

The Peak to Peak Alumni Magazine

Piqued

/'pēkt/ (verb) to excite interest or curiosity, to arouse an emotion or provoke to action



LEGACY

Volume 2: Issue 1
November 2018

In this issue of the Peak to Peak alumni magazine, we explore the notion of each individual's legacy at Peak to Peak and the impact our decisions will have for generations to come. What is your legacy? How will you continue to contribute to the fabric of our educational distinction?

In this issue:

- The "Listening Campaign"
- Alumni Spotlight:
Maithreyi Gopalakrishnan
- Our Retiring Treasured Staff



Above: The High School Boys Cross Country Team won the 3A state championship!

On the cover: Campus from the air with blue highlight illustrating the newly acquired land. Read more about the land in the Message from Ms. Reeser.

Message from Ms. Reeser

Executive Director of Education



Dear Peak to Peak Alumni,

Welcome to the second edition of Peak to Peak's Alumni Magazine! As distinguished members of our alumni network, you played a unique role in Peak to Peak's development. You were perhaps part of a family who originally envisioned our K-12 school that would be dedicated to scholarship, college-preparatory programs, and character education. You know about the hard work and perseverance it took to open the school's doors to 197 students in grades K-5 in September 2000. You may have heard about the hard work and dogged determination required to keep the dream alive for more than two years before that opening day. Peak to Peak is now a thriving school, home to 1,445 students in grades K-12 and nationally recognized for its excellent programs. The original dreams have come to fruition and you should be proud of your role in helping to create such an excellent school!

As part of the school's long-term strategic planning and continuous improvement efforts, Peak to Peak's Board of Directors and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) have been exploring the possibility of additional construction on campus to accommodate dreams for a variety of possibilities in the future. To that end, we recently purchased 5 acres of vacant land adjacent to our campus (see photo on front cover).

Right now, this land represents an open-ended "Field of Dreams" for which we can contemplate a variety of uses. This year we have launched a "Listening Campaign" to gather input from all of our stakeholders – including you as alumni – on potential uses for this land and to define our greatest opportunities and most pressing needs for the future. The feedback we have received so far has been incredibly helpful and thought-provoking: respondents are advocating for everything from flexible learning spaces, enhanced programming options for science, technology, engineering, the arts and athletics/activities, to innovative spaces for business leaders to meet with students of all ages. These ideas are stimulating and will certainly be incorporated into our planning for the future. Hopefully, you took some time to respond to the survey that you should have received on this topic. If not, you can access that survey [HERE](#). What do YOU think we should do with this land? We would love to hear from you!

Thank you for reading the Alumni Magazine. More news and updates are available on our website: www.peaktopeak.org. We look forward to helping you stay connected with Peak to Peak.

Best wishes,

Kelly Reeser
Executive Director of Education

Upcoming Events:

- **Nov 30th, 5:30-7:30pm:**
MS/HS One-Act Play
- **Dec 3rd, 6:00-8:00pm:**
Orchestra Concert
- **Dec 10th, 6:00-8:00pm:**
Band Concert
- **Dec 11th, 6:00-8:00pm:**
Choir Concert
- **Jan 22nd, 3:30-5:00pm:**
ES Spelling Bee
- **March 1st, 6:00-11:00pm:**
Peak Gala and Auction
- **March 12th, 6:00-8:00pm:**
Gala Concert
- **March 14th, 3:15-5:00pm:**
K-12 Pi Day Competition
- **March 16th, 8:00am-1:00pm:**
Charter School Teacher Job Fair

[Click to see Peak to Peak's K-12 Events Calendar](#)

Charting New Courses

If you haven't been to our campus in a while, you might not recognize it as the same school you attended. Not only are there physical changes, but we continue to make programmatic adjustments and improvements. This year, we have implemented a new secondary schedule for the 18-19 school year. There is now an additional class period taking us to eight class periods, and four block days a week



Above: The so-called "node chairs" are a popular addition to the middle school World History classroom.

instead of just two. Adding block time to weekly instruction was implemented to enhance learning opportunities and augment elective options during the day. The new schedule provides more freedom for juniors and seniors who may select to take either the first or eighth period off, according to their individualized needs. This means that we've eliminated Access as a set class each week, and will build in relevant class meetings, assemblies, college lessons, and assessment preparation into our weekly schedule and subject offerings. All of these efforts are to keep students at the center; more block days mean more problem-based approaches, fewer courses for nightly homework, more feedback for each student, and new avenues for collaboration and innovative learning. The doors are now wide open, and opportunities for every student to pursue their interests and passions. The change in the block schedule provided openings for new coursework, particularly at the middle school level where a number of elective courses have been added. We are excited to add guitar classes, more diverse art, theater and physical education courses, innovative technology classes, storytelling, and independent study courses.



Above: Guitar Lab students join an afternoon jam.

New Electives!

- Exploratory Band
- Coding Applications
- Global Issues
- Guitar Lab
- Piano Lab
- Art of Drama
- Communication Innovation
- Mixed Media Approaches
- Acting: Classical/Conceptual
- Acting: Contemp/Realistic
- 2D Art Design
- 3D Art Design
- Basketball IQ

Puma Athletic Updates:

After seventeen years at Peak to Peak, Athletic & Activities Director and longtime soccer coach, Peter Chandler, retired. Last spring was filled with celebrations and well-wishes. As we opened his dusty file cabinet this fall, we found it was filled with years of Peak to Peak athletic history, giving us the opportunity to reflect on how far our athletic programs have come!

We are excited to welcome our new Athletic & Activities Director, Dan Seidman, and look forward to the future of Peak to Peak athletics.

2003-2004



2017-2018





Class of 2011

Alumni Spotlight: Maithreyi Gopalakrishnan

Where are you now and what are you up to?

I'm headed to Stanford University for a master's degree in engineering management.

Do you think your time at Peak to Peak helped you pursue this? If yes, how?

Definitely. I learned a tremendous amount about the college application process as a Peak to Peak student, much of which was applicable to graduate school applications. I also got to explore unique career-oriented extracurricular, leadership, and service activities at Peak to Peak that helped me decide that this was the path I wanted to pursue.

Did you ever imagine doing this while you were at Peak to Peak?

I actually did! I have wanted to pursue engineering management for quite a long time. However, I did not imagine the specific path I'd take to get to where I am now.

What education have you pursued since high school?

I completed my M.S./B.S. in engineering physics from CU-Boulder, and am now starting a second M.S. in engineering management at Stanford.

Who was your favorite teacher and why?

I don't know if she's at Peak to Peak anymore, but I loved having Ms. Armbrust (now Ms. Martin) as my teacher for pre-calculus, calculus AB, and calculus BC. She really encouraged my love of math, and did an amazing job explaining concepts while also encouraging us to question things we didn't understand and finding unique ways to solve problems. She also created educational but fun learning opportunities even within the structured AP curriculum, such as 3D integral cake-baking competitions! In a relatively male-dominated field, I really appreciated having her as a female role model who shared my passion for mathematics.

Are you still friends with anybody you met at Peak to Peak?

Yes! I just attended a Peak to Peak friend's wedding reception recently, and still get in touch with/meet with a couple alumni every year.

Below: Elementary students enjoy the new Gaga Ball pit. Gaga ball is a high energy game played in an octagonal pit that requires students to be fast on their feet and have sharp focus.



What's the most influential class you've taken in college?

As a physics undergraduate student, I was required to take 2 semesters of electricity and magnetism. I was very fortunate to have Dr. Steven Pollock, an incredible professor, teaching my classes. Before these classes, I really struggled to understand many physics concepts, and I felt that I would never be able to develop any sort of intuition for the subject. Dr. Pollock taught several ways of thinking about electricity and magnetism concepts, some of which resonated with me. He additionally encouraged all of us to speak up and ask questions any time we had a doubt, which significantly helped my confidence and my comprehension of the material. Upon completion of these classes, I for the first time truly believed in my ability to succeed in this program. I also really discovered the beauty of physics in these classes.

What would you like to tell your fellow alumni?

Your experience at Peak to Peak has undoubtedly prepared you to succeed in anything you put your mind to and are passionate about. From my experience, I find the most success when I 1) Love and believe in what I'm doing and 2) Am surrounded by a great group of people. If you've found this for yourself, put your all into it and enjoy the ride!



Top of page: Food trucks and a bounce house were highlights at the K-12 Fall Picnic held on campus.

Above top: The Peak to Peak Puma mascot has a whole new look!

Above bottom: The Learning Garden harvest was abundant. Elementary students helped with both the planting last spring and the reaping this fall.



Faculty Spotlight: Carla Flanhofer

How long have you worked at Peak to Peak, and what classes have you taught?

My story of joining the Peak to Peak family does not follow a “traditional” hiring pathway. After I applied to an online job posting during my last semester of student teaching in the spring of 2003, I was contacted by a member of the hiring team and informed I was not quite what they were looking for in terms of my qualifications, and therefore was not going to be hired. Given that this was the only teaching job in the area I had applied to and given that I had planned to move out to Colorado regardless, I mentioned I would be in the area if Peak to Peak needed me to assist in any way in the future. The conversation that followed ended with an offer to interview for a long-term substitute position for 6th and 7th grade world and American history classes.

A month into the sub position that I was eventually offered, a single class of 9th grade world history needed to be covered so I was asked if I would consider staying on for the year. At the end of the spring term, I was offered a more permanent position but I instead decided to pursue a PhD track in the Criminology department at CSU.

I continued to be involved at Peak to Peak subbing and organizing testing throughout those grad school years but after finishing the Masters portion of my degree, I decided that Peak to Peak was really the right fit for my future. Conveniently, there happened to be an opening teaching 9th grade world history and 11th grade US history starting the fall of 2006 so I taught those courses for years until progressing to teach the courses I teach today: AP US History, AP Psychology and Senior Humanities Research Capstone.

How is the school (and/or students) different from when you first worked here?

The school is almost unrecognizable from when I started. Other than the physical changes to the campus, the increased retention

of staff over the years has created a veteran group of professionals which in turn has dramatically shifted the level of innovation happening, improved the cohesion and alignment of instruction and allowed for us to grow as a unified team in a profound way. Further, when I started, Peak to Peak was rife with the struggles that newly formed schools face, ranging from how to effectively run a fire drill to how to develop and implement appropriate communication pathways. While we continue to grow as an institution, many of the issues that occur in a growing school are now (thankfully) far in the past.

What’s the secret to a successful class?

I believe the ingredients that serve as the foundation for a successful class are 1. making the materials each day relevant to each student’s life and future, 2. setting high expectations (academic and character) for both the instructor and students in the room and 3. implementing structures that create an engaged learning academic community vs. a teacher-centered classroom.

Tell us about your recent successes/adventures?

In life, the biggest adventure is raising my little. Whether we are imagining worlds in our living room or we are out exploring nature by camping, hiking and kayaking, every day is an adventure in the fullest sense of the word.

A recent school “adventure,” however, is that Josh Benson and I are piloting a co-taught humanities course (APUSH and AP Lang blended in one course), which is a unique chance for our students to engage with materials from these classes in a new way and allows us to expand the experiential elements of both courses. It is also an exciting opportunity for my professional growth as I get to observe his amazing teaching each day and it pushes me to think critically about my instructional pedagogy and approaches.

What message would you like to leave for our Alumni?

As I was driving home from work the other day, I was listening to an interview on NPR with John Kerry about his new book “Every Day Is Extra.” I was really struck by how much the title of his book and underlying message about living life as if every day is extra captured my goal for how I strive to approach each day.

Top of page, left: The sun sets over the turf field during a Puma game.

Top of page, center: An AP Psychology student working with a Kindergarten student during class.

Top of page, right: Boys pass the hula hoop during an annual team building event for the middle school.

Right: Ms. Mary Campbell, High School Counselor, and her son Cooper who is in fourth grade at Peak to Peak.



Left: Sr. Andy Matthews, High School Spanish teacher, with family and friends at the K-12 picnic. Sr. Matthews’ son, Ty, is in sixth grade at Peak to Peak.



Alumni: We Need Your Help!

Each of you is such a credit to Peak to Peak and we hope life at college, in jobs, or with your families, continues to provide you a rewarding, challenging, and content life. Not only do you have

much to offer the world, but you have much to offer Peak to Peak by way of advice and promotional video content we hope to produce.

Peak to Peak now has 1,567 graduates. Alumni organizations are a great way to keep in touch with old friends, faculty and staff that were such a part of your lives here. We miss you and hope you feel the same even as you keep your eyes and actions moving forward to live out your destiny. We welcome your advice and feedback with regard to whether you would favor and participate with a Peak to Peak Alumni Association.

As we seek to raise public awareness about Peak to Peak, enhance our visibility with the business, arts, non-profit, and educational

communities in greater Denver and beyond, we plan to produce both advertisements and videos. To this end, your participation will prove invaluable.

For example, we would like to capture video of you speaking with and interacting with current elementary students, sharing where hard work, good study habits, goal setting, and dreams might lead. These encounters enable viewers to understand the strength of the Peak to Peak family. We have a tradition of mentoring and in such unscripted conversations, alumni share advice that younger students will long remember and cherish. As alumni, you are the Peak to Peak legacy beyond the walls of our campus. Our current students will remember your example, your words, and your care for them which is what being an alumnus of any school is all about.

So, if either of these concepts interests you we would sincerely love hearing back from you! Simply email Glenn Mosher (glenn.mosher@bvsd.org) and let's get started!



Alumni are welcome and encouraged to attend!

College Planning & Counseling Center

From the nervously excited seniors busily working on college applications to the freshmen getting to meet their counselors for the first time, the College Counseling Center has been buzzing with activity this semester! Our relatively new space is a beautiful place to host college visits and many students spend their study hall periods working on homework.

More than 200 college representatives from colleges and universities across both the country and the world have visited to meet Peak to Peak students. This year marked the 9th annual Peak to Peak College Day on October 3rd. That day, over 120 colleges and universities presented school specific classroom presentations, panels, and college topic workshops for students and parents. The parents had a full day of programming where college representatives provided insight on the admission processes at highly selective colleges, key questions to ask a student as they embark on the college journey, how to best prepare to visit a college, and more. Students gained insight on admission interviews, honors programs at large universities, the athletic recruitment process at all levels, Greek life, and more. This year a new FAFSA

completion workshop was added where we had admission and financial aid professionals on hand to help our seniors and families actually do their FAFSAs. It was impressive to see many students submit their FAFSA on October 3!

Quick facts about the class of 2018:

- 100% were accepted into a college of their choice.
- 96% attended a 4 year college.
- As a whole, the class received \$23,546,765 in scholarship offers.
- 38% of the class attended colleges in Colorado.
- Graduates attended college in 34 states and 3 foreign countries.

Alumni Updates

Class of 2009

Megan (Ward) Hensen

Graduations: Colorado State University, Human Development and Family Studies with a focus in Early Childhood Education, minor in Spanish, 2013
Current Job: 4th Grade Teacher at Peak to Peak
Marriage: Scott Hensen, July 2, 2016

Class of 2010

Justin Benitez

Current Job: Nuclear Reactor Operator for the U.S. Navy

Class of 2011

Eric Benitez

Graduations: Villanova University, major in Management Information Systems, minor in Finance Business, 2015
Current Job: Analytics App Development Specialist at Cigna

Heidi Mundhenke

Current City: Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Graduations: Colorado State University, BS in Health and Exercise Science, May 2015; Colorado State University, BS in Food Science and Human Nutrition, May 2015; Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, MS in Human Factors and Systems, May 2017
Current Job: Human Factors Advisor at Tactix-Human Systems Group

Class of 2013

Lia Hankla

Current City: Heidelberg, Germany
Graduations: Princeton University, AB in Physics, June 2017
Current Job: Fulbright scholar, conducting research in black hole accretion physics, returning to Colorado in the fall to start a PhD in physics at CU Boulder

Pieter Mundhenke

Current City: Erie, CO
Current Job: Machinist at Encision

Class of 2014

Blake Logan

Graduations: Lindenwood University, BA in Business Administration, minor in Marketing with Honors, May 2018

Andrew Peterson

Current City: Fort Collins, Colorado
Graduations: Colorado State University, Criminology, minor in Environmental Sustainability, May 13, 2018

Derek Wengryn

Current City: Denver, CO
Graduations: University of Colorado Denver, Biology, May 12, 2018. Attending the University of Colorado School of Medicine in the fall.

Class of 2016

Fiona Freeman-Grundeil

Current City: Singapore, attending Yale-NUS College

Ilse Maria Meiler

Current City: Northampton, MA attending Smith College
Current Job: National Science Foundation Center for Chemical Innovation on Chemistry at the Space Time Limit (NSF CCI CaSTL) as a Summer Diversity Fellowship Intern at the University of Utah for the Summer of 2018



Left: Picture with the puma have become a first day of school tradition.

Below: The team of specials teachers at the elementary level show their unity.



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