

Benchmark

THE MAGAZINE OF BENCHMARK SCHOOL | FALL 2021



Building Connections in Remote Times

2020–2021 Report of Gifts



Mrs. Fox led our youngest students in an outdoor art class, sketching our school buildings using simple lines. This class took place in May during Spirit Week for Mini-THON. On this day, students were invited to wear gold and yellow clothing for pediatric cancer awareness. Our 2021 Mini-THON fund drive raised \$10,751.74 to support the work of Four Diamonds.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Benjamin B. Rogers '95, Chair
Mark J. Thorburn, Vice Chair
Charles J. Bramley, Treasurer
Wendi Chase, Secretary
Dan Berger
Michelle Bogosian
Amanda Bruno
W. Gregory Coleman
Betsy Cunicelli, Ph.D.
Nicholas Kemp, Jr.
Leroy Nunery II, Ed.D.
Anne Rice-Burgess
Andrew B. Rogers '93
Charles E. Ryan
Michele Todd
James Viner
Sarah Willie-LeBreton

- Irene W. Gaskins, Ed.D., Founder & Trustee Emerita
Howard R. Marcus, Ph.D., Trustee Emeritus
Kristin Yerger, BPA Representative
Louisa Hanshew, Ex-Officio
Chris Hancock, Head of School

.....

Editor

Alyce Callison, Director of Marketing
& Communications

Design

Megan Craven

Contributors

- Alyce Callison
Rosanne Crowe
Kim Graham
Lilly Hornickle
Eric MacDonald
Emma Mattesky
Jesse North
Joyce Ostertag
Theresa Scott
Alex Templeton

ON THE COVER



Working in the Innovation Lab with our Director of Innovation Emma Mattesky, our art teacher Joan Fox invited students to look at the word "spring" as an action as well as a season and to design a structure that represented both. Kit Rorer shows her art in progress. (Photo credit: Emma Mattesky)

BENCHMARK SCHOOL

2107 N. Providence Rd., Media, PA 19063
610-565-3741 • benchmarkschool.org

Benchmark School is accredited by Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools, which is a member in good standing of the National Association of Independent Schools' Commission on Accreditation.

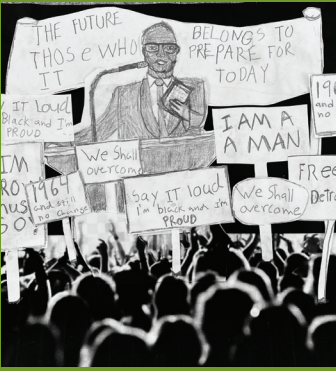
Benchmark School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, gender and sexuality diversity, age, or against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability, in its admissions and financial program, in the administration of its educational program, or in its employment policies.

Benchmark School is a tax-exempt organization as provided by IRS regulations and is registered as a charitable organization within the State of Pennsylvania. The official registration and financial information for Benchmark School may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

CONTENTS



Building Connections 12



DEI At BMK 15



Portfolio Project 19



Class of 2021 23

Message from the Head of School.....3
Meet Our New Trustees.....4
Campus News.....7
Apart, But Not Separate.....12
DEI at Benchmark.....15
8th Grade Portfolio Project.....19
Class of 2021.....23
Alumni Profile: Devon Cosgrove '10.....28
Alumni Update: Lilly Hornickle '20.....30
Class Notes.....31
2020-2021 Report of Gifts.....35

A MESSAGE FROM THE **HEAD OF SCHOOL**

FINDING **BRIGHT SPOTS**

Gratitude in the Face of Change

By Chris Hancock



Every school day over the past year, I've watched as our students dutifully wore their masks, lined up with sufficient space between each other, and made very close acquaintances with the bottles of hand sanitizer. Students expressed nervousness and fear about COVID-19: how it might affect them, what they should do to keep safe, and worries about loved ones getting sick. These are concerns we all shared, adults and students alike. There's no doubt it was a rough year. It's hard to put into words the hardship and loss that some people have endured.

However, there have been unexpected bright spots. Students invented creative games and new ways to play in the outdoor areas designated to their cohorts. Teachers found ways to flip lessons to digital platforms and embrace students working remotely and in-person. Classroom cohorts developed tight bonds, and as Adam Lemisch shares in "Apart, But Not Separate" in this issue, students became more like siblings than classmates. We asked students to embrace new tech, sit behind plexiglass, and rethink how they can be most

productive, and they rose beautifully to the occasion. As teacher Theresa Scott commented early in the year, students were "pushed out of the nest." Not surprisingly, the students flew.

So, this is a message of gratitude. The year demanded flexibility and sacrifice and good cheer from students, faculty, and families. Everyone in our Benchmark community met that challenge. I'm not saying it was easy. The very nature of a challenge means that we're called upon to exert ourselves, and that exertion can be exhausting and difficult. Still, with the dual goals of staying safe and engaging students in a full year of Benchmark education, we succeeded. This was no small achievement, and I am grateful to every member of our community.

This is also a message of hope and excitement for the future. In the midst of the turbulence of the COVID year, we initiated a strategic planning process and the school's first-ever facility master planning process, whose work will come to fruition

in this upcoming year. With this work, I am eager to watch Benchmark moving confidently forward in the next 50 years, elevating what we do well and building our strengths in our desired areas of growth.

Finally, while COVID derailed our plans to host our 50th Anniversary events in-person, I hope you will join us this upcoming year as we gather in-person for our "50+1" events. Please mark your calendars for the pinnacle of these celebrations—our 50th Anniversary Gala on Saturday, May 14, 2021. All are invited and it will surely be the talk of the town. We have much to celebrate! 



MEET OUR NEW TRUSTEES

Six New Faces on the Board

Benchmark School is pleased to have recently welcomed six outstanding new members to our Board of Trustees. Each member brings a wealth of insights and professional and personal skills to the Board, further ensuring that Benchmark's governance is in the best possible hands.

Get to know our new trustees.



Dan Berger, a Benchmark School alumnus (Class of 1993), grew up in property management and is happy to have found his home, and second family, at Berger Rental Communities. After earning his JD and MBA degrees from Temple University and being licensed to practice law in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Dan returned to his real estate and property management roots because of his love of working with people.

As President of Berger Rental Communities, Dan focuses on championing the company culture, building relationships, acquiring and developing multifamily properties, securing financing, and setting the company's strategic vision. Dan has grown Berger Rental Communities to a top 5 largest multi-family management company in Pennsylvania.

Dan makes a priority of being involved in the industry. He is currently an active member of the YPO (Young Presidents' Organization) Philadelphia Chapter, the President of the Pennsylvania Apartment Association, serves on the Executive Committee of the Jewish Federation of Real Estate, is a member of the Jewish Federation of Philadelphia Board of Trustees, and is a member of the Benchmark Board of Trustees. In addition, Dan has founded and is President of Hope & Door, a non-profit charity dedicated to providing

support to families facing homelessness due to an unexpected financial emergency.

While not at the office or a property, Dan is with his wife, Ashly, and their two children, Isabella and Hudson. (Hudson is a current Benchmark student.) He also enjoys long-distance running, Philadelphia sports teams, and spending summer weekends at the Jersey shore.

Michelle Bogosian grew up in Villanova and attended Villanova University, studying English and Business. After graduating she relocated to Chicago and worked in the teleconferencing industry. In 1998, Michelle returned to Villanova to assume a leadership role in her family's business, The Camera Shop, founded in 1920 by her grandfather.

During Michelle's tenure at The Camera Shop, she has overseen operations through the retail photo industry's most turbulent era. Michelle's methods and success in rebranding, transitioning to digital, and managing e-commerce have been recognized by imaging industry leaders such as the Photo Marketing Association, PRO, Photofinale and Hewlett-Packard. Her approach has been emulated by other independent retailers worldwide.

Michelle has spent many years volunteering locally, having served as Director of the Bryn Mawr Business Association and as Director of "Bryn Mawr Day," a free annual community event, during which time she grew the attendance from a couple of hundred to more than 5,000. Michelle has served on committees with the Philadelphia Zoo, the Philadelphia Horticultural Society, and the Philadelphia Orchestra.



BOARD UPDATE

(Continued)

While her daughter Emma Heckmann '19 was a student at Benchmark, Michelle was very active with the Benchmark Parents' Association, helping with numerous events including the Parent Social, the annual play, and Grandparents' Day.

Michelle's number one hobby is driving and flying Emma (who currently attends The Shipley School) around the country for fencing training and competitions. If she has spare time, Michelle enjoys cooking, hiking, flatwater kayaking, or walking with her three dogs and fiancé, Greg.

Michelle serves on the Development Committee of the Benchmark School Board of Trustees.



Anne Rice-Burgess is the President and CEO of Methodist Home for Children and Services. Anne has developed a career devoted to helping children and families as they face the challenges of limited resources, increased poverty, homelessness, disabilities and deficits in education.

Anne is a product of Philadelphia Quaker school education, a

graduate of Georgetown University with a BS in Psychology and an MS in Counseling Psychology and Marriage and Family Therapy from Chestnut Hill College. She obtained professional certification as a Human Resources professional at Villanova University and a certificate in Executive Leadership from Bryn Mawr College.

Anne began her career with Methodist Services 22 years ago. Of the work that Anne holds most dear will always be the many families whom she helped become whole through adoption leading to a 2015 Kathy Taylor Award for Mission and Community Service, the housing programs for homeless women and families she helped to create, and the organic urban farm for which she won the 2016 Social Innovations Journal Award. In all, the individuals touched in her career are in the thousands and Anne was recognized by a Strong Families Commission – Supporters of Change Award in 2017.

Anne's professional philosophy is that no matter a person's circumstances, they deserve the best, and once that person has had the opportunity to experience something better than what they've known, they will work hard to keep it. Most people need support and those that are underprivileged should be given a helping hand, without hesitation.

Anne is the parent of a 2018 Benchmark graduate, Krista, who currently attends Friends Select School.

Anne serves on the Facilities Committee of the Benchmark School Board of Trustees.

Amanda Bruno is the Global Chief Business Development Officer at Morgan Lewis. She earned a BS at Syracuse University and her JD from Villanova University School of Law.



Amanda joined Morgan Lewis in 2004 as an associate in the firm's litigation practice group before moving into client service and business development

roles. As Morgan Lewis's chief business development officer, Amanda Bruno leads the firm's global business development function, enabling stakeholders to drive growth while at the same time championing the voice of the client. In this role, Amanda is responsible for working with the firm's Chair and its senior leadership team to develop and execute on business development priorities aligned with the firm's objectives, including client-focused aspects of the firm's practice, industry, and regional strategies. Amanda serves on the firm's Diversity Committee and is an essential component of ML Women.

Amanda continues to practice law pro bono by representing abused and neglected children, and she is active in various local and national organizations.

Amanda's daughter Rachel currently attends Benchmark.



Michele Todd grew up in Havertown and graduated from The Pennsylvania State University, where she was VP of The Penn State Marketing Association and earned a BS in Accounting. She interned with Coopers and Lybrand, LLP during her senior year at Penn State and went on to work full-time as an auditor with Coopers and Lybrand after graduation.

While working at Coopers and Lybrand, Michele earned her Certified Public Accountant designation. Michele left Coopers and worked at Comcast Metrophone and at Pet Valu International, Inc.

Michele moved to Paris, France with her husband Michael, where she worked for Pricewaterhouse Coopers, LLC. After her son Michael Jr. was born she returned to the Philadelphia area. Michele rejoined Pet Valu International, Inc. as an Accounting Analyst before moving to The Haverford School as Controller in August 2002. As human resource requirements for schools continued to change, Michele filled a need and became the Director of Human Resources at The Haverford School in September 2010. She currently serves as a Trustee of the PAISBOA Health Benefit Trust, Chair of the PAISBOA TPA Ad Hoc Committee, and is a member of the PAISBOA Human Resource Steering Committee.

Michele's son, Michael Jr., graduated from The Haverford School in 2019 and currently attends the University of Richmond. Her daughter Madeline attends The Shipley School in Bryn Mawr. Michele likes to spend her time at the beach in the summers, and enjoys movies, travel, tennis, and general fitness/wellness.

Sarah Willie-LeBreton is the Provost and Dean of the Faculty and Professor of Sociology at Swarthmore College. She earned a BA from Haverford College, and an MA and PhD from Northwestern University, all in sociology.

Sarah began her tenure track teaching career at Colby College in Maine and Bard College in New York state, moving to Swarthmore College in 1997 where she assumed the coordination of the Black Studies Program and was awarded tenure in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology. Before becoming Provost, Sarah served the College as a department chair, interdisciplinary studies coordinator, Task Force on Sexual Misconduct chair, and Associate Provost.

She has been active in the Eastern Sociological Society, Sociologists for Women in Society, the Association of Black Sociologists, and the American Sociological Association. In addition to Benchmark School, Sarah's Board service has included the Executive Office and Budget of the ASA, Pendle Hill Quaker Center, Haverford College, and the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D.C.

Interested in social inequality, higher education, social theory, and African American culture, Sarah considers herself an applied sociologist, and works with a broad range of groups and organizations to understand social dynamics and to develop strategies to move toward organizational self-awareness, transformation, compassion, and inclusivity.

Sarah's son, Jeremy LeBreton, graduated from Benchmark in 2019.

Sarah serves on the Governance and Marketing & Admissions Committees of the Benchmark School Board of Trustees.



*Top row, L to R: Ben Rogers, Andrew Rogers, Greg Coleman, Nick Kemp, Wendi Chase, Chris Hancock, Charles Bramley, Jim Viner
Bottom row, L to R: Sarah Willie-LeBreton, Betsy Cunicelli, Kristin Yerger, Mark Thorburn, Michelle Bogosian
Not pictured: Dan Berger, Amanda Bruno, Leroy Nunery II, Anne Rice-Burgess, Charles Ryan, Michele Todd*

THE LATEST

From 2107 North Providence Road

Benchmark Presents Coming Out of COVID

In spring of 2021, we launched a virtual events series for the public called Benchmark Presents. The events in this series are designed particularly with parents and professionals in mind, and will take place several times per year.

Our first event of the Benchmark Presents series, called "Coming Out of COVID: What Parents Need to Know About Supporting Kids Emerging from the Pandemic School Year," took place via Zoom webinar on May 27, 2021. We hosted a panel of experts who spoke about how to support kids socially, emotionally, and academically this summer and into the next school year.

Head of School Chris Hancock moderated, and our distinguished

panelists were psychologist Dr. Amber West Buller '84, pediatrician Dr. Lily Higgins, clinical social worker Tom Hurster, and ADVIS President Barbara Kraus-Blackney. The panelists shared advice on how to help kids socialize again, how to support kids with anxiety, what to do about screen time, how kids should best spend their summer, what to look out for with COVID and vaccine effects, and much more. The recording of the event is on our Benchmark YouTube channel.



LIFERS LUNCH

A New Tradition

On Wednesday, June 2, 2021, Mr. Hancock and Dr. Gensemer hosted our graduating Benchmark School "lifers" to a "Lifers Lunch." These students have been at Benchmark since they were in first grade! The "Lifers Lunch" is a new tradition that Mr. Hancock is bringing to Benchmark.

At right, from L to R: Mr. Chris Hancock, Henry Jones, Charlie Noble, Will Viner, Reese Dyson, Judy Horn, Gabby Scirrotto, Brian Schwartzman, and Dr. Eleanor Gensemer.



HOSTING MOLLY GROSS

Holocaust Survivor



On March 12, 2021, Benchmark's middle school was proud to host guest speaker Molly Gross. Molly Gross is a Holocaust survivor who was separated from her parents at the age of 14 in 1942. She was sent, along with her older sister, from Bedzin, Poland to a Nazi labor camp in Germany.

The two sisters were able to survive and remain together until being liberated by Russian troops in 1945. Molly eventually met and married Leon Gross, also a Holocaust survivor. Together they raised a family and overcame the horrors of the past and the nightmares that haunted them. Leon has since passed, but not before he worked to share his story with his family, inspiring Molly to continue sharing her story. Today, Molly speaks as often as she can with her daughter, and their united mission is to help present and future generations to know the past, remember the past, and learn lessons from the past, so that such atrocities may never happen again.

The middle school teachers strove to help their students connect what they heard from Molly with what they learned that year in school. The sixth grade worked all year on a memoir unit, exploring the reasons why we as humans need to share and hear our stories. The seventh grade read the novel *Refugee* which focuses on the story of a Jewish refugee fleeing Nazi Germany and exposes them to the pain children experience when their families are torn apart by war. The eighth grade explored issues of identity, race, and prejudice through a variety of texts. Students learned that our experiences, as well as our responses to those experiences, help define who we become.

We are thankful for the parent connection that put us in touch with Molly Gross, and to middle school students, faculty, staff, and parents who were able to join our webinar event.

TRANSFORMING FUTURES FOR 50 YEARS

Benchmark History Via Video

COVID-19 curtailed our plans to gather and celebrate our 50th Anniversary in person during the 2020-2021 school year, so we turned to the medium of video. Through video, we explored and shared our past from the time of our founding to the present day.

We created five videos over the course of the year—one for each decade of Benchmark's history. Look them up on our YouTube channel.



APPRECIATION ALL AROUND

By Kristin Yerger, BPA President

In the fall of 2021, our challenge was to come together as a community, reprioritize and evaluate our everyday choices for the impact they would have on the learning of all of our children, and do hard things. Together with the faculty, staff, and support of the Board of Trustees we have ensured that our children attended school in-person for 161 days.

We welcomed over 30 new families into our community. We held many virtual events including a New Student Scavenger Hunt, Trivia Night, BINGO Night (twice!), Teacher Read-Aloud, Pumpkin Carving Contest, Gingerbread House Contest as well as two Virtual Parent Socials.

On Fridays in the fall and spring, we came together at Ridley Creek State Park for a Back-to-School Coffee and Gently Used Uniform Sale, Coffee and Conversation, Walk and Talks, Yoga, Pilates, and Book Talks and we celebrated the end of the year with a Mimosa Toast.

We welcomed our faculty back to campus with student-made posters lining the driveway and special treats each month including Bundt cakes, pies, cupcakes, pretzels, and ice cream. We included each faculty member in our holiday fund. During Teacher Appreciation Week, we treated the faculty to donuts, cupcakes, lunch from Mission BBQ, ice cream from Scoops and Smiles Ice Cream truck and a take-home dinner from our very own Chef Nick. Lastly, we and the Board of Trustees co-sponsored the year-end faculty party.

While the year came with some challenges and obstacles, together we were stronger and we did great things!



BENCHMARK MAGAZINE

Now Annual

Benchmark Magazine will be moving from a twice-per-year format to yearly. Now, you can look forward to receiving your annual copy of the magazine every fall.

WELCOME, ROBOTS

New Robotics Club in the Middle School

This fall, we're welcoming robots to Benchmark School in a whole new way. Robotics has been a popular part of our Innovation program for years, and now we're adding a collaborative and competitive edge. Thanks to a grant from the Steven and Ilene Berger Family Foundation, Benchmark is launching a VEX IQ Robotics Club in the middle school.

The VEX IQ Robotics Club and Challenge is a nationally recognized organization that fosters student development of teamwork, critical thinking, project management, and communication skills required to prepare them to become the next generation of innovators and problem solvers. Our initiation of a VEX IQ Robotics Club will allow us to expand our robotics program to a larger group of students and finally to competitions. Critically, the VEX IQ Robotics Club will help students enhance their knowledge on their own through STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) discovery and creative problem-solving.

Rosanne Crowe, the Head of our Math Department, explains, "The process of building a robot gives students opportunities to explore many different learning pathways. Through exploration, application, and the creation process, students discover their passions and strengths, such as spatial reasoning, logical approach, love of tinkering, and problem solving."

Emma Mattesky, our Director of Innovation, further adds, "Schools tend to separate the disciplines into discrete entities. Robotics turns this notion completely on its head. I hope the expansion of robotics into the middle school will ignite creativity, innovation, and tinkering in all classrooms and push against our conventional wisdom of what learning is and can be."

The VEX program will not only create opportunities for students who choose to participate in the after school club; it will serve as the catalyst for curriculum alignment within and across the innovation, math, and science departments, and all Benchmark students will benefit.



PETITIONING FOR A CHANGE (OF CLOTHING)

Students Turn Classroom Learning Into Action

By Theresa Scott and Alyce Callison

During social studies lessons in Mrs. Rahm's and Mrs. Madison's class, Ashton Muehl learned about the U.S. Constitution. Inspired by the right to petition, she realized that she could use the Bill of Rights to change an issue important to her: the Benchmark School dress code. After writing a persuasive letter in class, she drafted a petition to ask Benchmark to abandon the uniform dress code, and enlisted the support and signatures of 60 students.



Petitioners bring their case to Mr. Hancock.

Mr. Hancock read the petition and met with Ashton and fellow organizers, Angelina Georgiou and Madaline Yerger. The student activists were articulate and passionate when they met with Mr. Hancock and Dr. Lemisch, Head of Child and Family Support Services. They made their case and fielded Mr. Hancock's questions. Mr. Hancock promised to take the issue up with the Leadership Team.

Following a meeting of the Leadership Team, Mr. Hancock shared that Benchmark will now have a standing dress down day on the first Friday of every month, saying, "Enjoy and please congratulate those young ladies when you see them. Our own US politicians could learn a thing or two from them about patience and good listening."

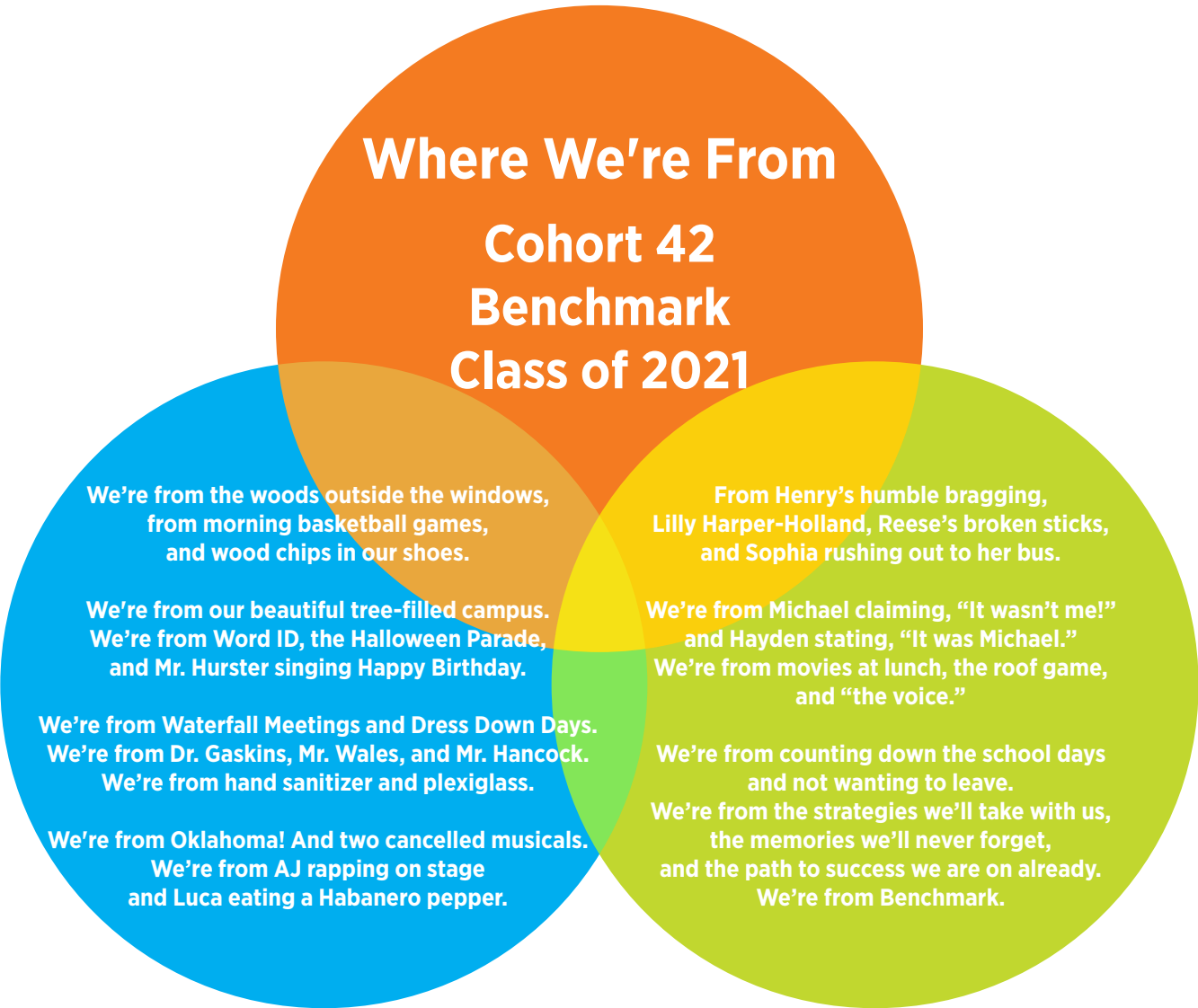
COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

8th Graders Reflect

By Jesse North

A major theme of our 8th grade English class is identity and using literature to learn more about ourselves, each other, and the world around us. A big part of one’s identity is one’s background. Students studied the original “Where I’m From” poem by George Ella Lyon and wrote their own individual versions.

As the 8th graders prepared to graduate and move on from Benchmark, we decided to write a collective poem of shared memories as a way for the Cohort 42 students to reflect on their time at Benchmark.



APART, BUT NOT SEPARATE

Building Connections and Support in the Remote Times

By Alyce Callison, Rosanne Crowe, and Emma Mattesky

Benchmark School prides itself on its close-knit, supportive environment. Connections among students, teachers, other classes, and the staff are the lifeblood of our community, and when COVID restrictions created the need for cohorted classes, distancing, and remote learning, we knew we'd have to get creative and intentional to keep our students feeling secure, supported, and connected.

In the 2020-21 school year, teachers and staff devised new ways to support students with care and intention.

Stewards of Well-Being

Dr. Adam Lemisch, Head of the Child and Family Support Services Team, explains some of the changes his team made at the outset of the year to look after the mental well-being of all of our students, providing a space to address COVID-related anxiety as well as general wellness. "In previous years we had class meetings through 6th grade. This year, we added the 'Wellness Forum' for 7th and 8th grades. We'd have feelings check-ins every week, asking students things like, 'What have been some high points this week?' and 'What's filling your bucket?' We always offered a chance to talk and ask questions about COVID or anything else." Jenelle Tomov, a counselor on the team, says, "Initially, there were many questions from middle schoolers about COVID, masking, and vaccines. Those questions eventually petered out. Lower schoolers would ask questions relating to their worries about COVID." Adam says, "This year, we checked in with every student in the school every week."

Formerly, when Adam's team would gather to try to determine what topics they would focus on in class meetings for that year, it was often a struggle to settle on which ones to prioritize. This past year, the demands of COVID helped to clarify some of the more important topics for discussion: self-care, building a growth mindset, and gratitude.

Classroom teachers have also been stewards of student well-being, making sure that their classrooms are safe and supportive spaces. Fourth grade teacher Melinda Rahm says, "My students loved school this year. They had worries about COVID, but school seemed to be a safe place for them." This feeling of safety is not an accident; Melinda prioritizes

building community and consistency. She says, "Every year, we build community using the Responsive Classroom approach, which is a set of research- and evidence-based practices designed to create safe, joyful, and engaging classrooms. Mrs. Madison and I offer student choice in activities and provide many opportunities for students to make personal connections."

Fifth grade teacher Theresa Scott adds, "Of course, building community is important in any year, but with the start of our COVID school year, we knew that a sense of belonging and community was what had been missing for children for nearly six months. For some of our students, they had only interacted with members of their own families and a safe friend or two. They had experienced a lot of isolation and a decrease in the activities that had typically sustained them. Teachers spent a lot of the summer thinking and designing lots of new ways not only to present material but to build friendships and community. New apps and games and ways of relating were designed to help students feel that while they were 6 feet apart, they were still connected in terms of their classmates and the larger school. Somehow, despite the masks and the limitations, children seemed to love coming to school and seeing each other, commenting that the year flew by."



FEATURE

Adam and Jenelle have also been pleasantly surprised to see the incredibly strong bonds among students this year. Adam says, “The silver lining of the cohorts is that there’s less drama. Classes are tighter; they’re more tolerant of each other, more like brothers and sisters. Jenelle echoes, “The social dynamic struggles were less this year. There was more contentment. They learned a lot about each other and they were focusing on each other. There was a strong sense of belonging and tightness in classes. They genuinely care about each other.”

Despite cohort restrictions, teachers and staff also found ways for students to build connections with other classes (safely) and with the wider community (virtually). In many cases, the students themselves came up with great ideas for building connections.

Transforming Connections

Theresa’s 5th grade class had a “buddy” class in Zeffie Spirokostas’s 2nd grade cohort. Even though the students couldn’t spend time in each other’s classrooms, they found lots of ways to connect. They sent each other Flipgrid videos. They arranged outdoor scavenger hunts. They read each



other stories via video. When Theresa’s students conducted research on animals, they decided that rather than solely present the information on a poster board, they wanted to create a book in the Book Creator app to share with their buddies. So the younger children could access texts on animals such as kiwi birds and Komodo dragons, the older students recorded each page of their books, resulting in an authentic application of fluency work and delighted buddies!

Melinda’s 4th grade class partners with Karen Berry’s neighboring classroom of 1st and 2nd graders. This year, her students decided to cut heart shapes from card stock so the younger students in Karen’s class could have a tracer for Valentine’s cards they might

want to make for their friends and family.

Joan Fox reflected on her school year as our mobile art teacher, bringing “Art on a Cart” into the cohort classrooms across the school. In her unique experience teaching this year, she was able to gain a unique vision on what schooling looks like at Benchmark. Joan says, “The ability for us as a community to pivot has been really amazing. It gave us permission to break some cycles, like looking at time and

Learning from Home: Remote Coaches Step Up

At an institutional level, the COVID year called on us to explore new approaches to learning, which led to our remote coaching model. As an innovative solution to supporting students and families at home, some of the Benchmark teaching staff transitioned to becoming what we called remote coaches. As students used Zoom to tap into their classroom instruction, our remote coaches were right by their side, creating breakout rooms for additional support and following along to the classroom instruction while providing movement breaks and weaving in student interests and setting goals.

Ruth Kelemen, one of our remote coach rock stars, reflects on her experience: “This was a total team effort with office staff, supervisors, nurses, leadership team, IT, teachers, parents, and students. We all played a part to make this a success. Even though we were not in the building, the whole Benchmark community worked together to support our students.”

space differently.” When the sun came out, all of the art and music classes moved to our playground, transforming the recreation space into outdoor classrooms. Joan explains, “The use of outside space is something we have all done better this year. In the past, outside represented playtime. Now, it is a space for learning. I watched teachers take their students out for meditative walks, and the creative fort building has been amazing.”

New Ways to Play

Fort building? Yes, this particular activity was another unanticipated community-building activity. As snow was falling on the ground of Benchmark’s wooded area, Julie Mattaliano’s 5th grade class was building their own village of gigantic forts. “It all started,” Julie says, “when the students believed they found an abandoned fort.” As it turned out, it was in fact a fort that our 8th grade classes built the year prior. From there, Julie’s class began to build the village. They created huge homes with gardens outside of them. They strategically gathered sticks, and certain pieces used for various construction needs like a door or a table for dinner. “Even though we were bundled up for the winter, the whole class became a community through this experience.”

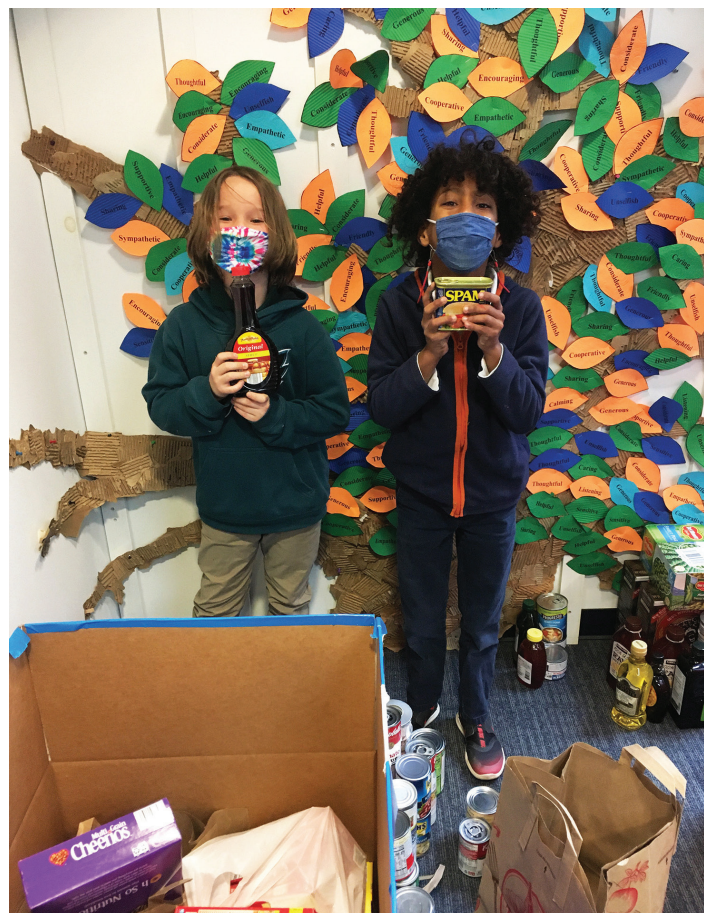
Thinking and Acting Beyond Benchmark

In April, Theresa and Melinda’s cohorts participated in Elementary Student Diversity Day, which was a project of the Greater Philadelphia Diversity Collaborative. At this Zoom-based event, their students took part in a collective meeting of 3rd-6th grade classes from local small independent schools to learn about diversity, equity, fairness, anti-racism, inclusion, and social justice.

Theresa noted that what was particularly great about this event was that her students “saw that this is what people do, that students and citizens think and talk about issues of inclusiveness and ways to address injustice. It’s really important for children to see that we are part of a larger community, one that shares values.” Also, she highlights the importance of involving voices beyond our Benchmark community. Theresa explains, “I think it was powerful for Benchmark students to hear same-aged peers be so comfortably conversant in discussing difficult issues. This was not their teachers talking about systemic racism, but 5th graders from The School at Rose Valley or West Chester Friends. The other children in the virtual Diversity Day powerfully modelled for our own students how to be upstanders and allies.”

Melinda says, “My students were so excited to be with other students. They saw and heard each other, but didn’t have

enough time to build connections. We’re looking forward to next year, when we will perhaps recognize some of the same students. I appreciated having a space for my class to interact with a diverse group of students about social justice issues.”



Through the House Community system that the Child and Family Support Services team leads, we found additional ways to engage with the wider community while also developing good self-care, with an intentional focus on gratitude. Adam says, “When you can think about what you’re grateful for and can think about things in a positive light, it helps you. In the lower school we created a gratitude wall, where students would post notes sharing what they are grateful for. In the middle school, we had a digital gratitude wall. It was great to see students reflecting on what matters to them. We also wrote “notes of care” to seniors in a local retirement community. Each middle school student and fourth and fifth graders wrote their own letter and younger students wrote as a class. We also collected hundreds of food items for the Media Food Bank. We’d like to continue these expressions of gratitude in the future.” 🌱

DEI AT BENCHMARK

A Journey of Identity and Awareness

By Joyce Ostertag and Alex Templeton

The Journey Begins: Learning Beyond Labels

Fifty years ago, a remarkable journey started. A woman named Irene Gaskins, who cared deeply for a marginalized group of young people, began a school for children who learned differently. She did not accept the labels they'd been given. She believed they could be anyone they wanted to be in life and could do anything they wanted to do. The belief in "learning beyond labels" has infused the culture of the school and made diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work a natural extension of Benchmark's mission. When Benchmark began to think about what learning in the 21st century would look like under changing leadership, it became clear that diversity, equity, and inclusion work should be a part of that undertaking.

Wisely, the Benchmark leadership recognized that teachers' own hearts and minds were the place to begin the work—teachers cannot teach what they cannot comprehend or believe in themselves. Racial literacy experts Dr. Howard Stevenson and Dr. Ali Michael from the University of Pennsylvania were invited to Benchmark for a series of professional development days to help teachers grapple with the realities of race in America. Drs. Stevenson and Michael unpacked the concepts such as white privilege, systemic racism, and the unconscious biases that well-meaning white people hold and use to interpret their world. Staff members responded with open and honest discussion about their own learning experiences and backgrounds. Following this successful start, staff development has been ongoing, including conferences, professional reading, and professional development sessions.

Student Engagement Across the Curriculum

As teachers' own worldviews evolved, they inevitably shifted to thinking about incorporating a DEI perspective into the curriculum. Teachers began by identifying books in the Benchmark library and curriculum collection that represented diverse perspectives. Teachers read and shared their impressions through "book talks" with other teachers. Many of these books found their way into the classroom to be shared with students. Leslie Komarnicki, the school librarian, actively searched out and purchased new books featuring underrepresented characters. Science and math teachers were particularly excited to share engaging biographies of

scientists and mathematicians such as Neil DeGrasse Tyson and Katherine Johnson as part of their STEM curriculum.

Fifth grade teacher Theresa Scott took this book project a step further so that her students would not only be exposed to new perspectives, but have a strategy for immersing themselves in the perspective. She taught students the concept of an "internal monologue" as a response to reading. Students read books with diverse characters, then entered into the thinking of those characters to write about the events of a chapter or novel as if from the point of view of that character. The students also applied their empathetic skills in writing internal monologues to historical figures, activists, and groundbreakers, such as Dolores Huerta, Maria Tallchief, Mae Jemison, and Harvey Milk. Although some students struggled at first to move outside their perspective, it quickly became second nature for them. One day, before Theresa could even begin the discussion of a chapter in Rita Williams-Garcia's *One Crazy Summer*, a student said, "Oh, that chapter made me so angry for the sisters. Did you see how those white people asked to take photos of the little black girls just because they were dressed nice, as if they weren't expected to look nice? That probably felt so racist to the girls!" It became a teaching moment for Theresa to talk about the impact of microaggressions on people of color. Art teacher Joan Fox also got into the action, teaching the students about protest art and inviting the students to create their own based on the person of their choosing.



Intersecting art and social studies, fifth grade students learned about the history of protest art and created their own.

Encouraged by these initial successes, fourth grade teachers Melinda Rahm, Sue Arabia, Sandy Madison, and Lauren Frantz co-developed a language arts and social studies unit that tied together the novel *Finding Langston* with a study of the Great Migration. The era came alive with a study of the poetry of Langston Hughes, the artwork of Jacob Lawrence (taught by art teacher Joan Fox), and the jazz greats of the era (taught by music teacher Laurie Veacock). Technology instruction even came into play—students used their newly learned tech skills to create “word art” of some of the poems of Langston Hughes. A proud Benchmark mom reported that her son excitedly realized that a commercial during a Sixers game was based on the poem “Dreams” by Langston Hughes and educated the whole family on the works of this Harlem Renaissance poet.

Fifth grade teachers were also inspired to make a shift in their social studies curriculum to a year-long study of global issues. After developing some background on countries in the continents of South America, Asia, and Africa, students considered events from Pizarro’s subjugation of the Incas to South Africa’s dismantling of apartheid, to Africa’s shortage of clean water. To avoid the thinking trap of “white saviorism,” the harmful message that people of other cultures need to be rescued by a more advanced and wealthy white society, students studied many “heroes who care” such as Wangari Maatai, whose Greenbelt movement to replant trees in her home country of Kenya solved not only deforestation issues, but improved the local economy and encouraged women’s empowerment. Teachers have reported high student engagement and a growing interest in and respect for diverse cultures. Students will spontaneously share something they heard on the news that relates to their studies.

Recently, Alex Templeton and Alexis Caporizzo’s seventh grade classes combined the study of the novel *Refugee* by Alan Gratz (which tells alternating and thematically overlapping stories of three different refugees from three different countries and time periods) with an art project that asked students to express their understanding of the “common threads” of the novel. Students used all sorts of mediums to convey understanding of the refugees’ experiences. Finished projects ranged from a painting of a tiny boat underneath a huge, star-filled sky to a brick wall constructed out of cardboard, a lone clay figure peering out of its one window, to three clay figures standing on a cardboard Earth, looking hopefully out at the different directions they will have to take in the future.

At right: Seventh graders used art to represent understandings of refugees’ experiences.

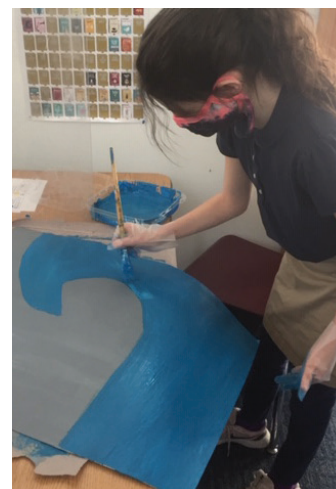
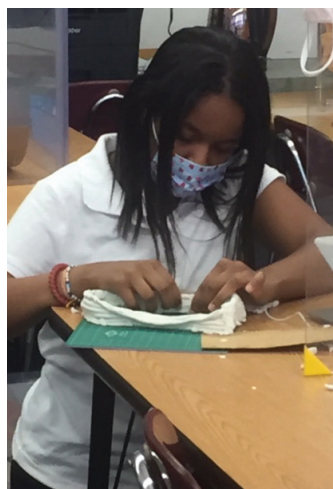
Benchmark also created other “spaces” in the day to address issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Lower school supervisor Joyce Ostertag joined classes during their morning meetings once a week to have informal discussions about race, stereotypes, and prejudices, and how the best response of a majority population to the advantages we have (sometimes called “white privilege”) is not silence or guilt but learning and acting.

How do we know these initiatives are having an impact on our students? Response from students has been overwhelmingly positive. After a recent morning meeting discussion about race, a student stopped Joyce in the hall, saying, “That was really interesting. When are you coming again to talk more about this?” Theresa Scott shared, “After the class watched the Disney short *Purl*, I asked the students what they thought the lesson of the film was. A student replied, ‘Just because you’re, say, Muslim, gay, or Asian American doesn’t mean you should change to be accepted by people who make you feel you don’t fit in.’ What is remarkable is that although the main character was actually a ball of yarn, the students could extrapolate and apply the lesson to any oppressed people.”

Building Our DEI Working Group

As the next logical move, the school’s DEI initiative has been formalized into a standing DEI Working Group composed of teachers, administrators, board members, and parents. After considering the multiple facets of life at Benchmark, the DEI Working Group identified five strategic areas to pursue:

1. Curriculum Development and Delivery
2. Policy and Governance
3. Recruitment, Support and Retention of Faculty and Staff
4. Student Recruitment, Support, and Retention
5. Parent and Constituent Participation



Our Mission and Vision for the Future

One of the key tasks completed by the DEI Working Group in this past year was to create mission and vision statements to act as touchstones for all future work. The Policy and Governance committee drafted a statement that was then commented upon by the entire group, revised, and then adopted. Now, Benchmark's work is to make sure that vision is reflected in all areas of our school.

Most immediately, the curriculum subcommittee of the Working Group is preparing to launch a curriculum assessment beginning in the fall of the 2021-22 school year. We are prioritizing curriculum as an area that directly impacts the experience of our students every day and can be a shared goal of most of the adults in our building. As is evident above, the desire to revamp curriculum already exists. The hope of the committee is that the assessment will provide a structure for the faculty and staff to build upon the work that has already been completed. There are multiple other initiatives also being planned by the DEI Working Group, including increasing the diversity of our staff, taking a closer look at school policy through a DEI lens, and increasing parent and family education and communication around these issues.

Engaging Beyond Our Walls

Our teachers are also reaching beyond Benchmark to network with other educators and multiply our impact. Benchmark has joined the Greater Philadelphia Diversity Collaborative, a consortium of smaller independent schools who have banded together to share resources around diversity. Two lower school classes recently participated in the Collaborative's virtual Diversity Day, zooming with other students from around the Philadelphia area, participating in workshops, and sharing ideas digitally via Padlet. More lower school teachers hope to participate in future Diversity Days.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Benchmark School strives to build a culture that honors the dignity and value of every race, religion, ethnicity, economic means, family structure, physical ability, age, gender, sexual identity, and approach to learning. Individual introspection, open dialogue, and institutional reflection are critical and ongoing elements to building a just, equitable, and inclusive school community.

We embrace and affirm diverse beliefs and backgrounds in our curriculum, professional development, hiring practices, admissions, professional relationships, event programming, and most especially, among the lived relationships of our students. We believe this work is a responsibility held by all and done for all.

Benchmark teachers from across the school have also signed on with an ADVIS-sponsored year-long professional development program with other independent school cohorts. The goal of the program is to guide educators through a process to develop racially inclusive and historically accurate curricula. Cohort members will participate in a collaborative learning community to share ideas, expertise, and resources to generate materials to be used in their classrooms and schools.

DEI work is a journey of energy-sapping climbs and exhilarating mountain top experiences. It is heart-breaking and heart-warming. We feel very privileged to work at a school that believes in the importance of this work for our students, our families, and ultimately our nation and our world, and is willing to commit the time and resources to support the journey. And we feel blessed to work with students who care deeply and are open and eager to embrace new perspectives. 🌱

At left: As part of the Greater Philadelphia Diversity Collaborative, several classes had the opportunity to take part in Diversity Day with other local independent schools.



New Books for Kids that Expand Representation

Counting on Katherine:

How Katherine Johnson Saved Apollo 13

by Helaine Becker

The story of Katherine Johnson, an African-American mathematician who worked for NASA during the space race and was depicted in the film *Hidden Figures*.

Starstruck: The Cosmic Journey of Neil deGrasse Tyson

by Katherine Krull and Paul Brewer

A picture-book biography on science superstar Neil deGrasse Tyson, the groundbreaking American astrophysicist whose work has inspired a generation of young scientists and astronomers to reach for the stars.

The Name Jar

by Choi Yangsook

After Unhei moves from Korea to the United States, her new classmates help her decide what her name should be.

Donovan's Big Day

by Leslea Newman

From the moment Donovan wakes in the morning, he painstakingly prepares for his special role in the wedding ceremony of his two mothers.

Hair Love

by Matthew A. Cherry

A little girl's daddy steps in to help her arrange her curly, coiling, wild hair into styles that allow her to be her natural, beautiful self.

Turning Pages: My Life Story

by Sonia Sotomayor

An autobiographical picture book of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

New Kid

by Jerry Craft

Seventh grader Jordan Banks loves nothing more than drawing cartoons about his life. But instead of sending him to the art school of his dreams, his parents enroll him in a prestigious private school known for its academics, where Jordan is one of the few kids of color in his entire grade. Can Jordan learn to navigate his new school culture while keeping his friends and staying true to himself?

Amazing Grace

by Mary Hoffmann

Although a classmate says that she cannot play Peter Pan in the school play because she is black, Grace discovers that she can do anything she sets her mind to do.

SETTING THE FLIGHTPATH TO SUCCESS

Student Reflection and the 8th Grade Final Portfolio Project

By Eric C. MacDonald, Ed.D.

“If you aim at nothing, you will hit it” is a variation of a quote from Zig Ziglar that I often share with students. This quote addresses a major goal we have for students at Benchmark School, which is that students become goal-directed learners with a deep knowledge of themselves and what it takes for them to be successful, academically and beyond. Not long ago, I heard from the head of another independent school that what he appreciates about Benchmark students is that they “know how to do school.” However, I would suggest Benchmark students go beyond just “knowing how to do school” to knowing how to “do” life. Benchmark students have become known for their deep understanding of themselves as learners and their ability to self-advocate and accomplish their goals. I think it is what sets a Benchmark graduate apart. But how do we help students get there? There are many elements that lead to the success of Benchmark students.

Beginning with Self-Reflection

The most important element that really gets students to develop that deep understanding of themselves is Benchmark’s emphasis on self-reflection. And no pandemic was going to stop this process from happening! Throughout planning for instruction during these challenging times, the one thing that I was not going to change was encouraging students to engage in the deep reflection typical of the 8th grade year. This reflection process begins in students’ earliest experiences at Benchmark. It comes to a climax in a student’s 8th grade experience, culminating in a major project known as the “final portfolio project.”

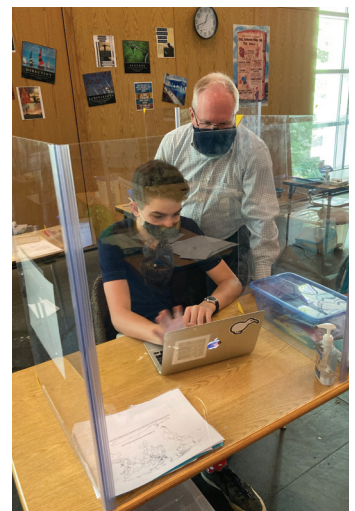
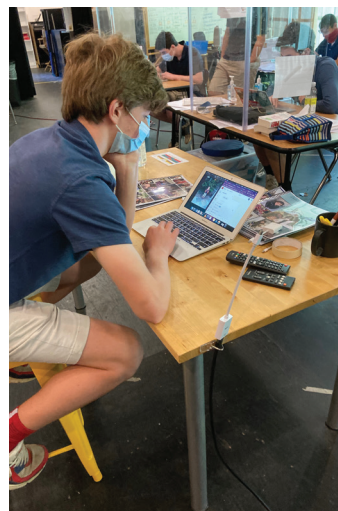
From the moment a student enters Benchmark, teachers are encouraging students to reflect on their learning. Often this begins with helping students reflect on their strengths along with setting goals. In informal and formal ways, teachers are constantly asking students to reflect on their work and what they might do to repeat a success or improve in an area of difficulty. Students are often asked to reflect after an assessment, project, or writing assignment on what worked for them and what they might do differently on a similar assignment in the future.

While Benchmark teachers are adept at gently nudging students to reflect, this can be a difficult process for students

who have struggled with learning in the past. Even as adults, we often find reflecting on ourselves to be a challenging endeavor. I will never forget one September when I was teaching 7th grade, I asked students to complete what I thought was a fairly common reflection activity. After explaining the assignment and allowing students to get to work, I looked up to find one student with his head down on the desk, crying. Even after some time at Benchmark, it was painful for this student to look in the mirror at his academic self. By the time this student ended 8th grade, he was a deeply reflective self-advocate, ready to face the challenges of high school, and is now tackling college.

We sometimes forget the deep struggles our students experience prior to coming to Benchmark. As Peter Bard ‘21 recently shared in his final portfolio’s academic growth essay:

I was in this small classroom during the language arts portion of the class and when I came back I would be asked by the students where I was all day and why I was not in the class, which made me feel uncomfortable. If I saw my friends in the hallway peek in the small classroom that they thought was for special needs kids, I would step out of their line of sight. The teacher that was teaching me was really nice and trying as hard as she could, but it was not what I needed.



Another student, Declan Cannon '21 shared:

A memory I have is feeling self-conscious about my reading level. We had to pick out our books according to our reading level in front of the class. I have a funny memory of picking a book about sharks from my reading level basket, and a kid came up to me and said, "Why are you reading that? It's easy. Are you dumb?" My response was, "No, I like sharks." This made me ponder my self-worth, which I should have not gone through.

The experiences our students have with learning prior to coming to Benchmark can create painful memories that reflecting can sometimes dredge to the surface. Reflecting can be difficult as we move students from focusing on strengths to strategically dealing with the challenges that can get in the way of their success.

Building Self-Knowledge

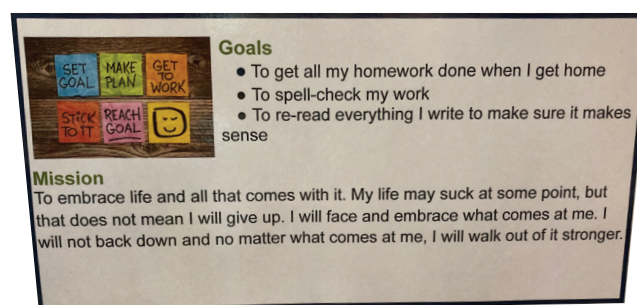
Over a student's time at Benchmark, this self-knowledge slowly builds. For some it is a steady process, for others it is a rocky road of two steps forward and one step back, and some even find themselves fighting the process. Teachers patiently work with students to continue this journey and as a student enters 8th grade and prepares to graduate, the reflection process is taken to a new level. We often get asked why we cannot hasten the process. In part, students are in a more mature stage when they reach 8th grade and a better place to really look deeply at themselves. Students also need the strong foundation of experience reflecting on themselves that they build as they encounter increasing challenges through their time at Benchmark. The seeds are planted throughout a student's Benchmark journey that sprout in the reflective and increasingly challenging work of 8th grade.

The Directions Project

At the beginning of 8th grade, students are given a project that gets them started delving deeply into where they have been as a student, where they are currently, and what they want to accomplish in 8th grade. We call this the "Directions Project," as the goal is for students to set the direction for their final year at Benchmark. Students have to gather information from parents, mentors, and other teachers and consider what their current strengths and challenges are as they plan for a conference they will conduct for their parents and teachers. At this conference, students share their academic journey, what brought them to Benchmark and how they feel they have grown as a student in their time at Benchmark. They share what their current strengths and challenges are and the goals they would like to tackle for

the year. A number of students throughout the years have commented that the process of planning for and conducting this conference, though a bit daunting, has really helped them to put things into perspective and create a path for a successful year. Of course, during the COVID year, these conferences took place over Zoom in a virtual setting rather than the typical in-person conference.

As the 8th grade year progresses, students are asked to reflect on the goals they set and the progress they are making in achieving them. Often the goals get revised or replaced as students encounter the increasing challenges of this pre-high school year. Students are encouraged to use grades as a way of assessing how their approach is working and when a course correction is needed. Through formal and informal reflections, students are constantly being asked to reflect on their progress and deepen their understanding of themselves. The pandemic made this a bit more challenging, as it was difficult in the beginning to have the personal conversations that help to deepen students' understanding and students may not have had easy access to mentors and other staff who may have worked with them during their time in the middle school. On the other hand, the plexiglass behind which students were sitting throughout the day provided a great place to post their goals so they were continually reminded of them.



Building Good Habits

Throughout 8th grade, students read and discuss *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, by Sean Covey. This book helps students to understand that they are in charge of the trajectory of their lives and the habits they can develop to better understand themselves and interact with others. In the English class I teach, we spend some concentrated time at the beginning of January focusing on Habit 2, "Begin With the End in Mind." As part of this habit, students are asked to develop a mission statement for themselves. The students draft a mission statement and then create a video version which is shared with parents at the January conference. We also read the books *Who Moved My Cheese?* and *Out of the Maze*, by Spencer Johnson, that both look at how we can

FEATURE

effectively deal with change and seek new opportunities to grow and challenge ourselves.

I have found that *7 Habits* in general and this three-week concentrated time reflecting have made a huge difference for students. Those for whom this really “clicks” seem to really soar in the remaining half of their 8th grade year. One such student, Paul Ziegler ‘19 wrote in his final portfolio,

One big area where I developed was my ability to reflect on who I am as a learner. I truly found myself as a learner and learned everything about myself that I need to know to help me tackle my challenges in the future.

Many students like Paul have found the ideas in these books and the related discussions about strategically approaching academics and life to take root and really grow to create a strong foundation for their success in 8th grade and beyond.

The Final Portfolio Project

Come May, our “Final Portfolio Project” begins. The process begins with students getting the opportunity to look through school records from throughout their time at Benchmark School. This includes trimester reports, report cards, work samples, informal testing/assessments, and even, when available, reports from their previous school. Students are also asked to interview people who have known them throughout their time at Benchmark, including lower and middle school teachers and staff.



Both the academic records review and interviews allow students to gather information about where they have been as a learner, how they have grown, and their developing strengths and challenges. Students use this information to write one or two essays. Most of our students write an essay detailing their academic growth and another essay exploring their current approach to learning, which includes what they see as their current strengths, challenges, and the strategies that help them. For those students who may still be working on time management or for whom writing is still challenging, the task is abbreviated into one essay that more succinctly addresses these same issues.

During the spring of 2020 and our remote learning, all of our students focused on the one condensed essay and their ability to interview a variety of staff was more limited. The spring of 2021 saw the return of more interviews, though many of these occurred virtually. The great part about students’ experience with virtual meetings was that some were able to interview staff that are no longer at Benchmark but who were important to the student.

Gaining an understanding of how far the student has progressed in their academic journey is a strong foundation for them as they move on to high school. Reflecting on how far they have come and the obstacles they have overcome helps students to realize they can handle the challenges they inevitably face in high school and beyond.

Filling the Toolbox

The process of preparing for and writing these essays focuses students on what they have accomplished in their academic journey. Nearly every student comes to realize how far that journey has brought them. For example, Charlie Noble ‘21 summed up his journey using a toolbox analogy, writing:

I came into Benchmark with no tools in my box to help me break through challenges and build up my strengths. I learned many new things that have helped me put new tools in my box. Every year I learned new strategies and how to apply them. Now with my box full of tools, I am able to take on every challenge. Every year my tools keep getting sharper and I am able to handle more of my challenges. As my tools keep getting better, my strengths get stronger and I become more effective at dealing with my challenges. As I look into my future, I know how important it is to conquer many of my challenges and build on my strengths. Benchmark has helped me unlock some great tools which have built incredible

strengths and helped me overcome even the toughest challenges.

Mission Statements for the Future

In addition to the major written aspect of the assignment, students are also asked to revise their mission statement. This year, Matthew Yerger '21 looked back at the mission he had written in January and realized he had grown so much that his mission needed to change completely. His mission in his final portfolio reads:

As I make my way through life, I promise never to give up, never to not give it my all, and never to lose who I am: an inquisitive, strong and resilient person who is willing to put in the work to be successful. When things become difficult, I have to remind myself how hard I have worked to get to where I am today and that I need to push on. I will use my strengths and strategies to overcome whatever challenges lay in the way of my path to success.

After reviewing their mission, students then take some time to envision where they want to be a year from now and write this into a vision statement. Reflecting on what they need to be successful, students create a catalogue of strategies and tech tools that will be helpful to them as they move on into high school. Finally, they create a cover that often includes a collage of pictures reflecting their physical growth and including a creative title and a closing page where students are asked to consider a creative way to bring their portfolio to a close.

But the story does not end there. Many students continue to use their portfolios to inspire them and to share with future teachers. Philip Himmelreich '19 said,

To this day I still look back at my completed project, which brings me great joy because I can relive a very pivotal time in my life that honestly shaped me into the person I am today. The Benchmark experience is honestly life-changing and if my parents did not choose to send me there, I would, without a doubt, not be in the position I am today.

There have been a number of students who have shared their portfolio or what they learned from completing it with staff as they have begun their new school. Invariably, those with whom the students have shared have been incredibly impressed and it has established a good relationship the student could leverage in the high school transition. Students continue to use their portfolios to remind them where they

have been and continue to inspire them. Ashley Schnyder '19 recently shared:

[The portfolio project] helped me picture myself in the future and what exactly I wanted to accomplish in this world. It gave me a sense of direction and a thorough plan on what I have to do to make those goals become reality.... Believe it or not, I still use my portfolio. I like to look through it and reflect back every year. Once I finish the school year, I glance through it and look at the progress I made through my work samples. I love to go back to one of the last essays I wrote at Benchmark talking about my goals for the new year to come. Looking back makes me proud of all I have accomplished this far. After seeing it, I feel encouraged. In my portfolio I wrote that I wanted to make it on the varsity tennis team freshman year, join the literary magazine, participate in my new school's shows, get good grades, and make new friends. I did all of that my very first year at Sanford.... It helped me picture myself in the future and what exactly I wanted to accomplish in this world. It gave me a sense of direction and a thorough plan on what I have to do to make those goals become reality.

For most of the past 23 years of my 36 years at Benchmark, it has been my privilege to teach 8th grade English. I often say that I have one of the best jobs at Benchmark because I get to witness the seeds that were planted and nourished throughout a student's time at Benchmark really sprout and bloom. Invariably, even the occasional students who may not have seemed to make much progress throughout the year seem to finally come to an understanding of themselves in the process of completing their final portfolio. For the many who really take on the challenges of the year and grow by leaps and bounds, they find this process to be a challenging yet rewarding way to bring their time at Benchmark to a close and launch into the next part of their academic journey.

A professor of mine at Westminster College (PA), Darwin Huey, once said, "The only real measure of education is the difference that takes place between when you come and when you leave." For Benchmark graduates, that difference is nothing short of a miracle. When students graduate from 8th grade at Benchmark School, they have a unique and incredible understanding of themselves and what they need to do to be successful and are ready to soar into their future. The final portfolio project is an encouragement for them to aim for great things and spread their wings as they embark on their flight to future success! 

GRADUATION 2021



Head of School
Chris Hancock

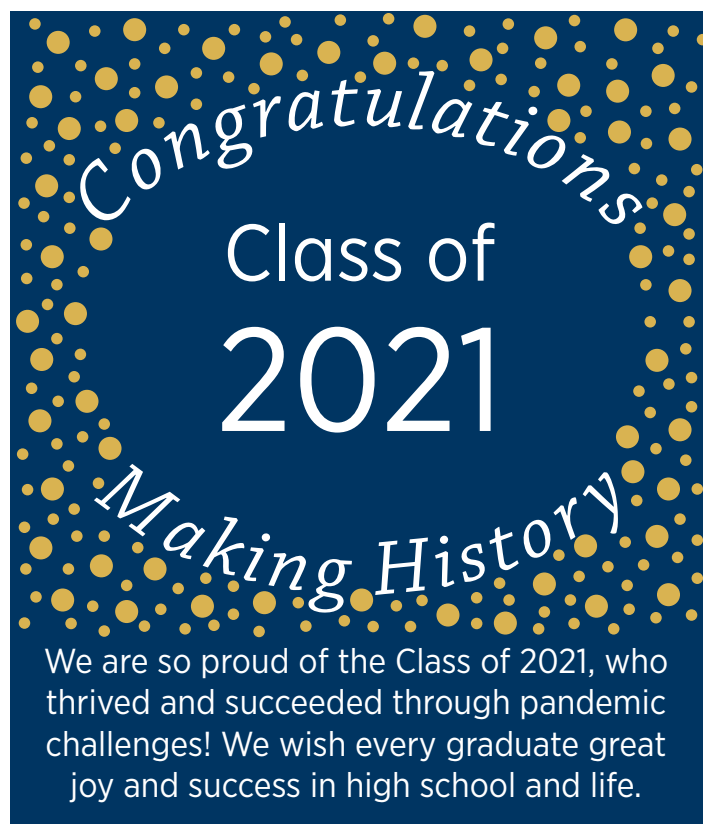


President of the Board
of Trustees and alumnus
Ben Rogers '95



Alumni Speaker
Jonathan Rhome '08





Peter Bard

Why are you ready for high school?

I am ready for high school because of 8th grade. I saw myself grow dramatically when I hit the middle of 8th grade after spring break. I started to try harder, I got better grades, and I knew how to be successful.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Do not hold back your homework for later, do it now.



Andrew Blum

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

I appreciated the connection I could have with teachers which was unlike a connection I could have at any other school.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

Playing home games on the Benchmark basketball team.



Declan David Cannon

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

My favorite memory was in 5th grade year when I made a chemical volcano out of cleaning supplies in a bathroom.

Benchmark has taught me...

...to manage my time.



Nicolena Carsello

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

My favorite memories were the greetings from Dr. Robb Gaskins every morning rain or shine.

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

I appreciate the dedication of the teachers and staff for making my time at Benchmark a success and making me feel that I can overcome my struggles.



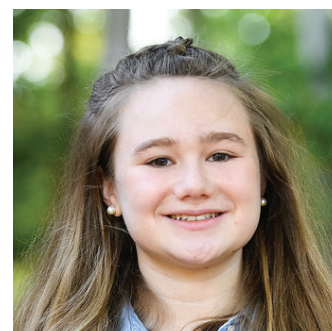
Francis Joseph Dunn

Benchmark has taught me...

...to advocate for myself.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

The field trip to Fort Mifflin.



Reese Dyson

What is Benchmark to you?

Benchmark is like my home. It taught me almost everything I know.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

There are too many to pick. If I had to it would be hugging Mrs. Cress because she was one tough cookie.

GRADUATES



Sophia Elgar

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

What I appreciate about Benchmark is that I got taught a lot of different things that will help me later on.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Write down your homework so you don't forget about it.



Audrey M. Gelinas

What opportunities has Benchmark given you?

Benchmark has given me the opportunity to take the time and establish myself as a learner.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

If you can survive, you can thrive.



Lillyth Renee Harper

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

It's your story. Don't be afraid to hit 'em with a plot twist at any moment.

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

Making new friends.



Sydney A. Henderson

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

Meeting my best friend and making so many memories with her.

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

I appreciate how I grew by overcoming my challenges and how much fun I had and the memories I made.



Judith Katherine Horn

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

I came to Benchmark in 2nd grade and I couldn't even read. Now I love to read and write. Benchmark has taught me so much and I wouldn't be who I am today without it.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

You're going to hear this your entire life, but be yourself.



Henry Jones

Benchmark has taught me...

...different strategies to make my work less stressful and more organized.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

The first day of school every year.



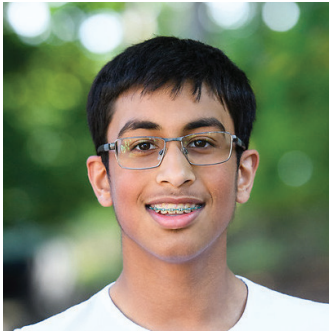
Abdul-Dauda Joseph Kamara

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Embrace the way you learn and have the courage to try when it gets difficult.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

Me rapping at the Talent Show.



Rohan Kapoor

Thank a Teacher

I thank every teacher who was there to support me when there were ups and downs.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

My favorite memory from Benchmark was meeting new friends.



Sophia Kowalski

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

I got to know a lot of new people and some of those people are my closest friends.

Benchmark has taught me...

...all of these strategies that I have now to help me in high school and in college. When I came here it was hard for me to do things but Benchmark has helped me with that.



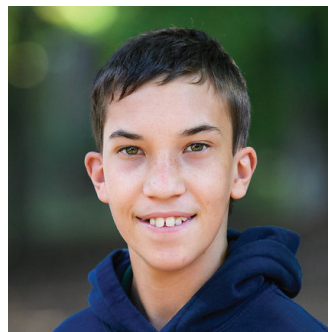
Quinn Lanchoney

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Don't give up and just be yourself.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

My favorite memory of Benchmark would be the friends I made.



Mark Angelo Matika

What was your favorite Benchmark memory?

My favorite Benchmark memory is being a Junior Counselor during Summer Camp.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Make sure you keep up with all of your homework assignments and ask for support when you need it.



Luca Mazzola

What did you appreciate most about your time at Benchmark?

What I appreciated the most about my time at Benchmark was how the teachers would go out of their way to always want to help a student.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

Me accidentally eating Habanero pepper.



Hayden Elizabeth Barrett McCray

What was your favorite memory from Benchmark?

My favorite memory at Benchmark is when I sat outside with some friends during lunch and we just sat and talked about life and things that actually matter.

Benchmark has taught me...

...how to connect with the people around me on a deeper level as well as with myself.



Charles Noble

Benchmark has taught me...

...that it is ok to make mistakes as long as you learn from them.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

When Benchmark soccer went undefeated.



Jai Maliya Rhoads

Benchmark has taught me...

...how to be a self-advocate and to be fearless, independent, and confident.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Don't let what you can't do stop you from doing what you can do.



Brian Schwartzman

What was your favorite memory from Benchmark?

My favorite memory from Benchmark is student vs. staff sports games.

Benchmark has taught me...

...who I am as a learner.

GRADUATES



Gabrielle Bridget Scirrotto

Benchmark has taught me...

...how to be a strong and confident reader.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Do your homework in mentor group.



Mira Snyder

What was your favorite memory from Benchmark?

I think my favorite memory is when we did the play in 6th grade but not the play itself but the behind the scenes.

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Make the most out of your time at school.



William E. Viner

What was your favorite memory from Benchmark?

My favorite memory is when I realized I could be good at reading.

Benchmark has taught me...

... how to ask for help and help others when they need it.



Evan Whitehouse

What was your favorite memory from Benchmark?

My favorite memory from Benchmark was when the JV soccer team was undefeated and we all went to Double Decker and we all got trophies.

Benchmark has taught me...

... that it doesn't matter if you have differences, everyone learns a different way.



Matthew Yerger

Words of the Wiser for Younger Students

Trust your teachers. They know what is best.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

My favorite memory from Benchmark is the basketball team in 7th grade.



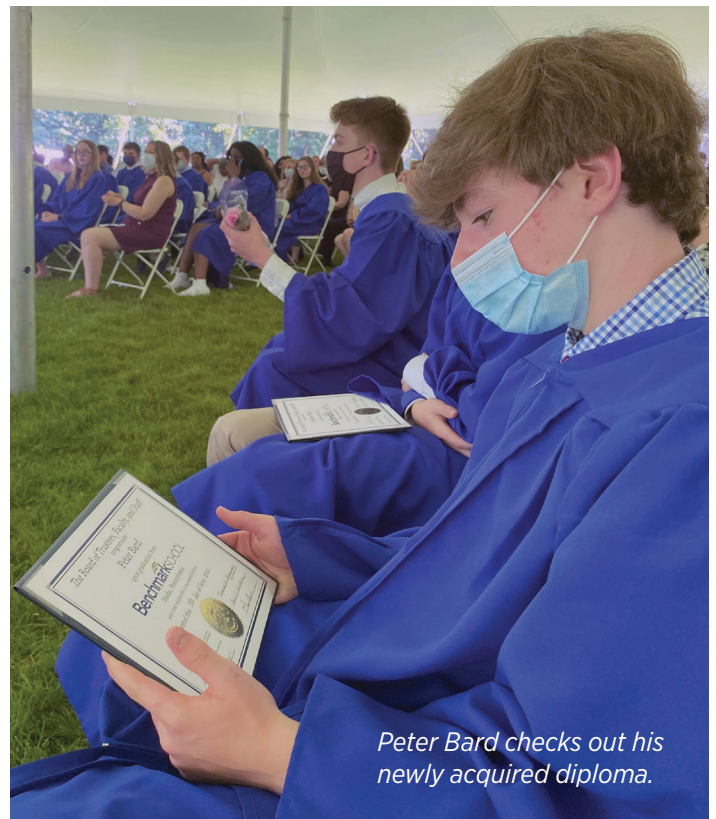
Michael Ziegler

Benchmark has taught me...

...how to be confident in myself.

What were your favorite memories from Benchmark?

Going to Dorney Park.



Peter Bard checks out his newly acquired diploma.

DEVON COSGROVE '10

Unapologetically Living by the No Sorry Rule

By Kim Graham, Associate Director of Annual Giving & Admissions



Devon at her High Point University graduation

Benchmark alumna Devon Cosgrove credits Benchmark for changing her life, both because of the educational experience it provided to her as well as the “no sorry rule” taught to her by former Benchmark teacher (and current board member) Dr. Betsy Cunicelli.

“Dr. Cunicelli was one of my biggest supporters and mentors during my time at Benchmark,” Devon says. “She had seen me at my best and worst, yet never gave up on me. At the time, I had a tendency to always say sorry when I had gotten

something wrong like a math problem, or interpretation of a reading passage. One day, Dr. C had had enough of me saying sorry and told me I was not allowed to say it anymore. Now at age 25 I can see just how important that small lesson was for me. Because of Dr. C’s no sorry rule, I grew in confidence and eventually learned that my insights and ideas were valuable. There is no doubt now that I speak my mind and my opinions freely without ever feeling like I must apologize for being me.”

Devon’s Benchmark-instilled confidence has since taken her all over the world. After graduating from Delaware Valley Friends School in 2014, Devon studied English Writing with minors in Communication and Women’s and Gender Studies at High Point University. During her junior year, she studied abroad at Bond University on the Gold Coast of Australia. While there, Devon wrote for both the school and local public newspapers. She also discovered a talent for audio production and served as the producer for her friends’ film, *The Neolite*.

Professionally, Devon is nurturing her natural abilities to care for others. She was the founder of a South Carolina non-profit called Elkstone Cares Inc., dedicated to assisting Congolese asylum seekers obtain independence in America. As the Director of Program Development, Devon would assess client goals, lead cultural orientations, facilitate ESL classes, manage health concerns, advocate for client needs in the community, and help clients navigate and comply with the legal process for seeking asylum in America.

Today, Devon has begun an internship with Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation in India as well as with the Natural Resources Advisor at Estée Lauder Companies. Her internship focuses on understanding mica mining and how to best make it a sustainable, safe, and child labor-free environment. She also assists schools in remote parts of India track the progress of their students, students who previously lived in communities that perpetuated child labor over education.



Devon in Bali, Indonesia. Devon’s time at Bond University in Australia provided numerous opportunities to travel and scuba dive in many Pacific and South Pacific based countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Fiji, and New Zealand.

ALUMNI PROFILE

The foundation is named for Kailash Satyarthi, one of two Nobel Peace Prize Laureates in 2014, who Devon previously worked with in India for his other organization, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save Childhood Movement). Devon has spoken on behalf of the organization at the United Nations in New York, and has gone to India to help girls obtain bicycles so they could safely ride to school to get an education. And as if that all doesn't keep her busy enough, Devon is also an Administrative Program Assistant for Blended Case Management (BCM) and Certified Peer Support (CPS) at Child and Family Focus in the greater Philadelphia area.

Devon's Benchmark journey began at Benchmark's Summer Camp in 4th grade, when her family moved from New Jersey so she could receive the educational help she desperately needed. After the first day of camp, Devon was thrilled to learn that the exciting place where she had just spent the day was going to be her school in the fall.

"I remember before coming to Benchmark not being able to truly read. While my peers were reading *Magic Tree House*, I was staring at the same words and not flipping a single page. It felt like I was looking at hieroglyphics," Devon explains. "After coming to Benchmark, I made leaps and bounds in my ability to read. By the time I was in 7th or 8th grade, I was reading at a college level. I never in a million years thought as a kid I would ever go to college or end up with a BA in English Writing. I never felt smart or confident in my ability to learn until I came to Benchmark. It is easy to say looking back that Benchmark is THE school that changed my life."

One of Devon's most meaningful Benchmark memories was the Benchmark musical, where she played Hedy La Rue, a voluptuous yet airheaded secretary in "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying."

"It was out of character from the actual person I was, but I still remember to this day Dr. Gensemer, Mrs. Veacock and Dr. MacDonald working together to teach me how to walk with a sultry sway so as to better embody my character," Devon says. "No one can say that Benchmark teachers don't give 110% to their students!"

All in all, Devon would strongly encourage parents of children with learning differences to give them the life-changing experience of a Benchmark education.

"School, especially elementary and middle school, can be daunting to those who are just discovering that their child has a learning difference or have felt like their child has been left behind in their current educational system," Devon explains. "Benchmark is everything I could hope a child, with or without learning differences, ever receives in an education. My parents were unique in their choice to move from New Jersey to Pennsylvania, just so I could attend. However, if you ask them if they would do it all over again, they will gladly say yes. Though Benchmark is a wonderful place to be, it will not always be easy. There will be some hard educational brick walls your child hits. However, you never hit these brick walls alone. You and your child are always supported by the dedicated faculty and staff around you, which makes those brick walls priceless learning experiences. As

the founder Dr. Irene Gaskins once told me, labels are for jelly jars. Just because your child attends Benchmark with a diagnosed learning difference, does not mean it will be their entire identity or that this difference will hinder their possibility for success. In fact, it sets you up to overcome almost anything. Maybe I make it sound like Benchmark School performs miracles, but when I tell you the school has made me into the person I am today, I believe that with every fiber of my being." 



Devon as Hedy La Rue in Benchmark's 2010 production of "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," pictured with Josh Kline '10 as J.B. Biggley.

LILLY HORNICKLE '20

Silver Service

By Lilliana Hornickle '20

Alumna Lilly Hornickle '20 shares the story of how she created a “Buddy Bench” for Benchmark.

When Girl Scout Cadettes focus on an issue they care about, learn the facts, and take action to make a difference, they gain the confidence and skills that will catapult them to lifelong success. It all adds up to the Girl Scout Silver Award.

A girl must be in middle school, complete the Cadette Journey requirements, along with an action project at the end. I also had to take Silver Award training to do my Silver Award Project.

The Silver Award Project can be done as an individual or as a small group (2-4 people). Each Girl Scout is expected to contribute fifty hours to the project. The project is to be girl-led, but adults can advise and assist when necessary. I chose to do an individual project.

The Silver Award is the second-highest award of the Girl Scouts of the USA, and the highest award that a Girl Scout Cadette can earn.

I chose Benchmark as my community and then thought about what I could do that would benefit them. I came up with making a bench that could be used to help kids recognize a friend in need. I had heard about “Buddy Benches” and thought that would be a great thing for Benchmark.

The process seems very easy, but it proved more challenging than I expected. The COVID pandemic wreaked havoc in almost every aspect of the project after I completed the basic idea and proposal process.

I picked a team to work with and lead, but COVID restricted how, when, and where we could work together and be safe. Supplies also became an issue as wood mills had been shut down so wood was harder to find and much more expensive. Even screws were an issue with so many people at home quarantining and people were doing home projects. I managed to push through all the setbacks and delays. I set up my workstation outside so we could work together and complete the bench project. I learned how to do many things from my dad from choosing the best lumber to minimizing the issues if the lumber was not as nice. I set the schedule and broke the building project into chunks so each helper would get a chance to learn how to build the bench.

I feel amazingly proud of all I have accomplished with building the bench for Benchmark. The best part is knowing what I did was a way to give back to a place that helped me more than I can say. This bench will be an example of how much a student from Benchmark can do if they put their mind to it! I hope the bench offers a nice place for students and staff and anyone visiting the beautiful campus to be able to take a breath and soak in how wonderful a place Benchmark is, in addition to helping the students identify a friend who might need a smile and a kind word. 



Dr. Eleanor Gensemer and Lilly Hornickle '20 standing proudly behind the Buddy Bench.

CLASS NOTES

'80

Jeff Mowery is a member of SAG-AFTRA and keeps busy appearing in many productions. A few of his more recent appearances include playing a suspicious man sitting on a park bench as Frances McDormand was looking for her internet blind date in *Burn Before Reading* and as a neighbor of Kate Winslet and Jean Smart in HBO Max's *Mare of Easttown*. A young Jeff even made a cameo appearance in Benchmark's "Transforming Futures for 50 Years: Benchmark School in the 1980s" historical video. Jeff remembers telling his 3rd grade teacher at Benchmark, Mrs. Maerker, that he was going to be either Luke Skywalker or an actor when he grew up. He currently resides in the Philadelphia suburbs with his wife and daughter.



Jeff Mowery '80 in *Mare of Easttown* (above), and in *Burn Before Reading* (below).



'81

Eric Knight has been serving as the national Commander (president) of the antique bicycle club, The Wheelmen, for the past three years. His article on the history of the bicycle was published in the September issue of *Silent Sports* magazine as the cover story. Eric has another article on transcontinental high wheel riding that was featured in the May issue.



'90

Nick Blatter stopped by Benchmark recently when he traveled from Oregon (where he lives with his wife and four children) to visit his parents. Nick began his career with the United States Coast Guard and then spent almost a decade as a Deputy Sheriff before switching paths to architecture and construction. He now owns his own general contracting business in Portland. As he toured the school—which has changed greatly since his time as a student—he said he now realizes that much of his design aesthetic was significantly impacted by Benchmark's architecture.

During his visit, Nick was able to catch up with his (and everyone's) former gym teacher, Mr. Reichart, and he also had the chance to speak to Dr. MacDonald's class. Nick shared some of his experiences in law enforcement and answered students' questions, many of which were generated out of their reading *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson (Adapted for Young Adults version) and *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely earlier in the year. Nick shared how he came to realize that someone's level of education and how they feel about themselves can have a significant impact on whether or not they turn to criminal behavior. For that reason, he worked with inmates to help recognize if they had a learning difference and helped them find the resources to work through them. Nick told the students how very lucky they are to be at Benchmark, and based on the emotion in his voice, he spent most of his visit remembering how lucky he was too.

Note by Kim Graham



'92

Sage Thompson attended Monsignor Bonner High School and St. Joseph's University before taking on his current role of Creative Director at Tat Communication, his father's company. Sage says, "I married my wonderful wife Janet 18 years ago, and we have two beautiful boys, Jack and Oliver. Recently I also started pursuing a YouTube channel 'TrailSage' which combines my skills in production with my two passions, running and cycling."

He also has vivid memories of Benchmark experiences that shaped his life. He recalls, "Benchmark has taught me so much and has given me the confidence to pursue anything in life. And while I am thankful for all the tools they have instilled in me, my most meaningful experience had nothing to do with school work, at least not in the traditional sense. Standing on a platform in a tree 50 feet above the ground clinging to the trunk, my heart was pounding out of my chest. I was certain I had made a mistake! But through the fear and nervousness that gripped my body I heard one voice... "Come on, Sage, you can do this!" And with that I grabbed that rope with



my sweaty little hands and went for it. Flying down the zipline at what felt like 100 mph I could see the forest floor and everyone cheering me on. It is a moment I will never forget and a metaphor for life. Thank you to Mr. Reichart who helped me push my limits and told me "I could do it."

'93

Andrew Repasky McElhinney's new motion picture, *Casual Encounters: Philadelphia True Crime Confessions* is in post-production (with a Fall 2023 release date). In 2020, Andrew was featured as an on-screen commentator in the three-part documentary, *Time Warp: The Greatest Cult Films of All-Time* (2020). During COVID-19, Andrew worked on the sound design for *Casual Encounters: Philadelphia True Crime Confessions*, read a lot, watched a few hundred old episodes of *Guiding*

Light from the early 90s on YouTube, and co-wrote the script for the eight-part screen adaption of the mystery bestseller, *The Darkest Secret*, with author Alex Marwood.

'00

Sam Rogers recently welcomed the arrival of his son, Asher, in October 2020. Asher has two older sisters Ava (8) and Maddie (6). Sam and his wife Veronica continue to live outside of Washington, DC and Sam reports that "We have changed parenting styles

to a zone defense compared to man-man. The dad jokes however, have only gotten stronger."

'06

Melissa Murphy attended Tatnall School and Rochester Institute of Technology after graduating from Benchmark in 2006. Melissa currently lives and works in Berkeley, California as a Creative Director at Jack Morton Worldwide (a marketing agency). She is engaged to be married this year.



'09

Gracie Gottlieb married Tony Newmark in 2020. In 2021, she earned an MPA in Business Nonprofit Management and an MA in Jewish Studies from New York University. She is the Associate Director of Yavneh campus programs.



Jason Tabas attended The Haverford School and the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business, with a major in Finance. In January 2020, Jason

was commissioned as an Officer in the US Navy. He is stationed aboard a destroyer off the Pacific Coast and is the ship's Electronic Warfare Officer.

'10

Devon Cosgrove attended Delaware Valley Friends School and High Point

ALUMNI UPDATES



University, graduating with a BA in English Writing and minors in Women's and Gender Studies & Communication. She also attended Bond University in

Queensland, Australia for Film and TV Production and Journalism. Devon started a nonprofit in South Carolina dedicated to helping Congolese asylum seekers obtain independence here in America. Devon enjoys horseback riding (she has been riding for 14 years), scuba diving, travel (she has been to 12 different countries), nonprofit work, and writing poetry.

Devon says, "I remember before coming to Benchmark not being able to truly read. While my other peers in my New Jersey public school were reading Magic Tree House, I was staring at the same words and not flipping a single page. It felt like I was looking at hieroglyphics. After coming to Benchmark and starting in 4th grade I was making leaps and bounds in my ability to read. By the time I was in 7th or 8th grade, I was reading at a college level. I never in a million years thought as a kid I would ever go to college or end up with a BA in English Writing. I never felt smart or confident in my ability to learn until I came to Benchmark. It is easy to say, looking back, that Benchmark is THE school that changed my life."

Michael Schwartz currently works at Jeffries in London as an Equity Research Associate. He manages the energy team's macro forecast and covers 10 integrated oil and gas companies with an aggregate market cap of approximately \$1trn.

'15

Tommy Flynn graduated from Benchmark in 2015 and has very fond memories. Tommy currently attends West Chester University and works as an EMT and firefighter.

'17

Blake Fox graduated from Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy in June 2021. He is attending Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. He plans to major in Government, with a specific emphasis on law, to pursue his aspiration of being a lawyer and eventually earning a seat on the United States Supreme Court. Recently, he worked on Andrew Yang's 2020 presidential campaign and is currently volunteering for Yang's campaign for Mayor of New York City. He is also serving as an advisor to a candidate running for United States Congress in 2022. Additionally, Blake's analyses of Supreme Court decisions have been published on legal websites. Blake credits his 7th and 8th grade history teachers for helping foster his interest in politics and law. Additionally, he thanks all of his Benchmark teachers and administrators for helping him grow as a student and person.

Jenna L. Gibson attended Woodlynde School after leaving Benchmark, and is currently studying Small Animal Science at Delaware Valley University.

Jenna says, "I want to travel around the world as I get older and help animals. I like photography and horseback riding. I have been riding horses since the age of 3, so for about 16 years." Reflecting



on Benchmark, Jenna gives a shout-out to fellow alumni friends Jack Grossman, Blake Fox, and Will Schaefer.

'19

Emma Heckmann spent a year at The Baldwin School before transferring to The Shipley School. At Shipley, she joined the squash team, Women in STEAM, Environmental Committee, and she still fences competitively outside of school. Emma says, "Benchmark helped me recognize my strengths and obstacles. Although I may have difficulties with my learning differences, Benchmark taught me to be a self advocate and to put myself in a position where I can be successful. The warm and welcoming environment that the teachers created while I was at Benchmark allowed me the flexibility to try different techniques in overcoming my learning differences."

KEEP YOUR NEWS COMING!

We love to hear about your activities! Tell us about your achievements, clubs, sports, employment, educational undertakings, life changes, and anything else you're proud of.

Submit your news and photos via the "Alumni" section of our website.



THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Benchmark Parents Partner with Trustees

Benchmark's Development Committee, a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, pursues critical objectives for the school's overall fundraising efforts. In addition to working to exceed the goal set for The Benchmark Fund each year, they also support initiatives such as promoting Pennsylvania's EITC program (which allows individuals and businesses to direct tax dollars to Benchmark's scholarship program), maintaining relationships with donors, and crafting development-related policies and long-range plans.

This year's committee includes current parents in addition to Benchmark Board members. This unusual structure allows the committee to broaden its perspective on fundraising goals and ways in which Development efforts can be most effective.

"As a Board member and Chair of the Development Committee, it is always helpful to gain input and perspective from current parents," said Michelle Bogosian, parent of Emma Heckmann '19. "This year's addition of three current and dedicated parents in addition to trustees has given us momentum to achieve our outstanding success in such a difficult year. They have been laser focused on achieving our goals and have strived to help us remember our mission of providing the resources to the school."

Do you want to support Benchmark by joining this purpose-driven, congenial, and essential committee? If so, please contact Louisa Hanshew, Director of Development & Parent Engagement at louisahanshew@benchmarkschool.org.

**Family
Participation in
2020-2021
Benchmark
Fund
Hits Record
High!**



Last school year, current Benchmark families supported The Benchmark Fund as they never have before, with 99% of families making a gift. This support is phenomenal and will greatly strengthen the school's profile when applying for outside funding. We are tremendously grateful for the generosity of our families.

This achievement would not have been possible without the diligent efforts of our fabulous team of Benchmark Fund Grade Captains: Janell Besa, Larry Besa, and Amanda Bruno (1st, 2nd, & 3d grades), Amanda Ryan (4th grade), Pete Verdi (5th grade), Liz Blum (6th grade), Latoya Watson (7th grade), and Kate Horn (8th grade).

The 2021-2022 Benchmark Fund is already underway. If Benchmark has had an impact on you or on a student you love, we hope you will consider joining our current families and showing your support by making a gift! Gifts can be made by using the giving envelope included in this magazine or on our website at benchmarkschool.org/giving.

Thank you!



2020-2021 Development Committee members met via Zoom last April. Pictured here (top row, left to right): Louisa Hanshew, Director of Development & Parent Engagement; Kim Graham, Associate Director of Annual Giving & Admissions; Michelle Bogosian, Development Committee Chair & Trustee; (middle row, left to right): Pete Verdi, Benchmark parent; Chris Hancock, Head of School; Amanda Bruno, Benchmark parent & Trustee; (bottom row): Wendi Chase, Trustee. Not pictured: Liz Blum, Benchmark parent; Betsy Cunicelli, Trustee; Irene Gaskins, Head of School Emerita.

MESSAGE FROM BENCHMARK'S DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

This has been a challenging year for everyone. One of the positives is it has brought people together to work towards common goals. We in the Benchmark community are so appreciative of the teachers and administration for jumping through hoops to make it possible for our children to attend school in person. We recognize that this came at a significant cost. So, this year more than ever donations are so important. We are thankful for all that have contributed to the Benchmark School.

Michelle Bogosian
Trustee and Alumni Parent
Chair, Benchmark School Development Committee

2020-2021 Report of Gifts

The 1970 Society of Leadership Donors

Named for the year Benchmark began, The 1970 Society of Leadership Donors recognizes those donors who have made a gift or are fulfilling a pledge of \$1,000 or more to the school between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. While the members of this group represent various parts of the Benchmark community, their goal is the same: to strengthen, enhance, and continue an unparalleled Benchmark experience for our students today and our learners to come.

The Founders \$25,000+

Sandy & Scott Adzick
Alumni Parents

The Boudinot Foundation
Made possible by Carol Atterbury, Alumni Parent

The Bryn Mawr Trust Company

Business Leadership Organized for Catholic Schools
Made possible by Nikki & John Bendl (Current Parents), Charles Bramley (Trustee), Amara & Jason Briggs (Current Parents), Laina & Rob Driscoll (Current Parents), Wendi & Charlie Chase (*Trustee & Alumni Parents), Keith Morgan (Friend), Mark Muehl (Current Parent), Sheri & Ken Resnik (Alumni Parents)*

Wendi* & Charlie Chase
**Trustee & Alumni Parents*

Patti Karolyi & Michael Semerjian
Current & Alumni Parents

Caren Lambert
Alumni Parent

Mondrian Investment Partners (U.S.) Inc.
Matching the gifts of Patti Karolyi & Michael Semerjian, Current & Alumni Parents

Mark Muehl
Current Parent

Charles Ryan
Trustee & Alumni Parent

Cheryl & Thomas Sawyer Weir
Alumni Parents

Alfred P. West, Jr. & Lorelee West
Alumni Parents

The Scholars \$15,000+

The Coltman Family Foundation
Alumni Family

Kathy & Bob Elias
Alumni Family

Jennifer & Samir Mehta
Current Parents

Pennsylvania Education Partnership
Made possible by Jim Viner (Trustee & Current Parent) & Daniel Govberg (Friend)

The Siegfried Family Foundation
Made possible by Bridget Siegfried '05

UHS of Pennsylvania, Inc.

Jim Viner
Trustee & Current Parent

The Visionaries \$10,000+

Daniel Govberg
Friend

The Steven C. Graham Family
Alumni Family

Allison & Chris Henderson
Current Parents

Keith Morgan
Friend

Sheri & Ken Resnik
Alumni Parents

The Steve & Ilene Berger Foundation
Made possible by Dan Berger '93 and Cindy Berger Nissen '96

The Tally Foundation
*Made possible by Amanda & Kevin Ryan,
 Current Parents, and Elizabeth Atterbury,
 Current Grandparent*

The Pioneers

\$7,500+

Nancy & Robert Mitchell
Alumni Parents

The Slye Family
Current Family

SofterWare Inc.

The Innovators

\$5,000+

AIM Scholarship LLC
*Made possible by Sasha Ballen & Dee
 Spagnuolo, Current Parents*

Sasha Ballen & Dee Spagnuolo
Current Parents

The Becket Family Foundation
*Made possible by Kristin & Bill Becket,
 Alumni Parents*

Nikki & John Bendl
Current Parents

Ashly & Dan '93* Berger
*Current Parents & *Alumnus & *Trustee*

Michelle Bogosian* & Greg LeMar
**Trustee & Alumni Parents*

Charles Bramley
Trustee

Charities Aid Foundation of America

Marcia & Greg* Coleman
**Trustee, Former Staff*

The Curran Foundation
*Made possible by Evie & Phillip Dutton,
 Alumni Parents*

Sue Deakins & The Peter B. Deakins
 Memorial Fund
Alumni Parent

Laina & Rob Driscoll
Current Parents

Lesli Esposito & Pete Verdi
Current Parents

Patricia Ralph Fowler & Gordon B. Fowler, Jr.
Alumni Parents

Ellen & Ed Hanway
*Alumni Parents, Alumni Grandparents &
 Current Grandparents*

John F. Hollway & Jami W. McKeon*
*Alumni Parents & *Former Trustee*

Dr.* & Mrs. Howard R. Marcus
**Trustee Emeritus, Former Staff*

Northwestern Mutual Foundation

Suzanne Perot
Alumni Aunt & Former Staff

Sharyn & Joe Pozzuolo
Alumni Parents

Jeralyn Svanda
Alumni Grandparent

The Trailblazers

\$2,500+

Jason & Amara Briggs
Current Parents

Maggie & Matthew Brodnik
Current Parents

Amanda* & Douglas Bruno
**Trustee & Current Parents*

Beth* & Pete Goodhart
**Former Trustee & Alumni Parents*

Chris Hancock* & Erica Meissner
**Head of School*

Missy & Ed Hanway
Current Parents & Alumni Parents

Jonathan LeBreton & Sarah Willie-LeBreton*
*Alumni Parents & *Trustee*

Alicia & Jeffrey Payne
Alumni Parents

Kristen & Keith Peter
Current Parents

Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Rorer
Current Parents

Dawn & Rich Salerno
Current Parents

Stellar Solutions LLC
*Made possible by Nagesh Kelkar, Current
 Parent*

Sunflower Foundation
*Made possible by Christena & Ken Waldman,
 Current Parents*

Anonymous

The Mentors

\$1,000+

Monika & Jörg Ahlgrimm
Current Parents

Anthony M. and Ann C. Ricci Memorial Fund
*Made possible by Sandy Griffin, Alumni
 Grandparent*

Gracen & Tom Ashton
Current Parents

Carolyn & John Bartholdson
Current Parents

Leslie Rogers Blum
Current Grandparent

Liz & Nick Blum
Current Parents

Anne Buczkowski
Alumni Parent

Amber West Buller '84* & Pierce Buller
**Alumna*

Scott Burkholder & Christine Stanko
Current Parents

Anne & Patrick Cahill
Current Grandparents

Terri Cappelli & Francis Jennings
Current Parents

Citizens Charitable Foundation
*Matching the gift of the Benjamin Rogers
 Family*

Comcast

Marie & John Connolly
Alumni Parents

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Dunn
Current Parents

Leslie & Rob Elliott
Current Parents

Betty & Vic Esposito
Current Grandparents

Carole Filtz
Alumni Parent

REPORT OF GIFTS

Molly & Gordon Fowler
Alumni Grandparents

Irene Gaskins
Head of School Emerita & Trustee Emerita

Jennifer* & Robb** Gaskins
**Former Staff & **Former Head of School*

Eric Gaupp
Current Parent

Ann & Maurice Glavin
Alumni Parents

Andrea & Richard Gottlieb
Alumni Parents

Anne & Matt Hamilton
Alumni Parents

Louisa Hanshew
Staff

Henry L. Kimelman Family Foundation
Made possible by Gay & Don Kimelman, Alumni Parents

Celeste & Richard III
Current & Alumni Grandparents

Ann Jones
Alumni Grandparent

Farah & Rahul Kapoor
Current Parents

Sally* & Rob Laird
**Staff*

Sue & Mark Lankford
Current Grandparents

The McGowan Family
Current Family

Karin & Rob Micheletti
Alumni Parents

Sandra L. Nesbitt
Current Grandparent

Cynthia Berger Nissen '96 & Kevin Nissen
Alumna & Current Parents

Michelle & Mark Noble
Current Parents

Dr. Leroy D. Nunery II
Trustee

Julia & Tom Patterson
Alumni Parents

Amy* & Jim Petersen
**Former Trustee & Alumni Parents*

Joshua Petersohn & Nuriye Uygur
Alumni Parents

Anne Rice-Burgess
Trustee & Alumni Parent

Carolyn Robbins
Staff

Mr.* & Mrs. Andrew B. Rogers '93
**Trustee, Alumnus*

Barbara* & Jim Rogers
**Former Staff & Alumni Parents*

Mr.* & Mrs. Benjamin Rogers '95
**Trustee, Alumnus*

The Rorer Foundation
Made possible by Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Rorer, Current Grandparents

Kai & Peter Seelaus
Alumni Parents

The Solomon & Sylvia Bronstein Foundation
Made possible by the Broker Family, Alumni Family

Margot & Philip Sullivan
Alumni Parents

Kwinn & Steve Tucker
Friends

Geoffrey Veale '86
Alumnus & Current Parent

Cindy Haveson Veloric & Michael Veloric
Alumni Parents

Karen & Jeffrey Wilson
Alumni Parents

Anonymous

DONORS

Gifts to Benchmark come from parents, grandparents, alumni and alumni families, faculty, trustees, and friends who have seen the impact of a Benchmark education and are committed to ensuring it continues.

The 2020-2021 Benchmark Fund (our school's annual fund) had an astounding 99% current family participation rate—the

highest in our school's history. We also had 100% participation from our trustees and 95% participation from our faculty and staff. The financial commitment of these two groups, in a year where we asked so much of them, is inspiring.

The Benchmark Fund bridges the gap between the cost of tuition and the funds needed to run the school. Gifts of all sizes are important, and we appreciate the donors listed below for standing with our students and families during a critical year.

Benefactors

\$500+

Ilene & Steven Berger
Marilyn & Al Blatter
Lisa & Rick Bonvicini
Dr. & Mrs. B. Gerard Bricks
Dori & Joshua Broudy
Megan & Patrick Cahill
Ridgely Chew '00
Linda & John Donahue
Nicholas Dubois '90
David Erskine
Barbara Fallon & Cole Walsh
Eileen & Andrew Flaherty
Tina Isen Fox & Richard Fox
Eleanor Gensemer
Lynn Gonzalez
Suzanne & Matthew Heckendorn
Dr. Joseph & Karen Iobst
Bandana Jha
Betsy (Hanway) Johnson '95 & Scott Johnson
Jennifer Kerbeck
Sarah & Shane Kinsella
Lankford Acquisition Company LP
Sandra & Robert Lichtenstein
Melanie & Jim McHugh
Nasdaq
William Pawlowsky '96
Becky & Doug Pyle
Laz Scheibe
The Schnyder Family
Kate & Andrew Semon
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Skelly
David Sullivan '00
Janine & Robert Tabas
Mark Thorburn
The Tomlinson Family
The Youngblood Family
Kathryn & Frank Zirnkilton

Sponsors

\$250+

Rafael Amaral
Sue Arabia
Mr. & Mrs. Richard S. Auchincloss, Jr.
Betsy & Charles Bemis
Janell & Larry Besa '91

Nicole & Trip Black
Cintya & Michael Carr
Susan & James Carr
Lexi & Joe Caruso '86
Mario Charriez & Megan King
Barbara & Isaac H. Clothier IV
The Cosgrove Family
Sloane & Brian Davis
Stephanie & Erick Davis
Kathy & Dave Dinella
Betsy & Michael Dubin
Jeong & Bill Duffy
Corrinne Fogg
Kelly & Kevin Ford
The Gelinas Family
Gerrity Agency Inc.
Google
Barbara & David Grove
Karen & Tom Helm
Sara Hill
Tom Hurster
The Keenan Family
Virginia & David Laird
Lankford Automotive Inc
Adam S. Lemisch
Joanne Levy
Elsie & Sandy McAdoo
Rosario Mariño & James Regan
Kitty & Steve Mattesky
Trisha & Stewart McCallum
Cynthia & Robert '81 McClung
Patricia & H. Brooke McMullin
Stephanie & Charlie Moleski
Nicholas Montgomery & Mary Katherine
Ortale '08
Anthony Orapallo
Robin Pointer & Robert Whalley
Gwen Ponder
Kari & Justin Richards
Kim Riley
Julie & Michael Samuels
The Schmidt Family
Peter Schofield
Kathryn & David Shields
Rachel & Andy Sofish
Brit & Whitney Suttell
Irene & Jim Sylvester
Vanguard Matching Gift Program
Wells Fargo Foundation Educational
Matching Gifts Program
Roberta West
The Whitehouse Family
Tammy & Ed Zabar
Anonymous

Patrons

\$100+

Erica Adams
Carol & Douglas Allan
Aqua America, Inc.
Jonathan Arend & Jaime Hanaway
Sean Bard '82 & Family

The Barrera-Gutierrez Family
Janine Barsoum & Jeff Butcher
Tyler Barton '99
Dorrance Hamilton Benson '94
Lynn Berry
Kathy & Larry Besa
Stacy & Gaeton Biscardi
The McKenna Black Family
The Bonatsos-Georgiou Family
The Braden-Forge Family
Stephanie & Kirk Brandow
Josh Bricks '88
Jen & Scott Brion
Sally & Peter Brodie
Marisa & Jim Bruder
Alyce Callison
Elise Carsello
Stephen T. Chase '06
Anthony Checchia
Marilyn Clarke
Mary J. Connelly
Sara Graff Cooke
Corning Incorporated Foundation
Megan A. Craven
Nikki Deangelis
Barb & Roger Demos
Carole & Barry Depew
The Detwiler Family
J.W. Draper
Tony Edmonds & Christal Mockenhaupt
Susan & Michael Effgen
Rosemary Eikov
Colin Finch '94
Kathy & Dan Fitzgerald
Shannon & Patrick Fitzgerald
Dorothy Flynn
Michael Frascella '94 & Family
Alexandra & Tom Frazier
Jan & Don Frisch
Paula & Bruce Fuhrmann
The Fulmer Family
David Gaunt '98
Wendy & William Gaunt
Jenna & Jeff Glahn
Kim Graham
Linda & Mike Graham
Sue & Brian Greenberg
Terry Grosso
Daurice & Robert Grubbs
Megan & David Grubbs
Crawford Hamilton '01
Miles Hamilton '07
Pamela Hamilton
Samuel M.V. Hamilton III '98
Lauren & Eli Hastings
Julie & Alan Hochman
Barbara & Dennis Hoffman
Karen & Joe Hofmann
Kate & Vince Horn
Elizabeth & Charles Hottenstein
Robert Jaffe '85
Ellet Jones

Sharon & Michael Jones Family
The Jones Family
Andrew Jordan '81
Turaya & Nicholas Kamau
The Kash Family
Ruth Kelemen
Nagesh Kelkar
Mary & Ed Kelly
Raine Kelsall
Paula & Steve Kennedy
Leslie Komarnicki
Amy & Michael Kopelman
The Krider Family
Barbara & Al Kurtz
Kari & Ken Kurtz
Cat Lambert
Jack Lamperez
Stephanie & Dan Lanchoney
Alison Lankford
Shannon & Tom Locher
Casita Lynn '89
Fanne & Robert Lytle
Eric MacDonald
Laura & Mark Matika
Julie & Tim Mattaliano
Emma Mattesky
Colin McAdoo '98
Elsie & Sandy McAdoo
Robert McAdoo
Jennifer McKenzie
The Mesigian Family
Jess & Todd Michener
Marjorie Mitchell
The Monahan Family
Laura & Jeremy Moskowitz
Melissa '03 & Erin '06 Murphy
Margaret Naugle
Julie Nesbitt & Derek Sweatt
Marcia & Neal Niznan
Jesse North
Susan North
Marissa & Michael O'Connell
Colleen O'Hara
Aindrea T. (MacDonald) Pattisall '84
Janine & Michael Pawlowsky
Ruth Payne
Anita & Joseph Pew
Natissa & Scott Pfautz
Pam Phillippe
Jacques Piquion
Elizabeth Price
Wayne Reichart
Pamela Reischauer
Gina Riganati
The Russell Family
Elisabeth Samuels '01
Bernard E. Schaeffer & Nanci O. Weber
Coreen Korengel Scheibe
Lisa & Michael Schreiber
Michel Manzo & Dean Schwartz
Aliza & Greg Schwartzman
Sally & Frank Scorzetti

REPORT OF GIFTS

Theresa Scott
Sara (Wilson) Searing '96 & Scott Searing
Judy Sennett
Jenn Shaw
Donna Shooster
Jeanne E. Smith
Regina M. Smith & Charles R. Smith, Jr.
Joanna & Phil Solomon
Zeffie Spirokostas
Ann & Jim Stinchon
The Sudhop Family
Kim & Mark Sylvester
Sharon Townley
Scott Trayah
Megan & Keith Trost
Starr Vernon
Martha & Ralph Wales
Teri Watkins
Latoya Watson
Katherine Wex, MD
F. John White II
Bill Williams
Cherie & Paul Williams '80
Megan Wonderland
Kristin & Stephen Yerger
Anonymous (3)

Friends

Up to \$99

The Abell-Doh Family
Accenture LLP
Acme - Give Back Where It Counts
Trisha Adami
Mary Lee & Harris Bass
Peggy & Lewis Beatty, Jr.
Eric Behrens & Lisa Popeck
Betty Berry
Karen Berry
Anne Blackburn
Richard Bocchini
Angela Bradbury & Bill Schweickert
The Breslin Family
Jackie Brodo
Silvana Byrne
Kevin Canney
Alexis Caporizzo
Coca-Cola Give
Becky Cogswell
Elizabeth Collins
Kelly Colton
Cyndi & Robert Conway
Faith Cost
Cheryl Cress
Rosanne Crowe
Christopher Crowley '94
Joan Davidson
Jane & Ernest Dellheim
Sue DiDomenico
Mara Dixon
Patrick Doyle & Dawn Harper
Christine Dragoun
Kay Draper

Merril & John Dutton
The Evans Family
Lauren Frantz
Stefanie Frayne
Sean Flynn '12
Judy Galloway
Francesca & Noah Gans-Pfister
Halina & John Glowacki
Nettie & Sterling Green
Mary Kate Grubbs '12
Helene & Jeff Herman
Morton Howard
The Hummel Family
Rebecca Hyde
Anthony Kamara
Hedy Karbinder
Susan Keith
Eric Knight '81
Dolores Kowalski
MaryBeth & Rob Kowalski
Ladies Benevolent Society
Janet & Bill Lampe
Helen Lawrence
Missy & Gabe Levin
Lincoln Financial Foundation
Marian B. & J. Dirk Lorenz
The Mader Family
Sandy Madison
Jen Malone
Lauren & James Maloney '04
Michael Maloney
Nicole Martin
Luca Mazzola
Drew McCorkell
Naketa McCray
Avery McMahon
Brysen McMullin '12
Maria Michetti
Danielle Miller
Hadley Mottola '10
The Murray Family
Susan Null
Jamellia Colistia O'Neal
Ann Rita Orapallo
Mary Lewis Orsatti
Joyce Ostertag
Christine Otto
The Polizzi Family
Nancy Powell
The Prinbeck Family
Seher & Tarik Quadir
Melinda Rahm
Beth Regan
Kristina Reisinger
Ayesha & Dallas Rhoads
The Rivkind Family
Rebecca Rosenstock
Megan & Craig Rushmore '06
Philip Ruth
Laura Carrington Sahlin '04
Melissa Savage
Nicole Scali

Marie Schueren
Jenn & Phill Scirrotto
Ben Seligsohn '09
Catherine Sharbaugh
Virginia Sharpless
Alyce Sheerer
Jennifer Sherman
The Siegel Family
The Silk Family
Deborah & David Snyder
Leslie Stein
Pete Tarnoff
Alex Templeton
Jenelle Tomov
The Uglow Family
Amanda & Scott Utain
Carolynn Utz '83
Laurie & Tim Veacock
Heather Warley
The Watson Family
Lynn & J. Reuben Wetherbee
Sara & Craig Wilhelmson
Sarah Witalec
Stephany & John Ziegler
Anonymous

GIFTS IN KIND

Nikki & John Bendl
Carolyn Robbins

NAMED FUNDS

Benchmark is the grateful recipient of numerous gifts to our restricted funds, all of which provide valuable, but targeted, resources for the school. The gifts from these individuals not only speak to their passion, but also to their commitment to our school community.

Beth Coltman Scholarship Fund
The Coltman Family Foundation

The Dr. Robert Gaskins Fund for Mindfulness, Peace, and Social Justice
Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Innovation Lab Building Fund
Sandy & Scott Adzick
Carol A. Atterbury/The Boudinot Foundation
Patti Karolyi & Michael Semerjian
Jennifer & Samir Mehta
Mondrian Investment Partners, Inc.
Cindy Haveson Veloric & Michael Veloric

The Joey Pozzuolo Memorial Scholarship
Sharyn & Joe Pozzuolo

The Peter B. Deakins Memorial Fund
Susan Deakins

The Promising Scholars Fund

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins
Caren Lambert
Charles Ryan

The Sawyer Henry Weir Creative Learning Initiative

Cheryl & Thomas Sawyer Weir

VEX IQ Robotics Club & Challenge

The Steve & Ilene Berger Foundation

GIFTS IN MEMORY

Benchmark School is deeply appreciative of the gifts given by our donors in memory of friends and loved ones. It is our privilege to remember the individuals listed in bold type.

Margie Beckett

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

James Bemis '86

Betsy & Charles Bemis

Jay H. Blum

Leslie Rogers Blum

Ellen Chan

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

David Collins

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins
Leslie Komarnicki
Joyce Ostertag

Frances Galson

Eileen & Andrew Flaherty

Richard C. Gaskins, Sr.

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Susan Ross Hatch

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Tracy Elizabeth Hottenstein

Elizabeth & Charles Hottenstein

Barbara Sage Barus Marshall

Ladies Benevolent Society

Nathan Pincus

Leslie & Rob Elliott

David Shooster

Donna Shooster

GIFTS IN HONOR

Benchmark joins with the following generous donors who have chosen to celebrate the individuals listed in bold type with gifts to Benchmark School in their honor.

8th grade grads!

Gina Riganati

Janine & Aaron Asbury

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Evie Bartholdson

Carole & John Bartholdson

Benchmark Class of 2020 graduates

Stephanie & Erick Davis

Benchmark's dedicated faculty & staff

Nicholas Montgomery

Benchmark Teachers & Eleanor Gensemer

Jen Malone

Hudson Berger & Micah Nissen

Ilene & Steven Berger

Karen Grimm Berry

Regina M. Smith & Charles R. Smith, Jr.

Marilyn Dvorak Blatter

Nicholas Dubois '90

Andrew Blum '21

Liz & Nick Blum

Stephanie J. Bogutz '08

Mary Lewis Orsatti

Liza Kurtz Bragin '93

Barbara & Al Kurtz

Agnes P. Brion & her first year at Benchmark

Elise Carsello

Jackie Brodo

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Mac Cahill

Anne & Patrick Cahill

Nicolena Carsello '21

Elise Carsello

Joe Caruso, Sr.

Lexi & Joe Caruso '86

Edward Chan

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Child & Family Support Services Department

Adam S. Lemisch

The creative thinking and teamwork of the first years in the church basement

Barbara & David Grove

Rachel Dellheim '93

Jane & Ernest Dellheim

Scott Draper '04

J.W. Draper

John Dyitt

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Reese Dyson '21

Elise Carsello

Blake Fox '17, high school graduation

Tina Isen Fox & Richard Fox

Lauren Frantz

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Dr. Irene Gaskins

Linda & John Donahue
Jennifer & Robb Gaskins
Julie & Michael Samuels

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Dr. Irene Gaskins

Dr. Robert Gaskins

Karen & Joe Hofmann
Kari & Ken Kurtz
Joshua Petersohn & Nuriye Uygur
Regina M. Smith & Charles R. Smith, Jr.

Angelina Georgiou

The Bonatsos-Georgiou Family

Seamus Glavin '12

Ann & Maurice Glavin

Gracie Gottlieb '09

Andrea & Richard Gottlieb

Emmett Hastings

Lauren & Eli Hastings

Otto Heckendorn '20

Suzanne & Matthew Heckendorn

Joseph Hofmann '19

Silvana Byrne

Carly Hottenstein '16

Elizabeth & Charles Hottenstein

Chelsea Iobst '01

Dr. Joseph & Karen Iobst

Sophia Kowalski '21

Elise Carsello

William Lampe

Janet & Bill Lampe

REPORT OF GIFTS

Hunter Lankford

Sue & Mark Lankford
Lankford Acquisition Company LP
Lankford Automotive Inc.

Helen Lawrence

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Rebecca Wilson Lerario '96

Karen & Jeffrey Wilson

Katy Lichtenstein '95

Sandra & Robert Lichtenstein

Jeremy I. Lorenz '87

Marian B. & J. Dirk Lorenz

Dr. Eric MacDonald

Lisa & Rick Bonvicini

James Maloney '04

Betty Berry

Jane & Pippa McKenzie

Celeste & Richard III

William B. Micheletti '15

Karin & Rob Micheletti

Nicholas Michener

Marilyn Clarke

Jesse North

Sharyn & Joe Pozzuolo

Pandemic persistence/the phenomenal BMK teachers and staff

Stacy & Gaeton Biscardi

Alex & Matthew Peter

Carole & John Bartholdson

Nancy Powell

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

Ben Rogers' great leadership as Board Chair

Dr. Leroy D. Nunery II

Sara Wilson Searing '96

Karen & Jeffrey Wilson

Marianne Smith's retirement

Laurie & Tim Veacock

Sam Sylvester

Irene & Jim Sylvester

Carly Tolson

Kwinn & Steve Tucker

Jewel Trayah

Jeanne E. Smith

Ralph Wales

Jennifer & Robb Gaskins

C.J. Walsh III '05

Barbara Fallon & Cole Walsh

Daniel Zabar

Tammy & Ed Zabar

EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT TAX CREDIT (EITC)

The Benchmark community greatly appreciates the support of the companies listed below who gave or pledged more than \$200,000 to Benchmark's Scholarship Fund through Pennsylvania's EITC program. This program allows businesses and individuals to "re-direct" their Pennsylvania taxes by receiving up to a 90% tax credit in exchange for their gift to Benchmark. Over the past two decades, Benchmark students have received more than \$3.6 million in scholarship assistance. It is truly a win-win for both our donors and our students. If you would like more information on how to participate in the EITC program, please contact Louisa Hanshew, Director of Development & Parent Engagement, at 610-565-3741, ext. 150 or louisahanshew@benchmarkschool.org.

AIM Scholarship 1 LLC

Made possible by Sasha Ballen & Dee Spagnuolo

Bryn Mawr Trust Company

Business Leadership Organized for Catholic Schools (BLOCS)

Made possible by Nikki & John Bendl, Charles Bramley, Amara & Jason Briggs, Laina & Rob Driscoll, Wendi & Charlie Chase, Keith Morgan, Mark Muehl, Sheri & Ken Resnik

Montgomery Avenue II LLC

Made possible by Nancy & Robert Mitchell

Pennsylvania Education Partnership LLC

Made possible by Daniel Govberg, Jim Viner

Silverback Educational Foundation for the Arts, Dance, & Athletics (SEFADA)

Made possible by the Steven C. Graham Family

SofterWare Inc.

Stellar Solutions LLC

Made possible by Nagesh Kelkar

UHS of Pennsylvania, Inc.

2020-2021 BENCHMARK PARENTS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE CHAIRS

President

Kristin Yerger

Vice President

Missy Hanway

Treasurer

Maggie Brodnik

Secretary

Janell Besa

Fun Fridays – Book Club

Sarah Kinsella

Fun Fridays – Pilates

Kim Sylvester

Fun Fridays – Yoga

Farah Kapoor

Monthly Staff Appreciation

Joanna & Phil Solomon

Benchmark is grateful to our families for their support and flexibility during a school year like none we have ever seen. Even with many restrictions, our BPA provided ways to cultivate community and show appreciation to our dedicated faculty and staff. Thank you!

This list represents gifts received as of June 30, 2021.

Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If there are additions, corrections, or omissions, please accept our apologies and contact Director of Development & Parent Engagement Louisa Hanshew at 610-565-3741, ext. 150 or louisahanshew@benchmarkschool.org.

Years listed following the names of our Benchmark alumni indicate the last year they attended Benchmark or graduated.



BenchmarkSCHOOL
2107 North Providence Road
Media, PA 19063-1898

610-565-3741
benchmarkschool.org
mainoffice@benchmarkschool.org

Address Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WILMINGTON, DE
PERMIT #751



Benchmark Gala

Save the Date

Saturday

May 14, 2022

Plan to join us for
cocktails and dinner on
our beautiful campus as
we cap our celebration
of the anniversary of the
founding of our school.

Sponsorships available.

Please email louisahanshew@benchmarkschool.org for information.