

THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

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Music That Moves Us Okorie Johnson Artist-in-Residence Visit

Sitting on benches and “criss-cross applesauce” on the floor, students in **Steph and Neda’s** class listen intently as **Okorie Johnson** strikes the strings of his cello. With the exception of a few tapping feet and bodies rocking back and forth with the music, you’ve never seen a group of seven- and eight-year-olds so still and silent. This is only one facet of the magic and joy Okorie Johnson, also known as “OkCello,” brought to Paideia during the month of January, as the first **Cecelia Caines** Artist-in-Residence.

As a former Paideia teacher and a patron of the arts, Caines is memorialized in this grant that allows artists to visit and maintain residency at The Paideia School.

“The purpose of hosting an artist-in-residence at Paideia is to help us better understand ourselves as a community,” says **Oman Frame**, director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging.

“Artists use their creative gifts to help us reflect on our origins and the DNA of our school culture. This process is rewarding for both the artist and the school and provides a different route to understanding ourselves, our friends and our entire community,” Frame continues.

Even as Johnson has been playing the cello since he was a little boy and masterfully constructs compositions that collide classical, jazz, EDM, reggae and funk, it is his storytelling that captivates his audiences, making them contemplate ways our community can be more inclusive and empathetic.



Whether performing in the classroom for students, in meetings for faculty or on a theater stage in front of a large crowd, Johnson reminded our community, through his performance, of the magic and connection music brings us.

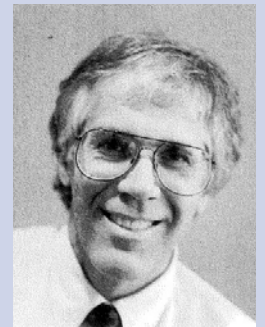
“There is always a bit of magic in the air that connects all of us all the time,” Johnson says. “Music can make that magic accessible, audible, visible even. And as we all experience the magical sound of a concert, it affirms the hereness, the nowness, and the essence of our common humanity.”

Thank you, Okorie, for sharing your time, talent and story with our community. To see photos and videos from Johnson’s artist-in-residence visit, check out our Instagram and Facebook.

The Paul Bianchi and Barbara Dunbar Fund for Teaching

Paideia is excited to announce that we will be establishing an endowment fund in recognition of the more than 50 years that Paul and Barbara have dedicated to Paideia and their upcoming retirements. This fund will be known as the Paul Bianchi and Barbara Dunbar Fund for Teaching.

Paul is known to say that part of what makes Paideia so special is that teachers love to teach here. Attracting, supporting, and retaining the most talented teachers has been imperative to the success of Paideia over the last 50-plus years.



By providing Paideia with the financial flexibility to continuously and innovatively support teachers, the Paul Bianchi and Barbara Dunbar Fund for Teaching can do such things as enable a long-time teacher to take a sabbatical during a short term or cover the costs of a teacher’s passion project over the summer. It can bring in visiting educators and expand professional development. The possibilities are as dynamic as our teachers.

With the Paul Bianchi and Barbara Dunbar Fund for Teaching, we will ensure that Paideia stays at the forefront of creative education for the next 50 years and beyond. If you would like to honor Paul and Barbara with a gift to the Fund for Teaching, you can make your gift online at paideiaschool.org/fundforteaching.

Paideia Students Excel in Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

Year after year, The Paideia School is proud to have a plethora of students submit works to the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. Presented by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers, the awards recognize student achievement in the visual and literary arts in 28 categories, including drawing and illustration, photography, flash fiction, poetry, film and animation, journalism and more.

Forty-seven Paideia students received recognition this year, winning a total of 81 awards — more art awards than any other independent school in Georgia. In art and photography, Paideia won 18 Gold Keys, including two photography portfolios, 21 Silver Keys and 28 Honorable Mentions, including one photography portfolio. In writing, seven Paideia Junior High and High School students were recognized, winning six Gold Keys, including one writing portfolio, five Silver Keys and three Honorable Mentions.

“The recognition Paideia students receive from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards truly illustrates the broad talents of our student body,” says **Dianne Bush**, head of the High School art program at Paideia. “Our stu-



dents consistently demonstrate their ability to think creatively and analytically, making them incredible and well-rounded students.”

Of special note was Paideia senior **Cassie Boulis**, who won 17 awards overall and Gold Keys in both the art and writing categories. “I am incredibly honored to be recognized,” notes Boulis. “My Paideia teachers taught me the value of centering identity in art and writing and encouraged me to be brave in my expression. This was important for my portfolios but even more important in shaping my sense of self-worth,” she says.

All Gold Key entries are automatically considered for national awards, including Gold Medal, Silver Medal with Distinction, Silver Medal and scholarship awards. Gold and Silver Key Winners will be honored at the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards ceremony for the Georgia region on Saturday, March 4, at SCAD. National medals will be announced on March 22.

Congratulations to all the award winners and good luck to those being considered for national awards.

Hunger Games Illustrator Speaks with ‘Why Is That Art?’ Class

Have you ever looked at a painting and questioned, “Why is this worth thousands of dollars? I bet I could throw paint on a canvas and it would look just the same.”

Students in **Baker Bongiovanni’s** January short-term class, *Why Is That Art?* explored this question as well as “how do artists make their art profitable?” They did so through discussion, documentaries and an artist Q&A with **Tim O’Brien**. A friend of Bongiovanni since art school, O’Brien is a globally recognized illustrator who has designed covers for publications such as *TIME*, *Rolling Stone* and *National Geographic*; and book covers, most notably the *Hunger Games* series.

Technology is changing the landscape of art; NFTs and AI further complicate an artist’s personal economy. As the president of the Society of Illustrators, O’Brien uses his platform to address AI, its ethical implications and



its detriment to artists’ livelihoods. He informed students that AI art is generated by harvesting existing art — those artists aren’t given credit and AI art can’t be copyrighted. This sparked a further conversation about copyright, patent and trademark.

Although Bongiovanni usually teaches production-focused art classes, this one was much more discussion-focused. Students did not create any art until the third week of the course. Rather, they studied different styles — for example, minimalism, surrealism and abstract art — and determined for themselves the importance of conceptual art. Their lessons culminated in O’Brien’s Zoom lecture and Q&A, in which he shared his experience of becoming

an artist, how much he charges for book covers and editorial illustrations, along with his favorite pieces and what motivates him.

Following the Zoom meeting, students were tasked with creating their own conceptual pieces. The lessons O’Brien shared stuck with students. As Bongiovanni recounts, “They were saying, ‘I can’t think of anything.’ And then I heard Matt say to Dalton, ‘Do what Tim O’Brien said to do and just start drawing and you’ll come up with an

idea.’ That was a good immediate takeaway. A good practical takeaway.”

Bongiovanni hopes that through this class and through their discussion with Tim O’Brien that students feel as if art school and becoming an artist are viable options for them.



High School Music Theater Presents 'Grease'

The Paideia Music Theatre Program presented an electrifying rendition of “Grease” in January. Director **Beverly Blouin** recognized that although some of the themes and humor of “Grease” have aged poorly, the audience can still relate to the imperfection of its teen characters. As a large production, with 10 main characters and many minor roles, “Grease” gave more members of the extremely talented ensemble a shot at the spotlight.

With only 20 days to prepare the show, the cast, ensemble, orchestra and tech crew put together a dazzling show. The bright and fun costumes, the lively dance numbers and the beloved songs had audience members singing and dancing along. I mean, who among us doesn’t want to belt out “Hopelessly Devoted to You” as we watch Sandy, played by 11th-grader **Celia Reed**, sulk over Danny, played by 12th-grader **William Lowance**. Other highlights included the dream-sequence musical number “Beauty School Dropout,” which paid homage to girl groups of the time and the “Hand-Jive” dance number.

Bravo on a phenomenal show!



HBCU 101 Students Educate Peers through Social Media Scavenger Hunt

In its second year, the short-term HBCU 101 class experimented with new ways to expose their peers to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, their history and culture. The HBCU 101 class was designed by Director of Service Learning **Natalie Rogovin** and High School math teachers and HBCU alumni **Kim Mansion** and **Eddie Johnson**. The course seeks to create a culture for HBCUs on campus and make attending an HBCU a viable option for Paideia students.



More than 20 guest speakers visited the class to share their personal experiences attending an HBCU. Students also had the opportunity to visit and talk with college counselors from Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College and Spelman College.

Last year, students organized Paideia’s first HBCU Day celebration. They decorated the doors of seven faculty members who attended HBCUs with their schools’ colors and mascots. This year’s class took a different approach in order to broaden their reach. Students planned a scavenger hunt throughout campus, giving clues about the teachers and the HBCU they attended via Paideia’s Instagram throughout the month of February.

Students, in collaboration with the communications department, designed the graphics and wrote the copy for all the HBCU social media posts, as well as writing and recording the clue videos. Additionally, they created an “HBCU passport” that students who participated in the scavenger hunt used to collect stamps from faculty that spell out a secret message. Even as winners of the scavenger hunt received small prizes, the real win for the HBCU 101 students was educating their peers on the rigor and prestige of attending HBCUs and honoring our gifted faculty who attended them.

Elly Bookman’s Love Sick Century

During the past six years, when Junior High English teacher **Elly Bookman** wasn’t assisting 7th-grade writers with poem structure or teaching Jaqueline Woodson’s *Brown Girl Dreaming* or *The Diary of Anne Frank*, she was processing the state of the world through her own poetry.



Previous works of Bookman, such as “Dark” and “Nocturne,” have appeared in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review* and *American Poetry Review*, but in September 2024 Bookman will publish her first collection of poems titled *Love Sick Century*.

Bookman describes the collection as a hybrid of narrative and theme with three arcs: love and relationships, politics and, more specifically, the handling of modern warfare. “All these good and bad things that happen in our world in some way start with love or a desire to be loved or the desire to give love. Sometimes it’s good and sometimes it’s bad; the poems explore all those different directions,” Bookman notes.

The 60-page collection comprises 30 poems stylistically influenced by poets such as Frank O’Hara, Matthew Dickman and Mary Ruefle — Bookman’s all-time favorite. The work also references pop culture, highlighting poets and musicians such as Jeff Buckley, Muddy Waters, John Berryman and Paul Celan, along with current events such as the COVID-19 shutdown.

“It’s not deliberate, but by nature I love movies and music and reality TV as much as the next person. I like to combine and play with the highbrow and lowbrow,” Bookman admits.

As we anticipate the release of *Love Sick Century*, Bookman seeks to enjoy the present: editing, proofs and finally, the arrival of her book. After 10 years of writing in this style and trying to answer these big questions, she appreciates the closure publication will give her to move on and start something new. Through this process, Bookman hopes her students are reminded that she relates to the struggles they face in writing and revising. Through it all, though, as she reflects, “You can still have success and still find something to say.”

Scan the QR code to visit Bookman’s website, read her work and learn more about her upcoming publication.



THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

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THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL is nonsectarian, serving families with children ages three through 18. Paideia does not discriminate in employment or in admissions. It actively seeks racial, cultural, and economic diversity in its student body. The ancient Greek word *Paideia* conveys the concept of a child's total education: intellectual, artistic, and social. The Paideia School Newsletter is published 10 times a year. The deadline for the newsletter is the 1st of the preceding month. Send all correspondence to Caroline Driebe, Editor, at Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307. Phone number is 404/377-3491, ext. 339; e-mail address is driebe.caroline@paideiaschool.org. For information about sports schedules and upcoming events visit our web site at www.paideiaschool.org

Booked on Campus

The Books: *Freewater*, *Hot Dog*, *Standing in the Need of Prayer: A Modern Retelling of the Classic Spiritual, Where Wonder Grows* and many more American Library Association (ALA) winners.

Who's Reading It: Librarians, students, teachers

Why We Like It: The ALA announced the winners of their annual ALA Youth Media Awards on Monday, January 30. The awards help librarians, students and teachers find great new books to read. The following winners (and more) were announced and are currently available in, or have been ordered for, the elementary library:

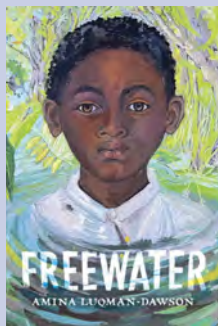
Newbery Award: *Freewater*, by Amina Luqman-Dawson

Caldecott Award: *Hot Dog*, written and illustrated by Doug Salati

Coretta Scott King Award, author: *Freewater*, by Amina Luqman-Dawson

Coretta Scott King Award, illustrator: *Standing in the Need of Prayer: A Modern Retelling of the Classic Spiritual*, illustrated by Frank Morrison

Pura Belpré Award, illustrator: *Where Wonder Grows*, illustrated by Adriana M. Garcia



ALUMNI NEWS

Tarun Narasimhan '09 writes, "I was lucky enough to make it on Jeopardy last November (2022). It was a tough game but a great experience.



All the Academic Bowl practice and tournaments in high school were good prep!"

Reunion Weekend April 14-16

Join your fellow alums for our annual reunion BBQ on campus Friday, April 14, 6:30-9:30 p.m. There will be plenty of food, fun and live music from **Charles Eastman '22** (of Penelope Road.) Classes ending in 3's and 8's host reunion parties on Saturday night. Bring your kiddos for alumni playdate on the half day playground Sunday morning from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. This year we will be celebrating Paul and Barbara on their retirement! Scan the QR code to share your memories.

