

The
Avery Coonley School
Magazine

Fall 2016 – Winter 2017

Early Childhood Education

The Avery Coonley School

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Our Philosophy

We believe that the joy and excitement of learning must begin early in life. We place a high premium on developing the desire in our students to become critical thinkers and independent, life-long learners.

We assist our students in realizing their intellectual, emotional, social, creative, and physical potential by promoting academic achievement, character development, self-reliance, self-confidence, independent thought, and personal fitness.

We recognize and are sensitive to the unique needs of gifted children. Within a traditional structure, we provide acceleration and enrichment, and foster a supportive atmosphere that provides opportunities for creativity, problem-solving, and risk-taking.

We believe that diversity is the foundation for a strong, competent, and compassionate community. Therefore, we value racial, religious, economic, and cultural diversity in our student body, faculty, and staff.

We strive to build a community that encourages understanding and mutual respect and nurtures appreciation of the individual, civility, gratitude, honesty, kindness and consideration, responsibility, and volunteerism.

Approved by The Avery Coonley School Board of Trustees on September 10, 2016.

Mission Statement

The Avery Coonley School is an independent school whose mission is to provide a learning environment that is appropriate both for academically bright and gifted children who are motivated to learn and have demonstrated the potential for the scholastic achievement necessary to succeed in a challenging academic program, in order that they may become positive, productive, and respectful members of society.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on September 10, 2016.

Cover: A view of the school from the newly refurbished path on the northern portion of campus.

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Dear Readers,

“We are always cognizant of the fact that [the school] belongs to the children; it is their world, not ours.”

“It is a children’s community. The purpose is not to teach what others had thought or grown-ups had done, but for the children themselves to do something.”

One of these quotes is from 1921, spoken by our founder, Queene Ferry Coonley. The other can be found a few pages from here, written by one of our Early Childhood teachers in 2017. The fact that it is difficult to guess which is which, I hope, is one of the main points of this issue of *The Avery Coonley School Magazine*.

Frequently, in this magazine and elsewhere, we attempt to put our finger on some particular aspect of the ACS experience. What makes the school so special, what – to use a trendy phrase – are our “differentiators”? We also, from time to time, try to find a healthy balance among our rich past and our present and future. ACS has evolved from a school founded with progressive education ideologies to one that serves the unique needs of gifted students. What values and principles do we share with our original institutional self, and in what ways have we grown and changed?

In this issue, we take a close look at our current early childhood programs, with profiles of our EC, JK, and Kindergarten classrooms. We also pay special tribute to Linda Ward, a fixture in our First Group since the late 1970s. A reprint from a section of *Finding Wisdom*, the book written about ACS in the 1930s, provides an interesting context for comparing now with then. Mrs. Coonley would surely approve our exploration of this topic; she was the leading voice for early childhood education in Chicago in the early 20th century, and she founded the first kindergartens in several suburban communities, including Downers Grove.

It is interesting – and, I believe, informative – to see that in our approach to the education of our youngest students, much has remained constant over the decades. These points of consistency include a deliberate and intentional focus on:

- ♦ Hands-on investigation and active exploration of the world
- ♦ Learning through guided play
- ♦ Physical and social, as well as academic, development
- ♦ Individual attention given to each student
- ♦ A safe environment in which risks can be taken
- ♦ Close partnership with parents
- ♦ A smooth transition from home to school
- ♦ Physical movement and the arts
- ♦ Establishing a solid foundation for future learning

And, of course, the belief expressed above that these earliest classrooms are and must be a child’s world. As you read the following pages, I hope that you gain a fuller understanding of the beauty, complexity, and messy glory of that child’s world.

Happy reading!


Chris Portman, Editor

Dear Friends,

Financial support for our educational systems is completely upside down! Virtually all research has concluded that the first five years of life profoundly shapes a child's educational success – creativity, love of learning, good habits, and passion are all affected in a child's initial exposure to intentional learning. In my perfect world, it is pre-schools and Kindergartens that would have 100 million dollar endowments, and the so called world's greatest "professors" would all reside in programs teaching our youngest children!



Head of School Paul Druzinsky sharing a story with some Early Childhood students.

Fortunately, even without a mega endowment, the ACS Early Childhood through Kindergarten program is exemplary, and the quality and caliber of the adults running the classrooms, along with the design of the curriculum, provides our youngest students with a first-class, superb experience. Our classes are designed to provide students with the very best of educational practices – drawing out the imaginations of children; allowing them to play and create; exposing them to numbers and science and ultimately to reading; teaching them social skills; supporting their earliest emotional experiences; and doing it all in a warm, safe, loving environment with adults who are both experts in their field and who truly love children – what we do at ACS is a model of best practices in early childhood education.

What stands out for me when I see our students and teachers engaged in activities is how the idea of inquiry is at the heart of each experience. The inquisitive nature of our students is drawn out through everything from treasure hunts to recreating famous French paintings. Our students experience farm animal visits, nature walks, tending gardens, storytelling – all project-based activities. Our youngest students also have opportunities for engagement with our older students, who visit often and participate in joint learning activities in the classrooms and on the playground and fields.

Our entire program, Early Childhood through Eighth Group, is student-centered, and this is never more apparent than in our youngest ages. Drop by a class and you will find children in the middle of everything – creating make-believe plays, singing in both French and English, exploring their world through books and toys – always surrounded and guided by attentive adults. In the youngest grades our teachers partner with our parents to ensure not only that we are working together with a shared vision, but that we are also giving our students the individual attention, enrichment, and support so invaluable to their academic and emotional growth and development. Our teachers know the ultimate key to the success of our students lies in creating a bond of trust whereby our students will be equally excited by the content of the curriculum and the adults who provide it. Small classes and the focus on individuals allows for these bonds to form, and provides the foundation for ACS students to have a life-long love of learning and a lifetime of positive school-based experiences, from early childhood through graduate school and beyond!

Paul Druzinsky
Paul Druzinsky, Head of School

This Is
What
School *for*
Three-Year-Olds
Looks Like

by Lauren Evans

*Lauren Evans has been
an Early Childhood Teacher
at ACS since 2010.*

The day starts with a simple task. Each student enters our locker room, finds the correct cubby, and hangs up his or her tote bag and coat. Another exciting day in The Avery Coonley School's Early Childhood Program begins!

After their entrance, the students have a choice of three different rooms for free play – puzzles, artwork, musical instruments, a toy kitchen, books and games are all available. When the bell rings, the students proceed to the locker room for some opening songs; when that concludes, that day's train leader invites the others to line up. As the group heads to the piano room, they sing another song and then settle in for circle time. This is the time for the large group lesson – for example, vocabulary pertaining to seahorses, with a song designed to reinforce what the students are learning. The three small groups then gather, with an activity or project reiterating the lesson; today it might be making patterns out of seahorse and starfish stickers, and then practicing writing the letter "S."

Each day typically concludes with some book-reading, followed by gross-motor activities on the playground, and then – no day is complete without it! – a healthy snack. The teachers try very hard to make sure that each student leaves on a positive note, and they report on that day's activities to the parents and caregivers as the children are loaded in the car for the trip home.

It may sound like a simple routine. But it has been fine-tuned over the years to advance the specific goals of our program and best meet the needs of our unique students.



Students can begin to see and form patterns through a variety of activities.

Feature

Our Students

Natural curiosity and an active imagination. A strong interest in learning and facing new challenges. An enriched vocabulary and an advanced sense of humor. These are just a few of the characteristics that we often see in our students.

It is important to remember too that they are three-years-old when they first come to us, and it is often their first time to be separated from mom or dad for an extended period. Many of our children also have heightened emotional intensities and sensitivities. A student might be worried about an earthquake on the other side of the globe or upset by a perceived slight to a friend. They are also at many different stages developmentally; at the beginning of the school year, for example, some students simply are not ready to sit with the group during circle time.



We must be aware of all of these unique characteristics as we navigate through each day and through the year. Each child deserves individual attention. But one of the great strengths about our EC program – and ACS in general – are our peer groups. Although they are all different, our students do share many important traits and interests and, as a result, they learn and feed off of one another and grow together. They also form very strong bonds, and these friendships often continue through Eighth Group and beyond. Like any really effective school, our students learn from the teachers and from each other.



(left) Friendships established in EC often continue throughout the students' time at ACS and beyond.

(right) The light table is a favorite of the students.

Student Characteristics

The Avery Coonley School's mission to serve academically gifted students formally begins in Kindergarten. But our Early Childhood and Junior Kindergarten teachers also see gifted characteristics in many of their students and they are expert at identifying and fostering these abilities.

The Center for Gifted and the Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity lists the following talents and characteristics as common among those students who thrive in gifted programs:

- Expresses curiosity and creativity
- Enjoys challenges
- Asks thoughtful questions
- Has unique problem-solving abilities
- Is keenly observant
- Has a well-developed imagination
- Demonstrates talent in art, music, writing, or drama
- Acts independently and with initiative
- Has an extensive vocabulary
- Uses complex language skills
- Discusses and elaborates on ideas
- Uses learned information in new contexts
- Shows ability to place objects in logical sequence
- Enjoys reading
- Creates and/or tells stories
- Exhibits wit and humor
- Has a sustained attention span
- Has a good memory

The EC and JK programs are designed to benefit all students within a supportive, challenging environment; those with some or many of the above traits will flourish among like-minded peers and experienced, knowledgeable teachers.



An important goal of the EC program is to make the students feel comfortable and at home in the Gatehouse.

Our Goals

The primary goal of our Early Childhood Program is to establish a strong foundation for learning in each of our students. A big part of this involves getting them used to a school routine – arriving on time, performing daily tasks, functioning in a group, listening to and following directions, taking turns and sharing. We want to make sure that our students – and their parents – feel comfortable and confident in our care. The transition from home to school is a big milestone, and we take it very seriously and work hard to make sure that it is as smooth as possible.

We are helped in that regard by the work and vision of our founder, Queens Ferry Coonley. Mrs. Coonley believed that school, especially for the youngest students, should feel as much like home as possible. Our setting in the Gatehouse is a real benefit here – it was originally designed as a home for the Head of School and still retains that great homey feel. With our outdoor playground, we have our own little world at the top of the hill.

At the same time, though, we realize that it is also important to connect the EC Program to the “big school.” We frequently take trips around the entire campus, to visit the library, for example, or to count the seahorses on our annual seahorse hunt. These visits help our students gain a sense of community and, as an added bonus, they benefit in many ways from seeing the older students in action.

At the same time that we are working to create a comfort level within our structured environment, we are also gently pushing our young students to step outside their comfort zones. ACS is all about learning to take risks, safely and securely, and that begins in EC. That might involve trying something new on the playground, or tackling a challenging puzzle, or joining the group to learn a new song; it might just be developing a sense of excitement to hop out of mom’s car and start the school day. As the year progresses, we see tremendous – sometimes remarkable – growth in each of our students.

We work very closely with the parents in all that we do; it’s a real partnership. We have formal and informal parent education programs and events, and there are many opportunities for parents to get involved with the daily activities. During pick-up we always share that day’s highlights, and at conferences we discuss in much more depth each child’s progress. The more that the parents know and the more involved they are, the more they love us!



The daily routine includes some outdoor time; it may be for special events like Farmyard Fun or simply exploring the campus.

Our Philosophy

Play is an important part of what we do in EC, but we are not a play-based program. We have a developmentally appropriate academic curriculum, designed specifically for our three- and four-year-old students. That does not mean that we hand out textbooks and assign homework. But it does mean that we have three experienced teachers who plan lessons, develop concepts, and use scaffolding techniques to move our students toward a deeper understanding and greater mastery of certain key skills. This distinguishes us from daycare centers and, although we fall into the “preschool” category because of the age of our students, we believe that this is what *school* should look like for three-year-olds.

Our daily routine is an important part of our overall approach. Providing clear transitions, and engaging the students as they move from task to task or room to room, helps them to adjust mentally and emotionally to the rhythms of the day. Having such a well-developed structure provides clear and attainable goals for students who may struggle early in the year managing their cubby or sitting quietly during circle time. As the year progresses, we are also able to adjust the routine – by having, for example, longer time in our small groups – depending on the children’s interests and development.

We are always cognizant of the fact that the Early Childhood Program belongs to the children; it is their world, not ours. We teachers are careful to show that we value them and want their input. We do not simply offer hollow praise – “What a pretty picture!” – but instead ask questions like, “What colors did you use?” and “What is this person doing?” Rather than imposing rules, like forcing the students to gather quietly in a straight line, we ask them to think about their choices and how their actions impact others. This approach empowers the students and establishes a sense of trust between teacher and student.



Happy memories are formed by making new friends, celebrating holidays and fun events, and learning and growing in a safe, comfortable environment.



Because many of our students have perfectionist tendencies and heightened sensitivities, they can become frustrated, for example, that their fine motor skills cannot keep up with their active imaginations. If what they are able to draw on paper does not come close to the image that they have in their mind, they may become upset or even shut down completely. We are keenly aware of this and constantly look for ways to make the students feel valued and safe. When we teachers make mistakes, we make sure to acknowledge them and model appropriate responses in order to show that it is okay to stumble or struggle. Resiliency is a difficult life skill to learn, but it is important to start early, especially for our highly sensitive students.

Our small class size and low student-to-teacher ratio allow us to offer individual attention to each student. If a child shows interest and is ready for the next step, whatever that may be, then he or she is ready, regardless of age. Likewise, if another child needs some extra time, we can provide that as well. Each student is different but our goals are always the same – to provide a safe, happy learning environment for confident, well-adjusted learners. Children have an innate curiosity; we want to help develop that into a true love of learning. We are not in a race to finish first; we are on a quest to do our best.

It is always a joy for us to watch our former students progress through the grades at ACS and to know that their educational journey began in the Early Childhood Program!

Why Early Academics Are Important

By Lisa Wiltz

Lisa Wiltz is the Early School Co-Coordinator and a Junior Kindergarten Teacher; she has been at ACS since 2003.

When one hears the word *preschool*, it literally connotes the idea that children are involved in activities prior to school or outside of a school setting.

As a society, we question the necessity of sending our youngest learners to school rather than a daycare environment. The thought process exists that education for three- and four-year-olds is “just play.” How can a person justify the time and money for an academic preschool program when higher education costs are so expensive? Some argue that high school and college tuition costs are a greater priority for future success. A prevailing attitude about preschool is that if money is spent on quality early education, college education will be sacrificed.

The other side to this argument is that without a quality early childhood experience, children do not have in place the necessary cognitive building blocks to achieve academic success. All of learning requires a risk-taking attitude and a bit of resilience. Learning only occurs when encountering a struggle or a cognitive conflict. Reciting, memorizing, and duplicating knowledge are all lower levels of thinking. In a preschool environment rather than a daycare, children can practice higher-level thinking skills.



JK students are able to practice higher-level thinking skills in a variety of ways.



In a school environment, students learn to keep trying when things are tough. They figure out that when they achieve something that is challenging, there is pride in the accomplishment. Furthermore, the hands-on investigation motivates children to keep exploring, asking questions, trying new strategies, and looking for new outcomes. And yes, many of these fundamental learning goals are achieved through play. But it really isn't "just play" – it is authentic, practical, and absolutely essential learning.

When children have preschool experience, they build the ability to take risks as learners and to learn from their struggles. For three- and four-year-old children, playtime is the most beneficial time of the day. It is not a break from learning but rather learning itself. Experts are in place who know when to scaffold and when to step back, so that through dramatic play situations, children can practice conflict resolution, compromise, and delayed gratification. Moreover, play allows them to see cause-effect relationships, develop sequencing strategies, and categorize objects and thoughts. Research has shown that when children have preschool experience with guided play, targeted social-emotional lessons, and stimulating interactions with teachers and peers, the benefits to their development surpass those of children without the same schooling benefits.

Let's view education as analogous to a construction project. Consider the building of a house. Early educational experiences serve as the foundation for the building. Without a solid base, the structure crumbles part way through and needs to be remediated to progress further. Though it takes a significant amount of time to complete the foundation, it is imperative to the overall integrity of the structure. If the builder cuts corners or tries to skip steps, there is typically a negative consequence. For instance, without putting in proper wiring, the electrical outlets won't function. So it is with education: without laying the groundwork with plentiful multi-sensory, hands-on experiences, the desire to learn and even competency can falter.

What does structured early childhood education offer to a young learner that cannot be duplicated in other environments? In a word, the foundation. Through carefully-designed settings and well-planned activities, children can establish core skills and the basic understandings that will enhance their learning throughout their educational career. To believe this, one must recognize that human development is achieved through sequential steps. By way of example, think of the processes children go through to learn to walk. First, the infant builds core strength by lifting its head and then rolling over to one side. Sitting upright requires balance and engages more muscle groups. The stages of skooching, crawling, pulling up, and finally maneuvering in an upright position require not only core strength and balance but also coordination, cross-lateral movement, and connection of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Walking is not possible without progressing through these steps. In that same manner, all academics emerge in a developmental fashion. Without the underpinning of experience and developmental readiness, the complex skill of making sense of symbols (reading, writing, and symbolic math) is not possible. Early childhood education provides the base for academic success.

Unstructured playtime, peer group interactions, motor-planning lessons, and guided time to observe and articulate observations are early education activities that create the scaffolding for future learning and critical thinking. As adults, we often view education in content areas, so let's look at different curricular areas to see how preschool programs support and enhance each subject. Scientific inquiry begins with noticing and questioning. At ACS, a walk through the forest with a collection basket brings a multitude of science into the classroom. The scientific method is simplified to "ask, do, and record," which builds the pathway for future scientific discovery. Math concepts also mature on a developmental timeline. The concept of number begins with using concrete objects that can be manipulated to gain a solid understanding of more, less, and equal. The concrete stage is followed by the connecting level (objects plus written numerals) and progresses to the symbolic level, which we typically think of as solving equations. Experiencing math is much different than memorizing math facts and builds a strong basis for higher level math reasoning.



Guided play, hands-on investigation, and individual attention from our experienced teachers all contribute to a solid educational foundation.

Feature

Likewise, the early childhood experiences of telling stories, hearing and creating rhymes, and playing with sounds in music and poetry all lead children down the path of literacy development and help to “crack the code” of reading. In preschool, children also foster the growth of written communication skills by drawing pictures, dictating descriptions, and connecting sounds with letters to tell stories. The ACS preschool program places a high priority on literacy and mathematics by providing center activities, small group instruction, individualized conferencing, and developmentally appropriate lessons to target foundational skills such as observation, articulation, and interpretation.

Beyond gaining the essential background that supports and fosters scientific inquiry, mathematical understanding, reading readiness, and writing/handwriting processes, early childhood education programs cultivate a myriad of other “soft” cognitive skills. Because preschool furnishes the opportunity for children to explore, investigate, and delve into situations with peers, children can experience learning as an adventure. Developing flexibility of thought and appropriate responses to conflict occur naturally when interacting with peers. Elena Bodrova and Deborah Leong outline developmental accomplishments for preschool in their book *Tools of the Mind*. As children exit Kindergarten, the following abilities allow for success in academic arenas:

- Symbolic Function
- Beginning to Act on an Internal Mental Plane
- Imagination
- Integration of Emotions and Thinking
- Development of Self-Regulation



All of these areas are targeted and reinforced in preschool programs. At The Avery Coonley School, time is built into each day for unstructured play, social interactions, novel experiences, and exploratory learning; our educators believe that these help to develop thinking, innovating, and executive functioning skills. Additionally, organized gross motor programs facilitate brain integration, give sensory stimulation, increase balance/coordination, and promote muscle development. Weekly Physical Education time in Junior Kindergarten and daily structured motor-planning activities augment children’s physical growth. Physical development directly correlates with academic success in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Therefore, children who attend ACS have the advantage of participating in developmentally appropriate activities designed to strengthen their bodies, challenge their minds, inspire creativity, and nurture collaboration with others.

The vast majority of early childhood education is experiential. Through multi-sensory activities, children attach meaning to abstract ideas, relate prior knowledge to new concepts or events, make connections and generalizations, analyze their environment, and synthesize information – all with the teachers’ guidance and support. To help illustrate this point, we can examine some core components of the ACS Junior Kindergarten program. The structure of the day is designed to provide security and a safe learning environment that bolsters risk-taking and increases communication between students and teachers. The children begin the day at the “Welcome Mat.” Choice is built into this social interaction as the children select a greeting of a hug, handshake, wave, or high-five to start the day. In a non-threatening and supportive environment, the children individually read through the daily sign-in sentence and place their name card in the corresponding graphing chart. Although the exchange is brief, this scaffolded approach to learning builds foundational academic skills such as word boundaries, one-to-one correspondence, and graph interpretation.

A second part to the daily routine boosts executive function skills. With the teacher, children outline a play plan. Students choose to attend featured activities during a 45- to 60-minute time block. The activities highlight varying learning modalities (artistic, musical, dramatic, kinesthetic, tactile, construction, large motor, mathematical, linguistic, and strategic). In order to support the growth of planning, sequencing, and follow-through, the children pick which centers they want to attend and move their picture card on a chart that tracks their choices. At the conclusion of center time, the teachers conference with each child to review the activities; this allows them to learn about the student's preferred learning styles and guide future growth. Through scaffolded social interactions such as these, the students develop skills of cooperation, self-regulation, and resilience that have impacts far beyond early childhood.

There may be a temptation to believe higher education is more important than preschool education because there is a tangible measure of success upon completion – the diploma. Nevertheless, this final accomplishment is set in motion by preschool education. Engaging in meaningful learning with peers at a young age sets the stage for investigative mindsets, perseverant attitudes, and collaborative problem-solving abilities. Children learn about their world and develop character by interacting and engaging in preschool activities. Their social-emotional growth is aided by everything from sandbox disputes to organizing snack time to figuring out how to fairly distribute supplies. Preschool thus enables children to approach academics with all of the skills needed to be confident and motivated throughout the journey of learning. Robert Fulghum's book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* could easily be re-titled *Preschool Made Me Who I Am Today*.



Mathematical understanding and reading readiness are just two of the cognitive skills that are gained through developmentally appropriate activities in the JK program.



Physical activity inside and outside the classroom helps to develop gross motor skills, and shared endeavors establish bonds among classmates.

Becoming



the Best

What is so special about Kindergarten at The Avery Coonley School? Our roots tell part of the story – Mrs. Coonley’s first school was a kindergarten in Riverside and she started several other kindergartens in the western suburbs, including (in 1912) the first kindergarten in Downers Grove. But what about today’s Kindergarten program? What skills do the children gain, and how do they learn and grow? What are the primary goals and how well are they achieved? Just like in those early years, an incredible bond is formed among our students, teachers, and parents – how does that happen?

Four people with detailed knowledge of the program – two teachers and two parents – gathered recently to discuss these questions and more. **Kristen Mitchell** has been teaching Kindergarten at ACS since 2003. **Angel Van Howe** joined our faculty as a Kindergarten teacher in 2012. **Archana Chawla** is the mother of three sons, all of whom have gone through the ACS Kindergarten program – Ashwin ’20, Rishi ’22, and Nikhil ’24. **Barnali Khuntia’s** daughters Leela ’21 and Jaya ’24 are also recent veterans of Kindergarten at ACS. The following is a transcript of that discussion.

That They Can Be

Building Community...



Community-building comes in a variety of fun and educational forms, including a live staging of Georges Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*.



Kristen: People might assume that teaching Kindergarten – or teaching gifted students in general – is pretty straightforward. But there are so many things that go into it. Besides the academic component, there are also all of the other academic skill sets, like fine motor, gross motor, proprioceptive, and executive functioning. There is a social-emotional piece, and for us there is a big community-building piece.

Angel: I think we should start with the community-building component; that's our platform.

Kristen: It's the heart of what we do. At the onset of the year, we work with the children to understand what the concept of community is, not only the definition but what it means to live it. We give them lots of examples and work toward an intrinsic understanding of how it feels to be part of a community. We also begin each day together as a community. Even though we're in our separate homerooms, we come together into the large room and start our day as a whole group. It gives us focus and purpose and a chance to connect. That's powerful and it sets the tone for the day.

Angel: The children really start to understand "community" when people help them and they realize they don't have to do it on their own. It provides them with a sense of security, a sense that they're going to be taken care of, and they can in turn take care of others as well.

Kristen: Then, because they do feel safe, that's when they start to soar. As soon as they feel comfortable and understand that they have a safety net within that community, they start taking risks. That's when they can reach their learning potential, that's when they can reach their social potential, that's when they can reach their potential as a person.

Angel: Yes. Their greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction, so it's critical for us to provide that framework and stability.

Archana: I've always loved the things you do to promote that sense of community, like the smiley jar. It allows them to experience how good it feels to do something nice for someone, or to allow someone to do something nice for you. That becomes their motivation, but then when they get to do something fun together, that just reinforces those positive feelings.

Angel: Whenever we observe them acting like a community, they receive smileys for the smiley jar. Once it gets filled to the top we get to do a special activity or have a special theme for the day. At the beginning of the year the teachers and children generate ideas and then the kids get to vote. We select a certain number of those ideas and then throughout the year those are the ones we work on achieving. It's going to be Star Wars day soon – we're only two smileys away!

Kristen: Again, it is modeling our community – they have a voice and a choice.

Barnali: We definitely see that sense of community outside of the classroom too and it carries on beyond Kindergarten. That's something that starts here, that foundation – your friend needs help finding her pencil or whatever it is, and you help her. There isn't any selfishness or the sense that you're on your own. That begins here and the kids want to be a part of that, and they also want to come home and be part of the home community. My daughters use those words with us all the time – we need to decide this together, we all have to have a voice.

*“Your dream for my children
is the same as my dream
for my children.
You want to know that
they are successful in life,
not just in Kindergarten.”*

Archana: For all of us that's what we truly want most for our children – we want them to be happy, we want them to be good contributors to their community, and we want them to set goals and achieve them.

Barnali: There are so many little things that you do, like the playdates that you set up. That may seem like a small thing, but it's so big in the life of a five-year-old, in their world.

Angel: We call that “chew and chat.”

Kristen: It's a little lunch program, where we try to pair up kids that don't necessarily hang out together, but we as teachers see that they have a lot of common ground and believe they would really connect; they just haven't found each other yet. So we have a special lunch table just for the two of them with a candle and a tablecloth, and they get to be at the front of the line and have a few other little perks. We also ask that they play together at recess. Sometimes it creates these lovely friendships and sometimes it doesn't, but it's an opportunity for them to step outside of their comfort zones a little bit and get to know someone new.

Barnali: It was great for Jaya, she had a new friend and they had lunch together and were able to giggle and play. We also appreciated that you reached out to both sets of parents to let us know that this was happening.

Angel: That's another important thing to remember—when we build a community, parents are included. There's that relationship and trust that's established right from the beginning. We have the same common goal so that makes it easier to establish our bond. We both want their child to reach his or her potential and be secure in the environment. That's our ultimate goal.

Archana: The communication is great, including the weekly updates with the little questions at the bottom, as well as the photos that you send to us.

Angel: The parent volunteer opportunities also allow parents to come into the classroom and get to know the other students and the teachers more, and really understand what we do and why we do it. Phone conversations are another important way we establish partnerships

with parents. We don't just talk to them at conferences, we talk to them via email and phone conversations and in the pick-up line throughout the year. There are lots of opportunities for dialogue.

Archana: As a parent, it is always such a supportive conversation. When you know, like you said, that we have the same goals, then you truly can establish that partnership. It's so important, and I think every parent who comes through this program is grateful for that.

Barnali: Absolutely. Your dream for my children is the same as my dream for my children. You want to know that they are successful in life, not just in Kindergarten. You genuinely love them, you genuinely care about each one of them. You see it when the older kids walk by, they call out to you and say hello. They still love their teachers! That's such a testament to what you do.



Understanding the Whole Child...

Kristen: Obviously, this is a school for gifted children and academics are very important. However, there is so much more than just the academic piece. One of our core principles is that we need to honor the way children learn, and not all children learn the same way. We work really hard to understand, as quickly as we can, how each child best learns and then apply that and give different options for learning.

Angel: There are different modalities of learning. We have our kinesthetic learners, our visual learners, our auditory learners. Through our observations and activities, we gather data and incorporate that into our instruction.

Barnali: It's hard because when you think "gifted," the tendency is to only think about academic ability. But there is so much more involved with being gifted than that, and a lot of it is challenging.

Kristen: Yes. For example, developing gross motor skills has always been a really integral part of what we do in Kindergarten because there is such an asynchronicity between gifted kids' mental and physical abilities. We have several programs that we use, and we work in

conjunction with the P.E. teachers, in order to take them through a series of skills that we want them to master by the end of the school year. Children need to learn to do certain things with their bodies before they can excel academically. One basic example – children need to be able to cross the midline of their bodies in order to be successful in reading. When you read, you start at the left and then you go to the right and then you have to cross back over, so you're constantly going left to right and then crossing back over. You have to cross the midline of your brain to do that, so children first have to be able to physically cross the midline of their body before they can start reading. Likewise, in math you have to develop what is called an "inner voice" before you can be good at any sort of math problem. That's why we have a kazoo band in Kindergarten – to strengthen their vestibular system. We will play a simple pattern, and they have to hold on to it in the minds and then play it back on the kazoo. That helps to develop that inner voice, which in turn is absolutely imperative for their future successes in math. We explain to parents that these are important skills in order for the students to be the best that they can be in the academic sense.

Barnali: You do a great job of communicating that to parents, that it's not just about academics. I think people might come in the door thinking that's all it is. I remember when we first started, I felt a lot of pressure to have my daughter in after-school activities every day because that seems to be what everyone does now. And you told me, it's okay if Leela just goes home and plays and makes dinner with you. I think that's something you might not hear in other places because there is so much pressure to achieve and get ahead.

Archana: Parents at first might think that my kid is going to learn every last math problem and will be doing algebra by the end of Kindergarten. Because conceptually they're not that far off in some ways. But the longer that you're at this school, the more you see the bigger picture in terms of understanding the whole child, and that support starts here and it carries through. You don't necessarily see it right away, but I feel like for any parent who's been here for a while, you definitely see it over time.

Emotional Intensities...

Angel: We recognize that many of our students have strong emotional intensities, and positive self-talk is a major resource for us. Basically, that's your self-soothing voice; they learn about that through Second Step, our social-emotional program, which we use on a daily basis. Let's say they wanted the purple scissors but ended up with green scissors. It can be hard for them to see past the color. So what are we going to do about that? What kind of positive self-talk can we use? Scissors is a trite example in a sense, but we actively go through different scenarios and apply it to bigger things, to move them toward a point where they can say, I didn't get what I wanted this time but I might next time, I will be just fine.

Kristen: Learning how to be flexible is a key component of that. Because you don't always get your way, in school or in life. Showing them that the world's not going to end, the day's going to be okay, even if you don't get your way. We also show them that sometimes listening to other ideas can have amazing outcomes and open up new possibilities. When they start school, being flexible is something that is very new for many students, so it's a concept that takes a while to build. The kids really amaze me at the end of the year by how flexible and adaptable they can be. When they are flexible, that's when they can listen to other ideas, and that's when they can adapt and reach their full potential. All of this feeds into the overall hierarchy of reaching your potential as a learner, as a person, as a community.

Angel: We also teach them to use "I Messages" to help with flexibility and adaptability. It has two parts – I feel... and I wish... I feel sad because you took my glue stick and I wish you would give it back to me. We teach them both how to give and receive I Messages.

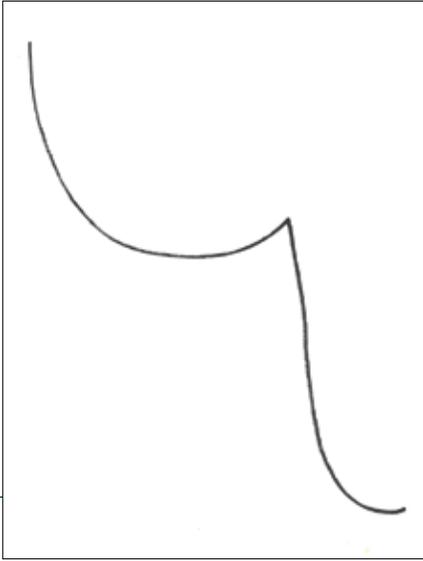
*"We need to honor
the way children learn,
and not all children learn
the same way."*

Barnali: You both are also so good at teaching the kids how to take a deep breath, step back, and look at a problem in a different way. You're able to do that yourselves and you show them how to do it too. That's so important.

Archana: Our three boys – Ashwin, Rishi, and Nikhil – all came through Kindergarten, and I don't know if it's a difference between boys and girls, but in those early years there's a lot of activity, there's a lot of talking, a lot of noise. That's what our house is like all the time! I loved that they academically learned so much here, but they were also able to stand up and move. There's a chaos, but there's an order to the chaos that actually allows them to focus and learn because they've had an opportunity to move around. I could list 20 things that I love about this program, but just that adaptability to work with them and to give them the opportunity to be focused, but also creative and kinetic. You truly understand who they are. Ashwin, Rishi, and Nikhil have loved it and it was a different experience each time through.



It is far more than just academics – accommodating different learning modalities, achieving important physical milestones, and learning how to be flexible are all part of the Kindergarten program.



The squiggles activity inspires students to look at things in a variety of ways and helps to develop divergent thinking.



Justifying...

Kristen: With our gifted children, it's really important that we justify with them why we teach a certain way. So, for example, if we're starting addition, a lot of kids may come up and say, I know how to add, I know how to subtract and multiply, I can do double digits or triple digits. I say, I'm so glad you can do all that! Then I show them the plus sign and ask, What does this mean? Plus. But what does plus mean? It means add. And what does add mean? We just keep going around and they eventually realize that they're missing something. A lot of children do come in with a certain skill set, but they don't have that conceptualization of the underlying foundation. That's why I justify why I'm going to backtrack a little bit and why I'm going to use hands-on manipulatives for addition, because I need them to understand what this means before we can get to the actual algorithm or equation for addition. Once they know the why behind it, they are more apt to buy into it and focus and listen. They realize that we have something to teach them.

Angel: We ask them to do the same sort of justification in Think Tank.

Archana: Think Tank was always one of my favorite pieces of Kindergarten.

Kristen: That's our divergent and convergent thinking piece. It's a time when anything goes – any answer is accepted. Our only rule in Think Tank is that you have to justify it, you have to explain your answer. In the beginning of the year, we start with more divergent thinking. One thing we do is called squiggles. I'll give them a line on a piece of paper, and they have to transform it into something by adding details to it. One person might make it into a duck, another person could add a door and chimney and made it into a house, and someone else might make it into a dinosaur by adding scales and a tail. We never want them to look at it one way and say, Okay, that's the way it is. You have to flip the paper in lots of different directions and in each direction you might see something different than what your partner might see.

Barnali: This squiggles activity, by the way, is our standard restaurant activity. We still do it. We don't take anything else to the restaurant but a blank sheet of paper and four colored pencils and that's what the girls do, the entire time we're there. They love it because it's never wrong.

Angel: Again, it's fostering different learning modalities. Squiggles is more of a visual example. We also do another activity called "groceries in the bag." We take play groceries from the dramatic play area, and we pretend there's a bag, and we say, What would the peach say to the pizza if it was next to it? Oh, you're really squishy! Oh, you're really greasy, get off me! That's more of a verbal-auditory activity.

Kristen: And of course they still have to justify their answer, take it a step further. Why would the peach say that to the pizza? At the beginning of the year, some of the kids, the ones who are very structured, look at you like, this is wacky. Lots of times gifted children tend to be perfectionists, so they are afraid to speak their minds in a divergent fashion because they think there's a right answer. Think Tank gives them a platform.

By November or December, they know that anything goes, so everyone is up on their knees, hands in the air wanting to share, because they know that it's a safe place to take a risk. Then we move into more of the convergent. For example, there's an old logic problem, where there's a farmer and a canoe, and there's a chicken and some corn and a fox. They have to figure out how to get each object across the river without the fox eating the chicken or the chicken eating the corn. That is more of a critical thinking piece but there are still a couple of different options. They all love it and it gives them that opportunity to think in different ways and be creative, and know that it's okay because there are lots of different answers to problems.

Barnali: The thing we notice as parents is that when they get in the car they're so excited about everything that happens – they'll hop in and start right away with "there's a farmer and a chicken and some corn..." They're so happy at the end of the day. They should be tired, but they have to tell us during the ride home every single thing that happened, especially when they get a problem like that and they get to figure it out. It's so exciting for them!



Hands-on manipulatives help students see the underlying foundations of mathematical principles.

Making Connections...



“Child’s Choice” time is not only fun for the students; it also allows the teachers to observe each child’s preferences and personalities, which leads to deeper understanding and stronger bonds.

Barnali: I remember our first parent-teacher conference with you, that was Leela’s first year at ACS. You told us that she was a visual-spatial learner and these are her strengths and she’s interested in that... I thought, she’s only been here six weeks – how do you know my child so well? She was in a different school for two years and did summer camp and I don’t think anyone there knew a fraction of what you knew about her. You know our children, you know their hearts. How do you do that?

Angel: There are layers to that question. I’ll start off by saying that the power of observation is very important. It is part of our skill set – we’re good observers. Also, our experience and backgrounds; my background is in social work. We bring those past experiences with us and funnel them through our teaching.

Kristen: We also have a low student-teacher ratio here, and that allows us to spend that quality time with kids and take anecdotal records. We watch what they play, how they react, where their strengths are and where they need more reinforcement. Like Angel said, we are keen observers, and we have lots of notes on all the kids. I think that that really helps us to get to know them. Another really amazing thing about this school, and the Kindergarten and EC and JK programs in particular, is that we do a lot of co-teaching. When Angel is teaching, I might be sitting back watching what the kids are doing and how they're reacting and how they're responding to her. That gives us insights into them as learners, how they process information, how they synthesize information, and how they can apply information.

"We get to know your children not as students but as people... I look at each and every one of my students as little people and get to know them as a whole person."



Angel: Because of the co-teaching aspect, we pick up what one person might miss. Also, we get to know your children not as students but as people. That's not always present in other schools. I look at each and every one of my students as little people and get to know them as a whole person. I sit down and talk with them and ask them questions. I'm not just here to teach them their academics. I'm here to create a relationship.

Kristen: You can also learn a lot about a child from unstructured, free choice time. We do have many structured times, but we also have many unstructured times. When they go to "child's choice," we're walking around taking notes, seeing what each of them does and how they react in certain situations, what their choices are, what they love to do.



Through individual attention and care, the teachers form very close bonds with each student; here (left to right) Kristen Mitchell, Jaya Khuntia, Nikhil Chawla, and Angel Van Howe share a happy reunion in the Kindergarten classroom.

Honoring the Individual...

Archana: For me, the biggest beauty of this program and this classroom is how you honor each student and honor how they learn. They each have a different personality and different strengths and challenges. I always felt that the teachers were there to foster whatever their strengths were, to take that and run with it and accomplish as much as they could. At the same time, whether it was my child or any other child in the classroom who might have been challenged by something, it is always a very supportive environment to help them move forward.

Barnali: For us, with Jaya, I feel that you went so far above and beyond what other teachers in other schools might have done. You both worked so closely with her, and then Mrs. Mitchell came to us and said, I think there's something going on with Jaya's eyes. You knew her so well and saw that there was this disconnect, and you wouldn't stop until you figured out what the issue was. Not only that, but when we went to the therapist, there was a short form to fill out, and the two of you supplemented that with a four-page essay on all of the things that you noticed in the classroom with her eyesight. The therapist told us, in my 35 years of being a therapist I have never received anything this

detailed or this helpful from a teacher before. That's the type of thing that you only get at Avery Coonley. I can't even imagine what would have happened to her if we were at another school, and now she's thriving and doing so well, even starting to read chapter books. Thanks to you.

Archana: I totally agree with Barnali. You have so many really bright, really interested kids, I don't know how you do it. I'm always amazed by how quickly you learn who they are and how you work with them individually and help each and every one of them move forward in a safe environment.

Kristen: One thing about Kindergarten children is that they're very transparent – what they feel on the inside you basically see on the outside. So if there are some things that they feel really good about you're going to know it, and if there are some things that they are more reserved or hesitant with, then we can step in and address it.

Angel: Again, it's about being observant and getting to know them as people, as individuals, not just another group of kids.

Barnali: Leela and Jaya were having a conversation recently about being favorites. They both felt like they were your favorite students. I asked, Did the teachers ever say that to you? And they both said no, but I just know it. It was funny because right after that we bumped into another child who was also in the class who said the same thing – I was the teachers’ favorite. So I asked her if Mrs. Van Howe or Mrs. Mitchell ever said that, and again the answer was no. So you didn’t actually say it to any of them, but they each thought that they were your favorite because of the way you made them feel. It might have been the way you touched their arm when they did something good, or maybe you praised them for helping a friend. You make each of them feel so special!

Angel: Thanks for telling us that!

*“You see that your children
are so happy...
they’re so supported ...
and they’re surprising you
in ways that you
never expected.”*

Archana: We talked earlier about teaching the students to be flexible. The flip side of that is the patience and flexibility that the teachers have. Sometimes as a parent, you’ll come into a classroom and notice some children veering totally off the instructions, but in such an amazingly creative direction. The teachers don’t just stop it right away, because there’s always an appreciation for the fact that maybe this project really was about following the rules, but something so creative is happening that we’re not going to stifle that by telling you that you were supposed to cut and glue and staple. I always love seeing the patience and flexibility that the teachers have. As a result, as a parent you see that one, your children are so happy; two, that they’re so supported; and three, that they are surprising you in ways that you never expected. That understanding of gifted learners, that support and encouragement, the whole thing... It really allows each of them to thrive and to become the people they need to be. So, thank you!



Within the tight-knit community, students are also given the freedom to be creative and pursue individual interests and passions.

“Rose, KEEP WRITING”



By Rose Yuanhong Benas '15

Rose Yuanhong Benas (ACS Class of 2015) nominated First Group Teacher Linda Ward for the 2016 Barnes & Noble My Favorite Teacher Contest. Rose wrote the essay below in support of the nomination and it was chosen as the winning entry in the local contest. At a ceremony at the Naperville Barnes & Noble in April, Mrs. Ward was honored as the local “My Favorite Teacher,” and Ms. Benas was recognized as the winning essayist. A few weeks later, Mrs. Ward was also selected as the Midwest regional “My Favorite Teacher,” and as such was one of five finalists for the national Barnes & Noble Teacher of the Year. Although she did not ultimately receive the national honor, the entire process was a testament to the incredible impact that Linda Ward has had during her ACS career, as well as the remarkable writing abilities of Rose Yuanhong Benas. Just as importantly, it highlights the depth and strength of the bond that is formed between ACS teachers and students.



Barnes & Noble
TEACHER CONTEST

Award Winner
PRESENTED TO
Linda Ward

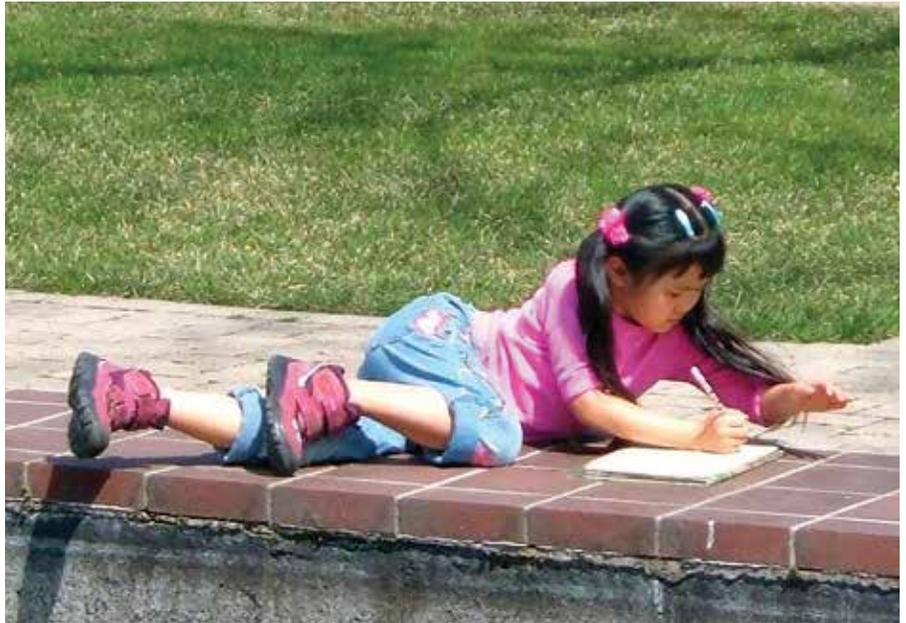
Dorothy Bailey
Director, Barnes & Noble Libraries

Barnes & Noble
TEACHER CONTEST

**In Recognition of
Your Winning Essay**
PRESENTED TO
Rose Yuanhong Benas

Dorothy Bailey
Director, Barnes & Noble Libraries

Linda Ward and Rose Yuanhong Benas pose with the awards from Barnes & Noble in Naperville.



“Step up to First Group!”

were the words I heard as I climbed the brick steps to class. I was greeted by the smiling face of Mrs. Ward; she was so creative and made learning magical. From dressing up as our favorite fairy tale characters to funny anecdotes during class, to the annual First Group circus, she soon became my favorite teacher. During lunch, I signed up for “story hour,” where Mrs. Ward read us books in different dramatic and dynamic voices, making the words leap off the page. She expanded our horizons by giving each student a tadpole to care for until it became a frog, and by organizing community field trips within walking distance. On one trip, we visited the library, and I remember being so excited to see where the books from the “book drop” went and how the librarians filed books away.

Around Thanksgiving, Mrs. Ward explained that a pilgrim was someone who left one country for another. My hand shot into the air as I excitedly exclaimed, “I’m a pilgrim!” Mrs. Ward then encouraged me to write my adoption story from China to the United States. I diligently handwrote a page or two a day, and three months later, I achieved my goal of writing a chapter book complete with drawings. Throughout the writing process, I was motivated by how Mrs. Ward would react when I gave it to her. Since we had talked about the Mayflower, I called [my story](#): *The Journey of a Little Rose Flower*.

Whenever I have seen her since First Group, she says, “Rose, keep writing,” and I always have. Two summers after First Group, Mrs. Ward and I wrote and mailed haikus to each other about activities we were doing; I remember being ecstatic to receive mail from a teacher!



(top) Each day in First Group, Rose wrote one or two pages of her adoption story.
(bottom) Mrs. Ward receiving the Midwest regional “My Favorite Teacher” award at last year’s Spring Fair.

Early Childhood Education

In Fourth Group, I wrote a story and poem which were published in an anthology, and in Sixth Group, I won a writing contest. With the money I received, I sponsored a child in China. Due to an essay I wrote in Seventh Group, I was one of four students chosen to represent my class in Washington, DC at a ceremony for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In Eighth Group, my poem was selected for the first page of the yearbook. Writing has always been a big part of my life, and I find it is the best way to express myself.

Now, I am in my first year of high school, and I still remember First Group with Mrs. Ward. I have had many great writing teachers, but Mrs. Ward inspired me to write my autobiography and helped me realize my gift for writing. My dream ever since has been to write a book and have it published. It is Mrs. Ward's thirty-sixth year of teaching at Avery Coonley and I hope she never retires, so she can keep making a difference in the lives of her students.



Rose – curious, determined, and (com)passionate.

At the ceremony honoring her as the winner of the local "My Favorite Teacher" contest, First Group teacher Linda Ward offered the following reflection on Rose Benas, the student who nominated her for the award:

I am honored and touched to be remembered by Rose Benas more than eight years after she was in my First Group class. Throughout these years, I have had the privilege of maintaining a relationship with Rose and watching her grow and blossom into a fine young teenager.

Just as parents are asked to think of three adjectives to describe their child when applying to The Avery Coonley School, I thought I would share the three adjectives I use to describe Rose. The first adjective is curious. Just like Curious George in First Group, Rose always wanted to know the hows and whys of something. She was always asking questions, searching for more information, and trying to gain a greater understanding. It was this same sense of curiosity that led her on her quest to find out more about her birth heritage after I read a book to the class called How Many Days to America, a modern story of immigration. Declaring that she too was an immigrant, Rose set out to find out more about her adoption from China and record it in a story.

The process of actually completing this story exemplifies the second adjective that comes to mind when I think of Rose - determined. Most six-year-olds complete a story in one sitting and are then ready to move on to another activity. Rose spent several months writing her autobiography, finishing one small section at a time, sharing it with me for revisions, and then proudly adding it to her slowly but steadily growing pile of pages. Although I did constantly encourage her to keep writing and complete her task, it was truly her determination to do so that enabled her to "publish" her story as a book and share it with the class. I still remember the look of pure joy on her face as she read her story to her friends.

The third and final adjective is a combination of attributes: com – passionate. Rose demonstrated both passion and compassion in First Group. From the first day she entered the classroom, Rose treated her fellow students with compassion, frequently sharing supplies with someone who had misplaced theirs, offering a word of encouragement to a friend who was feeling sad or injured, and always welcoming anyone into her activity or sphere of influence. I saw Rose's passion develop as the year progressed. It is a passion that she still possesses today – a passion for writing. She came to enjoy the actual process of writing and found her voice to express her thoughts and feelings by putting pencil to paper. I like to think that my passion for writing somehow influenced this development in Rose and, I hope, nourishes her soul as it does mine. In keeping with this passion, I would like to end my comments about Rose with a poem I wrote about her, entitled simply "To Rose."

*I saw a child, head held high
Approaching me with hesitant steps.
Her head tipped back; her eyes met mine –
And I saw the Questions there –
who, why, where!*

*"Come with me, through this door.
A journey of Discovery Awaits."
She took my hand and walked with me
And thus her wondrous journey
began.*

*Laughter, tears, highs, lows,
Sometimes failing, always growing
With gentle guidance and support
The whos, whys, and wheres
became more clear.*

*I saw a child, arms flung wide
Leaving me with confident step
A smile-lit face, a farewell nod,
She's ready now to conquer the
World!*



Third Group teacher Lucille Kaut helping a student "learn about the world," circa 1970.



Learning

About Their World

In the mid-1930s, Gertrude Hartman, the former editor of the Progressive Education journal and one of the leading education writers of the day, visited The Avery Coonley School over the course of three years. Her research culminated in Finding Wisdom: Chronicles of a School of Today, published in 1938. The book provides a detailed look – complete with photographs and examples of student work – at life at ACS during that time. The following is an excerpt from the first chapter of the book, describing the daily activities of the youngest ACS students.

By Gertrude Hartman

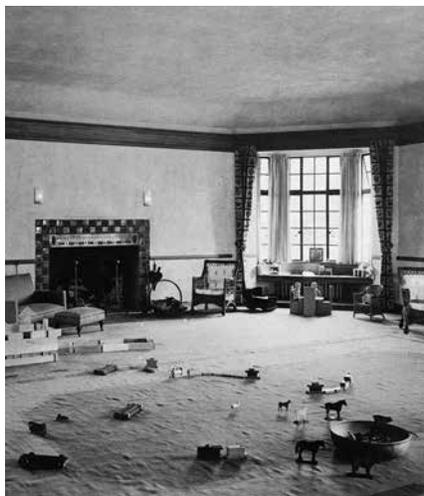
There is no sudden transition from home to school for the little four-year-olds starting in the kindergarten. The life of most of the children up to the time they enter school has been the quiet, simple, regular life at home with their parents, their brothers and sisters, and possibly a few outside playmates. They come to school with certain interests; the school utilizes these and builds on them.

To grow, children need freedom to move, to investigate, to try out their ideas and interests. They need real experiences; they need periods of activity and quiet times of relaxation and repose.

The large, light kindergarten room, giving a sense of space, simplicity, and beauty, allows ample room for much free activity. Opening into the central room are two smaller rooms where little groups may assemble for quiet occupations. One of them has a fountain and a pool which give the children an opportunity to try out boats made in the shop and to watch and feed the goldfish, turtles, and snails. Below these rooms is a rest room, a kitchen, and the kindergarten shop. By this arrangement the small children have their own complete unit.

The school life of these children is an active, informal one. Their days are filled with delightful, worthwhile work and play experiences. They sing and dance, they take care of their pets, they listen to stories and learn poems. There is at hand a variety of adaptable play materials – large and small blocks, wood, clay, and tools, and the children are encouraged to develop their creative abilities in simple ways. They hammer and saw and build, they paint and model, they engage in free dramatic play.

*(top) A view of ACS soon after the school opened in 1929.
(bottom) The Kindergarten classroom in the 1930s.*





Candle making and tending the school's livestock were two of the hands-on experiences for the students of the time.

The kindergarten also has its own outdoor playground, equipped with a swing, a slide, a trapeze, a climbing rope, a jungle-gym, a large, open, sunny space to run races, ride bicycles, pull wagons, and push wheelbarrows, and a playhouse where much dramatic play is carried on.

Trips are taken to nearby points of interest where the children can gain first-hand information about the things in their community which are of interest to four and five-year-olds. When they return they play out their experiences and so clarify their impressions and ideas.

The children in the kindergarten gain some knowledge of the activities of the people around them. In the first and second grades they are taken as far as their interests lead into many of the activities of the home and the community. In Group One they begin investigating and learning more about their school environment. They make a tour of the building to get an idea of the general layout. They see how it is heated and lighted, they visit the kitchen, and so on. Sometimes they pace around the school grounds to get a general idea of the size. They get a sense of the directions – north, south, east, and west.

The school is in a community of farms, and a number of the children in the school live on farms. This situation gives vitality and a sense of reality to farm study with the younger children. At various seasons of the year they go to nearby farms to see the animals and learn how they are cared for. Sometimes they help the farmer dig potatoes, husk corn, or gather apples and pumpkins. In the barnyard are hay lofts to play in, where perhaps a nest is discovered or a family of kittens has been hidden. Over the fence are low-branched apple trees just right for young climbers. For their luncheon out under the trees they have some of the delicious fresh milk from the cows they have seen being milked.



Sheep were a fixture on the ACS campus for several decades; students performed the primary construction of the barn.

On their return to school the children's impressions are worked into some sort of organized whole and supplemented by reading and information. They have some real farm experiences at school – churning, making jelly, dipping candles, shelling corn, and so on; and they try their hand at simple industrial processes such as spinning, and weaving, and dyeing materials with various vegetable dyes. Sometimes the various farm experiences are brought together in a large Farm Book, illustrated with big colored pictures which bring out the seasonal activities of the farmer.

All sorts of interesting neighborhood happenings are incorporated into the school experience of the children. One spring the road not far from the school was being repaired. One boy in the first grade who lived near the road was much interested in the undertaking. Day after day he sat on the fence watching the work and one day he brought to school a series of pictures he had made. He wanted to share this experience with the class and the teacher took advantage of the opportunity which the situation offered.

A simple wooden motion-picture machine was made, and large painted pictures were made from some of the boy's drawings. These paintings, with captions below them, were mounted on large sheets which were fastened together and put on the rollers of the machine. The moving picture thus made was given many times and enjoyed by all the children in the group.

The recent building of a new post office in the village has stimulated interest in learning about the mail. Each week a committee or the group visited it, noting progress and getting answers to their various questions. One day they were taken behind the scenes in the old post office and shown the simpler processes of the handling of the mail. Next came the desire to build their own post office. A rather crude building, almost entirely the work of the group, has been evolved and the activity of the post office is carried on daily.

The immediate environment of the school is rich in natural beauty. The teachers and the children go out to explore and see the natural wonders of the country about them. They discover choice spots to which they return again and again. Each season is enjoyed for the special interests and pleasure it brings. In the fall there are trips to the nearby woods to look for acorns, to see the trees in their autumn colors, to watch for the birds going south. In the winter there are snow experiences such as coasting, making snow men, and so on. The children learn that certain birds stay in the winter. They make feeding stations for them where they put food. They go out to see how the woods look under a blanket of snow. They follow the tracks made by the little wild creatures in the snow. In the spring they make bird houses and watch for the return of the birds. They observe them building their nests, feeding the young, and teaching the baby birds to fly. They look for the earliest spring flowers. They plant bulbs, flowers, and vegetable seeds and care for the garden. They find tadpoles and watch their development.

Feature

The *Progressive Education* journal, which Mrs. Coonley helped to establish, also offers fascinating looks at the educational theories and practices of the 1920s and 30s. This excerpted article expresses a pedagogical approach to early childhood education that is very similar to that found at ACS, both then and now:

The nursery group, whether run as an organization separate from a school or as the foundation of an entire modern school organization, speaks of the failure of education in the past to consider the earliest years of childhood as truly significant in the process of education. Many nursery school groups of children varying in age from one to four years have sprung up in America, England, and other European countries. In order to develop a real life in a significant environment among children as young as two or three, the nursery schools have done much serious and important experimenting on the conditions of physical environment, new equipment, and flexible educational technique.

The new education must work out such a technique that children grow in their own way, along the lines laid down by their individual type, and at the same time it must prepare them to meet the demands of the actual world. The problem is to develop children to meet life not as an adult in an adult world, but as a child in a child's world. If one considers education then as dealing with the emotional development of the whole human being, it begins at birth, not at an arbitrary "school age."

The most important equipment for small children is largely physical, because they get their contact with life largely through experimenting with materials and in testing their own physical powers. Later on this carries over into other fields and activities. We note the beginnings of scientific experiment in the procedure of the little boy who threw a ball straight up in the air. It fell on his face as he looked up at it. So without a word, he carefully measured arm's length, threw it up again, and watched to see where it would fall. The joy of discovering the simplest facts or inventing the simplest play material is as thrilling to the child as are world-famed inventions to an Edison. Learning to manipulate and balance himself on apparatus, climb stairs, and use seesaws, gives a child such a sense of security in himself that it carries over into other phases of life.

Equally important is the relation of the children to each other. We often think of the individual and the group as necessarily opposed, and look upon socializing as something that must be forced from without. The children when they enter nursery school are like separate little worlds. They sooner or later, according to the type of child, begin to take a genuine interest in one another. They explore other children as part of the environment, and are much interested when they get a human response. They desire to attract each other's attention, to win approval and affection. Their social intercourse is apt to take strange forms to adult eyes. We have learned a great deal by leaving the children alone, within the limits set by safety, and watching them work out their relations on their own plans.

"Foundations of the Walden School," by Margaret Pollitzer
Progressive Education (January-March, 1925)

The school has a barn with chickens, rabbits, goats, and other animals. Group One has charge of the goats. Two children for a week at a time are responsible for feeding and caring for them. Directions for the care of the goats are listed by the children, printed on a chart and hung on the barn wall.

Every Day Duties for Our Goats

1. Feed Them
2. Fresh Water
3. Clean Barn
4. Milk Them
5. Take Them out to their yard
6. Brush Them

Group Two has the responsibility of caring for the chickens. This includes seeing that they have food and water daily, bringing food from home for them, gathering the eggs, and cleaning the roosts. The eggs are sold at the regular market price and the children keep a record of all their transactions, including the amount received for the eggs and their expenses.

A number of fine maple-sugar trees are among those on the school grounds. Almost every spring the children of Group Two make maple sugar. They tap the trees and for a week or more they gather the sap in pails. They dig a trench over which they swing a big iron kettle and they collect firewood. When they have enough sap to fill the kettle they spend a day outdoors boiling it down to syrup.

Transportation is a vital interest of most five-, six-, and seven-year-olds, and this is especially true of these children as Downers Grove is at the end of the route for many trains. Several Zephyrs go through

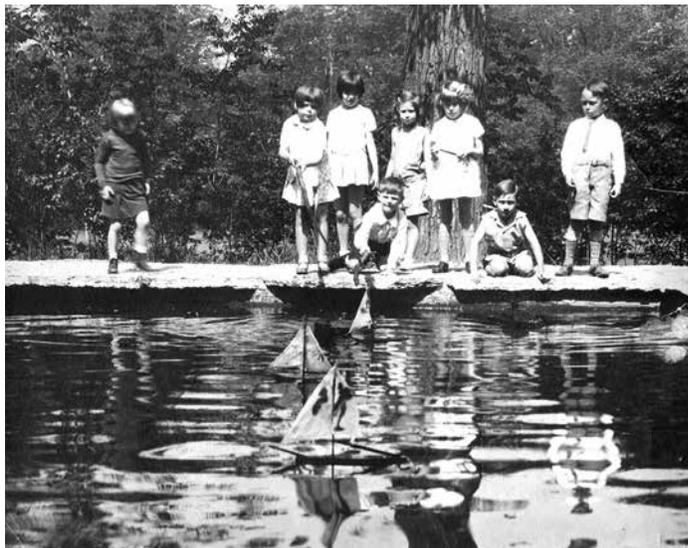
the village daily and there is a roundhouse and a turntable not far from the station. The children go to see the trains. They visit the roundhouse and the turntable. They have a ride on an engine. In the classroom perhaps they make a big train with barrels and blocks or with chairs, and they play traveling by train. There is a station agent, tickets, engineer, fireman, brakeman, conductor, and passengers.

Boats are of perennial interest to children of this age. The children go to the municipal pier in Chicago and watch the boats unload. They look up information and pictures of different forms of transportation and thus get a first taste of research. Interest in making boats follows, which necessitates a study of the parts of a boat and different types of boats.

The school is on an airplane route and airplanes fly over the building daily. Nearby is an airport. All of this naturally stimulates an interest in aircraft.

So the work goes on from day to day, from week to week. These children are reaching an ever wider understanding of the world about them. By the end of the second grade they are fairly well oriented in their immediate physical and social environment. They have gained some knowledge through first-hand experiences about the people who do the necessary work of the world and the relationship of that work to their own lives. They sense something of their own place in this environment and their responsibility to it. They have a conception of the relationship between their own home neighborhood and the larger world beyond.

In all of this working and playing together the children are taking the first steps in happy social living – learning to share, showing consideration for the rights of others, accepting responsibility, and experiencing the satisfaction which comes from cooperative endeavor.



(top) A recreation of the Zephyr train.

(bottom) The rock pond and reflection pool provided the perfect venues to test boat-making skills.

Around Campus

Class of 2016

Congratulations and best wishes to our newest ACS alumni – the Class of 2016! Members of the class are attending the following high schools:

Benet Academy

Culver Academy (IN)

Downers Grove North High School

Downers Grove South High School

Glenbard West High School

Hotchkiss School (CT)

Lyons Township High School

Naperville Central High School

Nazareth Academy

Northside College Prep

Phillips Academy Andover (MA)

Phillips Exeter Academy (NH)

St. Ignatius College Prep

Thacher School (CA)

University of Chicago Laboratory School



Jerel Bangayan (left) addressed the graduates in the morning; (top) the Class of 2016, posing for the iconic photo on the south stairs.



Two of our alumni – Jerel Bangayan and Emily Hall – returned to campus last June to deliver the graduation speeches to the Class of 2016. Thank you to both of our speakers!

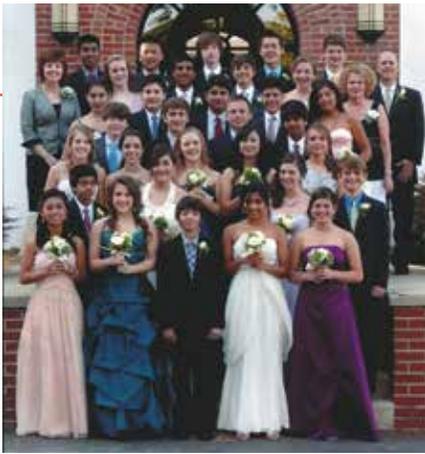
Jerel Bangayan '99 was the morning graduation speaker. After ACS, Jerel went to Benet Academy, and then to Boston University where he received his BS in Manufacturing and Engineering, followed by an MBA from Boston College. He returned to Chicago in 2012 where he lives with his wife, Margaret. Currently he is Director of Operations for Integrated Project Management, a consulting firm that helps businesses design, manufacture, and market their ideas. He also serves on the Board of Directors for an innovative non-profit organization, Kindling Group, which develops documentary films on social issues to ignite change beyond the screen.

Jerel began his address to the graduates by noting how many things had changed since his days at ACS. But he then said, "the core and heart of ACS remains. It's the Cloister that is central to who we are as ACS students and graduates. The walkway symbolizes the shared foundation of our education, put together brick by brick through teamwork, determination, and an incredibly dedicated faculty. And the reflection pool is the constant reminder that we are unique and talented, and yet very real and human."

Jerel offered three lessons to the Class of 2016. First, "Dr. Seuss's 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas' is the greatest book of all time," because it teaches us about the value of relationships and the power of community. Remembering this will help us to "be accepting of others and always make them feel welcome."

Second, Jerel said that "failure is neither good nor bad – it just is...It's what you do or don't do about failure that defines you." He went on to add that failure can either be an obstacle or a motivator. Jerel recalled some academic and professional disappointments in his life and urged the new ACS alumni to be motivated by the setbacks that will inevitably come their way.

To close his speech, Jerel made his third point very clearly. He asked, "What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary? A thesaurus. Life is simply too short to be taken so seriously – instead, find moments of laughter."



The Class of 2012

Emily Hall '86 was the featured speaker for the evening graduation ceremony. Emily graduated magna cum laude from Carleton College, where she served as a junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She then earned her MA in International Policy Studies from Stanford and worked as a senior mutual fund analyst for six years. Emily received her MD from Columbia University and is currently an academic fellow in Family Medicine at UIC, where her practice emphasizes maternity care and medical education. Emily is an avid reader, sewer, and quilter whose list of activities also includes running, biking, swimming and even circus aerialist classes as time permits. She and her husband Peter Gwinn have two sons, Oliver and Emmett.

Although Emily was only at ACS for Sixth through Eighth Group, she remembered fondly many of her Avery Coonley experiences, which included sledding in gym class; writing a play about King Arthur and then building puppets in art class and performing the play; dancing around the May Pole; singing holiday songs in English, German, and French; participating in the first Medieval Faire; traveling to the State Science Fair; venturing to the woods of northern Minnesota for a long weekend of French immersion; and portraying a giant spider, a saloon girl, and a young English noble woman in three different Middle School plays. "And those were just a few of the hundreds of amazing experiences that I had in those three years."



Emily Hall, the evening speaker, with her husband Peter Gwinn.

Like Jerel, Emily told the graduates that "some of the particulars of your ACS journey were very different from mine... but the essence and traditions of Avery Coonley remain the same. Most importantly, this school is full of people who believe that learning is a magical experience." She advised the Class of 2016 that "as you graduate from this beautiful school with its cloisters and maple trees, its reflection pond and school bell, take the best things that ACS and its teachers have given you and carry them into the world."

Remembering that her worst grades at ACS came in art and gym, Emily noted that two of her favorite hobbies now are creating textile art and performing circus routines. With a life-long love of learning, all possibilities are open to ACS alumni. She added, "As you all move on from ACS, I hope that you will think of the world as your metaphorical art club. A place that can be packed to the brim with your creative efforts. The Class of 2016 can, and I suspect will, demonstrate its passion and creativity in so many different ways. Some of you will write poetry, some of you can produce incredible art or theater, some of you can write awesome computer code, and some of you can play piano or violin or the marimba. You should fill your art club again and again."

Emily concluded by reminding our newest alumni to remain connected to their school. "Those you love at ACS will be excited to hear about all your new adventures!"

Class of 2012

Congratulations to the ACS Class of 2012 on their high school graduations and best of luck on their future journeys! Members of the class matriculated to the following colleges and universities:

Butler University
Colorado College
Columbia College
Columbia University
Columbia University & Julliard School
Dartmouth College
Franklin and Marshall College
Georgetown University
Hamilton College
Harvard University
Indiana University
Loyola University Chicago
Mount Holyoke College
Northern Michigan University
Parsons School of Design
Princeton University
Santa Clara University
Texas Christian University
Tulane University
University of Illinois
University of Michigan
University of Wisconsin
Vanderbilt University
Wake Forest University
Yale University

Around Campus

Farewell!



At Spring Fair, ACS bid goodbye to Karen Hyma (top left), Tracy Nemecek (bottom left) and Nicole Gilhooley (above, to the right of Rebecca Malotke-Meslin).



At Spring Fair in June, we bid farewell to three ACS employees: Karen Hyma, Nicole Gilhooley, and Tracy Nemecek. Middle School Head Anna Lenhardt, Lower School Head Kristen Teague, Director of Admission and Marketing Rebecca Malotke-Meslin, and ACS parent and Board of Trustees member Sue Gould offered remarks honoring the three. The goodbyes were hard as always, but we were lucky for their years of service to ACS and we wish all three the best in their future endeavors!

Middle School math teacher and math department chair Karen Hyma began her career at ACS in 2007. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Mrs. Hyma helped to develop the curriculum for both the Lower and Middle School math programs, worked with District 99 on high school math curriculum, initiated the ACS STEM and FUSE programs, and pursued numerous professional development opportunities in order to serve our gifted learners in the best possible ways. Board member Sue Gould also noted the many things that Mrs. Hyma did that went above and beyond her normal duties, including “how she encouraged students to come in early on the days of tests so she could give them sample problems to make sure they truly understood the concepts; how she made each of the students in Eighth Group a teacher for a day, where they were responsible for everything from preparing the lesson plan to doing the instruction to assigning and grading the homework to coming up with quiz and test questions; how she gave the kids confidence by letting them lead discussions during class on how to best solve a difficult problem and how she taught them to give their peers constructive and positive feedback; how she provided Lower School students extra enrichment in math; and the countless number of high school recommendations she has written to help our students get admitted into the most prestigious high schools in the country.”

Assistant Director of Admission and Marketing Nicole Gilhooley began working at ACS in 2012, but her connections to the school go back much further than that. The daughter of former Head of School Gus Favreau, Mrs. Gilhooley has a deep understanding and love of ACS and its mission. Rebecca Malotke-Meslin noted that “so much happens behind the scenes in the admission office – and for 3 ½ years, Nicole Gilhooley has been the one beautifully managing everything behind the scenes! She is the kind smile and reassuring voice that parents need when they call, email, or stop by, wanting to know if Avery Coonley is right for their child. With her professionalism, knowledge, and passion, she has encouraged hundreds of families to become a part of the Avery Coonley community.”

Although Tracy Nemecek served only one year as the ACS school counselor, she had a wide-reaching impact on the school community. In addition to her work with families and students on an individual basis, Mrs. Nemecek’s efforts included small group gatherings with students as young as Junior Kindergarten, lunch group meetings, and advisory sessions with students of all ages. Anna Lenhardt and Kristen Teague remarked that Mrs. Nemecek has “a gift for knowing how best to handle each situation, and doing so in a way that always puts the needs of the child first,” and they thanked her for her patience, flexibility, and kindness. They closed their farewell by paraphrasing Winnie the Pooh: “How lucky are we to have someone who makes saying goodbye so hard.”



New Path

Thanks to the support and leadership of the ACS Alumni Council, we have a wonderfully refurbished path through the woods on the north end of campus – and some great new wood carvings too! The path was also used for part of the Fun Run course.



(clockwise starting at top) A portion of the beautifully refurbished path on the north end of campus; students (and parents) enjoyed the return of the Fun Run; some of our 8th Group students celebrating post-race; Charlene Geary, Jacquie Orr, and Barnali Khuntia are the chairs of the new Parent Ambassador Program; the new path features several fun wood carvings.

Parent Ambassadors

A new “Parent Ambassador Program” debuted in the 2016-17 school year. The school community has always been a tight-knit group, and our parents, alumni, and current students continue to be our best marketing tool. The Parent Ambassador Program is designed to support both of those phenomena by organizing events and activities for current and prospective families, mentoring new families, and spreading the word about the importance and effectiveness of our mission. The Program is under the auspices of the Home and School Association, and Charlene Geary, Jacquie Orr, and Barnali Khuntia are the chairs. A big thank you to all of our Ambassadors!

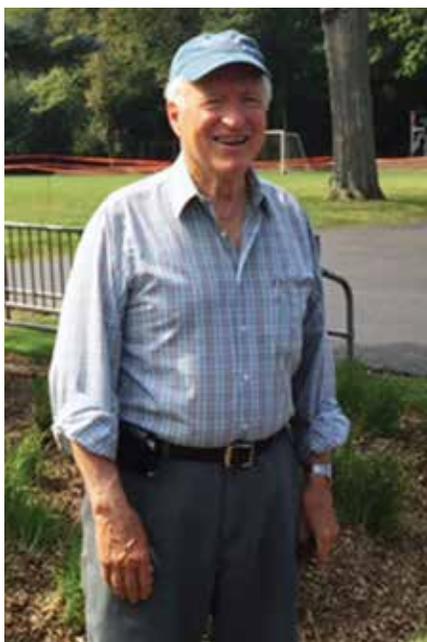


Fun Run

We were excited to welcome the Fun Run back to campus this Fall! Over 400 people participated in this family-friendly event. Many thanks to our sponsors and to the Home and School Association for making this ACS favorite such a rousing success!

Class Notes

We love to hear what our alumni are doing! Please visit the Alumni portion of our website www.avery-coonley.org and register; you will be able to post updates and see news and photos from your classmates and friends. You can also email information to development@averycoonley.org or share a note in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. We look forward to hearing from you...thanks!

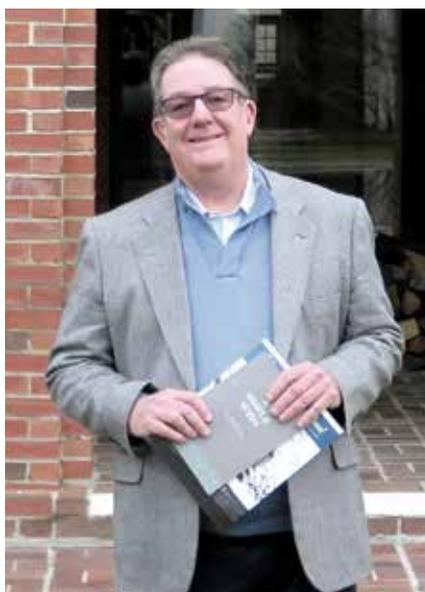


Arthur Kidder '52 stopped by ACS in September for a brief visit. Art, who lives in Tucson, Arizona, was in town for his high school reunion.



1938

We were sorry to hear of the passing of **Mary Ann (Keene) Hoffman** on August 7, 2016. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Mary Ann enlisted in the Navy, where she attained the rank of Pharmacist Mate Third Class. After receiving her B.A. with the help of the G.I. Bill, she went on to a distinguished career as a librarian and archivist. Mary Ann and her husband Jim had three sons.



John Laing '62 visited ACS last spring. John is living in Chicago and teaches in the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University.

1992

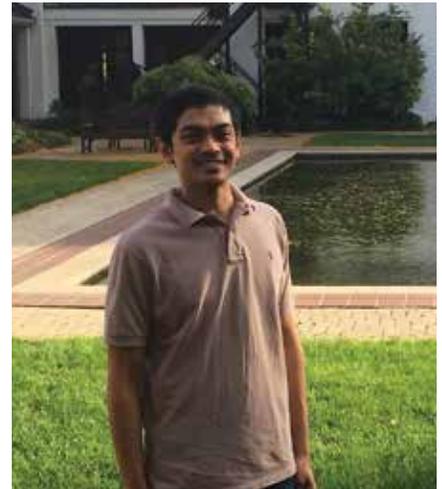
Arjun Mendiratta is a scientist at Matrix Industries (previously Silicium Energy) in Oakland, California. Matrix recently launched a kickstarter campaign to fund their new human-powered smartwatch.

Congratulations to **Michi Trota**, the first Filipina to win a Hugo Award, given to the best science fiction and fantasy works and achievements. Michi received the award in August for her work on *Uncanny* magazine, which was selected as the best semiprozine of the year. .





(left to right) Alumni Ciarra Schmidt, Amy Klein, Luke Sequeira, Nicky Singh, Ashwin Shetty, Rick Baum, and Amit Marwah gathered for an impromptu mini-reunion. Ciarra and Amy are from the Class of 2001; the others are all Class of 1998; Erik Voit '98 and David Klein '98 were also present for the gathering but are not pictured.



Anthony Oliveira '01 recently visited campus. He is living in the Los Angeles area and works in marketing for Toyota.



Congratulations to Shelly Janevicius '05 for running – and finishing – the Paris Marathon in April.

2005

Adelaide Packard graduated from the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford in May, 2016, and has begun an internship in OB/GYN in Miami, Florida.

Class Notes

2006

Caitlan Feigenbaum recently visited ACS to catch up with her former teachers; she even had the opportunity to read her own Curious George story to this year's First Group students.

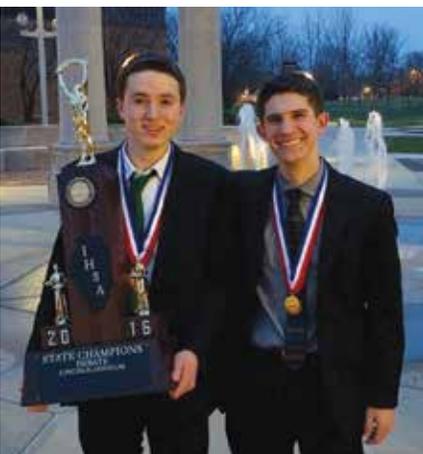


In June, members of the Class of 2012 were invited to a gathering with the Board of Trustees to celebrate their high school graduations. Pictured here are Katarina "Tia" Majauskas, Caroline Fry, Arun Sharma, and Sophie Baillargeon.



2013

Madeline Cohen was elected Senior Prefect of the Latin School Class of 2017.



Congratulations to Ian Crowell '13, state semifinalist in the IHSA Lincoln-Douglas debate division in March, 2016. Ian, who is now a senior, is posing with his Fenwick High School classmate Ted Steinmeyer, the state champion in the event.

Members of the Class of 2015 visited campus for Spring Fair in June: Olivia Krylov, Loey Bull, Andrea Wiltz, Nathan Hu, Kyle Heimburger, Yaseen Ahmed, Ellyse Grunsten, Quetzali Lopez, and Ethan Harrast.



In November, parents from the Class of 2012 gathered at ACS to help pack care packages from the school for the members of that class, now freshman in college.

Alumni Gathering

A beautiful fall weekend in San Francisco provided the ideal setting for our most recent regional alumni gathering. Area alumni and their families joined Middle School Head Anna Lenhardt and Alumni Relations Coordinator Shannon Horn for a casual walk through a park, an evening gathering, and Sunday brunch. A great time was had by all!



Middle School Head Anna Lenhardt, Kate Fitzsimmons '88, Dan Haeger '00, Shannon Horn '06, Blake Glidden '87, Anand Vora '00, Christopher Kao '88, and Vince Belizario '88.



Blake Glidden '87 with his parents Robert and Margaret.



Brittany Glidden '89 with her daughters Maddie and Ellie, Uncle Blake '87, Erika Shumate '98, Anna Lenhardt, and Shannon Horn '06.



Brittany Glidden '89, Matt Braithwaite '88, Anna Lenhardt, and Blake Glidden '87.





The
Report
of
Giving
to
The Avery Coonley School

Charitable giving supports the life of The Avery Coonley School on a daily basis. It is evident in the classrooms, where small groups of students, highly-trained faculty, an innovative curriculum, and state-of-the-art technology all interact in magical ways. It is seen in the rich offerings of the arts, physical education, and extracurricular activities that address the development of the whole child. Charitable support makes possible the amazing array of physical spaces of this beautiful and historic campus. It is in the traditions, special events, and trips that build a strong and welcoming community. It is in the financial aid that ensures that an ACS education can be within the reach of as many families as possible. All of this, and more, is made possible by the contributors acknowledged in this Annual Report.

Each year, the School conducts two major fundraising programs that are coordinated through the Office of Development: the ACS Fund and the Annual Auction. Charitable support may also be directed to one of the three major endowment funds of ACS:

- The General Endowment Fund, which supports a wide range of needs and opportunities of the School
- The Professional Growth Endowment Fund, which provides vital resources for the ongoing professional development of the ACS faculty
- The Financial Aid Endowment Fund, which supports the goal of broadening access for qualified students of all socio-economic backgrounds

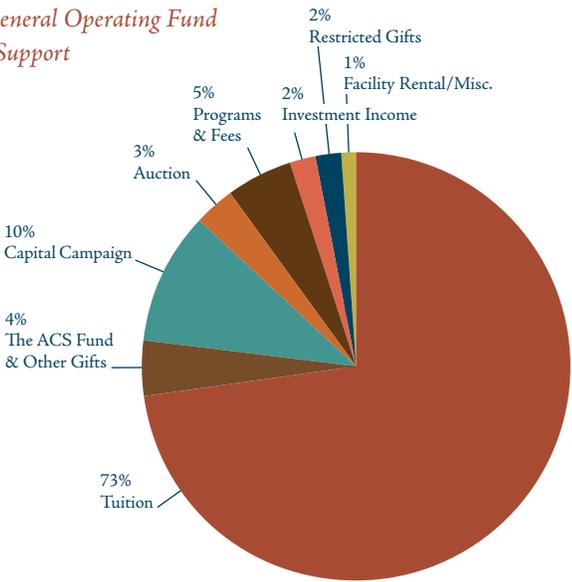
In 2015, ACS embarked on our *Journey Forward Together*, designed to make the unique learning environments at our school even better. Our JFT Capital Campaign honors the critical role that ACS has played in so many young lives, celebrates the many fond memories that we share, and recognizes our shared responsibility in maintaining and enhancing this magnificent school.

The goals of the capital campaign are to restore and renovate our original building and enhance our common spaces and learning environments. In doing so, we will honor our past while simultaneously ensuring a bright future for our school. We are pleased to report on the campaign progress in this Annual Report and are grateful for the generosity of many donors for their support of our *Journey Forward Together!*

The tradition of philanthropy started by Queene Ferry Coonley in the early 1900s continues to be a vital part of the success and well-being of ACS. When asked, please advance the mission and continue this tradition of philanthropic support. Charitable contributions at all levels are gratefully received and will be put to good use educating current and future generations of students so that they may reach their full potential, follow their dreams, and become positive, productive, and respectful leaders of society.

How ACS Works Financially

2015–2016 General Operating Fund
Revenues and Support



Revenue and Support

Tuition Income Less Need Based Financial Aid \$6,126,465

Full tuition is charged to all students who attend the School. ACS awards financial aid to qualified recipients based on financial need calculated by School and Student Services (SSS), managed by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). Partial financial aid was awarded to 40 students during the 2015-2016 school year.

ACS Fund and Other Gifts \$300,878

The ACS Fund is generous charitable support from current parents, alumni, grandparents and other friends of the School to help pay the additional expenses not covered by tuition.

Capital Campaign \$875,951

The ACS Journey Forward Together Capital Campaign is a multi-year campaign to modernize and upgrade the original school buildings. This amount includes cash and pledges received during the 2015-2016 school year.

Restricted Gifts \$167,872

Donations made to the school whose use is temporarily restricted by the donor. The funds are released to income as the expenditures which meet the restrictions are incurred.

Auction \$292,368

Net proceeds from the ACS Annual Auction help bridge the gap between what tuition covers and the actual costs of educating students at ACS. Currently, the gap is well in excess of \$3,000 per student.

Programs and Fees \$446,012

Net income from the After School Program, Summer Program, milk fees, testing services, and new student fees assist with paying for the variety of additional programs and services offered by ACS.

Investment Income \$136,163

Income earned on operating cash, designated cash, and a portion of the interest earned on the endowment.

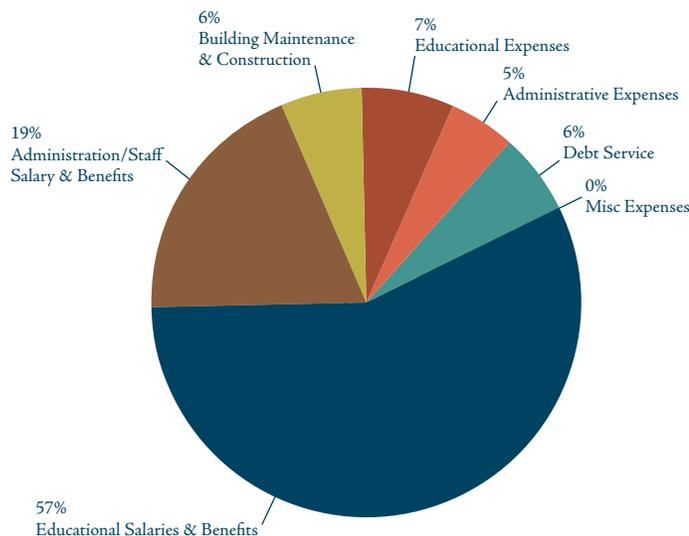
Facilities Rental and Miscellaneous Income \$86,502

Net revenue generated from the rental of school facilities and other programs sponsored by the School.

Expenses

Educational Salaries and Benefits	\$3,981,767
Salaries and benefits for faculty and assistants. The benefits include retirement contributions, health insurance, life insurance, disability, and FICA contributions.	
Administration and Staff Salaries and Benefits	\$1,352,054
Salaries and benefits for administrators, the school nurse, maintenance, and ACS staff. The benefits include retirement contributions, health insurance, life insurance, disability, and FICA contributions.	
Building Maintenance and Construction	\$443,205
Contracted maintenance services including custodial, landscape, snow removal, utilities, maintenance supplies, and repair costs.	
Educational Expense	\$464,783
Expenses related to instruction including educational software, curricular materials, textbooks, technology equipment, classroom supplies, educational professional growth, standardized testing costs, as well as spending to fulfill requirements of temporarily restricted donations.	
Administrative Expense	\$313,957
Includes property and casualty insurance, financial and legal costs, photocopying, postage, office supplies, telephone, professional growth for the administration, and membership dues for school associations.	
Debt Service	\$393,830
The Village of Downers Grove issued Revenue Bonds on the school's behalf. The principal and interest payments represent the current cash outlay to cover the Middle School addition and a portion of the Lower School renovations.	
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$20,300
Expenses used that are not covered in the above categories.	

2015–2016 General Operating Fund Expenses



2016 – 2017 School Year

Statement of Income and Expenses – Operating Fund

For the Period Ending June 30, 2016

	Actual	Budget	Variance
<i>Revenues and Support</i>			
Tuition income	\$6,126,465	\$6,106,939	\$19,526
Programs	341,568	330,300	11,268
Fees	104,444	31,725	72,719
Investment income	136,163	70,000	66,163
Miscellaneous income	51,117	92,045	(\$40,928)
Facility rental	35,385	36,000	(\$615)
Internally-generated income	\$6,795,142	\$6,667,009	\$128,133
Auction proceeds	292,368	150,000	142,368
Restricted gifts	167,872	0	167,872
Temporary Restricted and Unrestricted gifts	1,176,829	350,000	826,829
Total support	\$1,637,069	\$500,000	\$1,137,069
Total income	\$8,432,211	\$7,167,009	\$1,265,202
<i>Expenses</i>			
Educational	\$4,446,550	\$4,457,897	\$11,347
Administration	2,059,841	1,716,858	(\$342,983)
Maintenance	400,968	437,125	36,157
Building and grounds	42,237	542,599	500,362
Other expenses	20,300	12,500	(\$7,800)
Total operating expenses	\$6,969,896	\$7,166,979	\$197,083
2015-2016 surplus/(deficit)	\$1,462,315	30	1,462,285
Special expenditures and allocations	(\$1,462,315)	(\$30)	(1,462,285)
Net Change in Undesignated Fund Balance	0	0	0

An independent auditor's report is available for review in the ACS Business Office.



THE ACS FUND
AND ENDOWMENT FUNDS

The Importance and Tradition of Giving

The Avery Coonley School extends a warm thank you to everyone who supported the ACS Fund in 2015-2016. Last year, more than 375 parents, alumni, parents of alumni, grandparents, faculty, staff, foundations, corporations, and other friends generously contributed to the ACS Fund. This generosity enables the school to provide a transformative experience for our students and helps ACS continue to be one of the nation's finest independent elementary schools.

Contributions to ACS Fund support operations in the current school year by “filling the gap” between tuition and other revenue and operating expenses, which allows the school to remain financially sound. Through your generosity, we raised more than \$300,000 for the ACS Fund, achieving 83% overall parent participation. Once again, every member of the Board of Trustees and nearly every faculty and staff member also supported the Fund. An additional \$16,435 was given in support of the endowed and restricted funds listed in the following pages.

The ACS Fund is more than just a fund-raising initiative. It is a demonstration of our collective commitment to the importance of a specialized education for gifted and talented young minds. It cultivates remarkable pride within our community and ensures that current students and the generations to follow will benefit from the ACS academic program of excellence.

Special thanks to the following volunteers for their significant roles in securing philanthropic support for the ACS Fund and the Journey Forward Together Campaign:

Journey Forward Together and ACS Fund Leadership for 2015-2016 School Year

Journey Forward Together Campaign Chairs

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Chris McClear

ACS Fund Chair

Brian Gilmartin

Alumni Chairs

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J. Brett Pritchard '76

Faculty and Staff Chairs

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Raj and Nina Goyal
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Maneesh and Archana Chawla
Second Group

Peter and Kathleen Danakis
Franklin and Peggy Tan
Third Group

Mark and Jackie Gupta
Anup Bendre and Anu Perni Bendre
Fourth Group

Zainab Baig
Bill and Farah Turk
Fifth Group

Bill and Reagen Atwood
Brendan and Mary Sheehy
Sixth Group

Patrick Fry
Chris and Lisa McClear
Seventh Group

Kevin and Kelly Flynn
Sue Gould
Eighth Group

2015-2016 ACS Fund Leadership Giving Circles

The leadership giving circles were established to honor the rich history, traditions, and founding leaders of ACS.

Elizabeth Coonley Circle

Honoring the only child of Avery and Queene Ferry Coonley, and the first student of the school, this Circle recognizes contributors of \$10,000 and above.

Anonymous Alumnus

Mr. Frederick '55 and Mrs. Kay Krehbiel

Mr. John Krehbiel, Jr. '51

Mr. Christopher and Mrs. Lisa McClear

Nickum Foundation

Rev. Dr. Linda Nelson

Mr. and Mrs. Martin P. Slark

Jens Jensen Circle

Honoring the famed landscape architect and naturalist who designed the school grounds including the stunning rock pond garden, this Circle recognizes contributors of \$7,500 to \$9,999.

Mr. Peter and Mrs. Kathleen Danakis

Dr. Parag and Mrs. Shweta Jain

Waldron Faulkner Circle

Honoring Avery and Queene's son-in-law and the architect of the 1929 school building, this Circle recognizes contributors of \$5,000 to \$7,499.

Anonymous

Mr. Ajay and Mrs. Priya Desai

Dr. Joshua Friess and Mrs. Jessica Friess

Mr. Lloyd A. Fry '67 and Mrs. Colleen Fry

Lloyd A. Fry Foundation

Mr. John and Mrs. Ann Grube

Dr. Steven and Mrs. Amy Louis

Amy & Steve Louis Foundation

Mr. Neal and Dr. Jennifer Reenan

Henry Chapman Mercer Circle

Honoring the designer and ceramicist who created the fireplace, floor tiles and Cloister triptych, this Circle recognizes contributors of \$2,500 to \$4,999.

Mr. Aamer and Dr. Zainab Baig

Mr. Matthew Bousquette and Mr. John Jacobs

Mr. Maneesh and Mrs. Archana Chawla

Mr. James and Mrs. Pamela Crouthamel

Mr. Rik Geiersbach and Ms. Carolyn Burger

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Ms. Padmaja Putcha

Mr. Dan and Mrs. Mary McNamara

Mr. Edwin Savarimuthu and

Ms. Dhevi Kandasamy

Dr. Karim Tourk and Dr. Aamirah Dhar

Mr. Joel and Mrs. Shannon Weinberger

Mr. Aloysius Wild, III and

Dr. Caer-Eve McCabe

Lucia Burton Morse Circle

Acknowledging our first Head of School and Mrs. Coonley's collaborator for over 30 years, this Circle recognizes contributors of \$1,000 to \$2,499.

Anonymous

Dr. Nouri and Mrs. Shatha Al-Khaled

Mr. John and Mrs. Artemis Anos

Mr. William and Mrs. Reagan Atwood

Mr. Srikanth and Mrs. Lavanya Batchu

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Mr. Michael Baum and Mrs. Tobin Baum

Dr. Anup Bendre and Dr. Anuradha Perni

Mr. Eric Benson and Ms. Stephanie Sayegh

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Dr. Hui Zhao and Dr. Yi Zhou

Dr. Yunde Zhong and Dr. Shuli Wang



2015 – 2016 ACS Fund

Maple Tapping Circle

Representing one of the School's most cherished traditions, this Circle recognizes contributors of \$500 to \$999.

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Mr. Keith Woodruff and
 Dr. Monina Quindipan
Mr. Charles and Mrs. Amy Wright

Bell Ringers Circle

Signaling a decades-old tradition of a new school day at ACS, this Circle recognizes contributors of \$250 to \$499.

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Mr. Neal Winterhof '96
Mr. Peter Winterhof '04
Mr. Ludwig and Mrs. Kathleen Wolf
Mr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Marni Wright
Ms. Anna Zechel '10

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Symbolizing the special place of serenity and action at the center of the school, this Circle recognizes all contributors of gifts up to \$249.

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Mrs. Christine Kurczaba-Aquino
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Mr. Jordan Lloyd
Mr. Rhys Louis '07
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2015 – 2016 ACS Fund



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Mrs. Dina Tufo Mathews
Ms. Clare McComb
Mr. Andrew McCormick
Ms. Nancy McGreevy '79
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Mr. James O'Leary '07
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Ms. Erin Portman '07
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Mr. Hafeez and Mrs. Arshia Quraishi
Dr. Feraz Rahman and
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Mr. R. Ramas and Ms. Janice Ciampi
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Ms. Kara Thorpe-Dosen
Mr. Derek and Mrs. Ying Timmermann
Mr. Wallace and Mrs. Adina Van Buren
Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Van Howe
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Ms. Amanda Boatright
Ms. Susan Walker '97
Mr. and Mrs. William Ward
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Mr. and Mrs. Brian Wetta
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Mrs. Lisa Wiltz
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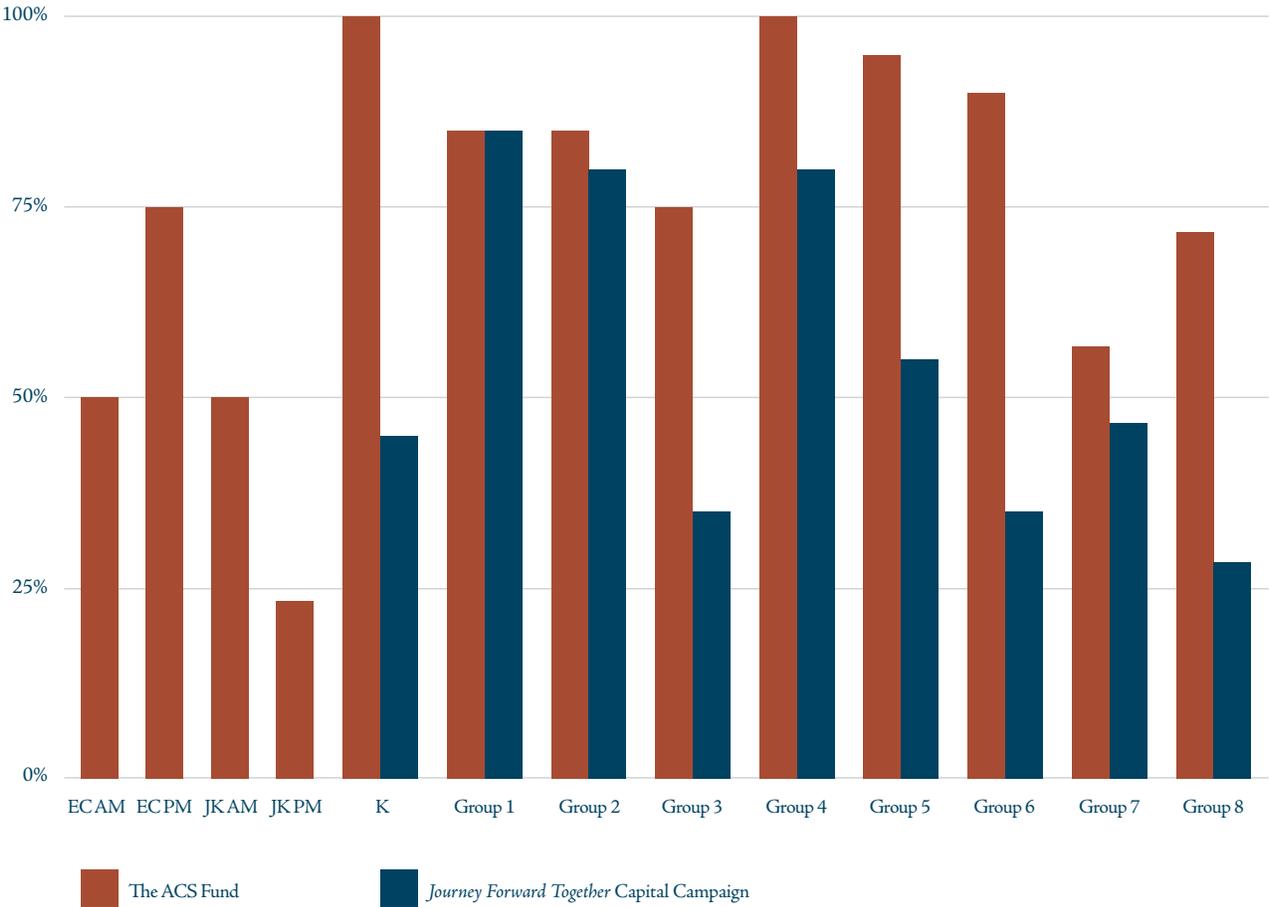
Donations from Corporations and Foundations

The following corporations and foundations generously supported the School in the 2015-2016 fiscal year. These organizations include family foundations, donor-advised funds, and companies that offer matching gift programs. We encourage all donors to inquire about the possibility of a gift match through their employer - it is an easy way to double or even triple your donation!

Amy & Steve Louis Foundation
APG Dentistry, Inc.
Apple Inc.
Bank of America Matching Gifts Program
CME Group Community Foundation
Corning Incorporated Foundation
Corporate Executive Board
Fidelity Charitable
GE Foundation
Google Matching Gifts Program
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Renaissance Charitable Foundation Inc.
Schwab Fund for Charitable Giving
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
UBS Donor Advised Fund
UBS Matching Gift Program
Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program

2015 – 2016 Parent Participation

Among the many traditions initiated by our founder, *Queene Ferry Coonley*, was her remarkable record of philanthropic giving. Grateful parents continued this “spirit of giving” during the 2015-2016 school year with their support of the ACS Fund and the Journey Forward Together Campaign. Kindergarten and Fourth Group parents led the way with an impressive 100% participation in the ACS Fund! In the end, 83% of all ACS parents participated in the appeals. Thank you to the many parents who generously supported the School with a donation!



Restricted Giving

General Endowment Fund

Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Agos '86
Mr. Mark Schindler '67
Mr. Aidan Weinberger '10

Financial Aid Endowment Fund

Mr. Taylor Foxwell '91
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Mr. and Mrs. Paul Wiggin
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Ms. K. Eunbok Kim-Crespi
Dr. Charles Crespi '71 and
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Lucia Burton Morse Faculty Grants Program

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Ms. Miranda Herzog '09
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Wilson



Dennis Murphy Memorial Fund

Mr. Rich and Mrs. Christine Babb
Mrs. Deborah Murphy
Ms. Amanda Walsh '11

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Anonymous
Dr. Anup Bendre and Dr. Anuradha Perni
Mr. Kevin and Mrs. Tammy Bristol
Dr. and Mrs. Peter E. Doris
Mr. Mark and Mrs. Jacqueline Gupta
Dr. David Herrup and Dr. Nicole Jordan
Lowes Store Naperville
Mr. Rick Ogren
Dr. and Mrs. Udit Patel
Mr. Wayne and Mr. William Reid
Sonia Mani-Joseph Photography

ACS also extends our sincere gratitude to the many families and students who contribute to the ACS Library Birthday Book Club and Library Enrichment Program each year.

Alumni Donors

With deep gratitude, we recognize the loyalty and philanthropic support of our alumni to the ACS Fund, the Journey Forward Together Campaign, our endowments, and other restricted funds. In addition to their financial support, alumni support ACS through their service on the Board of Trustees, the Alumni Council, as guest speakers for special events, and through other volunteer opportunities. ACS alumni remain connected to their alma mater through the Auction and a wide variety of other events, programs, and activities.

Anonymous
 Christopher Agos '86
 Walter Anderson '80
 Derek Babb '06
 Stephen Bohnen '70
 Jessica Bollow '05
 David Breisch '99
 Mary Ellen Bull '79
 Marilyn Carle '51
 Elizabeth Slark Carlson '01
 Edward Carson '11
 Karen Colvin '68
 Matthew Cook '05
 Alexander Crespi '83
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 Anthony Engel '91
 John Fitzgerald '63
 Seamus Flannery '15
 Taylor Foxwell '97
 Patrick Fry '80
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 Blake Glidden '87
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 John Hetzel '77
 Shannon Horn '06
 Robert Hutchison '06
 Sabira Khalil '84
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 Frederick Krehbiel '55
 John Krehbiel '51
 Panorea Kukla '88
 Stephen Lester '66
 Marysa Leya '03
 Rhys Louis '07
 Tamara Lyday '90
 Nancy McGreevy '79
 Carissa Means '89
 Sonia Mittal '96
 Horace Nash '68
 Frances Nelson '82
 Michael Oh '88
 James O'Leary '07
 John O'Leary '05

Kevin Peterson '69
 Michael Porro '14
 Erin Portman '07
 Supryia Ray '87
 Daniel Rucci '94
 Tiffany Schafer '94
 Mark Schindler '67
 Ritesh Shah '89
 Gerald Sheets '79
 Perry Soriano '86
 Brittany Thompson '01
 Nancy Tuttle '50
 Theodore Tylman '48
 Ashish Vora '92
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 Aidan Weinberger '10
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 Ms. Karen Winterhof '01
 Mr. Neal Winterhof '96
 Mr. Peter Winterhof '04
 Joan Wootan '42
 Anna Zechel '10

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 Patrick Fry '80
 Chris Agos '86
 Blake Glidden '87
 Carissa Means '89
 Michi Trota '92
 Shilpa Gokhale '94
 Rick Baum '98
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 Matt Cook '05
 Jessica Bollow '05
 Vinay Nayak '06
 Evan DeLorenzo '09
 Madeline Cohen '13
 Sophie Opler '15
 Madeline Flynn '16
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 Patricia Huebner, *Former Staff*
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 Shannon Horn '06, *Alumni Coordinator*
 Chris Portman, *Director of Communications and Alumni Parent '07 '10*
 Carolyn Johnson, *Director of Development*

Journey Forward Together

With careful planning under the direction of the Board of Trustees, the Journey Forward Together Campaign was launched in 2015 to create a learning environment that fully supports the talents and needs of our extraordinary students. The goals of the renovation are to upgrade the infrastructure in our original building, create flexible spaces that are conducive to large-group, small-group, and individual learning, remain on the cutting edge of technology, and honor and enhance the charm of our historic campus. Renovations have been implemented in multiple phases, with each phase proceeding only when funding is secured.

Phase I - Complete

Completed in the summer of 2015, the first Phase included complete renovations to the library and the Second, Third, and Fourth Group classrooms. New furniture, technology, and learning environments have made a real difference in how our students interact and grow. This project also provided technology upgrades for middle school classrooms. Funding was made possible from proceeds of a successful bond refinancing and donations in the silent phase of the campaign.

Renovation Highlights

- New cooling, electrical, and plumbing systems in the 1929 building
- Modern furniture that is safe, age-appropriate, and easily reconfigured
- Expanded teaching walls with large, interactive touch screens
- Increased opportunities for collaborative work
- Lighting and flooring that are healthier and more conducive to learning
- Plaster ceilings and other acoustical enhancements
- Additional cabinets and counters providing more storage and display surfaces



(top left) The newly designed library features three small-group work rooms, a large conference room, and easily reconfigured furniture to accommodate many different uses.

(bottom left) Each of the renovated classrooms features touch screen monitors, allowing teachers and students to interact in a variety of ways.

(right) The Third Group learning spaces have been an iconic part of the ACS campus since their construction in 1970. The new learning spaces were rebuilt so that many more generations of students can enjoy this truly unique part of the ACS experience.



Phase II - In Progress



As the campaign entered the public phase last year, the community rallied to fund Phase II. The level of support from the ACS community has been truly remarkable – over \$1.5 million has been secured to date! Thanks to this incredible generosity, we were able to upgrade the south wing of the 1929 building during the summer of 2016, which included important renovations to the Kindergarten and First Group classrooms. Additional infrastructure work is planned for these classrooms, pending funding. These improvements will address air conditioning, electrical, and plumbing needs, completing Phase II.

What Our Teachers Are Saying:

- The dual screens and mobile document cameras lead to increased student engagement.
- The learning environment is much more comfortable and promotes risk taking.
- The interactive software makes communication and lesson delivery easier and more effective.
- There is now a greatly enhanced ability to enrich and adapt our lessons.



Phase III - Looking Ahead

The campaign and the project move forward! An additional \$1.5 million is needed to undertake Phase III, the third and final phase of the project, which will focus on the east wing of the Cloister. If fully funded, these renovations will significantly impact teaching and learning in our French, art, and music classrooms. The complete scope of future renovation work depends on our fundraising success. To remain fiscally responsible, ACS will only proceed with the remaining work once we have raised sufficient funds to cover the costs.

Join the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, grandparents and other friends of ACS on this important initiative to renovate the original 1929 building. The benefits of this project will serve the students of ACS for decades to come, and there are wonderful naming opportunities available to enable donors to become an ongoing part of this legacy.

For more information, contact Carolyn Johnson, Director of Development, at 630-969-0800 x7218 or cjohnson@avery-coonley.org.

*With your support,
we can*

Journey Forward Together
*to provide the
best education possible
for our extraordinary
students!*

Work during the summer of 2016 included much-needed renovations to the Kindergarten and First Group classrooms, including new furniture, flooring, paint, and technology.

Journey Forward Together

Journey Forward Together

Thank you to the following donors for their early support of the Journey Forward Together to restore and renovate our original building and enhance our common spaces and learning environments. Giving levels represent pledges and donations through June 30, 2016.

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The renovations have enhanced iconic features like the fireplaces and cabinetry while adding bright colors and flexible room configurations.

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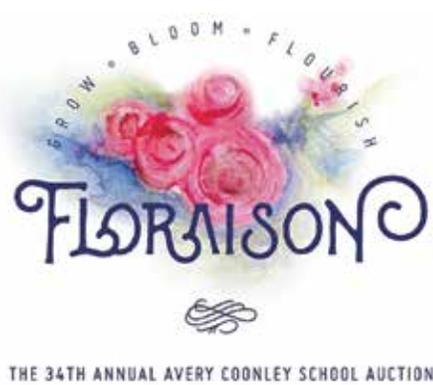
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2016 Auction



The 34th Annual Auction was celebrated on Earth Day, April 22, 2016 on the beautiful grounds of the Morton Arboretum. The theme of the Auction, *Floraision*, signified the amazing growth and blossoming of ACS students through the years, from tiny seeds to confident young women and men with bright and limitless futures! The event netted \$292,368 for the School. Proceeds were directed to support the Journey Forward Together Campaign to renovate the 1929 building and to the school's operating budget. Together with the ACS Fund, the Auction helps bridge the gap between tuition and other revenue and operating expenses, allowing ACS to continue to provide an outstanding educational experience for our exceptional students. The evening also offered the opportunity to create lasting memories among friends old and new, thanks to the generosity and effort of the following volunteers and donors. Mark your calendars for the 2017 Auction on Saturday, April 22, 2017 – an event you won't want to miss!



Auction Chairs Barnali Das Khuntia and Deb McGarry.

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2016 Auction

Fleur de Lis Society

The Fleur de Lis Society is comprised of benefactors who provide philanthropic support to the Auction at a leadership level of \$1,000 or more. The Society, established in 1990, is critical to the fundraising success of this event, which ultimately funds the annual operating needs of the school. Sincere appreciation is shared with all contributors to the Fleur de Lis Society.

This year we were excited to offer a Matching Challenge as part of Fleur de Lis. Five families established a fund of up to \$25,000, which was used to enhance the gifts of new donors as well as those who increased their level of support from previous years. Donors stepped up to the challenge and helped ACS secure the full \$25,000 in additional support!

This year's donations to Fleur de Lis, exceeding \$130,000, set an all-time high mark for Fleur de Lis giving – a wonderful testament to our school's philanthropic spirit, particularly in a year faced with the additional fundraising needs of our capital campaign.

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Thank you to the generous companies who provided financial support at a leadership level of \$1,000 or more to the Auction. Sponsorship provides a unique and valued opportunity to support ACS.

For more information on sponsoring the 2017 Auction, please contact the Office of Development at 630-969-0800 or development@averycoonley.org.

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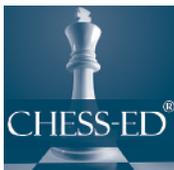
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Lauren Evans	John and Grace Harrast	John Kukral '74
Expression Dance Studio	Health Connect, LLC	Olga Kurganova
Yong Fan and Tzu-Ling Yeh	Laura Heimburger	Labriola Cafe
Kristian and AnnMarie Fauske	Robin Hernaez	Edward Lam and Angela Gomez-Lam
FGM Architects	William and Elisabeth Heun	Laser Quest
The Field Museum	Hiltons of Chicago	The Lashe Spot-Hinsdale
Finan Animal Hospital	Leslie Hindman '68	
Fire Water BBQ	Hinsdale Racquet Club	
First American Bank		

2016 Auction

Wai and Jessica Lau
Mary Lauinger
Tom and Dawn Lawler
Learning Express
Anna Lenhardt
Lifetime Fitness
Lombard Roller Rink
Lou Malnati's Pizzeria
Steven and Amy Louis
Stephen Lunn
Lynfred Winery
LyondellBasell Matching Gift Program
Paul and Daiva Majauskas
Rebecca Malotke-Meslin
Mani & Pedi Nail Salon
Mario Tricoci Hair Salon and Day Spa
Oak Brook
James and B.J. Marshall
Gerard and Lisa Martin
Todd and Dottie Martin
Martin Lawrence Galleries
Jennifer Marvel-Gillono
Mathnasium Of Hinsdale
McAninch Arts Center at College of DuPage
Andrew McCormick
David and Deb McGarry
Linda McGarry
Dan McGinn and Daesman Suri
J. McLaughlin
Timothy McMahon and Michelle Andreoli
Dan and Mary McNamara
The McNish Family
Rajeev and Tejal Mehta
Meson Sabika
Metamora Fields Golf Club
Metamorphosis Med Spa
Adam Metcalf
Microplane
Miller's Alehouse Restaurant
Miskatonic Brewing Co.
Kristen Mitchell
ModCloth Inc.
Mojo's East Coast Eats
George and Connie Molitor
Mon Ami Gabi
The Morton Arboretum
Morton's The Steakhouse
Frederick Mueller and Cindy Leicht
Jeff and Jill Mueller
Mulcahy, Pauritsch, Salvador & Co, Ltd.
Tom Murray
Museum of Science and Industry
Nabuki
Naked Me Tea
Linda Nelson
Tracy Nemecek
Nina Leone Photography
Nordstrom - Jo Malone/ La Mer
Nordstrom - Woodfield
NorthCape
Northwestern Athletics
Northwood Investors
Nurturing Wisdom Tutoring
Oak Brook Park District - Tennis
Edmond and Sarah Opler
Damian Ortiz and Adeena Weiss-Ortiz
Palmer's Gymnastics, Inc.
Paper Culture
Party People Rental Company
Udit and Malini Patel
Peter Shannon & Co.
Kevin '69 and Janet Peterson
The Pilates Body, Inc.
Pilates By T
Pinor's Palette - South Barrington
Wayne and Geraldine Piven
Chris and Carol Portman
Portrait Innovations
PotashCorp
Potter's Place
Premier Gymnastics Academy
Bonnie Pritchard
Brett '76 and Antonia Pritchard
The Qureshi Family
RA Sushi
Megan Rasmason and Vittorio Williams
Real Urban Barbecue
Neal and Jen Reenan
Wayne Reid
Reinforce Health and Wellness
Representative Ron Sandack
Nancy Ries
Dillon Riley
Elizabeth Roberts
Roundheads Pizza Pub
Carl, Tony and Anne Ruzicka
Salon Buzz
The Salon by David and William
Salon Hype
Salt Creek Ballet
Sandlock Sandbox
Patrick Sapinski and Minh Tran-Sapinski
Savannah Riverboat Cruises
Joe Schallmoser
Michelle Schaub
Nancy Schmidt
The School of Rock-Glen Ellyn
Schulz-Brundage Inc.
John Seger
Sephora-Oak Brook
Serosun Farms
Tapan and Kavita Shah
Brendan and Mary Sheehy
Woosang Lee and Kyungeun Shin
Kenneth and Kelly Shipman
Silpada Designs
Skuddlebutt's
Sky Center Martial Arts
Sky High Sports
Skydeck Chicago
Martin and Cathy Slark
Stephen Smith and Gale England Smith
Snap Kitchen
Jeanne Snyder
Debbie Soldato
Solstice Restaurant
Spirit of America Car Wash
St. Louis Cardinals
Stampin' Up
Standard Market
Peter and Cindy Stathakis
Joel Stava
Jay and Jill Stocki
Strategic Academic Services
Style Studio
Jaime Surdyski
Sweet Home Massage
Sweet Tomatoes
Sycamore School
Franklin and Peggy Tan
Target
Madison Tasker
Susan Taylor
Kristen Teague
Ten Friends Blow Dry and Style House
Samuel Tepper and Christine Giovannelli
Theatre School at Depaul University
Lynne M. Thomas and
Michael Damian Thomas
Kara Thorpe-Dosen

Tom & Eddie's
 Toni Patisserie and Cafe
 Top Driver
 Beth Treleven
 Michi Trota '92
 Trunk Club Hinsdale
 Dina Tufo Mathews
 William and Farah Turk
 Uncanny Magazine
 Uncle Bub's
 Angel Van Howe
 Jennifer Vaughan
 Christopher and Lisa Vaughan
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 Venkat Venkatakrishnan and
 Kavitha Rao



Vie
 Paul Virant
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 Yunde Zhong and Shuli Wang
 Zoobooks
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Seven members of the Class of 2006 attended the Auction in April to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their ACS graduation. (from left) Caitlin Feigenbaum, Christopher Finis, Conor Owens, Elizabeth McKay, Shannon Horn, Natalia Khosla, and David Zaccaria.

This report reflects gifts received between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. If any errors or omissions are noted, please accept our apologies and share them with the ACS Office of Development.

Welcome New Staff



Leslie Gordon became the new ACS Lower School Head in August. She comes to us from Skokie, where she served for fourteen years as Principal of the Highland Elementary School. While there, Leslie co-facilitated the district's Gifted Learning and Implementation teams, which researched best practices for gifted and advanced learners.

Leslie brings to us a wide range of experiences and approaches to education, having served as a teacher and assistant principal at several diverse schools throughout the Chicago area. She believes that "as educators, we need to provide our students with an environment in which students use communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity to not only prepare for college and a career in the 21st Century, but also instill a life-long love of learning in all children."

In addition to spending time with her husband and two sons, Leslie enjoys camping, cross-country skiing, reading, and hiking.



Linda Hunt joined our staff as the new Math Department Chair. She has served as a K-8 Academy Mathematics Coordinator and has been a teacher for over twenty years. In addition, Linda teaches in the math department at the University of Chicago, where she offers graduate level courses to educators earning an endorsement in Mathematics and/or Science at the middle level.

Mrs. Hunt's focus has been on the education of gifted students in the area of mathematics. She has served on the Achieve, Inc. Mathematics Achievement Partnership, creating the "Foundations for Success: Mathematics Expectations for the Middle Grades," a collaboration of mathematicians and mathematics educators benchmarking standards and mathematics content to the top-achieving countries in mathematics.

In her spare time, Mrs. Hunt enjoys logic and Sudoku problems, spending time with her family, reading, and riding her new bike along the lakeshore. She also loves singing and doing yoga.



Julie Safranski is our new School Counselor. She has twenty-one years of experience working with individuals and families within school- and community-based settings. Most recently, Julie was a School Social Worker in the Elmhurst Community School District. She is a licensed clinical social worker and also has experience in private therapy practice.

Julie's experience includes work as a group facilitator, trainer, and field supervisor in school settings. Julie enjoys being able to provide services to kids of all ages. Her focus at ACS is helping kids to develop social emotional skills that they can utilize throughout their academic career.

When not cheering on the Cubs, Julie enjoys spending time with her family, trying new restaurants in Chicago, and keeping active by playing volleyball and tennis.

Welcome New Board Members



Archana S. Chawla is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and The University of Michigan Law School. She practiced corporate and transactional law at Squire Sanders, Jones Day and Citadel Investment Group.

Archana is currently at home raising her three sons, Ashwin (Group 5), Rishi (Group 3), and Nikhil (Group 1), all of whom have been at The Avery Coonley School since Early Childhood. Over the years, Archana has been involved at the Board level with charter schools in the City of Chicago. She served on the Board of Directors of Namaste Charter School from 2006 – 2011 and served as Board Secretary from 2007 – 2011. During her time at Namaste, the school expanded from grades K-2 to K-7 and also completed a rehab, extension, and move to a new school building. Since 2012 Archana has served as a non-Board-member Board Secretary for Intrinsic Schools, a 7th-12th grade charter school. She has also assisted Intrinsic Schools with a number of projects from its inception through its growth to full capacity.

In addition to her various volunteer activities at ACS and elsewhere, Archana enjoys reading, being outdoors, and spending time with her family.

Deborah (Deb) Clarke has been in the banking industry for over thirty-five years, focused on business and commercial banking. Most of her career was spent with predecessors to JPMorganChase in various capacities, including management of the Global Financial Institutions Group and later a member of the executive team at Chase Commercial Card Services. Following a five-year work hiatus from 2005-2010, when she chose to spend more time with her son Daniel (ACS '13), Deb resumed her banking career at PNC Bank in a local commercial lending capacity. Over the years, she has joined and participated in numerous organizations, both inside and outside her employers' structure, including performance enhancement teams, merger integration teams, women's networking and mentoring groups, and has represented the bank at various civic and business development organizations. In 2015, Deb decided to leave PNC Bank and "retire" from the banking industry.

Deb met her husband Dan in 1992 while both were working at the same banking institution in Detroit, and they moved to Chicago in 1996. They are the proud parents of Daniel, who was admitted to ACS in his JK year in 2003. Deb was an enthusiastic supporter and active member of the Home and School Association and served as Live Auction Chair for the 2009 Auction. Deb and Dan still enjoy attending the auction annually, where they renew old acquaintances and meet new parents. Deb is an avid gardener and loves visiting Daniel in Massachusetts, where he attends Northfield Mount Hermon (Class of 2017).



Welcome New Board Members



Joshua Friess is a current parent of two ACS students — Fiona in First Group and Vivian in Early Childhood. Josh is a Wisconsin native, having met his wife Jessica at the University of Wisconsin, where he graduated with a B.S. in physics and mathematics in 2002. He went on to obtain a Ph.D. in physics from Princeton University, writing his dissertation on potential experimental consequences of string theory.

After graduate school, Josh and Jessica moved to Chicago in late 2006, followed by a move to Hinsdale in 2010. From 2007 to 2012, Josh worked as a quantitative analyst at Citadel in Chicago. After enjoying some time off with his family, Josh recently enrolled in the Master of Science in Education program at Northwestern University.

During his family's time at ACS, Josh has assumed a number of volunteer roles, including tour guide, assistant coach for the Science Olympiad team, the Fleur de Lis and Corporate Sponsorship committees for the 2016 and 2017 ACS Auctions, and the Development Committee, Finance Committee, Investment Committee, and Enrollment and Marketing Committee of the Board of Trustees.

Josh also currently serves on the Board of Directors for the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues and the Governing Board of the Association of Princeton Graduate Alumni, and is the former Vice President for Graduate Alumni for the Princeton Club of Chicago.



Sreeram Prasad Veluchamy and his family have called Chicagoland home since 1996 when he moved here to start his professional career with the Swiss Bank Corporation (now UBS) as a derivatives trader. Prasad started an equity derivatives group at Ronin Capital, LLC in 2003 and managed it until 2015; he currently trades as an independent investor. Prasad grew up in Coimbatore, India, and graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering from PSG College of Technology. He later obtained graduate degrees in engineering and management from the University of Pennsylvania.

Prasad is an active volunteer for his alma maters and has also served on ACS committees, including the Policy and Planning Committee and the Committee on Gifted, prior to joining the Board. Prasad and his wife Uma have two children, Avinash ("Avi") '13 and Narayan ("Nani") '18. In their spare time the family likes to cook, travel, read, and visit with their extended family here and in India.

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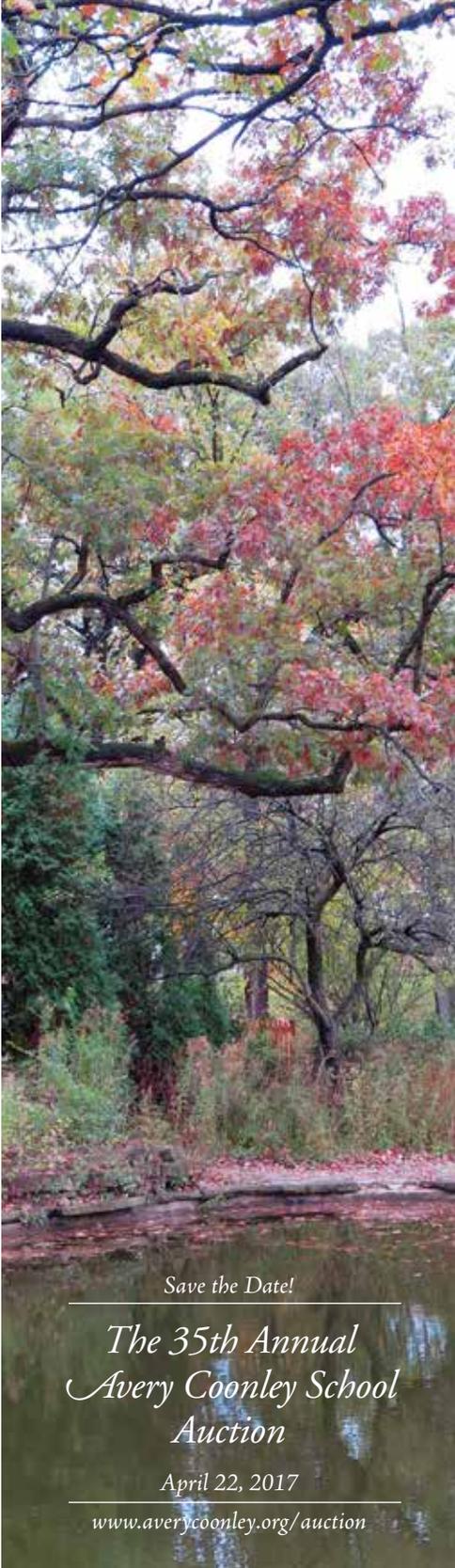
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April 22, 2017

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