new fitness



gym has also been the site this year of new timess programs at AIM including fencing, a popular addition to our extracurricular offerings and lacrosse clinics as we prepare to add this popular sport to our athletics roster this spring.





### AIM for Success – A Morning with Temple's Fran Dunphy

Temple University Basketball Coach **Fran Dunphy** became the school's first AIM for Success Speaker in October. Dunphy shared his advice for working hard and overcoming difficulties as keys to success on and off the court. "All of you at AIM Academy, you're a team," Coach Dunphy said. "The best thing about a team is you become teammates."

### CATCHING UP WITH AIM ALUMS

What is life like after AIM? How do students handle the transition to college? Why AIM? In January parents and students alike had the opportunity to ask and hear answers to these questions from a panel of recent AIM alumni. **Read more of our alumni's thoughts on Why AIM.** 



"AIM is the reason that I was able to get into many of the colleges that I did because they gave me the tools and strategies to succeed. School is not easy for me and still isn't, however, I've found myself over the course of my Freshman and Sophomore year to be using what AIM has taught me and I have certainly seen the difference it makes."

**Jon Lowry**, Class of 2015, is a sophomore at St. Joseph's University where he is majoring in Sports Marketing.



"AIM is incredible because of the nurturing environment they have here, the community they have and all of the myriad of resources and tools and strategies that all of the teachers bend over backward each and every day to give their students. AIM has provided me with life-long learning and a bright future."

**Maria Santangelo**, Class of 2015, is a sophomore at Philadelphia University. She is a member of the university's cross country team and is enrolled in a 5-year Occupational Therapy degree program.



"The things I think I learned most at AIM were the ability to understand my learning disability better than I had before and learning to take advantage of different resources and learn how to get them in the first place. They always had a focus on making us prepared for the next level when it comes to education and getting us ready. It gave me the ability to go to a school that I really wanted to attend."

**Michael Berman**, Class of 2016, is a freshman at American University in Washington, DC. He credits AIM for leadership opportunities he wouldn't have been able to receive away from AIM such as being a student ambassador, varsity basketball captain and graduation commencement speaker.

## FACULTY AND STAFF

#### **Did You Know?**

- Thomas Jefferson University recently named AIM's **Occupational Therapy Department** a PreMo (Promoting Environments that Measure Outcomes) site. AIM is fortunate to be 1 of 3 occupational therapy programs in the area to have this distinction of operating an innovative program.
- AIM's entire **Speech and Language Therapy** team traveled to the national American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) conference in November. AIM therapists were poised to bring back research and resources for the entire AIM community and commented AIM is on the cutting edge of emphasizing language as part of literacy!"
- ALL AIM students benefit from the feedback and input of **AIM's Learning Support team** whether they receive individualized support or not as teachers and program leaders communicate and receive input on students and their needs.

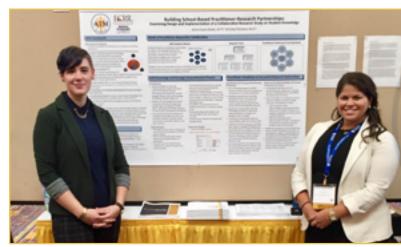
#### Did You Know?

- 78% of AIM faculty hold advanced degrees
- Our faculty and staff have worked in classrooms and schools for an average of 11 years.
- 5th Grade teacher **Aviva Coyne-Green** will spend part of AIM's spring break working with teachers at Summit School in Annapolis, Md. to help set up a literacy research project.
- Upper School Language Arts Teacher **Alli Gubanich** represented the Folger Shakespeare Library at the National Council for Teachers of English conference in Atlanta in November sharing how to differentiate a lesson for children with learning differences entitled: "Shakespeare Is for Everyone—a Hands-On Workshop in Differentiation."
- Upper School Teacher **Anne Rock** who is spearheading the Middle School's new Riding for Focus program has been invited by **The Specialized Foundation** to attend their training program in Morgan Hill, Calif. this summer to train the next group of Riding for Focus schools.
- 6,560 professional development hours are earned by AIM faculty EACH YEAR

#### Educating Global Citizens - Cultivate Kindness Initiative

Our school-wide, faculty-driven **Cultivate Kindness** initiative permeated all of our classrooms, added inspired art to our walls, led to thoughtful discussions in literature and math classes and taught children and staff alike ways that they can share kindness all around. Be sure to look for our all-school art installation near our conference rooms showing AIM's vision of kindness in art.





AIM teachers Emily Pritchard and Aviva Coyne-Green at the IDA conference.



AIM's Occupational Therapy Team



AIM's Speech and Language Therapy Team



I am in an environment that is constantly challenging me to be the best educator I can for students. Through the professional development and research-based practices at AIM I am continually growing in my knowledge base and in the instruction I deliver to students.

Eilis McMahon, a 5th Grade Teacher, holds a bachelor of science degree and a master's degree in education with a focus on learning disabilities from Hunter College.

### AIM INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING & RESEARCH

#### AIM Endorses Federal RISE Act Legislation

The AIM Institute for Learning & Research, the professional development and research arm of AIM Academy, was one of 17 organizations endorsing, the **RISE** Act, bi-partisan legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate in December to support college students with learning disabilities as they continue their education beyond high school.

"While AIM Academy faculty and staff work hard to ensure our students are well prepared for the transition to college, we are aware of the common struggles that students can face related to college faculty reluctance to allow for accommodations or the costs associated with the required diagnostic testing," explained **Deborah Lynam**, Director of Partnerships and Engagement for the AIM Institute for Learning & Research.

According to the National Center for Learning Differences, which also endorsed the **RISE** Act legislation, 94% of students with learning disabilities received accommodations in high school, but only 17% received accommodations in postsecondary schools.

#### **Research to Practice**

The AIM Institute for Learning & Research's **5th Annual Research to Practice Symposium** on March 13th promises to be the largest gathering of educators and professionals yet. The symposium, which will focus on **Reading Proficiency: Differences That Matter**, includes free in-person and live streaming opportunities and will focus on Reading Proficiency: Differences That Matter with expert speakers: **Dr. Diane August**, **Dr. Nadine Gaab**, and AIM Research Advisory Board Members **Dr. Louisa Moats** and **Dr. Julie Washington**.



### **Reading Proficiency: Differences That Matter**

A Closer Look at High Risk Populations - Literacy Development & Practices That Work

### SAVE the DATE! Monday, March 13, 2017



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Andine Gards, Ph.D.





Nadine Gaab, Ph.D. sociate Professor al Pediatrics, Boston Children's Haspital/ Harvard Medical School

Consulting Inconts, Ed.or. President, Moets Associates Consulting, Inc.; Author, LETRS Professional Development Series





From I to r: Pat Roberts, Access-to-the-Experts speaker Dr. Fumiko Hoeft and Nancy Blair.

#### Introducing the AIM Model to Others

Over the past few months visitors to AIM have included:

- Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera In September, we welcomed Secretary Rivera to our campus so he could learn about AIM's educational model and developing literacy skills for children with diagnosed learning disabilities. Rivera's visit, part of his Schools That Teach tour, provided him the opportunity to witness AIM's research-based, integrative curriculum in action.
- Leaders at the National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Chinese Educators visiting Philadelphia for a program at Temple University.
- An award winning Australian teacher who used her grant money to travel to the IDA conference and visit United States schools for children with learning differences like AIM.

#### Students and Research - By AIM 8th Grader Seiji H.

There are many research studies occurring in the lower and middle school at AIM Academy. Please keep in mind that all of these studies are completely voluntary for the students.

- One of the studies happening in the lower school involves the 5th grade. Researchers, **Amy Elleman**, Ph.D, and **Don Compton**, Ph.D, are researching "how words acquired during the year-long study of the Italian Renaissance are integrated into a student's knowledge of related word meanings."
- Another research study is happening in the middle school with the 8th grade. Dr. Lori Severino is studying the brain to make a reading comprehension app. She is using a special kind of headband that measures blood flow.
- There is another study for grades 4th through 12th. Dr. **Fumiko Hoeft** is doing an anxiety measure. To put it simply, she is measuring the anxiety students have when they have to read.

Those are the research projects happening at AIM, and hopefully the results of these studies will help students learn more effectively.

From the November issue of **The Pack**, AIM's Middle School Newspaper



From I to r: Nancy Blair and Pat Roberts with Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera.

### Why AIM?

AIM's willingness to let us examine the impact of the integrative humanities program on passage comprehension and transfer in fifth arade students has been truly amazing. The school's understanding of benefits of having researchers involved in the school is extraordinary. This relationship between practitioners and researchers allows AIM to continually modify and evaluate how best to serve their unique population of students.



AIM Research Advisory Board Member **Dr. Don Compton** will launch his second research project at AIM in late February.

## SUPPORTING FEARLESS LEARNERS

#### Every Gift Matters. Every Gift Makes a Difference.

- 77 generous donors responded to our Giving Tuesday challenge on November 29th surpassing the \$50,000 matching gift challenge offered by an Anonymous Donor and Pat Roberts and Nancy Blair, and raising a total of \$103,605 for AIM in just one day!
- 100% of AIM's Faculty and Staff Have Contributed to the 2016-2017 Annual Fund
- A scientist at **Glaxo Smith Kline** was so impressed by the AIM students he met during a science class visit to the pharmaceutical company that he made a donation to AIM
- 23 businesses that pay Pennsylvania business taxes received tax credits for donating to AIM through the EITC and OSTC scholarship program in 2016. As of February 15, \$456,535 has been pledged
- Vulcan Spring & Mfg. Co. is once again sponsoring our high school FIRST Robotics team with a \$10,000 donation. Vulcan owner Scott Ranking visited with team members in February to learn about their coming competitions and efforts to share robotics tips through informational videos.



### Why AIM

I don't invest in things, I invest in people and my wife and I really try and give to kids. What AIM is doing is filling a need that no one else seems to want to think about. You have kids who learn a little bit differently that no one would care about in a regular school. AIM seems to focus on these kids who to me are brilliant. The reality is I'm looking for future employees and for people that can work for me and do tremendous things. What they're learning in robotics has nothing to do with school. It has everything to do with life lessons and bringing skills to a company that no one else will have.

**Scott Rankin** is the President of Vulcan Spring Mfg. Co. He and his wife **Sharon** have supported AIM and sponsored the high school robotics team since the team's inaugural season three years ago.



### ONE SCHOOL. ONE COMMUNITY. HOME.

Our many AIM community events have provided numerous opportunities for AIM families and friends to celebrate One School. One Community. Home. Record attendance at the **HSA's Fall Festival** and **Grandfriends Day** provided great opportunities for family and friends to see our students at work and play. Children showed off their blue and gold AIM pride during **Spirit Week** and winter events like **Family Fun Night** and **February Frenzy**.

Looking ahead, we are looking forward to many more opportunities to celebrate "One School. One Community. Home" in the months to come:

**Hearing** stories and experiences from our Middle School and High School students as they travel abroad from Williamsburg, Virginia to Krakow, Poland

**Greeting** new students in our **AIM Summer Enrichment Program** from July 3 to July 28.

Seeing STEAM come to life at our all-school B.A.S.H. on Thursday, April 27th

and **Watching** our 5th and 8th graders moving up and our Class of 2017 graduates receive their diplomas on the ACC stage in June.

We hope to see you soon.



