

STATE OF THE SCHOOL REPORT | 2020



METAIRIE PARK COUNTRY DAY



Dear Country Day Community,

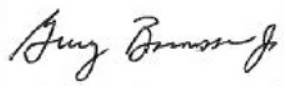
We are proud of the powerful learning that takes place each day as our faculty and staff utilize a student-centered approach that is cultivated in our intentional and caring community. That intentionality is lived at every level from our faculty, staff, students, and board, to our facilities and our programs. The yield of such work is great.

As the Board Chair, it has been gratifying to hear about, see, and support the important work being done. Just as our 15-acre campus promotes gathering, an appreciation for nature, and great athletic events, our academic, athletic, and arts departments ensure a breadth and depth of learning across grade levels. It has been inspiring to learn how the English Department focused this year on having students demonstrate their understanding and creative thinking through alternative assessments. Assessments such as creating a “utopian” society, writing and presenting a movie pitch for Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, writing, recording, and editing podcasts about American roots music and Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and creating black-out poems that relate to themes in Wiesel’s memoir *Night*. It was also exciting to see how the Department of Applied Technology enhanced student learning by integrating technology throughout divisions and subject matter using the Sphero SPRK+ robot, design challenges, and so much more. These intentional acts reinforce who we are as a school and, more importantly, prepare our students for lives of purpose, connection, and ultimately success.

I am pleased to share this state of school report. In this report, you will learn about the ideas and ideals that scaffold together to allow us to offer a rich and rigorous academic and athletic experience to our students. You will also hear about the importance we place on the arts and on the many aspects of Country Day that help us cultivate *intellect* and *character*.

Our intentionality continues to propel our mission. As we look back on 2019 and then towards 2020 and beyond, I remain excited about our future.

Sincerely,



Gerry Barousse, Jr.
Chairman, Board of Trustees



Academics *A Balanced Education* BY G. HOWARD HUNTER

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of STEM, the acronym for a curriculum based on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The clarion call of the National Science Foundation came out of a sense of desperation — American 15 year-olds scored well under international norms on standardized tests in math, and with a post-industrial economy, the United States according to the naysayers, would not have the wherewithal to compete on a global scale. President Obama in 2011 called it the new Sputnik, which played into the sense of crisis generated by the NFS. The 180-pound satellite launched by the Soviet Union in 1958 fueled widespread panic and drove home the notion of the United States losing the Cold War. Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev with his usual bombast declared on the floor of the UN the Soviets would bury us. The result was a reaction on a prodigious scale, with President Kennedy announcing the Apollo program in 1962 as well as untold federal dollars dedicated to teacher training in math and science.

Compared to Sputnik the new crisis is tougher to define because the stakes are individual i.e. the ability (or inability) of our progeny to make a living. Education gurus repeatedly warned us at teacher conferences that our students would be boomerang children, or worse, suffer the ignominy of having to hustle lattes at Starbucks (which I thought rather insulting to the remarkable baristas I have known) unless we changed to a more STEM approach. From our end, we heeded the call in a way we believe follows our mission. We created a new department in applied technology, after school programs in robotics and problem solving, more computer science across the board, a new focus on A.P. science and engineering as well as building a new science and technology facility.

Yet a curious thing happened. On a national scale, those who simply focused on STEM could not make sense of the trillions of megabits of data filtering through their cubicles. It took the help of humanists to synthesize the data and tell the story. According to J. M. Olejarz of the Harvard Business Review,

From Silicon Valley to the Pentagon, people are beginning to realize that to effectively tackle today's social and technological challenges we need to think critically about their human context — something humanities graduates happen to be trained to do. Call it the revenge of the film, history and philosophy nerds.

While vindication may be a stretch, suffice it to say that current trends affirm our academic mission of a balanced education, as well as the interdependence of the sciences and humanities on each other.

The philosophy driving STEM also gave us pause. It seemed brutalist and utilitarian, at odds with our commitment to learning for its own sake. This is hardly a platitude; learning for its own sake is serious business with the academic disciplines acting as lenses for looking inward and projecting on to the world. Educator William T. Harris, a post Civil War Hegelian and reformer likened the liberal arts and sciences to windows into the soul. The academic disciplines cultivate the mind to properly discriminate truth from falsehood or between the beautiful and the meretricious. They foster a critical sensibility for making sense. The late Steve Jobs thought coding essential for learning how to think, an end in itself. Lady Ada Lovelace, the daughter of Byron and progenitor of coding going back to the 1840s believed poetry and mathematics as identical parts of the imagination, “which penetrates into the unseen worlds around us, the worlds of science.”

The exigencies of a post-industrial economy require that we adopt changes to meet the needs of our students for college and life. For example, data analysis as a stand-alone course, or integrated into the curriculum is in the near future simply because students need to learn how to manage large chunks of information. But the specious canard that STEM will be essential for “jobs yet to be invented” begs the question, as it assumes particular courses can meet the needs of an uncertain future. A balance of the liberal arts and sciences fosters the critical thinking that can navigate uncertainty and make sense of the exponential change that threatens to overwhelm us. And understanding context and patterns inherent in both nature and human nature is the best preparation we can give our students.

ACADEMICS IN ACTION



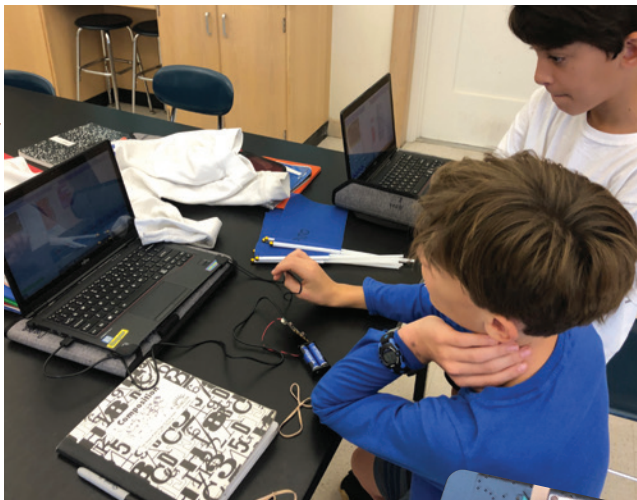
The Lower School robotics team, the **TECHNOCAJUNS**, represented Country Day at the regional First LEGO League competition. Students in fourth and fifth grades competed in three rounds of EV3 programming challenges, various teamwork exercises and also shared their research project with judges and students from 14 different area schools. The TechnoCajuns exemplified the First Robotics core values of “cooperation” and “gracious professionalism.”



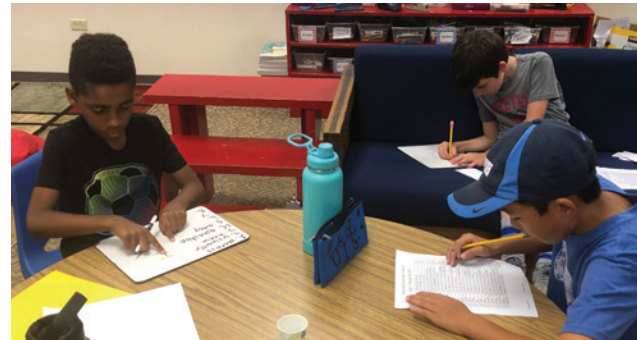
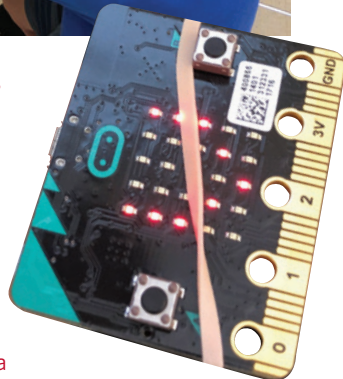
Seniors in **MATH MODELING** culminated their semester of study with a unit on Cryptography and Code Breaking. Students used problem-solving and teamwork to escape from “The Playground” (an escape room). Throughout the semester, these seniors tackled discrete mathematics topics such as graph theory, network analysis, and combinatorics.



During **K/1/2 INTERACTIVE WRITING** (when students work as a group to compose), students wrote instructions on how to brush their teeth. When teachers “rehearsed” to see if their instructions were clear, students discovered that some revision was definitely necessary. The students loved the “rehearsal” as teachers made quite a mess with the toothpaste and the cup of water.



Seventh-grade science students created **PEDOMETERS**. They then measured their steps and uploaded this data into the computer program Make Code for Microbits (java block code). Students were then able to measure distance using a scale model of the solar system.



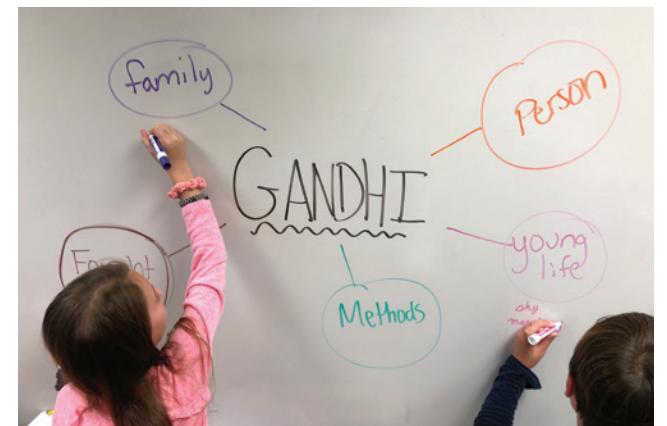
Students in third and fourth grade develop and finetune their writing skills through a program called **WRITING WORKSHOP**. The Writing Workshop is a framework for teaching writing that prioritizes brief teacher-led skill lessons, followed by long blocks of time during which students write about topics that are meaningful to them. Then, during independent writing time, teachers conference one-on-one with students to help them build specific skills as they write. This teaching model most closely reflects the real work of authors. It also relies heavily on mentor texts, so students see the skills they are working on in the types of books they are reading and that they love.



Students in an eighth grade English class were asked to reflect on their time camping in North Carolina through a set of **THREE POEMS**. Two were haikus, each describing an element of nature they encountered on their trip. The third was a free verse poem that talked about an experience on the trip. These works ended up highlighting many elements from the trip - from the bus ride to experiencing a breathtaking view on the hike to being rained on in the middle of the night! The free-verse poem was a chance for students to practice creating using some of the tools they have been studying such as simile, metaphor, anaphora, antithesis, parallel structure, and allusion in their own writing.



Students in AP Art visited the Musée d'Orsay in Paris using **AUGMENTED REALITY (AR)**. Wearing special AR goggles, students looked around the classroom to view pieces of artwork through their goggles. Looking through these devices, students truly felt as if they were inside the Museum viewing famous pieces of art.



Third and fourth graders study literature through **BOOK CLUBS**. In groups of three to five, students read a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts to practice comprehension and oral fluency. This model naturally lends itself to cross-curricular explorations. The fourth-grade book club just completed the book, *Who Was Gandhi?* by Dana Meachen Rau. Students learned about Gandhi's life and his key role in India's independence from British rule. They concluded this unit by creating a mind map of key concepts from the text. This extended student learning from their history study of ancient India to include a more modern perspective.



Middle and Upper School Art Teacher Pam Skehan shares Elliot Eisner's 10 Lessons the Arts Teach in her classroom.

1. The arts teach children to **make good judgments** about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.
2. The arts teach children that **problems can have more than one solution** and that questions can have more than one answer.
3. The arts **celebrate multiple perspectives**. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.
4. The arts teach children that in **complex forms of problem-solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity**. Learning in the arts requires the ability and a willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.
5. The arts make vivid the fact that **neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know**. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.
6. The arts teach students that **small differences can have large effects**. The arts traffic in subtleties.
7. The arts teach students to **think through and within a material**. All art forms employ some means through which images become real.
8. The arts help children **learn to say what cannot be said**. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job.
9. The arts enable us to **have experience we can have from no other source** and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.
10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes **to the young what adults believe is important**.

The Arts Matter

BY COUNTRY DAY'S ART DEPARTMENT

In mid-January students and faculty members from University Prep School in Seattle Washington visited Country Day for a week-long exploration of and immersion in New Orleans history and jazz culture. UPrep students collaborated with our upper school orchestra, worked on a coding and art project in the Lydia Sneed Engineering Lab, and attended field trips in and around New Orleans. According to Jason Parker, UPrep's Jazz Band Director and Trip Leader, "Learning the music of New Orleans, in New Orleans, with people from New Orleans, gave us a deeper insight into music and culture." Joseph, an 11th-grade student echoed, "It was fun playing second line music with the Country Day band, and then letting them hear our Seattle swing. It goes to show that music has no barriers." Throughout the visit, their experience was enriched and enhanced by all aspects of the arts.

The Arts Matter. For many, the importance of the arts is intrinsic. Working with students in an educational environment, we see firsthand the power art holds to light the creative spirit, to explore the beauty of the human experience, to express emotion - it has no barriers. This importance is echoed in the very foundation of Metairie Park Country Day School. From our founders' vision to the very structure and fabric of our daily curriculum, we strive to balance the math-sciences, the humanities, and the arts.

According to Art Department Chair Katie Antis, "The arts are what make us human." "They are an essential statement of our humanity - a document of our collective experience, our infinite imagination, and a defiant celebration of beauty and truth, of pain and passion, of joy and rage, of sense and nonsense, of order and chaos," continues Drama Teacher and Actor Sean Patterson.

"We reveal our innermost thoughts and get a glimpse into the souls of our fellow humans. We see all the foibles and follies of humankind and understand their consequences." These ideas are reflected widely among art enthusiasts and educators including Elliot Eisner, a former Stanford professor and academic, who provides rationale regarding the contribution the arts play to individual expression and discovery.

Eisner continues that the arts allow for discovery. Just as we can perform and express through art, we can also discover the emotions and feelings behind those actions. "To hand a child a paintbrush and paints is to give a child the freedom to express themselves," shares Lower School Art Teacher Lisette Overby.

"Such exploration is part of growth and part of who the child will become as an adult." "In other words, the arts can help students find their individual capacity to feel and imagine," Eisner explains. By expression, he contends that the arts allow an individual to share their feelings or thoughts with the world through form, such as theater. Patterson agrees, sharing, "Theatre, to paraphrase Shakespeare, holds a mirror up to life and reflects it on the stage. It gives us a place to explore what it means to be human. It lets us explore and experience the full range of human emotion, from tears to laughter and everything in between."

The arts also use our brains in different ways. "Creating new neurological pathways as students put pens to paper, hands in clay, fingers on instruments, all help make new and stronger connections in the brain," shares Antis. This idea is supported by vast research. According to John Hopkins University's Mariale M. Hardiman, "Arts expressions are part of our cultural evolution and central to the cognitive development of our species, an essential platform upon which language and logic have developed. More than an anthropological slideshow, the arts constitute a direct connection between what we experience and who we are." In his book titled, *Art As Experience*, John Dewey agrees with Hardiman that the arts help us form an experience, instead of just single experiences that are not connected or meaningful. This is clearly visible at Country Day. The merging and blending of voices during our Upper School Chorale concert form a truly ethereal experience. However, it is the care faculty and students have for each other, the hard work and hours students prepare, and the history and structure of the music they sing that combine to form this memorable experience. The experiences are formed throughout every branch of the arts from metals and woodworking to ceramics, photography, and fine arts.

Whether to form an experience, improve school engagement, or simply to enjoy, the arts hold important meaning for and in our school community. One where they are valued alongside academics, athletics, and service and one where they are scaffolded and shared across divisions, disciplines, and subject matter. They add meaning to our school day and richness to our lives. As Academic Dean Howard Hunter shares, "The arts make (school) life worth living." We could not agree more.

Visit www.mpcds.com/source for this article's sources.

ATHLETICS

2018-2019 WINTER

BOYS' BASKETBALL

2019 State Champions

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Lost in Class 2A Semi-Finals



BOYS' SOCCER

District Champions
Lost in Division IV Regionals

GIRLS' SOCCER

2019 SPRING

BASEBALL

District Champions
Lost in Class 2A Regionals

GOLF

1st in District (one member)

SOFTBALL

2nd in District
Lost in Class 2A Quarterfinals

TENNIS

Four Regionals Competitors

GIRLS' TRACK & FIELD

2nd in District

BOYS' TRACK & FIELD

3rd in District



2019 FALL



VOLLEYBALL

2019 State Champions

GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY

2019 State Champions

BOY'S CROSS COUNTRY

2019 State Runners-Up

FOOTBALL

Lost in Class 1A Semi-Finals

GIRLS' SWIMMING

Finished in 11th in the Division IV State Championships

BOYS' SWIMMING

Finished in 13th in the Division IV State Championships



SCHOLAR-ATHLETE HONORS

LHSAA ALL-ACADEMIC TEAM

- (2) Boys' Cross Country
- (1) Football
- (1) Swimming
- (2) Volleyball
- (2) Boys' Soccer
- (1) Girls' Soccer
- (1) Girls' Tennis
- (2) Boys' Track & Field
- (1) Girls' Track & Field
- (1) Girls' Track & Field (All-Composite Team)



(1) Chevron Scholar-Athlete

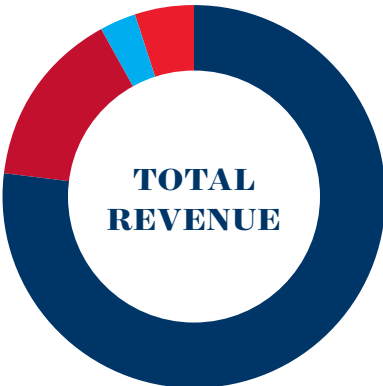


Financial Statement 2018-19

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

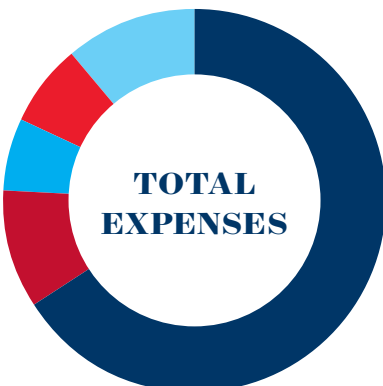
Metairie Park Country Day School has an annual operating budget of \$20 million. The annual operating budget is funded through four major sources: Tuition, Auxiliary Services (Dining, Early Childhood, Summer Programs), charitable giving via Annual Fund, and annual endowment support.

	(Amts in '000)	
Tuition	\$15,510	78%
Auxiliary Services: Dining, Early Childhood, and Summer Programs	\$3,060	15%
Endowment Support	\$551	3%
Contributions, including The Country Day Fund	\$855	4%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$19,976	100%



The largest expense in this operating budget is salaries for our faculty and support staff which are the foundation of the strong and nurturing learning environment we build at Country Day. The remaining funds go towards funding our Instructional and Student Support Programs, including our strong arts and athletics programs, providing financial aid, and maintaining our beautiful campus.

	(Amts in '000)	
Salaries, Taxes, and Benefits	\$13,606	68%
Instructional and Student Support Programming	\$1,440	7%
Financial Aid	\$1,222	6%
General and Administrative	\$1,667	8%
Plant Operations, including Major Repair and Maintenance	\$2,041	10%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$19,976	100%



Development

THE 2019-2020 COUNTRY DAY FUND*

Thanks to our generous donors and 100+ volunteers, this year’s Country Day Fund campaign is off to a great start.

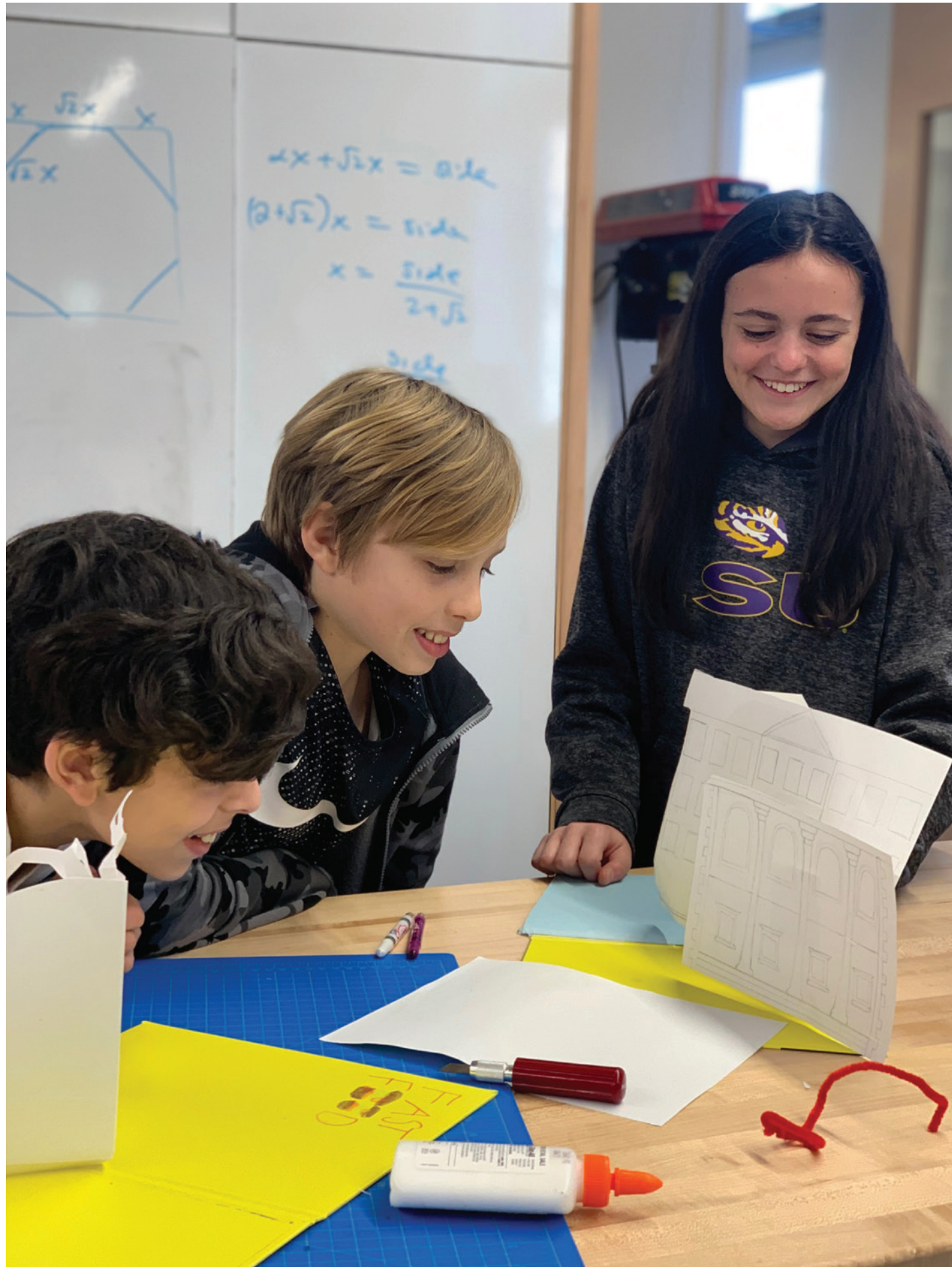
Over
50%
PARENT
PARTICIPATION*

96%
Participation from
FACULTY
AND STAFF*

100%
Participation from
THE BOARD
OF TRUSTEES*

Over
\$670K
RAISED*

*Figures as of 2-11-2020



Looking Forward

In the book *The Elements of Pop-Up*, the author shares the building blocks of pop-up design by taking nearly 40 pop-up shapes and providing step by step directions to create each. Our sixth graders dove in as they collaborated with Dr. Talmadge to build their own. Their creations housed pop-up designs, drawings, and text that was all centered around a novel they were reading in English class. The deliberate process it took to plan and then to make such a creation, epitomizes a purposeful approach. Similarly, our school community has taken a renewed and purposeful approach as we continue to foster *strength of character* at Country Day.

This focus on character is not new, having been part of our School's vision of providing *strength of intellect and strength of character* since its inception. We see the amazing work happening in classrooms as faculty continue to model behaviors, expectations, and support and through the social-emotional lessons they share. Our buddy programs and family-style dining also continue to organically contribute to a community for which we can all be proud.

What has advanced are some of the ways in which our students and faculty are heeding the call. Last summer, Upper School History Teacher Lucas Miller joined Country Day's Faculty Fellows Program, a three-week intellectual think tank, where he researched a wide range of sources to expand our School's notion of student leadership. The results were carefully constructed definitions for how *honor*, *optimism*, *confidence*, *creativity*, and *sense of humor*, central tenets of our mission, relate to student leadership. These definitions were shared at our first faculty and staff meeting of the academic year and were used to help improve our already impressive Student Government Retreat. One such change initiated when planning the Retreat was that all students who had an interest in leadership were invited to

attend, not just those elected. The outcome was an energetic, engaged, and robust set of students who were ready to lead our school - through many different forms of leadership.

Furthering our efforts as a *No Place for Hate* school, DEI Coordinator Ninnette Varisco introduced Dot Day, a global celebration of creativity, courage, and collaboration. Inspired by Peter Reynolds' book *The Dot*, a story about a girl who learns to trust her own abilities and becomes brave enough to "make a mark," Country Day brought dot day into virtually every classroom from our Early Childhood Center to our 12th grade. Students left knowing they could and should be courageous and "make their mark" on the world.

Service-learning was also introduced in a fresh way by Middle School Assistant Principal Kathy Brennan. Students participated in service just as they finished mid-term exams and before they entered the busy winter break. The amount of work our 150-plus middle schoolers accomplished over two days was truly impressive. Students made 480 sandwiches to distribute to the homeless, decorated and packed 63 pillowcases with hygiene packs for foster care children, made 143 snack bags and 600-plus cookies for the homeless, built and painted 41 bookshelves for low-income families, planted 75 trees in City Park, cleaned 2 vacant lots, sang to the elderly, and much more.

Energy continues to drive our culture of *strength of character*, from the examples listed above to those who participate in activities through Second Harvest Food Bank, the NOLA Tree Project, and as part of American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and Operation Donation to the countless leaders on our athletic teams and in our 40 clubs. We have much to look forward to.



STRENGTH OF INTELLECT
STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

300 Park Road, Metairie, LA 70005



Metairie Park Country Day School enriches the lives of talented young people in a dynamic learning environment, building strength of intellect and strength of character within a community that is simultaneously challenging and supportive. Our students learn to be flexible, to be adaptable, and to face the challenges of life with honor, optimism, confidence, creativity, and a sense of humor.

2019-2020 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Vice Chair
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