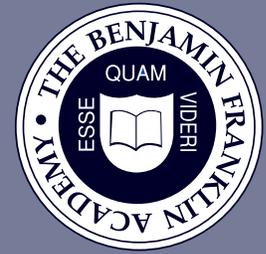


POOR RICHARD'S GAZETTE

A Publication of the Ben Franklin Academy

Contents

Note from the Head of School
Celebrating the Class of 2020
Pandemic Response
New Staff Members
AP Scholars
Eagle Scout Honor
Founders' Day Celebration
The Franklin Players
Extracurricular Activities
William H. Izlar, Jr.
Poetry Contest
Student & Teacher Highlights
Alumni News
Annual Fund



Note from the Head of School

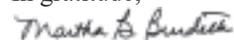
Dear Friends,

The 2020-2021 school year was unlike any other year that we have experienced since our founding in 1987. The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it unprecedented challenges and hardships for everyone. Collectively, we have all experienced, in one way or another, adversity during the pandemic. Many Americans have lost loved ones and/or jobs, and all of us have been unable to lead normal lives. Educational experiences for many of our nation's children have been affected in profound ways, too, as most schools were unable to open at all initially or only part-time, relying primarily on virtual modes of instruction for their students.

Benjamin Franklin said, "Out of adversity comes opportunity," and this was certainly the case this year as Ben Franklin Academy teachers sought to be more innovative than ever in offering our students in-person and virtual instruction. We reopened for in-person instruction in August, following CDC guidelines on how to operate schools safely during the pandemic. We added a new Learning Management System, which our teachers had to master in only a few weeks; and we expanded our Zooming capability and bandwidth to accommodate virtual instruction, working together as a tight team to teach our students well. Our teachers even found ingenious and enjoyable ways to offer clubs, activities and sports virtually, all of which you will read about in this issue of Poor Richard's Gazette.

Resilience, courage, care, and commitment were apparent as our Board members, faculty, students, and parents worked together in various ways to support BFA's mission. We have thus been able to move forward through this year by recognizing the opportunities inherent in the adversity brought on by COVID-19. Now that we are beginning to see signs of hope for a return to more normal lives as more Americans are getting vaccinated, it is important to stop and reflect upon the strength our community so evident in the stories and pictures in this issue of Poor Richard's Gazette from the 2020-2021 school year.

In gratitude,


Martha B. Burdette, Ph.D.
Head of School



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Congratulations to the Class of 2020!

On August 1, 2020, B.F.A. hosted our first-ever drive-thru commencement ceremony for our Class of 2020. Students and their families came to campus one at a time for the graduates to receive their diplomas and take a commemorative picture outside the Junior House. The B.F.A. courtyard was full of decorations and B.F.A. faculty as teachers cheered for each graduate and their families. We were so grateful to celebrate this momentous occasion as a community, and we can't wait to see what our 2020 B.F.A. graduates will do next as they continue on their own unique journey to success!



Augie Benoit and mom Tina Benoit



Maxwell Greenbaum and parents



Cecily Emrich Branche and family



Cal McAleer and parents



Matthew Price and family



Lia Neiman and family

Celebrating The Class of 2020! (continued)



Amy Anderson and parents.



Zach Erraki and family



Jonas Iskander



Isabelle Braden



Nathan Hopkins and family



Emma Clonts and parents



Peter Merrill and his mother



Sophia Marion-Landais and family

Learning in the Midst of Pandemic



B.F.A. was proud to continue to fulfill our mission and to provide our high quality educational experience to all students, even during this exceptional year. B.F.A. offered a Modified On-Campus Learning Option as well as a Remote Learning Option for students. Families were able to choose an option that allowed them to manage COVID-related concerns while enabling their teens to continue their education.

The Modified On-Campus Learning Option for the 2020-2021 school year included the opportunity for students to attend in-person classes within their cohort building (Junior House or Senior House). Students were able to “Zoom” any courses in the other buildings to limit potential exposure and keep the in-person option viable for a maximum number of students. The Remote Learning Option included regular video meetings between teachers and students as well as a regular school schedule with one-on-one access to teachers.

As situations changed within families and within the community, all students were able to smoothly transition from one plan for learning to another. The clear guidelines, flexible teachers and staff, and resilient students enabled a successful start to the school year and a remarkably “normal” year of learning.



New Staff Members



Adriel Muehlbrad (left) and Sarah Moore (right) joined the Admin Team in February. Adriel runs the office and is Executive Assistant to the Head of School. Sarah Moore assists Dr. Burdette in the classroom at Senior House. Adriel graduated from Concordia College and is a member of Tara Winds, Symphonic Band. Sarah holds B.A. and M.A. degrees from Georgia Tech.



B.F.A. Students Recognized as AP Scholars

As the 2019-2020 academic year concluded in Remote Learning, B.F.A. students continued to excel with their academics. The College Board recognized the following B.F.A. students as AP Scholars in recognition of their achievements taking AP Exams in spring, 2020.

AP Scholar with Distinction - granted to students who receive an average scores of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken AND scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams. This year's recipients are (left to right) Isabelle Braden, Ellie Ptacek, and Preston Selignan.



AP Scholar with Honor - granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken AND scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams. This year's recipient is Sophia Marion-Landais.

AP Scholar - granted to students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams. This year's recipients are (top row, left to right) Augie Benoit, Maxwell Greenbaum, (bottom row, left to right) Annie Lee, and Erika Wu.



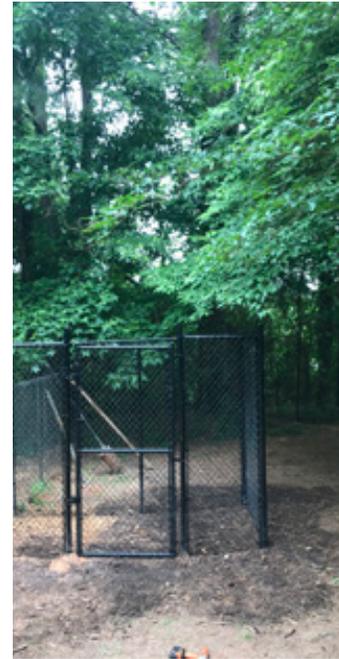
Faculty Departure



Lyra Morrison, who taught English, Latin and history for several years, is leaving our school to pursue other opportunities. She is a wonderful teacher, and we will miss her next year. Lyra started as an Emory Intern at Ben Franklin while she was an Emory University student and applied for a teaching position after she graduated.

B.F.A. Student Earns Eagle Scout

Timothy Etson recently completed his Eagle Scout project and earned the rank of Eagle Scout. For his project, he and some helpers built two safety barriers at an animal shelter. The barriers will allow dogs to move safely in and out of their cages at the shelter. Congratulations on your achievement, Timothy!



Founders' Day

Ben Franklin Academy celebrated Founders' Day -- its 33rd birthday -- on November 11 with cupcakes in the school's colors. Each house celebrated the wonderful event in masks, following social distancing guidelines!



The Franklin Players

A REAL ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT FAKE NEWS

Courtesy of the Franklin Players

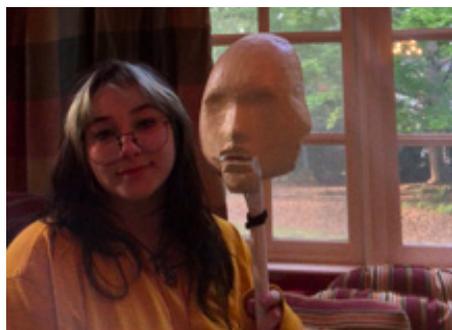
In keeping with the positive energy of the rest of the Ben Franklin faculty and staff, the B.F.A. Theatre Program and its resident producing ensemble, the Franklin Players, faced the challenges of the fall term with a fun and creative offering. As they say in theatre, “the show must go on,” so they took the show to the internet and the Zoom virtual stage for the performance of an original radio play written and performed by the ensemble members. Several guest stars included actors who just happened to also be some of the many multi-talented faculty members.

Friends and fans tuned in from all over the internet to enjoy this “live” dramatic experience performed by our talented ensemble.

The Drama Program continued to meet and work on Zoom with Franklin Players Cal Owenby and Sara Etkind building new skills in this virtual platform, which will continue to influence the work of theatre artists in the professional and educational milieus even when we can finally meet together in the same space. Our project spring term was a close study of the script I and You by Atlanta native Lauren Gunderson, a writer who has been the most produced American playwright for several of the past few years and who began her career while an Emory undergraduate as a recipient of Essential Theatre’s annual playwriting award. This powerful theatrical piece is about two teenagers: Caroline, a smart, sardonic loner who hasn’t been to school in months due to a serious illness, and Anthony, a popular and sensitive jock who comes to her home after volunteering to partner with her for an English class assignment based on Walt Whitman’s iconic long poem Song of Myself. During an afternoon together mining the play, each begins slowly revealing a personal truth. In the end they discover the mystery that has brought them together.

During our process of climbing deeply into the play structure and theatrical conventions, we also found much to discuss in terms of the authenticity and complexity of these two characters and made some surprising discoveries about the relevance of Whitman’s poem (even) for Gen Z teens. We also looked at alternate forms of theatre performance and worked on creating puppet “avatars” to investigate different ways that this play could be presented on a small-screen platform such as Zoom. These photos show each of the puppets in progress as the actors began rigging a working mouth into the face structure.

In May, the Franklin Players performed a showcase demonstration about the play and our discoveries on Zoom for interested members of the Ben Franklin community. Dr. Pamela Turner is the Director of the Drama Program. Tech Director is Jeff Guthrie, and Wright Howell is the Line Coach.



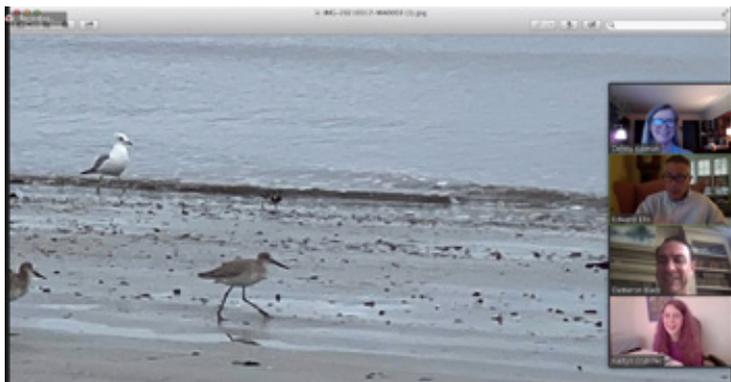
Extracurricular Activities

Despite the extraordinary circumstances, Virtual Cross Country, Philanthropy Club, Green Club, and Art Club were all enjoyed and very well attended this year!

Teachers Debby Keenan and Dameron Black, along with Dr. Edward Ellis, hosted a virtual Nature/Green Club, for students on Wednesdays.



The Nature/Green Club Members shared nature photos like the one at right as they discussed nature sightings on Zoom.



Cross Country Team

The Ben Franklin Academy Cross Country team had a strong year! To reduce the threat posed by Covid-19, the team met virtually and kept track of their training on social media platforms such as Strava. Led by Hilary Druckman and Dr. Edward Ellis, the team took part in a number of virtual races throughout the year. The longest race was the 2021 Trans-America Foot Race from San Diego, California, to Tybee Island, Georgia, 2424 miles. To complete the whole adventure by May, the boys' and girls' teams ran over 300 miles each month. The coaches kept everyone posted on the team's progress throughout the year! The women's team "made it" to Tybee Island with over one month to spare in the school year!



William H. Izlar, Jr. Poetry Contest

Winners of the 2021 William H. Izlar, Jr. Poetry Contest were announced during National Poetry Week in April. First Place went to Jacob Varney, Second Place to Freddie Simon, Third Place to Gibby Heiser, and Fourth Place to Lila Haden and Erika Wu (a tie). The wonderful poets are pictured as they received their prizes. The contest is funded by the Mary Ryan and Henry G. Kuhrt Foundation in memory of our friend and former Overseer Bill Izlar, Jr.



Franklin's Toolkit

For thirty-three years, Ben Franklin Academy has used the latest research from the fields of education, psychology, cognitive science, neurology, and personal development to establish innovative and individualized learning plans for our students in grades nine through twelve.

B.F.A. respects the gifts that each student brings to our learning community. In fact, we strongly believe that diversity of interests and talents makes our school stronger. For instance, the student who hates math may be an exceptional poet or guitarist, while the English-phobic child may be a computer whiz. While these students with different perspectives are at B.F.A. together, they can learn from one another by working closely together on projects in Philanthropy, Arts, Sciences, and Sports.

We are excited to announce our new Franklin's Toolkit website devoted to providing community resources to help students accelerate their study skills and improve their writing strategies! We are also elated to announce that we will be providing an on-line course to parents and teachers interested in the Mastery Learning approach.

Service Award Winner

Dr. Jack Miller received the 2020 Jane and Dameron Black, III Service Award. Jack has been our librarian, media specialist, and Philosophy and Art History teacher since 1992. Jack is an excellent research librarian who has been helpful to faculty and students with their research projects. He has also held lively philosophical discussions with his students. Congratulations and thank you, Dr. Jack!



Celebrating the Class of 2021

Cormac McCabe was named Ben Franklin Academy's STAR Student for 2020-2021, and Cormac named Barry Dunnivant as his STAR Teacher. Cormac graduated this spring and will start his freshman year at Colorado School of Mines in the fall.



Barry Dunnivant and Cormac McCabe

Graduation 2021

The graduation service was an in-person event held on June 14 at the Atlanta History Center for seniors and their families. Zach Meyers was the Valedictorian, and Erika Wu was the Salutatorian for the Class of 2021. Zach plans to attend Kenyon College next year, and Erika will be a freshman at Tulane University (pictures right). We were excited to bring our seniors and their special guests together on June 14th to celebrate the seniors' achievements.



Olivia Sims

B.F.A. also celebrated the class of 2021 with graduation yard signs. Seniors were excited about the recognition!



Jacob Varney

B.F.A. Student Performs for Fund Raiser

B.F.A. student Ella Greenbaum was selected as an artist to perform in 500 Songs for Kids the first weekend in May. This was a fundraising event that is held locally each year to provide music for children in hospitals and in need. The event hosts 500 artists selected by a committee, and each vocalist performs one song over the course of two days. This year the theme was Beatlemania, and Ella performed "Good Day Sunshine" on May 1 at 2:30 pm. The event was on-line this year due to the pandemic.



Ella Greenbaum

Alumni News

Christina Hoff (2006) started a new position as Client Executive, Manufacturing Industry at Capgemini.

Patrick Malins (2012) completed his M.Sc. at the University of Kent in Canterbury.

Zachary Mountcastle (2012) graduated from Georgia State University at the end of the fall 2020 semester. Zachary earned a B.A. degree in Film and Media.

Jordan Putney (2012) started an ORISE Fellowship at CDC this spring. He is doing lab research on variants of food pathogens like E-coli. He graduated with a B.S. in Bio-Chemistry from Georgia Tech in 2019.

Samantha Burger (2016) graduated in December from the University of Alabama. She majored in Communications and was named to the Dean's List the last two semesters of her senior year.

Erin Catherall (2016) completed a B.S. in Business Administration from Georgia Tech.

Ben Chen (2016) completed a B.S. in Computer Science from Georgia State University.

Evelyn Amick (2017) completed her degree at Guilford College. She was an intern in a 3rd grade class last spring and did her student teaching this past fall in a K-2 class. She graduated in December with a major in Elementary Education, a minor in Theatre, and with her North Carolina teaching license! She also got her pup in the fall, which made quarantine much busier!

Indira Cunningham (2017) completed a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Oklahoma. She also designed and built her own artist website, complete with a portfolio and a visual art store. She is showcasing and selling prints of her original art through the website. You can check it out at www.indiraannalise.com.

Chris Fleischman (2017) graduated from the University of North Georgia in the Army ROTC Program. He earned a degree in Criminal Justice and was commissioned an Army officer in the Field Artillery branch. He was named to the Dean's List last semester for his outstanding grades.

James Schweizer (2017) graduated from the University of New England, in Biddeford Maine, with a Bachelor of Science in Sports and Recreation Management. James was named to the Dean's List last semester.

Katie Stewart (2017) will be graduating from Savannah College of Art and Design next fall with a B.F.A. in Jewelry Design and Metalsmithing. She credits her time at Ben Franklin Academy and art classes with Susie Duncan with helping her to discover her creative passion.

Emma Tracy (2018) is a junior at Auburn University, where she made the Dean's List last semester. She is majoring in Speech, Language and Hearing Science with a concentration in Biological Sciences. She is assisting a professor in the Language and Speech NeuroRehabilitation (LASR) Lab and wants to pursue a career as a speech language pathologist. Her hope is to help rehabilitate people with neurological conditions that affect communication.

Brendan Lyster (2019) is studying International Studies at Covenant College.

Sara Francis (2020) is doing well and is extremely happy at Eckerd College.

Amy Ji (2020) was named to the President's List at Kennesaw State University for her exemplary work fall semester.

Preston Seligman (2020) is enjoying Tulane University and the city of New Orleans.

Annual Fund

The 2020-2021 Annual Fund supports our students above and beyond what is covered by tuition. We would like to share a special thanks to those who have volunteered their time and resources to serve as Annual Fund Volunteers this year. With support from Angela Cassidy, BFA's Director of Community Engagement, this year's group of dedicated volunteers includes

Amy and Gabe Damiani, Current Parents, Co-Chairs

Dr. Ioana Bonta, Current Parent, Senior Parent Chair

Jane Black, President, Board of Trustees

Lucas Dear '09, B.F.A. Graduate

Daniel Eberly, Current Parent

Sonja Greenbaum, Current Parent

Christina Hoff '06, B.F.A. Graduate

Patty King, Current Parent

Fluffy McDuffie, Vice-President, Board of Trustees, Alumni Parent

Tricia Warren, Board of Overseers, Alumni Parent

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