



THE LAURENCE LETTER



HEAD OF SCHOOL MESSAGE



Dear Laurence Community,

How wonderful it was for us to spend the 2021-2022 school year on campus... we truly BELONG TOGETHER! This year saw the return of many wonderful Laurence traditions, including in-person RWB&G assemblies, after school enrichment classes, interscholastic sports, live performances, the Golden/Bedazzled Bucket Games, and so much more! And we were delighted to welcome parents back on campus after more than a year, to serve Snack Bar and Hot Lunch, and to attend sports games and productions.

As I reflect on the past two years of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic for our students and ourselves, I continue to be inspired by the strength and resilience of our Laurence family. It has been no small feat for each of us, with the unending need to pivot and so much uncertainty. In February, we heard from Dr. Tina Payne Bryson, co-author of *The Power of Showing Up*, about how to help our kids succeed. She explained that our nervous system is set up to deal with constant acute stress, and it protects and heals us. But we have not had the important time to regroup ourselves and recharge our resiliency with everything in constant flux. It is hard enough for us as adults—but how can we best help our children flourish while navigating rapidly changing circumstances?

One of the best ways that we can help our students be successful is for them to feel “connected and protected”—by predictably showing up for our children. Research has shown that secure attachment with at least one human (parent or otherwise) makes the biggest difference between an experience making us fragile vs. resilient. Just by consistently showing up, we help our students

feel the 4 S's: Safe, Seen, Soothed, and Secure, which helps them feel more comfortable with stepping outside of their comfort zone and taking risks. At Laurence, we have been focusing on the theme of belonging, to ensure that every member of our community feels loved and safe, which enables deep learning to occur because people feel seen and heard. We will continue to listen with empathy and understanding, as we bring our community back together once again.

I am truly grateful for the home-school partnership we have with our families, and the many ways we all come together to show up for our students, and to raise kind, resilient future leaders who are determined to do good and help others.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to our community—from our faculty, staff, and administrators, to our students and our parent body, who continue to show up for one another through these difficult and constantly changing times.

I hope that you enjoy our newsletter. We are so proud of our students and our programs, and are delighted to show you a window into life at Laurence.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie Wolke".

Laurie Wolke, Head of School

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MESSAGE

Summer is here at last, and it is a good time to reflect on what we have all been through together. Given the events of the last two years, this past spring felt like a rebirth. The school community was finally back together, and the school was clicking on all cylinders. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to again thank the school administration, faculty, and staff for holding us together during the most trying of times.

I am honored to be on the Laurence Board, along with twenty other current and former parents. We are privileged to serve the Laurence community, and we do it because of our desire to make this school all it can be for every student currently enrolled and for future generations of students as well. We are never content to rest on our laurels, and we are always looking ahead. This fall, we will be celebrating the school's seventieth year, and I can tell you, Laurence's future is as bright and remarkable as it has been over its entire history.

As we celebrate our students' spring academic, artistic, and athletic achievements, let's continue working together to make Laurence the most inclusive, joyful, and supportive community for our children. Thank you for entrusting Laurence with your children, and thank you for everything you do to make our amazing community what it is.

Sincerely,



Mike Lifrak, Board of Trustees Chair



PARENT ASSOCIATION MESSAGE

Unbelievable, that our 2021-2022 school year has come to a close! The Parent Association is proud of every child's growth and development throughout this pandemic year and grateful to our Laurence teachers, staff, and administration for their tireless efforts, which kept our children safe, secure, and learning in person.

Our Parent Committee chairs and volunteers also deserve a colossal THANK YOU! Despite the challenges we faced, parent-run activities persevered and continued to enrich our children's daily lives. Your time, creative energy, patience, and selfless volunteering made vital impacts throughout the year.

At the start of the year, "contactless" was key with the Uniform Exchange, but we were ecstatic when Room Parents, Dads' Club, and 6th grade parents were invited to create an in-person Halloween Carnival! Gradually, on-campus volunteer activities returned: Food Pantry, Toy Drive, SOCK-tober, SOUP-er Bowl, Lost and Found, Snack Bar, and Lunch Service. Global Garden strengthened our community's connectivity and celebrated our families' diversities. We were financially generous, contributing more money than ever to the Holiday Gift Fund and we raised money for Laurence and PA through Party Books, Spirit Wear

Sales, and the Spring Event. Parent volunteers also helped us express our gratitude and support of our teachers and staff with the first-ever Fall Appreciation Week and Faculty, Staff and Administration Appreciation Week. Overall, in such a demanding year, our volunteers made an extraordinary impact! I am grateful to you all for our successful year.

We optimistically look towards 2022-2023, as we hope to return to the pre-pandemic Parent Association structure with uninterrupted in-person, on-campus, volunteer opportunities, meetings, and activities! Please stay involved, and get even more involved next year! The best is yet to come for volunteering and the Parent Association at Laurence!

With love,



Annie Goto, PA President





WE BELONG TOGETHER

Last year's Character Education theme was "We Belong Together," inspired by the in-person reunion of the Laurence community. The concept of "belonging" encompasses a sense of connectedness, a feeling of being included, and the feeling that you are in the right place with people who support and care about you. When you feel like you belong to a community, you feel truly heard, respected, valued, and accepted—feelings that allow you to be your best self and to be exactly who you are. As we aimed this past year to deepen our sense of connection, belonging transpired in all facets of life at Laurence, including the classroom, RWB&G Assemblies, athletics, performances, special events, and our DEI/Global Garden efforts.



GO LIGHTNING!



Nearly 100% of our 4th through 6th grade students participated in our Interscholastic Sports Program, and we couldn't be more proud. Our athletes not only excelled in their technical skills and winning games, but also in learning important character and life lessons through sports.

In a homecoming-like setting, 6th graders participated in unforgettable Golden Bucket/Bedazzled Bucket flag football games under the lights at Harvard-Westlake in December! The Laurence Lightning prevailed in these thrilling, hard-fought

rivalry games as Laurence maintained possession of both the cherished Golden and Bedazzled Buckets. This annual athletic event represented Laurence's genuine sense of sportsmanship, community, and collaborative dedication at its finest.

A special thank you to Bernard Redmond, Athletic Director, and the entire Athletic department for fostering an athletic program that builds character, camaraderie, teamwork, and a genuine love of sports!



ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Girls Basketball and Volleyball:

6th Grade Yellow - Won their Championship Games

Girls and Boys Soccer:

6th Grade Yellow - Both were League 2nd Place Winners

Boys Basketball:

6th Grade Yellow - Won the Championship Game

Flag Football:

6th Grade Yellow - League 2nd Place Winners

Both 6th Grade teams won the annual Golden and Bedazzled Bucket Games.

**As a result of COVID-19, playoffs were only held for 6th grade athletes this school year.*

STEAM



The Tech Team was ecstatic to be back in the classroom with our students! Our classes were filled with tinkering, coding, engineering, and a-ha moments, which are absolute joys to facilitate and witness!

Creativity combined with computational thinking (the ability to break down complex problems into smaller steps) is at the heart of our curriculum. From learning how computers work in Kindergarten and 1st grade, to building interactive cardboard robots in 6th, we intentionally design our lessons to support skills beyond the classroom.

Here are some highlights from the 2021-2022 school year.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



KINDERGARTEN & FIRST GRADE

The *Hello Ruby* book series is the perfect way to teach young children the different parts of a computer and how they work together. We read the books as a class, then students crafted their own paper computers to show what they learned.



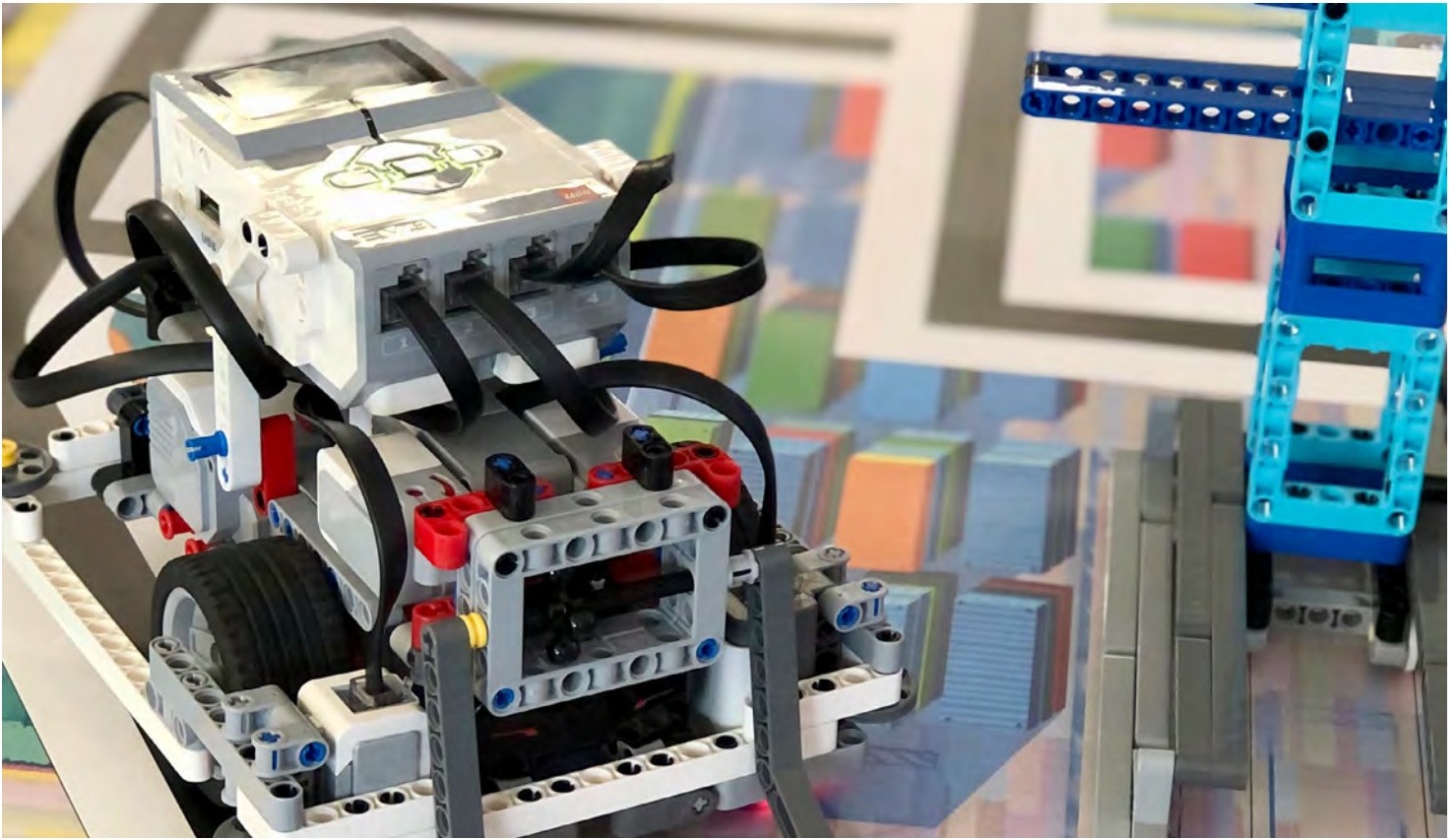
SECOND GRADE

Students coded Finch Robots to create Mondrian-style works of art! They took geometry concepts into account and calculated the correct angles and number of sides of 2D shapes. Once the coding was complete, the robot was placed on a piece of paper and shapes were drawn all over. This was then taken to art classes and colored in, producing something Piet Mondrian himself would be proud of!



THIRD GRADE

Our 3rd grade students learned how to program digital stories in CS First. The first project was a three-page story that included programming multiple characters, text, movement, and sound. Then, students moved on to "Coding a Superhero," where they created sprites and coded moving objects to build a complex video game where superheroes collect points and avoid obstacles.



FOURTH GRADE

Coding video games is made both accessible and fun with Microsoft's MakeCode Arcade, a web-based code editor used to create retro arcade games. Fourth grade explored different game concepts and using custom sprites, tile maps, and images, they created their own Gold Rush themed game, bringing in the research they learned in Social Studies class.



FIFTH GRADE

Students practice skills learned in lower grades such as coding, engineering, and presentation skills. This year, the robotics project reflected the UN Sustainable Development Goal #9, which investigates infrastructure, industrialization, and transportation. Students identified supply chain issues, brainstormed solutions, and designed robots to solve logistical challenges. They then demonstrated their robots in action to a live audience.



SIXTH GRADE

Students applied what they learned in Science Class to Tech. In Science, they researched and gathered data on biomes. In Tech, they selected an animal from their chosen biome, which was used as a source of inspiration to create a cardboard robot, highlighting the ecological issues that these biome regions face. Their creations came to life using the Hummingbird and Micro:bit—a microcontroller, which allows robotics components to be attached.

DEI AT LAURENCE



Laurence's Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Inclusion Strategic Action Plan continues to drive our goals and initiatives as we engage in constant reflection about our teaching practices, how to further foster DEI values in Laurence students, and find ways to deepen our community's connection. To truly feel a sense of belonging, students need to be welcomed, acknowledged, and appreciated. Celebrating and including all cultures and identities, both in the classroom and as a school community, has been instrumental in creating an inclusive environment filled with learning opportunities. In doing so, people from different perspectives and backgrounds can showcase their true, authentic selves.

Being back in-person and having parents at our Red, White, Blue, & Green Assemblies provided one avenue to share stories community-wide. Through cultural celebrations at assemblies, we honored Hispanic Heritage Month, Diwali, Lunar New Year, Black History Month, Nowruz, Armenian History Month, and Pride Month. Students shared their family traditions and the importance of the celebration, while developing a sense of pride in their identity. The demonstrations, musicians, and dance performances provided both windows and mirrors for our community.

We also formed a DEI/Global Education Representative Faculty Committee to review, develop, and align the Kindergarten through 6th grade homeroom and specialist curriculum. This committee, consisting of one teacher from each grade level and specialist teachers, met regularly to discuss DEI lessons that were integrated into existing curriculum, along with the teaching objectives of the lessons. Teachers collaborated to create opportunities for students to learn from and relate respectfully with people of their own culture, as well as those from other cultures, by incorporating curriculum and literature that provide both windows and mirrors.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarteners traveled across the United States on a virtual road trip, learning about important people and places. Students took virtual tours of national parks, landmarks, and museums. Along the way, they learned about influential artists, scientists, and politicians with ties to the state. Parent volunteers shared their own connection with each state, bridging our classroom and family communities.

FIRST GRADE

First graders studied the lives of influential artists and created their own masterpieces based on the artists' work. Incredible artists from different walks of life were profiled, including Alma Thomas, Keith Haring, Faith Ringgold, and Yayoi Kusama. Creating a unique piece of art while learning about the artist helped students to make a deeper connection not only to their own artwork, but also to the artist. It also encouraged students to lean into their own creativity and potential.

SECOND GRADE

Second graders discussed what makes a hero and learned about a different American hero each week. One of the heroes was Wilma Rudolph, who overcame polio as a child and went on to become the first woman to win three gold medals at the 1960 Olympic Games. The celebratory parade hosted in her hometown of Clarksville, Tennessee was the first multi-racial event in the town's history because Rudolph refused to attend a segregated event.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students learned about the lives, achievements, and challenges of Sonia Sotomayor, Sally Ride, and Misty Copeland. They completed the process of how to research, use multiple reliable sources, and scaffold all of their information to create a cohesive writing piece. The 3rd graders also learned about the Women's Suffrage Movement and women from the past and present who have been influential to our history.

FOURTH GRADE

Fourth graders were encouraged to continue to develop their understanding of social justice and identifying injustices present in our world today. This year, students researched the Chicano movement and the impact Cesar Chavez had on our national and state history. They then used that information to create newspaper-style writing pieces, which were compiled into a Social Justice Newspaper.

FIFTH GRADE

In collaboration with our Librarian, Jennifer Levin, 5th graders learned about the history of voting rights in America. One specific area of focus was the founding and influence of the NAACP. In their Global Relations class, the students researched and presented information about four important members of the NAACP: W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary Church Terrell, Thurgood Marshall, and Mary White Ovington.

SIXTH GRADE

One of the many ways 6th graders celebrated Black History Month was through their Black Trailblazers banner project. They learned about the accomplishments of many Black engineers, artists, and inventors, such as Langston Hughes, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Granville Woods, Garrett Morgan, and many more. Each student presented to their class, allowing them all to learn about new and familiar leaders who forged a path for others to follow. The 6th graders then focused on Female Trailblazers in celebration of Women's History Month.

SPECIALISTS

Performing Arts

Over the course of three months, the 5th grade students took a historically contextualized look at the experience of Black artists in each of their performing arts classes. The students learned about Amanda Gorman, the 24-year-old poet and humanitarian activist, in the classroom. Then, in Drama, they created a "found" poem based on her 2020 inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb." In Dance, the students were introduced to the history and technique of three historically Black dances: the Lindy Hop, Stepping, and Hip Hop. Lastly, in Music, the 5th graders learned about the historical significance of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a song written in 1899 by James Weldon Johnson, a poet and civil rights activist.

Library

We continued to celebrate Read Across America Day the first Wednesday in March by sharing stories that truly reflect "reading across America." Staff members served as mystery readers who visited the classrooms and read some wonderful titles from our library. Some of these books included *What is Love?* by Mac Barnett, *Ruby's Wish* by Shirin Yim Bridges, and *The Matzo Ball Boy* by Lisa Shulman.

Spanish

Throughout the grade levels, students discussed Afro-Latinos in Hollywood, while touching on the many Latin American countries with large Afro-Latino communities. Some of the people covered included Christina Milian, Zoe Saldaña, Rosario Dawson, Bruno Mars, Roberto Clemente, and Sonia Sotomayor. Students also learned about Arnaldo Tamayo Méndez, a Cuban of African descent, who was the first Black astronaut in space.



PERFORMING ARTS



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

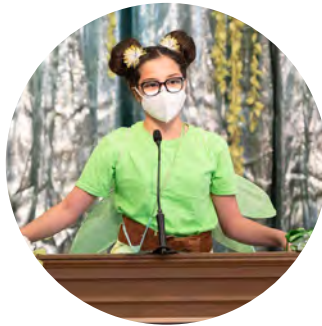
More than 60 of our 4th through 6th grade students shined brightly during their spectacular performances of *Beauty and the Beast*. Through singing, acting, dancing, and stage crew, our after school musical theater students worked together for six months to bring this beloved Disney musical to life.



101 DALMATIANS

Forty-four of our 1st through 3rd grade students wowed our community during the performances of the Disney classic, *101 Dalmatians Kids*. Our student performers acted, sang, and danced their hearts out, bringing the drama and comedy of this musical to life. We are incredibly proud of our students and Performing Arts team for their hard work and dedication in producing this year's spectacular lower division musical.

KIDS' COURT



For many years, Laurence students have learned about the United States' legal and criminal justice system through our unique, award-winning Kids' Court program developed by Head of School, Laurie Wolke, J.D. In this mock trial program, 6th grade students put famous fairytale characters on trial, assuming roles as prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, bailiffs, witnesses, and the accused, while younger students play the role of jurors.

This year, in the case of *The County of Neverland vs. Peter Pan*, Peter Pan was on trial for the attempted murder of Captain Hook. As part of the program, our Board Chair and attorney, Michael Lifrak, engaged 6th grade students in developing an appreciation and understanding of the legal system and the various players in a courtroom. In addition, 6th grade students took a deep dive into learning about the individual rights and liberties emanating from the Bill of Rights. In Drama class, students read the script and then engaged in the adaptation/playwriting process, where they were able to rewrite the script, adding new characters and dialogue. Our students and community were enthralled and entertained with delight as they observed, firsthand, the trial of Peter Pan.

SERVICE LEARNING

