

POOR RICHARD'S GAZETTE

A Publication of the Ben Franklin Academy

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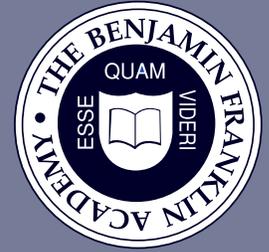
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Note from the Head of School

Dear Friends,

Fall Semester, 2024, was a semester filled with events and activities to bring the Benjamin Franklin Academy family together. Focusing on unity and community, we hosted events for parents, faculty, and students to celebrate and connect over common interests and goals. Parent and Grandparent Night, the Holiday Cookie Swap, the Senior Luncheon, the Underclassmen and Women Luncheon, drama productions, concerts, clubs, and sports — to name a few events — brought our community gather in joyful and meaningful ways and highlighted the wonderful talents and abilities of our students.

In this issue of Poor Richard's Gazette, you will read about the ways that lives are touched and shaped by others every day at our school. Benjamin Franklin's ideas on collaboration and generosity are captured in his words, "A right heart exceeds all." As we teach and encourage others and give to help others, we continue to advance the mission of our school.

In gratitude,

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



Parent/Grandparent Nights

As the Fall Semester begins, we welcome the parents and grandparents of BFA students to meet and chat with the BFA teachers and staff. Traditionally, we split our families over two evenings for this event to allow a smaller meet-and-greet for families and teachers to facilitate conversations. This year, students' families with last names starting with letters A-L stopped by our school on a Wednesday evening, while students' families with last names starting with letters M-Z came the next week on Thursday evening.

We had a great turnout for these events this year! Many of our BFA families came to meet their students' teachers and advisors in person, learn about some of the wonderful activities and classes taking place at BFA, and chat with fellow parents and grandparents. The event was well attended and is always a highlight of the Fall Semester, providing an opportunity to put names to faces and hear about the many special events of the school year so far and those coming up later in the semester and school year. Parents and grandparents discuss goals for the upcoming school year and learn more about the classes their students are taking. Many parents and grandparents also show an interest in learning about our many activities and sports. Thank you to all of the parents and grandparents able to join us for these events!



Lei Shan and
teacher Max Dudukovich



Teacher Alex Correa and
Dana Meyer



The Pattersons



Ronald Ramirez and
Gwen Baer



The Rickmans and teacher
Dameron Black IV



Dr. Barve and teacher Jan Bedol

Winter Holiday Teacher Cookie Swap

Just before the Winter Holiday Season, our BFA families share their appreciation for the BFA teachers and staff by baking and buying cookies for our annual Cookie Swap. Teachers are delighted with the delicious treats the students and their families provide for them. It is always incredibly special to learn about many of our students' phenomenal baking skills! Some of the highlights from this December's Cookie Swap include mini-bundt cakes, savory cheddar cookies, gluten-free and dairy-free options, peppermint bark, and many, many homemade chocolate chip and sugar cookies! Our teachers and staff were able to take home about two dozen cookies each, thrilled to share these delicious treats with their family and friends.

While our teachers love feeling appreciated throughout the school year, we are all very grateful for this annual sweet treat that our BFA students and parents take so much time and effort to bring together! (See picture of the "Cookie Elves" who helped teachers fill their boxes with cookies.)



Sari Flomenbaum, Adriel Anderson, Amy Barnes, and Tianna Bailey - the "Cookie Elves"



Delicious treats from BFA families



Charlie Weber, Kelly Thompson, Jack Miller, and Amy Barnes



Dameron Black IV



Jan Bedol

Senior Luncheon



Throughout the year, we strive to celebrate our BFA Seniors and honor their continued hard work toward Graduation in May. One of the events held each semester is the Senior Luncheon. The Fall Semester Senior Luncheon was held on Friday, September 15, in the Junior House Carriage House. Senior students enjoyed pizza, salad, and desserts while playing fun games with friends. One of the most beloved games played every year is the “Guess the Teacher Baby Photo” Game. Students have a blast looking back in time at some of their favorite teachers to guess which baby grew up to be their educator at BFA! By competing and winning these games, students have an opportunity to win gift cards, including those for Starbucks, Chick-fil-A, Amazon, and more.

The Spring Semester Senior Luncheon was held on Friday, January 26, in the Junior House Carriage House. We celebrated our BFA Seniors in their final semester at BFA with pizza, salad, and desserts. Tianna Bailey, Administration Coordinator, brought fun with different games and more prizes to win. While our Seniors are experiencing the stresses of college applications, finishing classes, and graduation along with the excitement for their futures and the sadness of leaving their home at BFA, we always look forward to celebrating their successes and recognizing the hard work our students have done over the years they have been at BFA. This event is only possible thanks to the donations of families wishing to join us in celebrating their 2024 Seniors, for which we are very grateful.



Tianna Bailey with Pictures of Teachers

Underclass Luncheon



Ethan Frost-Boyce

While we strive to recognize and celebrate our BFA Seniors, we also want to recognize the hard work of our underclass students throughout their time at BFA. Each semester, BFA hosts an Underclass Luncheon to celebrate our younger students and express our gratitude for their being a huge part of what makes BFA so great!

Our Fall Semester Underclass Luncheon was held on Friday, September 29, in the Junior House Carriage House. Underclass students enjoyed pizza, salad, and desserts, including some treats donated to the event by underclass families. Similar to the Senior Luncheon, Tianna Bailey and the Emory Interns working at BFA create and execute many games, generally centered on life at BFA. One game that is always a hit is “BFA Pictionary” in which students are given a prompt relating to BFA such as “Ben” and “Frank,” the two current BFA cats; the front office; and specific classrooms or classes. The student must draw as many prompts as possible while the audience works to guess what is drawn. Students have fun trying to figure out what is being drawn, and the winner wins a gift card from Chick-fil-A, Starbucks, Amazon, or other popular stores.

Our underclass students are also celebrated at our Spring Semester Underclass Luncheon, which take place later in the semester. Thank you to the families who donated to this event .



Gaby Ames and Charlotte Groton

BFA Founders’ Day



Lauren Meltzer

Ben Franklin Academy was founded on November 11, 1987. Each year, we celebrate this occasion with staff and students. This school year, the 36th anniversary of Ben Franklin Academy’s Founding, also sometimes referred to as “BFA’s Birthday,” fell on a Saturday. To ensure that this anniversary did not go unrecognized, we celebrated the occasion with students and faculty on Thursday, November 9. Along with a short speech from Dr. Martha Burdette, Head of School, students and staff sang “Happy Birthday” to honor our beloved school and enjoyed chocolate and vanilla cupcakes with bright blue frosting, our school colors, as well as a birthday cake. Happy 36th Birthday, Ben Franklin Academy!

Ancient Culutures Club

If you are interested in learning about the cultures of long ago, BFA's Ancient Cultures Club is perfect for you! Every other Friday, when there are no special events like the Senior and Underclass Luncheons, Max Dudukovich and students meet to learn about ancient civilizations' history, languages, and cultures. With a focus on ancient Western Civilizations, including Rome and Greece, students have fun learning, chatting, and playing games.

At one of the early Fall Semester club meetings, students learned how to play the "Royal Game of Ur," an ancient board game. This game involves trying to move all of your pieces across the board before the other player can. Your pieces can knock out your opponent's pieces in a way similar to the modern game of "Sorry." Throughout the semester, students continued to hone their skills in this wonderful game. Students loved competing in this old, yet modern-feeling game and look forward to continuing to play it throughout the school year. Along with playing the "Royal Game of Ur," students and Max spent time discussing the Roman gods and how they relate to the names of the planets in our solar system. For example, Mercury is the god of travel, among other aspects of life, and the planet may have been given this name because it moves quickly around the sun; Venus is the goddess of beauty and love, and the planet Venus is one of the brightest objects in the sky aside from the sun and the moon in the Milky Way. Students were fascinated to learn about how these ancient gods are still impacting our lives and enjoyed brainstorming reasons why the planets were given their specific names relating to the Roman gods.

While many ancient languages, including Latin, are no longer spoken, rest assured that these ancient cultures will not be lost, thanks to our BFA Ancient Cultures Club!



Katie Thompson and Club Sponsor,
Max Dudukovich

Philanthropy Club

Thanks to the hard work of our club advisors, Asefeh Hemmati, Dameron Black, and Dr. Edward Ellis, our students, families, and communities have been able to support a number of causes in the Atlanta area. One of our first philanthropy projects of the school year was collecting and donating items for the Fulton County Animal Shelter. We received many donations including towels, cat and dog food, collars, gift cards, and much more. We appreciate the families who were able to donate to this cause to help our furry friends at the shelter!

Another project we took on during the Fall Semester supported Nicholas House, which is an organization geared toward supporting families experiencing homelessness to achieve self-sufficiency. Some specific programs at Nicholas House include emergency shelters, various rehousing programs, and educational programs to help adults develop goals and learn the skills needed to achieve them. Our Philanthropy Club organized a Bake Sale and Donation Drive to raise funds to donate toward these essential programs that support many in the Atlanta area. Students bought, made, and sold baked goods like macarons, chocolate chip cookies, uniquely decorated cupcakes, and much more. Through these Bake Sale efforts, our students raised \$270 for Nicholas House.

For the past five years, one of the biggest Philanthropy projects of the school year is our annual Angel Tree Project, spearheaded by faculty members Jan Bedol and Asefeh Hemmati. Families in need make requests for the holiday. Through Hagar's House, a shelter for single mothers with children experiencing homelessness, we connect with two to five families each year with requests for the holiday season - gifts for children, warm clothes for the colder months, and gift cards for groceries and other necessities. Each request is written on an "angel" and posted in a communal area of the school. Students, faculty members, and families find an angel that speaks to them and purchase the requested item, ranging from \$3 to \$200. Participants bring in the requested item, which is then wrapped by the students in Philanthropy Club to be delivered to Hagar's House to be gifted to the family that requested it.

Thank you to the BFA families who have participated in this year's Angel Tree! We know it brought joy and warmth to those who have requested and received what they needed for the 2023 Winter Holidays.



Philanthropy Club Members and Faculty Advisors

Nature/Green Club



Mason Taylor and Owen Stockton



Michael Wu and Henry Reilly

have begun to create their own list of what they can do to help stop and, hopefully, reverse the negative effects of climate change. Students have also taken the initiative to improve our recycling program at BFA, including collecting all the paper waste to bring to the recycling plant. We look forward to reporting more about the wonderful ways our Nature/Green Club has been positively impacting our community and the world.

Ellie Harrison

Throughout the Fall Semester, our Nature/Green Club members have been spending many lunch periods engrossed in the natural world, both physically and mentally. Club members spent time outside, especially with our BFA Organic Garden. In early October, students and our two faculty advisors, Dameron Black and Dr. Edward Ellis, added a new plant bed to our garden to increase the number of delicious vegetables, fruits, and flowers grown from seeds to sprouts to ready-to-eat and enjoy produce! Some of the produce that can be found in this garden include

jalapeno peppers, marigolds, strawberries, cabbage, corn, and beans. The students hope to see them begin to sprout in the coming weeks and months. When these fruits and vegetables are fully grown, our students and teachers enjoy eating them (though some of our students need a bit of encouragement to give them a try!) Along with learning about growing produce through the BFA Organic Garden, students have taken several field trips to the Emory Farmers' Market, which takes place every Tuesday on Emory University's campus. Students have been able to meet farmers and sellers from the Atlanta area and learn about the process of producing and selling goods.

Along with learning about growing produce, both from farmers and by practicing these skills in our garden, students have also been sharing interesting current event stories focused on the environment, including the current environmental issues we are facing as a global community. Students have been so inspired by these stories that they



Robotics Club



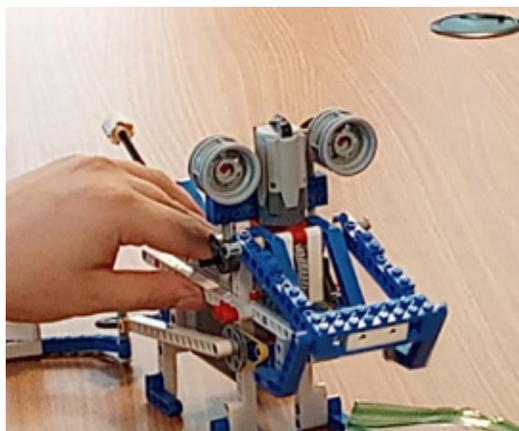
Colin Pan

For our engineering-focused students, there is no better club than Robotics! Kecia May and Paula Riefkohl, the two club advisors, work hard to share their passion for robotics and inspire our next generation of engineers and designers. Students start the process of learning about robotics with Legos, developing a deep understanding of the process of mechanics, and eventually begin to work on their own Lego projects. This year, our students' individual Lego projects have ranged from functional pulleys to operating carts. Once these projects were complete, students entered a catapult competition. They were split into groups of two to build the best catapult possible, specifically to see whose design was the most functional and accurate. Our students enjoyed working together and against one another with a shared goal of better understanding how machines are built and improved.

Once these projects were completed, students moved from Legos to metal and screws, thereby upping the level of rigor and developing a deeper understanding of how some of the machines we use every day are designed and built. By the end of the semester, club members learned how to design and build robots that can move from one specific place to another, lift and put down boxes, and more. Once the robots were built, students learned the coding behind robotics to better understand how to train robots and utilize their mechanisms to complete tasks. By the end of the semester, many students had built functional robots from scratch and competed against each other to see whose robot could complete tasks the best. These tasks included weaving through chairs, spinning around, lifting objects and putting them down. All of our student participants gained knowledge of engineering and robotics!



Abby Crutcher with the Robotics Club Members.



Arts and Crafts Club

One of the most well attended clubs at Ben Franklin Academy is our Arts and Crafts Club. Students meet on Mondays with the two club advisors, Debby Keenan and Jan Bedol, to create beautiful art. Many of these projects exemplify BFA's commitment to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math). Over the school year, students learn about and build terrariums, wooden Ferris wheels, and much more, allowing a space to be creative while learning about the world around us.

This past fall, students worked on a number of different projects including completing canvas paintings; creating structures with polymer clay including animal figurines and 3D tiles; carving their own unique stamps to decorate and print cards and canvas totes; and creating an origami project. Not only do our students learn about different forms of art and how they relate to the principles of science and engineering, but they also create unique and beautiful works of art, perfect for any gift-giving occasion!



Julia Draper



Service Award and School Recognition

Lynne Winship, longtime member of Ben Franklin Academy's Board of Overseers, is the recipient of the 2023 Jane and Dameron Black, III Service Award. Lynne is also the mother of BFA alumna Kelly Winship. Ben Franklin Academy recognized Lynne for her many years of service to the Board of Overseers and her support of Ben Franklin Academy's Learning Clinic. She has been a wonderful ambassador for the school! Congratulations, Lynne!

BFA Recognized by the College Board

Ben Franklin Academy has been recognized by The College Board for the 2023 AP School Honor Roll. This award is presented "for developing an AP program that creates a college-going culture and gives students opportunities to earn college credit and to maximize their college outcomes." Thank you to our teachers, faculty, alumni, current students, and families for helping us achieve this honor.

The Franklin Players



Franklin Players

The Franklin Players kicked off their 2023-24 three-show season in November with the production of SPYDER, an original devised play performed in the BFA Carriage House Black Box Theatre magically transformed into the Paradise Garden Cemetery located in an unnamed town in Georgia. Though time and space shifted during the action of the play, it was still grounded in concerns of the present by touching on the effects of bullying and the pressures of social identity. It also featured a mix of human and animal characters

navigating the same natural and emotional space, with two resident cemetery spiders sharing their equal fears of venturing out and remaining “caught” in numbing complacency, while a Peter Pan-obsessed pre-teen boy invades their world through a dare only to discover that bravery is an elusive standard and growing up might not be a choice.

The play script was co-written and performed by ensemble members Peter Green, Thorn Kuhar, Devin May, Humphrey May, Audrey Schmidt-Davis, and Connor Wilson. The play was directed by playwright and Theatre Program Director Dr. Pamela Turner. The process of creation started with a series of daily prompts and exercises that led to individual writing and then a devising process “on our feet” that put elements together into a cohesive whole. The show made use of puppetry, original music (by Peter Green), and mixed media lighting.

Adding their talents to the mix, faculty member Paula Riefkohl was featured as the voice of the Web Spider while Faculty member and Line Coach Wright Howell also performed in the piece. Associate Dean and Technical Director Jeff Guthrie created a sound score for the play combining music, sound effects, and voice recordings.

The BFA Theatre Program is an academic elective and training lab devoted to the study of Theatre as an art form, profession, business, and cultural barometer. Play productions are most often from existing scripts, but, as with the SYPDER project, sometimes involve an original work. Program Director Dr. Pamela Turner is also an active Theatre professional across the country and serves as a voter for the annual (Broadway) Tony Awards. Students who join the program are a mix of those new to Theatre and others who have had some previous experience. The only requirement is a commitment to learning and an interest in collaborative creation.



Fall Sports

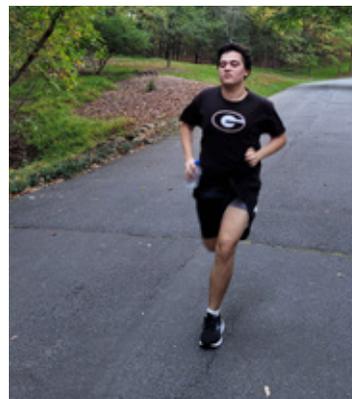
Cross Country



Cross Country Team

Throughout the Fall Semester, our BFA Cross-Country team has been hard at work. With the guidance of our three coaches, Dr. Edward Ellis, Lauren Zauche, and Max Dudukovich, our students conditioned and ran through the Fall Cross-Country season. Twice a week, students and coaches met to stretch, condition, and run, often through Emory University's Lullwater Nature Preserve. While sprinting and long-distance running practices, our students have smiled all the way through. The runners expressed feeling exhilarated and energized after running through the beautiful and scenic Lullwater Preserve, just a few minutes from our BFA campus (and faster if you run!). Students were able to enjoy nature while practicing a sport they love and getting a chance to catch up on the latest school news, current events, and their personal lives.

While many students join the Cross-Country team to get regular exercise and release some energy, some join for the competitive nature of the sport. Our BFA Cross-Country team competed in a few meets over the Fall Semester with all participants feeling great about the effort put forth. While the official Cross-Country season has come to an end, many of our students and faculty members will continue to run throughout the school year and beyond.



Michael Wu

Latin Dance Club

One of our newest and most exciting after-school sports offerings is Latin Dance. Our Spanish teacher and resident Latin Dancer, Alex Correa, has taken on this fun and lively sport with students and even some fellow teachers, including English teacher Jan Bedol. Participants start with a quick warm-up and jump into aerobic dance routines based in Zumba and Salsa dancing. Our student dancers have enjoyed learning new dance moves and practicing them



Alex with Dancers

to well-known modern pop songs and Latin American music. This unique and enjoyable activity is a great way for our students and teachers to get moving, learn some new dance moves, and chat about their lives in a low-pressure environment where all dancers and dance levels are welcome. Word has it that our Head of School, Dr. Martha Burdette, may make an appearance, too, so be sure to keep your eyes out for Martha's dance moves!

Fall Sports - Continued

Golf

BFA is proud of the hard work of our Golf coaches and students throughout the school year. Golf is offered both in the Fall and in the Spring Semesters with the Fall Golf Club serving as a great starting point for those newer to the sport and the Spring Golf Team focusing on supporting our more veteran players who compete against other school teams from around the Atlanta and Decatur areas.

In both the Fall and Spring Semesters, we have an outstanding team of coaches including Riley Baxter, Head Coach, and Jorge Correa and Ryan Cottrill serving as Assistant Coaches. This Fall Semester, our BFA golfers have been learning techniques and practicing their new golf skills. Our golfers have enjoyed going to the driving range, working on their short game, including putting and chipping, and getting some fresh air after a long day of learning and studying. Some of our golfers have never played the sport before and have developed a deep love of golf and the intricacies of the game. We look forward to cheering on our BFA Golf Team this upcoming Spring Semester as they compete against other school teams.



Drew Patterson



Ethan Frost-Boyce



Asa Barfield



Sam Joiner

Band

On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, you can hear beautiful music emanating from the downstairs Carriage House. Our BFA Band has been practicing hard with the guidance of our two band directors, Norm Ficke and Joe Gransden. This year, our BFA Band includes several guitarists, vocalists, bassists, drummers, saxophonists, and even a harmonicist. Our students enjoy learning new instruments, practicing ones they are familiar with, and spending time with fellow musicians.



Bobby Tong



Claire Lobdell

Fall Sports and Activities Banquet

Every school year, we celebrate our BFA athletes and musicians in the fall and in the spring with the bi-annual Sports and Activities Banquet. The 2023 Fall Sports and Activities Banquet took place on Thursday, December 7. Students, families, coaches, and activity leaders enjoyed pizza, salad, sodas, and cookies as the event commenced. Each coach presented awards to the students, often adding a little bit of humor to the presentation. We celebrated our Fall Latin Dance members (Head Coach, Alex Correa); the Fall Cross Country Team (Head Coach, Edward Ellis and Assistant Coaches Lauren Zauche and Max Dudukovich); BFA's Jazz and Rock Band (Band Directors, Norm Ficke and Joe Gransden); and the BFA 2023 Fall Golf Club (Head Coach, Riley Baxter and Assistant Coaches, Jorge Correa and Ryan Cottrill). Our BFA Band also performed at the Banquet, including hits such as "Can't You See" by The Marshall Tucker Band, "Isn't She Lovely" by Stevie Wonder, and "Weird Fishes/ Arpeggi" by Radiohead. Band Director, Norm Ficke, also presented awards to each band member for their incredible performance and effort throughout the semester.



Band

Thank you to our coaches and teachers for supporting our students in these wonderful Fall Semester activities and for helping us celebrate their successes, too! Thank you to the families who came to support our students at the banquet!

Alumni News

Brendan Cassidy (2012) is a Firefighter for the City of Atlanta, AdEMT (Advanced Emergency Medical Technician) and serves in the Atlanta Fire Honor Guard. He also works for CHOA as a driver for their NICU ambulances (pictured here). Drivers of these ambulances need to have a special driver's license because the trucks are so big. They are actually rolling emergency rooms, equipped with doctors and nurses onboard. We thank Brendan for all of his hard work keeping Atlanta residents safe and healthy.



Brendan Cassidy



Conor Cassidy

Connor Cassidy (2015) attended Florida Tech for his undergraduate degree and MBA. Connor is employed by Space Florida, a company that works towards commercializing the aerospace industry.

Indira Cunningham (2016) graduated in 2020 from the University of Oklahoma with a 4.0 GPA and Honors. Indira was also recognized on the Dean's List. Indira has also received several awards post-graduation including Style Week Pittsburgh's Artist of the Year in 2022, the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh Emerging Leader Award in 2023, and the 2023 Advancing Black Arts Grant Recipient from The Pittsburgh Foundation.

Stanley Cunningham (2017) graduated from the University of Southern California. Stanley was also a writer and producer on the album *My Truth*, which was nominated for a Grammy for the Best Gospel Album of 2023.

Cyrus Rothenberg (2017) is currently at Georgia State University studying Film and Visual Arts. Cyrus plans to work in the independent film industry after graduation.

Harriet Mycroft (2018) graduated from the University of Georgia in May, 2022. Harriet now studies at the Emory University School of Medicine.

Brendan Lyster (2019) graduated from Covenant College with a major in International Studies and a minor in German. His long-term plans include politics, business, and German Studies.



Anna Taite Murphy

Anna Taite Murphy (2020) attended Colorado College in Colorado Springs, CO. She graduated this spring with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Drawing.

Erika Wu (2021) was accepted to the Middlebury-CMRS Oxford Humanities Program to study at Keble College during the 2024 Spring semester. She is pursuing an English and Political Science double major at Tulane University. Her semester at Oxford was an incredible opportunity to bring learning to life. Erika reports that she has reflected many times on how her BFA teachers have influenced and guided her path.

Supporting the Mission of BFA

Developing a Passion for Learning

Ben Franklin Academy's Annual Fund raises funds above and beyond tuition to invest in strategic resources for our teachers and students so they can focus on what matters most—pursuing a passion for learning.

Gifts to the 2023-2024 Annual Fund will support the purchase of technology enhancements and upgrades centered around STEAM initiatives including computer hardware and software for enhanced coursework, lab materials, and teacher learning tools. Additionally, support will enable us to provide need-based scholarships through the Wood Smethurst Scholarship Fund, exemplifying our beloved “Doc” Smethurst’s legacy of academic inclusion.

To learn more about BFA’s Annual Fund, and other ways you can support the school, please visit our website, www.benfranklinacademy.org.

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