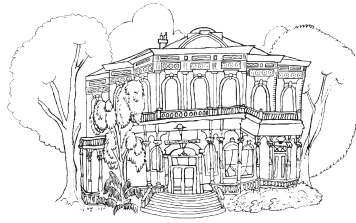


NEWS



NOTES

WINTER 2017

WHY DOES AMERICA NEED PROGRESSIVE SCHOOLS?

by Jim Benz

IN RECENT YEARS, educators have had the uncomfortable realization that the academic content that has been taught to students will be increasingly accessible through technology. This turns the model of traditional education, that of simply transmitting academic content from adult to child, on its head.

In John Dewey's writing, he strongly argued for a curriculum that is interactive and that engages the child's experience. He wrote that schools should have a curriculum that helps children develop specific thinking skills rather than one that is focused on delivering inert academic content.

Dewey saw that content information was useful to society only when citizens had the skills to think critically about it and the freedom to use that information to participate in society. This, essentially, forms a recurring theme in his philosophy about education: the responsibility of teaching and promoting democracy lies with schools. This tenet remains at the heart of progressive schools across America.

We don't know if Dewey predicted that as a result of democracy, access to information would grow exponentially as it has in the last 20 years, but his overall goal of developing rigorous thinking in children was to help them use these skills as a tool to make decisions and, as a result, develop their individuality.

Peninsula School's values are deeply rooted in Dewey's work. Articles in this edition of *News Notes* provide a glimpse into how staff members used the elections to emphasize the importance of participating in a democratic society. They engaged students in a hands-on introduction to get out the vote initiatives, campaigning, and the election and voting process, all while challenging students to think critically and objectively about the issues and propositions. Through



Upper School students learning 'Election 101' from the work displayed and presented by their fellow students last November.

this process, students began to recognize that in order to be an active participant in a democratic society, one must be an informed citizen.

Peninsula is committed to providing time and opportunities for students of every age to make choices and learn from reflecting on the results of those choices. So, while the complexities of the election process are more accessible to the older students, we recognize that learning how to make choices, even at a very young age, forms the core of active citizenship.

It is important for us all to remember that Peninsula School's values are informed by such great minds as John Dewey, Francis Parker and Maria Montessori. It's comforting to see that these values are being utilized each day by skilled staff members who are dedicated to helping students develop their full promise of being confident contributors in the world.

To our beloved Peninsula community,

Since its founding in 1925, Peninsula School has been a community committed to social justice on both a local and global level. The values of equity, inclusion, support for all students and a celebration of all students' differences – these are not just words listed on our website, but values that run through our school's 90-year history and are as much a part of Peninsula as the mud puddle, the treehouse, or the Big Building.

It is with these values in mind that we, as a staff, find ourselves deeply troubled by the recent national dialogue of contempt, divisiveness, and intolerance, and by the recent spike in hate crimes across the nation. Beyond finding this alarming and repellent on a personal level, we find that many of the messages communicated by the new administration run directly counter to our values as a school and as a community.

As such, we want to communicate that we intend to stand up for our values, as a staff and as a community. We will not allow bigotry and intolerance to enter our school as they have entered the national conversation, and we intend to ensure that each and every one of our students feels safe and supported on

our grounds. Additionally, we intend to make our students aware of local opportunities to fight bigotry, and to support them in having conversations and thinking critically about our current national situation. As a staff, we have already begun meeting to organize and initiate concrete action, aided by the Diversity Committee, who have been working on social justice and anti-bigotry for a number of years now. It is our hope that as part of our commitment to social justice, the Peninsula School community at large will work collaboratively during the coming months and years to take a stand and support local and global justice, in whatever form that may take.

Peninsula's vision of social justice, equity, community, inclusion, and diversity is as timely now as it has ever been. We find ourselves honored to be part of such a vibrant and wonderful community, and we hope that you will join us in continuing Peninsula's long tradition of living our values each and every day.

*With much love,
The Peninsula School Staff*

PENINSULA'S DEVELOPMENT WORK IS BRANCHING OUT

by Sue Eldredge

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE A MEMBER of the Peninsula School community as the Director of Development. Peninsula is such a unique and wonderful community, and I feel blessed with the opportunity to lead the Development Office and its important role in providing resources that contribute to the vitality of the school and ensure that the Peninsula tradition carries on into the future. Andromeda and Heather have deep knowledge of development work at Peninsula which they have generously shared with me.

Last year my daughter Grace joined the Peninsula sixth grade class, and I followed her stepping in as the Development Director last January. I've been on a fast learning curve, getting to know the community and trying to understand Peninsula's rich and complex history, all as the fast paced work of last year's winter and spring tumbled forward. One of the high points has been meeting with teaching staff and visiting their classrooms to understand the art and science behind the Peninsula experience.

It's an exciting time of change for development at Peninsula. We have a healthy Annual Giving Campaign to build upon with phenomenal participation across the community. This year I'm working with



Development Director, Sue Eldredge

Jim and the Board's Development Committee to shape a long-term strategy that includes building the newly-created Peninsula Tuition Assistance Fund and creating a small capital campaign, both of which will provide a solid foundation for our Centennial Campaign in 2025. The Board is doing some exciting visioning work this year that will drive our Campaign goals forward. I welcome conversations with as many commu-

nity members as possible to fuel our planning. Please reach out to me.

You'll notice the Annual Giving Campaign had a fresh look this year with new campaign materials. Alumni and current parents wrote incredibly moving letters asking for everyone's support. We also introduced a new AGC component—the *AGC Challenge* aimed at raising resources to increase tuition assistance. Every dollar raised over this year's AGC goal of \$400,000 will go to the Peninsula Tuition Assistance Fund which was created due to a generous gift of \$100,000. We hope to extend the life of the Fund for the next ten years and make a Peninsula School education possible for even more families.

I look forward to having the pleasure of meeting more and more of the extended Peninsula community and letting you know about how our development work is growing. Please don't hesitate to reach out or visit the Development Office.

ELECTION 2016 PENINSULA STYLE

LEARNING ABOUT ELECTIONS

by Akash Pandey - 7th Grade

THE 2016 ELECTION has been on students' minds this year. From the start, we have had students in the upper school asking questions, sharing opinions, making sense of this moment that brings so many of the best and worst qualities of our country out into the open. This year we decided, in the upper school, to each bring an element of the election into our classrooms for our students to learn and to share with others. Livy's class focused on the process of voting; on Election Day, her room became a polling place open for all upper-schoolers to submit a ballot. Marcella's offered Election 101, helping students to understand how the election works. Akash's seventh graders looked at presidential campaigns past and present, focusing on the appeals candidates make to voters. Mel had her eighth grade class research this year's slate of propositions in California, examining the arguments made by both sides and reasons to vote 'Yes' or 'No.'



Akash Pandey helping his students research and prepare presentations about presidential campaigns.

We dedicated the afternoon the day before the election for all the students in the upper school to check out each other's work, thus becoming better informed future-voters. Perhaps some of them even became advisers to parents in need of a quick primer before sneaking out of work on Voting Day.

BETTY'S CLASS GETS OUT THE VOTE

by Betty Achinstein - 4th Grade

Progressive education encourages youth engagement in democratic life. An election provides a unique opportunity for this at Peninsula School and my class embraced this occasion with enthusiasm. Our class engaged in an inquiry about: the history of U.S. voting rights; voter turnout trends by race, age, and socioeconomic status; and why voting is important. The students became alarmed at the low voter turnout and wanted to take some action. We investigated how kids have sought to get out the vote and brainstormed activist ideas. Launching a 'Get Out the Vote' community organizing campaign (GOTV) within and beyond our school was what the kids chose to do. The class invited a guest speaker with ties to a GOTV campaign to help teach us. We discussed locations we could go to in order to help get out diverse voting constituencies. We deliberated over messages that would best get the vote out, including creating posters such as: *We Can't Vote, So You Have To*; *Your Vote is Our Voice*; and *People Died*



Betty's 4th grade ready with their handmade signs to get out the vote on Election Day, 2016.

for Your Right to Vote. The students developed different chants such as: *Vote Now, Vote Loud*; and *Be the Voice of a Kid*. On Election Day, Betty's class mobilized in five community sites in neighboring cities to get out the vote. Students are change agents for democracy!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ENDOWMENT GIFTS

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the donors listed below who contributed to support the future of Peninsula School through their gifts to the Peninsula School Endowment & Trust Fund during the 2016-2017 school year. This group has added to this important fund which was started by the Board and parents in 1970 to ensure that Peninsula School would continue for generations to come. The Peninsula School Endowment & Trust Fund provides security for the school and protects Peninsula from unforeseen circumstances, with the added advantage of providing a percentage of its total investments to Peninsula's annual income. We appreciate your generous donations which allow future children to one day follow in the footsteps of our nine decades of students and alumni, also enjoying our tree-filled grounds and inspiring progressive education.

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NEW ASSISTANT TEACHERS

ALEXANDRA GRIFFIN
5TH & 6TH GRADE

"Returning to Peninsula as a staff member gives me a new perspective and deep appreciation for the thoughtful manner in which the Peninsula staff believe in and work hard to support the values and culture of Peninsula School. I knew it was good to be a kid here, and I am happy to now be a part of creating that for my students."

RACHAEL LOPATIN
7TH GRADE

"As a completely new member of the Peninsula family – having never before worked in a similar environment – all I can say is that each day is exceptional. I have loved every moment bonding with these kids, teaching

them, learning from them, and watching all of us grow as thoughtful, compassionate people. Forming unique, meaningful relationships with my students and fellow teachers has been and will continue to be an absolute joy."

MILLY SEIGEL
6TH GRADE

"Growing up at Peninsula, I think I really took the student-teacher relationships here for granted. When I graduated, it was kind of startling to meet kids that hadn't had that kind of upbringing in their education. Being back here as a teacher,



From left to right: Alexandra, Milly, & Rachael

it's really refreshing and fun to see how much these kids want to talk and hang out with the adults around them."

A WARM WELCOME TO BETH LEE

BETH LEE began as our Business Director this August, and we are so happy to have her join the Peninsula School community. Previously she worked at the Waldorf School of the Peninsula where during her 19 years of service, she served as the school's Director of Finance and Business Operations and Business Manager. Beth has a B.A. in English Literature from Loyola University of Chicago and a certificate of Advanced Accounting



Beth Lee

from Santa Clara University. Since she arrived, she has proven to be knowledgeable about independent school finance and operations, a good colleague, thoughtful and warm, and has a deep commitment to progressive values and independent school education – a great fit for Peninsula School.

GETTING TO KNOW JESSICA FOSCO

JESSICA FOSCO is the newest in a long line of wonderful Peninsula Kindergarten teachers. Originally from Saskatchewan, Jessica earned a B.A. from Stanford in human biology and a B.A. in elementary education from the University of Saskatchewan. Jessica is fluent in French and was an elite synchronized swimmer on the Canadian National Team for four years, serving on Stanford's varsity team as well.

Arriving last January, she has taken on her class with enthusiasm and heart, mentioning that it was a miraculous fit. She joined Camerina Lozano, Frank Smithson, Chrissy Quinn, and Vicky Velazquez. More knowledgeable and supportive assistant teachers would be hard to find. They have fast made a wonderful classroom family together. Jessica is happy to note that this family includes the parents.



Jessica Fosco

Jessica feels that the style of teaching at Peninsula is so natural and comfortable, fitting with her own ideas of how she wants to teach. "Here we have the freedom to see the lessons in everything we do, and to take these moments with the kids. There is time to be intentional, slow down and allow kids to process and to think critically." It is clear that Jessica is intelligent and warm with children. In her own words, "I am excited to come to school everyday and so are the kids. What could be better than that?"

INTRODUCING MOIRA MCNAMARA

MOIRA MCNAMARA is our new Woodshop teacher and joins Peninsula with a range of prior experiences. She earned a B.A. in English Literature and Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a certificate in Wood

Technology from Laney College in Oakland. She works as a design consultant, and has been a cabinetmaker and a bookbinding teacher as well. One interesting past job was as a carpenter for a special exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum of Art in NYC. Most significantly, for the past 12 years Moira was a carpentry instructor at Kid's Carpentry, Inc. in Berkeley where she taught children from kindergarten through middle school the basics of tool use, safety and 3-D design.

Since arriving at Peninsula, Moira is enjoying setting up her woodshop with projects that meet the kids where they are developmentally. She gives a lot of credit to the high level of skills she has found in the students at Peninsula and really appreciates that the kids have the opportunity to come to Woodshop so often because of the structure of Peninsula's studio program. She also appreciates that this program allows for crossover projects with other studios like Art and Weaving. About working with the kids, Moira says, "I give them the foundation and their ideas and creativity can grow from there. That is the ideal teaching situation!"



Moira McNamara planning projects with the kids at Woodshop.

ALUMNI UPDATES



Ben Burr-Kirven, number 25, pictured in the game against CAL. His first college interception and he ran it back 27 yards.



Kenny and Matt, friends since their school days, in Hawaii scheming up their next project.



Matt McCrosky, still climbing trees, but now with his wife at their wedding.

Benjamin Burr-Kirven, Class of '11

I've been playing football at the University of Washington during my first two years of college. It was a really incredible season coming off a solid first year up here at Washington. As a team, it was awesome to see how we were able to progress. We got the chance to not only win the PAC 12 this year, but also go to the college football playoff in the Peach Bowl. Hopefully we can keep building from here and get back to the playoffs next year.

Alice Malone, Class of '99

I am a Peninsula alum and the aunt of two current students. In the past couple years I sometimes come to play my violin with the Front Porch Band at lunchtime and enjoy the Peninsula atmosphere. I recently got some great news I'd like to share with you all in *News Notes*. My design was one of 4 chosen by Netflix to go on their fall mailer. Netflix wrote "We absolutely fell in love with this whimsical trio of trick-or-treaters! Popcorn, a Netflix DVD, and a mug of hot cocoa with a marshmallow on top – the perfect combination for a cozy fall evening. Alice's favorite snacks for movie time are watermelon and pistachios. She considers *Kings of*



Knengi Martin celebrates with wife after their wedding.

Pastry to be a highly underrated movie and imparts this wisdom: Be sure a good bakery will be open when you finish watching!!!"

Knengi Martin, Class of '98

I am currently coaching high school football and working in real estate, but there is big news. I got married to my longtime girlfriend, Katie Ott, on New Year's Eve, surrounded by our friends and family. The wedding took place at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido. We are feeling happy!



Alice Malone with her violin.

Kenny Meehan & Matt McCroskey, Class of '94

A few years ago, Kenny Meehan and fellow alumni Matt McCroskey traveled to India to film a documentary about their friend who was acting in a Bollywood film. The documentary, titled *Big in Bollywood*, is now available on Netflix. (Trailer available at www.BigInBollywood.com)

Kenny Meehan is living in Redwood City with his wife and 3 year old (soon-to-be-Peninsula-kid) son. Kenny is currently working at Apple developing video technology and still making movies in his "free time."

Matt is living in New York working as an actor and filmmaker. He just married Quinlan Pozner in Hawaii with family and friends all around. Matt shared, "I got some love for this girl!"

Gottfried Paasche, Class of '52

After 50 good years in Canada, Carol and I have moved to Newton, Massachusetts. There we will be closer to our children and grandchildren, and closer to our farm in Upstate New York, where we enjoy spending much time.

CLASS OF '83 REUNION

By Michael Becker

Our class had a wonderful reunion in October 2016. Diane Friedlaender and Lizzy Fong helped organize a weekend for us all to get together. We chose a beach house in Pajaro Dunes because when we were at Peninsula, we had an annual field trip to the dunes. Seven of us attended, and seven more participated through calls, Skype, and notes. We connected from around the world - from California, Tennessee, Florida, Oregon, & Sydney, Australia. Even though we have spread out, we are still as close as ever. It was an amazing weekend filled with a sense of family and love.

We were able to drop all filters and pretense, the years evaporated when we came together, and we were back amongst family. Peninsula has formed immeasurable bonds amongst us all. We have all taken so many different paths, but the sense of connection has never waned. For those who could not make it, we shared memories and aspirations through email and Facebook. Next year, we are hoping to do it again and that even more classmates can join!

I'm so proud of my classmates and what beautiful human beings they've all become. Peninsula is such a special experience.



Class of '83 reunion, (left to right) Lizzy Fong, Maria Fadiman, Mark Luntzel, Alex McClure, Ginna Demetrios, Diane Friedlaender, Michael Becker.

DANCING MUD

*By Rev. Jeremy McLeod
(f.k.a. Lorne Brown at Peninsula)*

I promised myself long ago, that one day I would do something to give back to Peninsula School. The time I spent at Peninsula had a profound effect on the rest of my life, in believing I could be myself, and in finding good in creative endeavors. Since my life-long fascination with clay (oh, let's be honest . . . lifetime "addiction to clay") is pretty much Peninsula School's fault, I figure the School should benefit from a gift of a piece of my pottery. Let me tell you how this came to be.

In the WaaaaayBack machine, 1952 to 1954, I was a Peninsula student for

Kindergarten, first, and part of second grade. Looking back those 64 years or so, some wonderful things were set in motion in even those few years' experience.

One day stands out in particular. My first grade classroom shared a passageway with a bathroom and the Arts and Crafts room. That day I went to the bathroom and then sneaked into the Arts and Crafts room. I was alone in that space and drawn to an even-then-old Leach Style treadle potters wheel. Its hulking, boxy shaped bench seat drew me to it. I sat, put my foot on the treadle, and began to spin the wheel slowly. Even without clay on the wheel, I knew then that this thing was just plain amazing and would be a part of my life.

Fascination has unfolded in fits and starts and interesting ways. Clay has claimed my imagination in wonderful ways. Of all the

WORKING WITH UNDERSERVED YOUTH

Ayinde Tate, Class of '99

After I obtained my BA in Psychology from La Salle University in 2007, I moved back to California and began working at the San Mateo County Emergency Shelter as a Shelter Care Counselor for abused and neglected adolescents who were removed from their home. I realized I enjoyed working with underserved youth, and I went on to earn my Masters in School & Mental Health Counseling from Penn Graduate School of Education. I was able to reach back and use the lessons I learned at Peninsula as guidance. This program not only provided me with the necessary tools to provide academic or emotional help for people but also led me to meet my future wife.

Now I am using these skills and the life lessons learned at Peninsula, working as an 11th grade Academic Advisor/College Counselor at Freire Charter School. In this position I assist students from different parts of Philadelphia with navigating through their junior year of high school and parts of their senior year. I also work as a therapist at an LGBTQ youth center in Philadelphia where our mission is to provide a safe space and, if needed, an opportunity for these youth to receive mental health care that they may not be able to obtain otherwise.

I hope to continue my work in both the school and the mental health realm in order to assist the next generation with their success. Whether that is through continued individual work or through policy work only time will tell, but I know that the lessons of fostering intellectual, social, and emotional growth will continue to guide me throughout.



Ayinde Tate, pictured at a semi-formal event with his wife, now works with underserved youth.

artsy things I do, it's the one that shuts off my left brain better than anything else and becomes a restorative meditative practice. On bad days my husband will all but command, "Go to the studio. Now." In my retirement from pastoral ministry, I'm now able to spend 15 or so hours a week with my hands in clay, making sculptures, functional, and ritual vessels under the business name of Jeremy McLeod - Pottery (dancingmud.com).

These three-footed bowls and shino glazes have been at the heart of my work for some time now. When I promised myself I was going to make a piece for Peninsula School, they were obvious choices. Wouldn't you know it? The resulting piece is among the best pieces I've done and it seems a fitting way to give back to a school that set my feet on such a powerfully transformative path.



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