

Dolphin Dispatch

THE DISCOVERY MAGAZINE | NO. 03

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OUR MISSION

WE OPEN OUR
MINDS AND HEARTS
SO WE CAN
DISCOVER THE
KNOWLEDGE AND
IDEALS TO BUILD A
BETTER WORLD.

Our Vision

*To cultivate an inclusive and vibrant
community that promotes knowledge,
creativity, independent thinking and
mutual respect.*



Nita Hurley & Meghan Devlin
CO-EDITORS IN CHIEF

Welcome

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



Dear Discovery Community,

Welcome to the 2024-25 school year, the 34th year in the school's existence.

Local School. Global Education.

I am filled with pride reflecting on the unique journey we offer our students at The Discovery School. Our commitment to fostering a holistic educational experience, rooted in Montessori principles for our Toddler and Primary students, and culminating in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program is a testament to our dedication to nurturing well-rounded, international-minded individuals. For this reason, we want to highlight the connection of our *Local School* and our *Global Education*.

Montessori & IB

At Discovery, we believe that education is not confined to the walls of our classrooms. It is a vibrant tapestry woven from the threads of local experiences and global perspectives. Our Montessori approach encourages our youngest learners to explore their environment, develop independence, and cultivate a love for learning.

This foundation is essential as students transition into the IB program, where inquiry-based learning takes center stage.

Here, students engage with complex concepts, think critically, and develop the skills necessary to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

As our students progress to the capstone middle school program in grades 7 and 8, they are empowered to synthesize their learning from the Montessori and IB frameworks. Our middle school program not only showcases their academic achievements but also emphasizes the importance of internationalism, open-mindedness, and collaboration. Our 8th graders emerge as confident inquirers and compassionate collaborators, ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

An Interconnected World

In a world that is more interconnected than ever, we are committed to instilling in our students a sense of responsibility towards their local and global communities. Through service projects, cultural exchanges, and collaborative initiatives, our students experience and carry on the value of empathy, respect, and understanding. They become not just learners, but active participants in shaping and building a better world.

As we celebrate the achievements of our students and the dedication of our educators, I invite you to reflect on the profound impact of a global education rooted in local values. Together, we are nurturing a generation of thinkers, innovators, and leaders who will contribute positively to society. I further invite you to inspire your children to help them bring local initiatives to our classrooms.

Thank you for being an integral part of our school community. Your support and involvement are vital as we continue to inspire and empower our students to reach their fullest potential.

Yours in partnership,
Petra Obritzberger

Team Discovery

2024-2025

Administration

Petra Obritzberger | *Head of School*
Jill Nason | *Director of Finance & HR*
Nita Hurley | *Co-Director of Admissions, Marketing & Communications*
Meghan Devlin | *Co-Director of Admissions, Marketing & Communications*
Josh Tayloe | *Development Coordinator*
Shane Remenda | *Director of Facilities, Health & Safety*
Trevis Nelson | *Dean of Students*
Chad Bishop | *Athletic Director*
Madison Pruski-Long | *School Secretary & Receptionist*
Hannah Rose | *Business Office Coordinator*
Jasmine Ramos | *Aftercare Coordinator & Toddler Montessori Mentor*
Mariya Stephenson | *Social Media & Public Relations Coordinator*
Stacy Derleth | *Librarian & Webmaster*

Academic Coordinators & Student Experience

Heather Oulton Rousseau | *Director of Upper School & High School Advisor*
Liz Colavecchio | *Interim Director of Lower School*
Erica Wright | *Elementary & Enrichment Coordinator*
Laura Bayer | *Curriculum Coordinator*
Lauren Meredith | *IB PYP Coordinator*
Trevis Nelson | *Dean of Students*
Robin Thomas | *Lead Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator*
Christine Tocco | *Lead Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator*
Naomi Kaplan | *Learning Specialist*
Ellen Baughman | *School Counselor*
Jasmine Ramos | *Aftercare Coordinator & Toddler Montessori Mentor*



Aftercare & Substitute Team

Odemaris Alfonso-Sierra
Alicia Birch
Jenny Caceres
Amanda Fleetwood
Caroline Lebet
Wendy Morton
Maddie Ober
Abigail Roberts
Lisa Rodriguez
Isida Skarco
Kristie Starnieri
Xyla Strohecker
Anna Tocco



Enrichment Team

Maria Fournier-Bernal | *Spanish*
Chad Bishop | *Athletic Director*
Marie Carpenter | *Ecodiscovery & STEM*
Stacy Derleth | *Librarian*
Yoko Lafferty | *Japanese*
Ana Paz | *Art & Spanish*
Adam Rohrer | *Music*
Will Smith | *Director of Innovation*
Chantal Windham | *Spanish & World Language Coordinator*
Andreina Zubizarreta | *Spanish*

Toddler Team

Ashley Rowe | *Lead Teacher*
 Nicole Peters | *Lead Teacher*
 Lindsay Townsend | *Lead Teacher*
 Christine Tocco | *Lead Teacher*
 Anna Tocco | *Associate Teacher*
 Steven Beck | *Associate Teacher*
 Lisa Rodriguez | *Associate Teacher*
 Raiani Kendrick | *Associate Teacher*
 Cali Nix | *Associate Teacher*
 Odemaris Alfonso-Sierra | *Associate Teacher*
 Linda Phelps | *Toddler Mentor*
 Jasmine Ramos | *Toddler Montessori Mentor*



Primary Team

Lilli Bramley | *Lead Teacher*
 Liz Colavecchio | *Lead Teacher*
 Kelly Gallagher | *Lead Teacher*
 Rachel Greisinger | *Lead Teacher*
 Robin Thomas | *Lead Teacher*
 Cathy Langdon | *Associate Teacher*
 Natalie Kenning | *Team Associate*
 Maddie Ober | *Associate Teacher*
 Isida Skarco | *Associate Teacher*
 Susan Tsai | *Associate Teacher*
 Megan Varnadore | *Associate Teacher*
 RaeAnne Wesley | *Associate Teacher*



Elementary Team

Lauren Dobson | *FE Lead Teacher*
 Ashly Isaacs | *FE Lead Teacher*
 Sara LoSchiavo | *FE Lead Teacher*
 Sarah Mackey | *FE Lead Teacher*
 Annie Payton | *FE Lead Teacher*
 Lori Price | *FE Lead Teacher*
 Cara Downs | *LE Lead Teacher*
 My-Shyellea Fleming | *LE Lead Teacher*
 Kati Johnston | *LE Lead Teacher*
 Bailey Richards | *LE Lead Teacher*
 Lindsay Strohecker | *LE Lead Teacher*
 Maggie Venn | *LE Lead Teacher*
 Emily Harezlak | *UE Lead Teacher*
 Amba Kone | *UE Lead Teacher*
 Kim Strong | *UE Lead Teacher*

Middle School

Ingrid Bowler | *Literature, Global Perspectives & Wellness*
 Heather Oulton Rousseau | *Writer's Workshop & Wellness*
 Deborah Robbins | *Mathematics*
 Will Smith | *Big History Project & STEM*
 Chantal Windham | *Spanish*



About Discovery

WHO WE ARE

The Discovery School of Jacksonville, Inc. was founded in 1990 and is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to providing children a quality education, nurturing intellectual, physical, emotional, and moral growth. Discovery is composed of four divisions: Toddler (ages 18 months - 3 years), Primary (3-6 years, including Kindergarten), Elementary School (grades 1-6), and Middle School (grades 7 & 8).

OUR EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

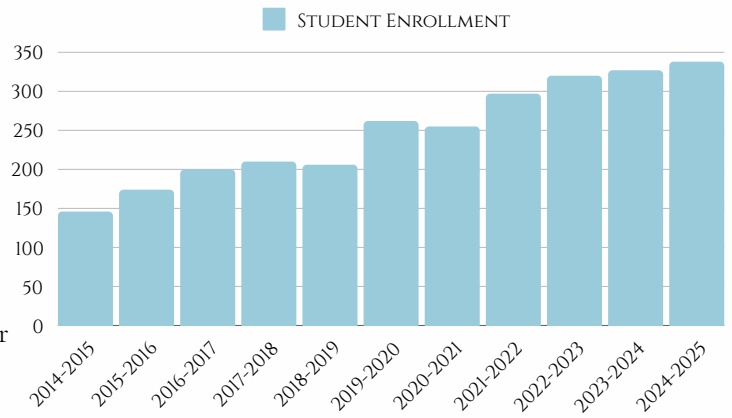
The Discovery School is a diverse and inclusive independent day school that educates students aged 18 months to 14 years. We provide a unique program that begins with the Montessori philosophy with our youngest learners that later transitions in elementary to our inquiry-based environment International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme. The Middle School Program prepares adolescents by fostering thoughtful decision-making and critical thinking skills for the journey ahead by holding high expectations in a low-pressure setting.

OUR CREDENTIALS AND COLLABORATIONS

The Discovery School continually strives to maintain an exceptional learning environment for all of its students. To this end, the school periodically undergoes a stringent re-accreditation or authorization process.

FLORIDA COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (FCIS)

The FCIS accreditation is an objective, independent, and reliable validation of a school's performance. Driven by a passion for educational excellence, the FCIS works to both set the standards and advance the quality of independent private school education in the State of Florida. As one of the nation's largest organizations of independent schools, FCIS represents over 74,000 students in 144 member schools. The Council also represents the interests of independent schools in matters of legislation and regulation.



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY (AMS)

In the spring of 2013, Discovery successfully completed a whole-school accreditation process with the American Montessori Society (AMS). Today, The Discovery School is a member of the American Montessori Society. All Lead Teachers are trained in the Montessori philosophy, all team members undergo regular professional development, and classrooms are set up by its model.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB)

In the spring of 2014, Discovery was accepted as a candidate school for the Primary Years Programme (PYP), pursuing authorization as an IB World School. As such, Discovery shares a common philosophy—a commitment to high-quality, challenging, international education that The Discovery School believes is important for our students. In the winter of 2018, Discovery was successfully approved as a fully authorized IB World School for the PYP (Primary Years Program). During the 2022-23 school year, TDS went through an in-depth re-evaluation with the PYP and hosted a Visiting Team in the spring of 2023.

HIGHER GROUND EDUCATION (ALTITUDE)

We are excited and proud to be an Altitude Learning partner. Altitude Learning facilitates the transformation from teacher-led to student-centered learning with a uniquely comprehensive platform coupled with intensive support. This learning platform allows Discovery educators to focus on what matters most: creating learner-centered experiences in which all learners thrive. Grounded in research about how children learn best and informed by practice, our technology supports the entire learning cycle. It also connects families with student learning as they can view their activities and progress with their own unique access.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Helen Pajcic Nicholson
Board Chair



Cortney Cronin
Vice Chair



Hampton Graham
Treasurer



Bob Stewart
Secretary



Freddie Williams



Josh Ashby



Laura Alrutz



David Doward



Jessica Wynne
Class of '94

Board Functions

- Develop Discovery's long-term Strategic Plan
- Lead Committee Work
- Review and assess the educational mission of the school on an ongoing basis
- Select, support, and review the Head of School
- Approve the school's annual budget and financial plan

THE DISCOVERY SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

Curriculum & Co-Curricular



Delivering an outstanding *Curriculum & Co-Curricular* will remain our standard. We will focus on student-centered learning, pursuing curricular enhancements and ensuring cohesive progression across grade levels.

Student Experience



Providing a unique *Student Experience* is what differentiates our school. We commit to providing a balanced student experience by prioritizing appropriate extracurricular activities, community involvement, and diversity/inclusion.

Physical Space



Enhancing our *Physical Space* continues to be important as the school grows. We will preserve our signature outdoor learning spaces while we focus on campus build-out and heightened safety/security.

Finance & Operations



Ensuring strong *Finances and Operations* are foundational to sustaining our school. We commit to aligning tuition and fundraising with program priorities and our strategic vision.

Governance



Embracing proper *Governance* sustains, guides, and fosters a healthy school that values keeping our faculty, staff, and board members properly trained, evaluated, and prepared to serve the strategic needs of The Discovery School.

Asked & Answered

Helen Pajcic Nicholson, Board Chair
Mom to North Nicholson '31, Shepard Nicholson '34, and
Reed Nicholson '35



01

Introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your history with TDS.

Hi, I'm Helen Pajcic Nicholson, and my husband Marvin and I have three children at The Discovery School (shout out to P4, P5 and FE2!)... and one on the way! My neighbor, Jennifer Kowkabany, introduced me to Discovery and recruited me for the Board when my oldest was in the toddler program. In my former life as a professional I worked in education policy at the federal level in Washington, D.C., and I was happy at the opportunity to stay connected to education in our own community.

02

What inspires you to serve Discovery as a Board Member?

Serving on the board is such a privilege. I am grateful for the opportunity to get to know the administration and families through my role on the board. Together we can ensure Discovery continues to provide a well-rounded, rigorous, engaging education for the generations to come.

03

How do you inspire others to serve?

Make it fun!

04

If you could swap jobs with one staff member, what would you want to try and why?

Presumably this swap includes the staff member's talent, so I would like to be Mr. Adam, the music teacher. The band makes me cry every time!

05

Where do you see the school in the next 5-10 years?

As the leading independent school in Northeast Florida for educating independent, globally minded, curious students aged 18 months to 18 years.

Asked & Answered

Helen Pajcic Nicholson
The Discovery School Board Chair

06

If you had unlimited resources, what is the one thing you, as a board member, would do for our school community?

Give every child in the beaches community the opportunity to attend The Discovery School regardless of income level.

07

How do you define our school community when you talk to others?

Our school community is welcoming, kind, and inclusive.

08

Using only one word, how would you describe The Discovery School?

Empowering

09

What is the most useless talent you possess?

My kids would agree – I'm the best tickler.

10

What is your favorite Discovery memory or tradition?

I look forward to the Around the World celebration every year. This on-campus event showcases the multitude of countries and cultures represented at The Discovery School with food and entertainment. The diversity is inspiring – and delicious!



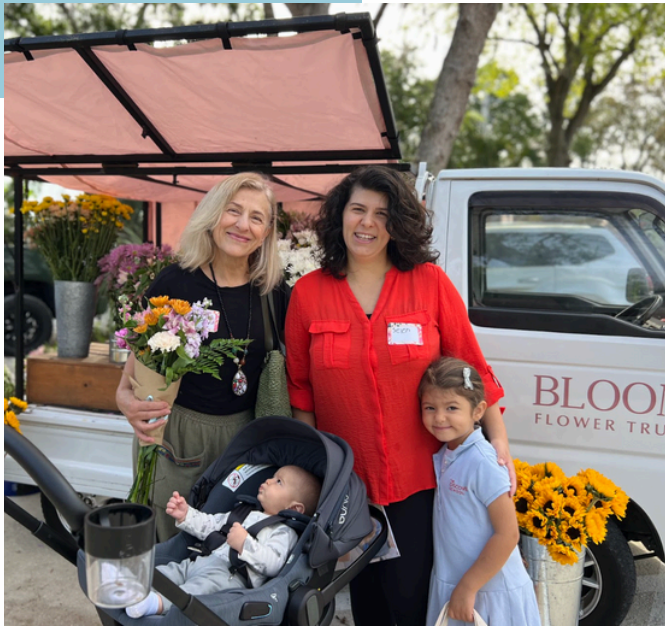
CELEBRATING OUR FAMILIES & FRIENDS FROM NEAR AND FAR



Grandparents & Special Friends Week has become one of the most beloved traditions for students and families, an event that brings different generations together on our campus for a unique opportunity to experience a small part of what it means to be a Discovery student. Every spring we invite grandparents, families special friends to spend the day on campus.

The Bloom Flower Truck provided an interactive experience with a bouquet of flowers together. The Library was busy with parent volunteers and visitors for our Annual Book Fair. Visitors explored the campus, participated in classroom activities, and enjoyed refreshments with their special guests.





AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD: DISCOVERY ABROAD



By: The Middle School Team

Learning at Discovery extends beyond the classroom! Last spring, our middle school students embarked on an unforgettable field trip to Costa Rica, a country renowned for its incredible biodiversity, stunning landscapes, and rich cultural heritage. Their journey was a hands-on learning experience that blended education with exploration, fostered greater independence and responsibility, and left students with knowledge and memories to last a lifetime.

The international trip was planned with Go Journey Abroad, a company specializing in coordinating academic and experiential journeys overseas, to provide a balance of adventure and learning.

After their arrival, the group began their stay with an exciting scavenger hunt in a local marketplace. Our students' facility with Spanish helped them navigate the colorful market and enthusiastically interact with vendors as they located a variety of items. Eighth-grader Ashley Christamtsis remarked, "I believe this trip had a significant impact on me as a Spanish learner and an adventurous person. The opportunity we had to use our Spanish and communicate with the locals was one of many truly memorable experiences."

Later in the week, the class ventured into the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, nestled in the highlands of the Alajuela Province, where they learned about the area's rich biodiversity and native wildlife. Another highlight of the trip was the night hike through the rainforest in La Fortuna. The trek challenged students to step outside their comfort zones; however, they embraced the experience, even turning off their flashlights at one point to appreciate the cacophony of unfamiliar sounds heightened by the pitch-black darkness surrounding them. According to eighth-grader Lara Goodrich, "The adults who went on our trip were very mindful and careful of our safety as there wasn't a time that I didn't feel protected. This trip was a good time to learn independence under the watch of our teachers and explore the wonderful place of Costa Rica." Another activity students enjoyed was their tour of an organic farm during which they learned the intricacies of chocolate and sugar-making, presentations that related to topics several explored in their Little Big History projects.





Finally, the group braved torrential rain to experience the adrenaline rush of ziplining high above La Fortuna Waterfall. Despite the downpour, students had a wonderful time. They cheered each other on and left the course with self-confident smiles having faced their fears and developed an essential element of resilience.

Beyond exploring natural wonders, the trip included a deep dive into Costa Rica's vibrant culture. Students visited with the indigenous Maleku tribe, learned to dance Cumbia, and enjoyed cooking and sampling traditional dishes, including fried plantains and gallo pinto. At another stop, they crafted miniature ox carts, a traditional symbol of social status in Costa Rican culture. They approached each activity with open minds, gaining a true appreciation for Costa Rica's rich blend of Spanish and immigrant cultures.



The students enjoyed visiting a coffee plantation, Café Britt, to learn the history of this famous Costa Rican export and see firsthand how coffee beans are cultivated, roasted, and transformed into fragrant elixir with a behind-the-scenes look at the farm and processing facilities.

One of their favorite experiences was visiting the Museo de los Niños, where they practiced their language skills by interviewing each other in Spanish and singing an enthusiastic rendition of a Senor Wooly favorite, "Billy la Bufanda." While at the museum, students also participated in a race to illustrate the banana harvesting process, from picking and weighing the fruit to packaging and transporting it for export. Throughout these immersive programs, our middle schoolers served as outstanding Discovery ambassadors, receiving compliments on their engagement and politeness everywhere they went.

For an entire week, enlightening excursions and authentic interactions provided students with a broader understanding of Costa Rican life, traditions, and values, enriching their overall experience. Eighth-grader Rowin Wright summed up the journey when he reflected, "The trip was fantastic. Our travels in Costa Rica expanded my horizons and taught me just how beautiful a place could be. I'm so grateful I got to experience such a unique trip."



Our Middle School students enjoying the local markets—a perfect way to practice their fluency in Spanish.



Brixton Abercrombie | *Douglas Anderson School of the Arts*
 Finley Barnes | *Douglas Anderson School of the Arts*
 Bianca Brzezicka | *Episcopal School of Jacksonville*
 Liam Kowkabany | *The Bolles School*
 Hunter Pharr | *Carrboro High School, North Carolina*
 Finn Refling | *Ponte Vedra High School*
 Charlie Sheeler | *Fletcher AICE Program*
 Alex Turci | *Stanton College Preparatory School*

London Williams | *Episcopal School of Jacksonville*
 Joseph Montaldo | *Ponte Vedra High School*
 Liam Slivinski | *Stanton College Preparatory School*
 Sam Nall | *Fletcher AICE Program*
 Luke Roth | *Colossal Academy Jacksonville*
 Henry Bennen | *Colossal Academy Jacksonville*
 James Goodrich

The Graduating class 2024 marked a celebratory moment for our Middle School Program. Not only were we recognizing 5 years of our Middle School Program, but we had the largest graduating class of 8th graders since its inception. As the graduates enter their next chapter, the Discovery School community extends its heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for their future endeavors.





2024 LEGACY GRADUATES

Brixton Abercrombie
Joined Discovery in 2013

Finley Barnes
Joined Discovery in 2013

James Goodrich
Joined Discovery in 2012

Finley Refling
Joined Discovery in 2012

Alex Turci
Joined Discovery in 2013

In celebration of recent Discovery graduates, we created a video to share insight into how our alumni are navigating the world of high school and how Discovery prepared them for the next chapter in their educational journey. Use the QR code below to watch.



CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES



The Bridging Ceremony for our Kindergarten students honored students who completed our Primary Program and are moving to our Foundational Elementary Program. The Bridging Ceremony is part of a Montessori tradition that symbolizes passing through to the next level of their learning and growth cycle. The sweet ceremony included a small bridge for each child to walk over, followed by the students taking turns marking what they would miss and what they were looking forward to.

SUMMER DAYS AT DISCOVERY

Summer camp at Discovery offers unique and enriching experiences beyond the classroom. Campers enjoy the joy of spending the summer on campus with many of their beloved teachers and create lasting memories. From cooking to photography, coding to creative writing, the summer was filled with tons of fun.



Learning the craft of gelli printing.



Advancing skills in digital photography.



Finding shark teeth at Tolomato Preserve.



Practicing basketballs skills.



Learning the culinary arts.



Foam Fridays.



Honing their green thumbs.



Field-hockey fun.



Hands-on slime making at DIY Wonderlab.



Looking for shark teeth.



Kids Can Code.



The art of watercoloring.

LOCAL SCHOOL. GLOBAL EDUCATION.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is built on a set of key principles that guide its educational philosophy and framework. These principles aim to develop students who are knowledgeable, inquiring, and caring, and who are prepared to contribute positively to the world.

1 International Mindedness

The IB program promotes an understanding and appreciation of different cultures and perspectives. It encourages students to think globally and act locally, fostering a sense of responsibility toward the world.



2 Holistic Education

The IB emphasizes the development of the whole person, including intellectual, personal, emotional, and social growth. It encourages students to engage in a variety of subjects and activities, promoting well-rounded development.



3 Inquiry-Based Learning

Central to the IB philosophy is the idea of inquiry as a driving force for learning. Students are encouraged to ask questions, explore topics deeply, and engage in critical thinking and problem-solving.



4 Rigorous Academic Standards

The IB program prepares students for success in higher education and beyond by fostering skills such as research, analysis, and communication.



5

Community and Service

The IB encourages students to engage with their communities and participate in service projects. This principle emphasizes the importance of giving back and developing a sense of social responsibility.





6

Transdisciplinary Learning

The IB promotes connections between different subjects and disciplines, encouraging students to see the relationships between knowledge areas. This approach helps students apply their learning in real-world contexts.



7

Reflective Practice

Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for personal growth. This reflective practice is integral to the learning process.



8

Collaboration and Communication

The IB values collaboration among students, teachers, and the community. It emphasizes the importance of effective communication skills, both in expressing ideas and in working with others.

These principles work together to create a comprehensive educational framework that prepares students to be active, compassionate, and life-long learners who understand and respect the world around them.

9

Ethical Responsibility

The IB program instills a sense of ethical responsibility in students, encouraging them to consider the impact of their actions on others and the environment. This principle fosters a commitment to making informed and principled choices.



10

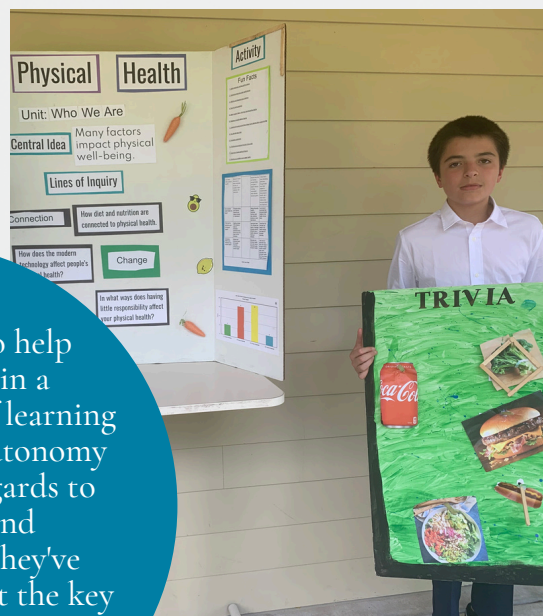
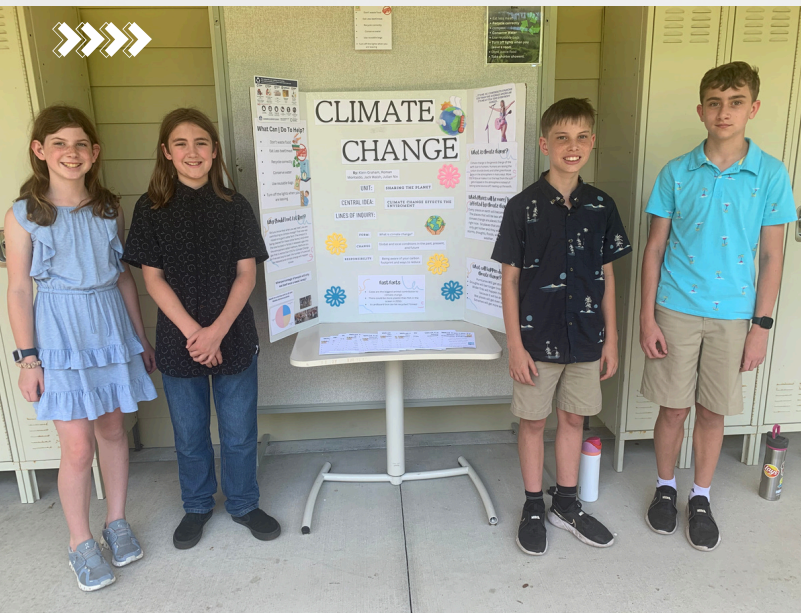
Life-long Learning

The IB promotes the idea of life-long learning, encouraging students to develop a love for learning that extends beyond their formal education. This principle prepares students to adapt to a rapidly changing world.



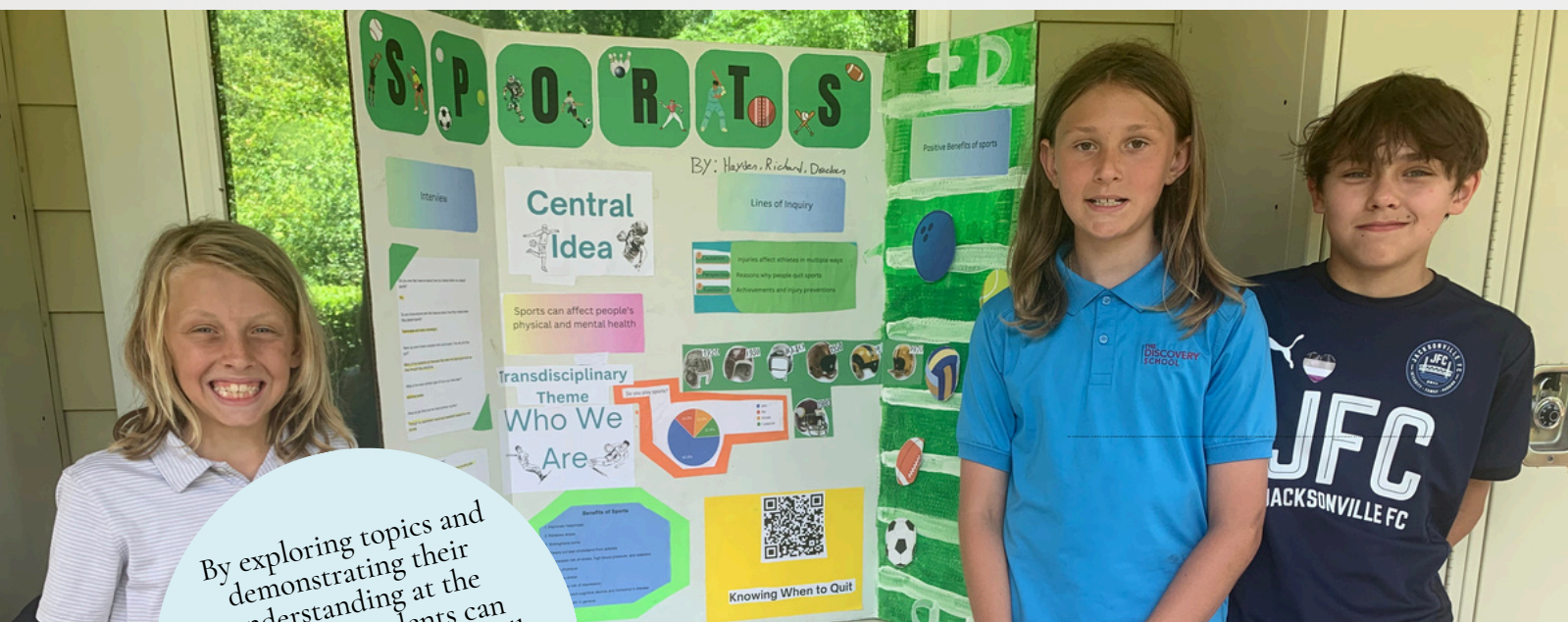
.... PYP EXHIBITION

At the culmination of the Primary Years Programme (PYP), 6th grade students at Discovery undertake the collaborative process to demonstrate agency and take responsibility for their learning, called exhibition. The exhibition is a memorable part of the Primary Years Programme. Students are tasked with identifying, investigating, and generating solutions for real world problems they see in the world around them. After collaboration and extensive research, students have the opportunity to present their topics to the community, offering an exciting moment to demonstrate their independence and responsibility in their own learning.



Exhibition aims to help students engage in a collaborative form of learning and inquiry, show autonomy and agency with regards to their learning and demonstrate that they've learned and can enact the key qualities of the IB Learner Profile.

...PYP EXHIBITION...



By exploring topics and demonstrating their understanding at the exhibition, students can show how they embody all these qualities and take them into account as part of their learning and life experiences.



Students utilize multiple communication skills to present their ideas and action items to exhibition guests.



DOLPHIN ATHLETICS SPOTLIGHT



BY: CHAD BISHOP,
DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS



Upon entering the Discovery School as the Athletic Director last year, there were some goals I really wanted to accomplish. Luckily with a great group of kids, most of them were checked off. We got our first wins ever in both Basketball and Flag Football and put together the first undefeated Soccer regular season in school history! It was a very special first year as a Dolphin and the future is super bright.

Entering my second year, the bar is even higher now and I know we can achieve it. Instilling the winning mindset in our students has changed our program and now we are chasing championships instead of single victories. All of our athletes are bought in and getting better and better each and every day.

Being able to offer Basketball, Flag Football & Soccer starting in 3rd grade this year is also a first for our school. We have a Junior Varsity (3rd and 4th grade) and Varsity (5th and 6th grade) team in Basketball this year for the first time ever. This will allow our students to compete earlier so when they get to the 5th and 6th grade, they will be veterans instead of just beginning. This is such a big accomplishment and hopefully this will happen with both Flag Football and Soccer as the year continues.



Being a Dolphin is truly amazing and watching all of our athletes grow each and every day is something special. We developed a spirit store this year with tons of items that promote athletics in our school. The students wear them with pride every Friday and it has really brought a lot of excitement to everyone around campus. Students as young as a toddler are able to showcase their Dolphin Spirit around campus.

It really has been such a wonderful experience being at Discovery. Success in athletics will come as we build, but the day-to-day growth of our athletes is much more important. There are so many values that they are taking away from Dolphin athletics that they will carry on for years and years. All our students are wearing our Dolphins with pride, which was my number one goal in starting last year. We have come a long way in a short time, and the future is even brighter!

Go Dolphins!



A JOURNEY INTO WELLNESS



BY: ELLEN BAUGHMAN, LMFT
DISCOVERY SCHOOL COUNSELOR

THE INSPIRATION

The Discovery community has been embarking on a new journey into wellness, sparked by a presentation at the 2022-2023 FCIS conference. Ms. Ellen, Discovery's School Counselor, attended a presentation on a well-being program that grows with students, focuses on the whole child, and is lead by example. It felt perfectly aligned with who we are as a school.

The Four Pillars of Wellbeing from The Contentment Foundation, focuses on wellness for all school community members, starting with teachers. They must be well themselves and serve as models of well-being before bringing the four pillars into the classroom.



TEAM TRAINING

Ms. Ellen, Ms. Maddie, Mr. Trevis, and Ms. Laura have earned certifications that allow them to lead the rest of the team. Through study groups and independent work, all team members completed training in all four pillars, Mindfulness, Community, Self-Curiosity, and Contentment & Balance, during the 2023-2024 school year.

Team meetings during pre-planning for 2024-2025 focused on implementing the pillars of Mindfulness and Community into the daily routines for all program levels.



MINDFULNESS IN CLASSROOMS

Our youngest students have been diving into Mindfulness in the classroom by exploring their five senses using the Montessori sensorial materials. For our older students, Mindfulness is being developed into an intentional practice of cultivating focused and non-judgmental attention to the present moment. Elementary and Middle School students have developed a routine of finding a mindful posture and anchor spot where they can feel their breath in their body.

Mindfulness has been helping students to center themselves and practice slowing down to notice their experiences. Several families have reported that their children are coming home, and they are being taught how to take a mindful breath with increased awareness of when they may need a moment of stillness.



MINDFULNESS AT HOME

The school-to-home connection will be further emphasized as Discovery moves forward with Ms. Ellen running a pilot program of The Contentment Foundation's family application to learn how to best integrate the pillars into school and family life for students. The parenting application will allow parents to access videos and articles on various wellness topics. Additionally, the application is a tool for establishing wellness rituals and routines in the home.

This partnership with families through the parenting application will occur as students are at the heart of the community pillar and learning how connection to a strong community helps improve their overall well-being. Students will close the school year emphasizing gratitude, trust, and collaboration to help them succeed beyond Discovery.



GIVING AT DISCOVERY

DISCOVERY FUND 1990 SOCIETY OF SUSTAINERS		CAPITAL CAMPAIGN & ENDOWMENT	
Every Year	Expenses not covered by Student Tuition	Lasting Stability	Needs to Increase with the Growth of the School
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT		Investment	
IMMEDIATE NEEDS		FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE	
Need Based Financial Aid	Theater Productions	Playground Equipment	ATHLETIC COMPLEX
FIELD TRIPS	Youth Philanthropy	Campus Improvements	

THE DISCOVERY FUND: SUPPORTING THE STUDENTS OF TODAY



PETE CHRISTAMTSIS & KATIE

HAMMILL

DR. DAVID DOWARD

JENNIFER & DR. JAMES

FREIDENSTEIN

MEREDITH & MARK FRISCH

CAITLIN & RYAN GREENE

THE PAJCIC NICHOLSON FAMILY

JESSICA & JEFFREY SALAZAR

THE STEPHENSON FAMILY

BREE & FREDDIE WILLIAMS

JESSICA & CHRIS WYNNE

Like all independent schools, the Discovery School relies on philanthropic support to go beyond what tuition alone provides. Your generosity supplements our annual budget to help us expand classroom resources, extend key initiatives, properly maintain and enhance facilities, and address urgent or unexpected challenges that inevitably arise each year.

The Discovery Fund: Supporting the students of today

The Discovery Fund is our top annual fundraising priority. Every year, from July 1 to June 30 (our fiscal year), we invite parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends to provide a gift to the Discovery Fund that is meaningful to them. Those who lead through their annual philanthropic support join our 1990 Society – a prestigious group of donors who give \$1,990 or more every year in honor of the year of our founding.

All gifts to the Discovery Fund are unrestricted, meaning they can be directed to the area of greatest need. This provides flexibility that impacts every aspect of the student experience. Regardless of the amount, when those who care about the Discovery School come together to provide annual support, the collective impact fully enables what we do best: Nurturing inquirers, risk-takers, and well-rounded individuals and empowering them to reach their full potential.

FUNDING TOMORROW - STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN

Strategic Campaigns: Supporting the students of tomorrow. From time-to-time, it is important to broaden fundraising efforts to enhance and expand the school's capacity to serve better and serve more. In these instances, a strategic campaign is initiated as a means of realizing important objectives in the school's strategic plan – at a faster pace than what annual budgets can accomplish.

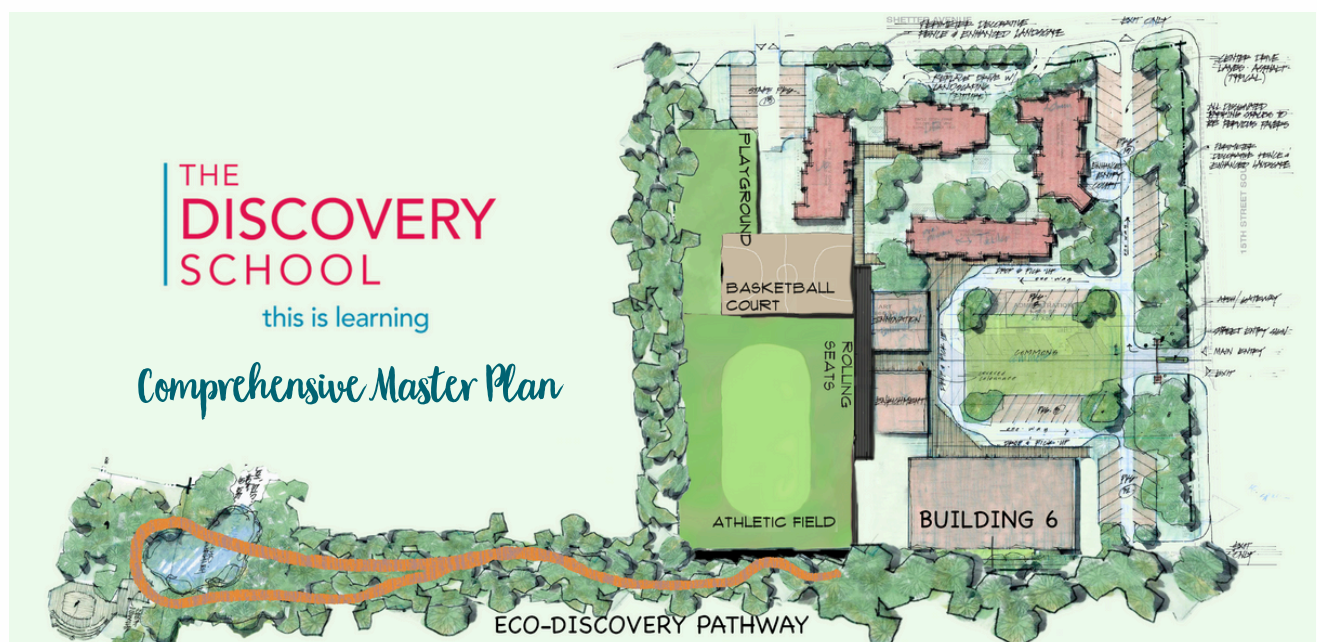
Strategic campaigns are aimed at the students of tomorrow in that they are multi-year fundraising efforts, and philanthropic support usually takes the form of multi-year commitments to allow generous donors time to make their best gift. Gifts to strategic campaigns are above-and-beyond what donors provide annually to the Discovery Fund.



A key objective of the current strategic plan is to "enhance our physical space." Accordingly, we have initiated a campaign aimed at accomplishing this in four phases.

- Phase 1: Building 6, now the "Peter and Jennifer Sleiman Building"
- Phase 2: Athletic Complex
- Phase 3: Playground Renovation and Expansion
- Phase 4: Ecodiscovery Path and Outdoor Lab

We are nearing completion of Phase 1 and preparing to start Phase 2. Donors can help advance these efforts by committing to a multi-year gift above and beyond support of the Discovery Fund.





LOCAL IMPACT: THE PETER & JENNIFER SLEIMAN BUILDING

THE DISCOVERY SCHOOL RECEIVES \$1.5 MILLION GIFT, THE LARGEST IN ITS HISTORY

The Discovery School was thrilled to host the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for its newest landmark, The Peter & Jennifer Sleiman Building. This momentous event celebrated the culmination of months of hard work, dedication, and collaboration with our partners and community members.

The Peter & Jennifer Sleiman Building is a testament to their dedication to furthering the School's mission and serving the local beach community. This building will provide a hub for our Upper School community and a large gathering space for parent education and campus events.

The building was made possible by a transformative gift from Peter & Jennifer Sleiman, leading developers of retail shopping centers in North Florida. They have developed, owned, managed, and operated over 4,000,000 SF commercial projects for nearly 20 years. The Sleimans' passion and belief in the mission and vision of The Discovery School and their expertise helped bring the dream of expansion and meeting our students' needs a reality.

The grand opening ceremony took place on August 10, 2024, featuring distinguished guests, community leaders, and stakeholders who have contributed to the realization of this remarkable project.





Thank you to our outstanding contributors who made The Peter & Jennifer Sleiman Building possible:

Laura & Zachary Alrutz
 Stefani & Josh Ashby
 Crystal & Justin Ashourian
 Dawn & Dr. Michael Barlow
 Samuel & Rebecca Cain
 Pete Christamtsis & Katie Hammill
 Cortney & William Cronin
 Dr. David Doward
 Jessica & Topher Dumas
 Kathleen Fitzgerald
 Meredith & Mark Frisch
 Cheree & Hampton Graham
 Margaux, MacKenzie, Harrison & James Gray
 Caitlin & Ryan Greene
 Jeanne & Tim Hammill
 Lena & Bryan Hipsher
 Caroline & Gavin Jett-Sun
 Kimberly & Fred Jones
 Greg Jaggernauth & Larissa Barber

Jennifer & Steve Kowkabany
 Blair & James Landry
 The Lazzara Family
 Hilary & Jared Libman
 Kathy Maloney
 Joseph McGurrian
 The Meredith Family
 Helen & Marvin Nicholson
 Petra & Gerald Obritzberger
 Erin & Kyle Passkiewicz
 Kate & Richard Ream
 Anjna & Dr. Saswata Roy
 Brittany & Alex Sifakis
 Jennifer & Peter Sleiman
 Mariya & Justin Stephenson
 Scott & Josh Tayloe
 Amy & Luca Turci
 Bree & Freddie Williams
 Jackie Liuliu Zhang



Ribbon Cutting

CREATING COMMUNITY:

THE NEW UPPER SCHOOL LEARNING EXPERIENCE



SUPPORTING OUR MISSION: BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

The Back to School Bash was a night to remember! Parents and community supporters gathered for an evening of fun, laughter, and community bonding, all supporting The Discovery School.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our sponsors, who helped make the Back to School Bash such a resounding success.

One of the night's highlights was the silent auction, which brought out the competitive spirit in many attendees! With a wide variety of exciting items and experiences up for grabs, ranging from private chefs to a fishing charter, guests enthusiastically placed their bids. A huge thank you to our local community members and businesses for donating auction items.

- Alma Ramirez Art
- Barasch Music
- Cheree & Hampton Graham
- Jacksonville Jaguars
- Jessica & Jeffrey Salazar
- Jessica Fredericks Photography
- Katie Hammill Nutrition
- Keely Lynn Photography
- KT Gallagher
- Leander Everyday Professional
- Mark Wood
- One Ocean Spa and Resort
- Petra & Gerald Obritzberger
- Seeds to Sawdust
- Silom Jax Wellness
- Tom Bush Family of Dealerships
- ToyTopia by Safari Ltd.
- United Community Bank, Inc.
- Wild Card Fishing Charters

The event was the perfect way to kick off the new school year by bringing our adult community together in a fun and festive environment. We are excited about the year ahead and can't wait to continue strengthening the bonds within our school community.



Presented by



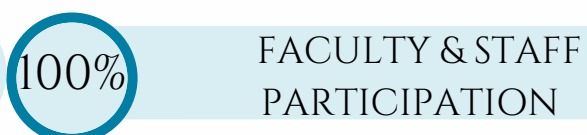
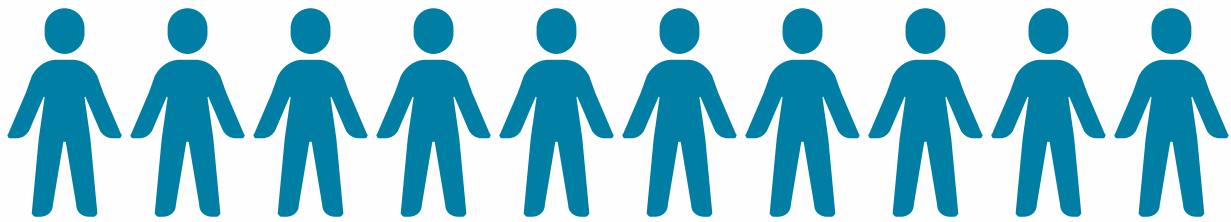


Back to School Bash

DISCOVERY FUND 23-24

ANNUAL REPORT

Together, the Discovery Community raised \$270,381 during the 2023-2024 school year!
This incredible achievement was made possible by your support. Your gifts ensured the school was able to meet 100% operational funding.



\$1,032 Average Gift | 262 Total Gifts | 195 Total Donors



DISCOVERY FUND

23-24 DONORS

INNOVATORS

GIFTS OF \$10,000 OR MORE

Megan & Matthew Del Pizzo
Meredith & Mark Frisch
Jim Goodrich & Diane Wong
Cheree & Hampton Graham
Jennifer & Stephen Kowkabany
The Pajcic Nicholson Family
Jessica & Jeffrey Salazar
Chelsea & Nick Sandifer
Linda & George Sharpe
Tom Bush Motors
Jessica & Chris Wynne

PEACEMAKERS

GIFTS OF \$5,000 TO \$9,999

Anonymous
The Getchell Family
Caitlin & Ryan Greene
Hilary & Jared Libman
Northwestern Mutual
ToyTopia by Safari, LTD.
Bree & Freddie Williams

EXPLORERS

GIFTS OF \$2,500 TO \$4,999

The Albus Family
Stefani & Josh Ashby
Meredith & Steve Kurosko
The Landry Family
The Posluszny Family
The Stephenson Family
The Sun Family
Kate & Ken Underwood

LEADERS

GIFTS OF \$1,200 TO \$2,499

Laura & Zachary Alrutz
Shane Campbell
Pete Christamtsis & Katie Hammill
Cortney & William Cronin
Dr. David Doward
The Elli Borghetti Family
Elizabeth Evans
Jennifer & Dr. James Freidenstein
Greg Jaggernauth & Larissa Barber
Matt Miller & Collette Cunningham
Petra & Gerald Obritzberger
Muserref & Necdet Senhart
The Stewart Family
Josh & Scott Tayloe
Amy & Luca Turci

RISK TAKERS

GIFTS OF \$1,000 TO \$1,199

Jeannette Kowkabany
The Montaldo Family

INQUIRERS

GIFTS OF \$500 TO \$999

Banks' Nana
Aga & Greg Brzezicka
The Caserta Family
Rebecca & Tucker Clarkson
Meghan & Matt Devlin
Margaux, MacKenzie, Harrison & James Gray
Kandi & Matthew Nawrocki
The Sharpe Family
Jodi-lee & Nigel Thomas



DISCOVERY FUND

23-24 DONORS

THINKERS

GIFTS OF \$250 TO \$499

Zachary Champagne & Claire Riddell
Kathleen Fitzgerald & Arturo Murillo
Cindy Harris
The Hurley Family
JP Morgan & Chase
Cathy & Mike Langdon
Dr. Kelsey & Matthew Mileski
Jill Nason
Katelyn Salam Salman
Jacob Thomas
The Tran Family
The Triplett Family
The Waldron Family

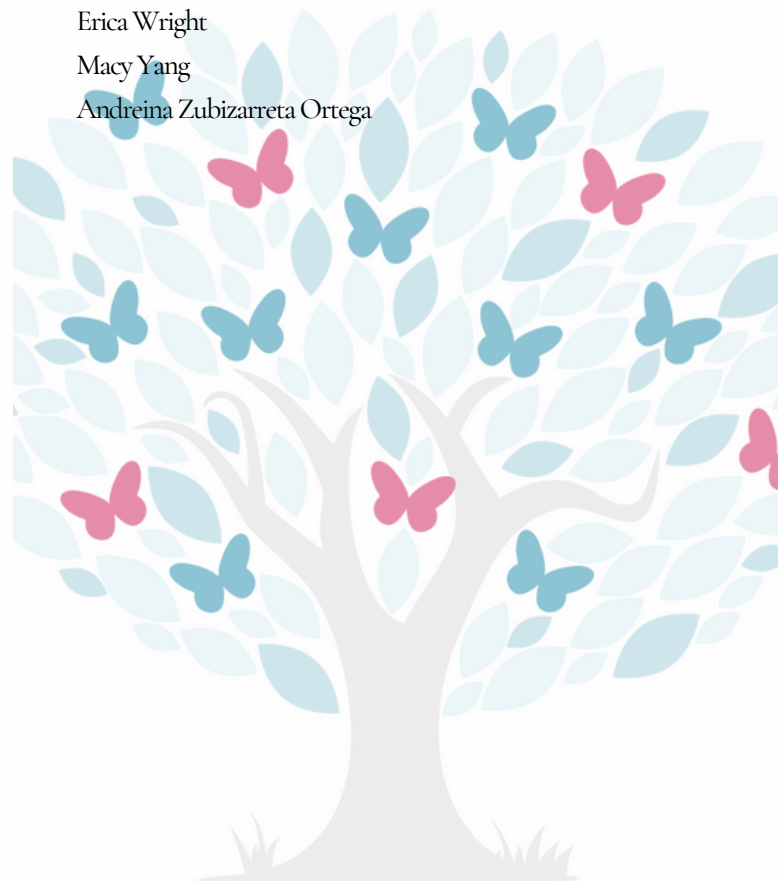
COMMUNICATORS

GIFTS UP TO \$249

Ellen Baughman
Bridget, Maren, Keith & Steven Beck
Chad Bishop
Cat Blakelock & Nathan Funderburk
Ingrid Bowler
Lilli Bramley
Leigh Carpenter
Marie Carpenter
Christopher Carver & Dina Rulli
Liz Colavecchio
Stacy Derleth
Ashley & Brian Friederichs

Kelly Gallagher
Brenda Gandy
Molly Goodman
The Goodman Family
The Gonzalez Family
Rachel & Brent Greisinger
Emily Harezlak
Xavier Hunter
Nancy & Barry Jett
Naomi Kaplan
Raiani Kendrick
Kristen Kimball
Amba Kone
Yoko Lafferty
Sarah Mackey
The Meredith Family
Alissa Negron
Trevis Nelson
Coco Newman
Carmen Nix
Heather Oulton Rousseau
Annie Payton
Ana Paz
Nicole Peters
Linda & Robert Phelps
Lori Price
Madison Pruski-Long
Marnie Purcell
Maddie Ober
The Ramos Family
Shane Remenda
Bailey Richards
Lisa Rodriguez

Adam Rohrer
Hannah Rose
Ashley Rowe
Isida Skarco
Will Smith
Natalie Stadt
Nicole & Robert Stewart
Lindsay Strohecker
Kim Strong
Robin Thomas
Anna Tocco
Christine Tocco
Lindsay Townsend
Susan Tsai
Megan Varnadore
The Venn Family
RaeAnne Wesley
Brook Wiley
Chantal & Michael Windham
Erica Wright
Macy Yang
Andreina Zubizarreta Ortega



UPCOMING EVENTS

**NOVEMBER 12-14: MIDDLE SCHOOL
FIELD TRIP**
KEY LARGO, FL

**DECEMBER 6: THEATER
PRODUCTIONS: ANNIE JR.**
LAZZARA THEATER
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

DECEMBER 13: DECK THE CHAIRS
SEAWALK PAVILLION JACKSONVILLE
BEACH

**JANUARY 31: STATE OF THE SCHOOL &
PARENT PIZZA SOCIAL**

MARCH 29: DOLPHIN DASH FUN RUN
ATLANTIC BEACH

**APRIL 8-10: UPPER ELEMENTARY
FIELD TRIP**
SAVANNAH, GA

**APRIL 15 & 16: GRANDPARENTS &
SPECIAL FRIENDS**

APRIL 27: PTO AROUND THE WORLD

MAY 23: GRADUATION & BRIDGING



