

The Chronicle





Contents

Greetings from the Head of School

Annual Report

The Greenfield Game

**New Family Profile: The Barlow and
Billus family**

Congratulations Graduates

Staff Profile: Amanda Richard

**Community Voice: Morning with
the Littles**

Alumni Updates!

Student Voice: Poetry Mashup

**Faculty Voice: What? Teachers Doing
Stand-Up?**

**Board Member Voice: Curtain Up
on the Middles!**

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Greetings from Charlie

Greetings, friends! We have tons of news to share in these pages. I hope you find something that moves you as you read. I must say I am immensely proud of how well things are going here at YOUR Center School these days.



This year, the school underwent the Association of Independent Schools of New England accreditation process. The process entailed a remarkable journey of “self-study” in which our community—teachers, staff, parents, administration, and board, took a careful and thoughtful look at our mission and connected to EVERY single aspect of the school. We wrote over 500 pages of material for AISNE. Then in May, a team of five committee members from other AISNE schools came out to Greenfield to take a look at the Center School in action. Here’s the letter I wrote to them as a snapshot of “what to expect” when then came:

“The most important reason for going from one place to another is to see what’s in between, and they took great pleasure in doing just that.” From *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster, local author

March 15, 2015

Dear AISNE Visiting Team,

Happy much deserved spring! I am very pleased to be writing you this letter on behalf of my beloved Center School community. As you read about us you will discover that Center Schoolers learn from one another every day, and this year we’ve done so with the added layer of the Self-Study process. Thus far, the Self-Study has proven to be an enlightening and empowering experience. Over the course of this AISNE quest, the teachers, staff, Board of Directors, and Parent Union have gathered in galvanized cohorts to work on the 50 AISNE standards (50!), and thus to think deeply about the school most of us call affectionately, “home.” Through this process, not only have we come together for reflection and dialogue, we’ve also done what we ask our students to do all the time, to clearly articulate our ideas in a creative and eloquent representation. As you all know, wrapped up in the two binders awaiting your perusal is more than a year’s work. Much more. They hold a collaborative narrative account of what makes us, us. As you also know, we are incredibly proud of our School (why else go through this?). What’s gratifying is that pride in our school is both

what prompted us to do the work in the first place AND what we generated by doing it. That journey "in between" got us far. I've been asked to write to you to share the Center School's overall strengths, areas of challenge, and directions for the future. I'd like to



start with a story (I'm a 2nd/3rd grade teacher at heart, so this is how I roll). Yesterday, when I went to pick up my son Jude from his Uppers classroom all of the students and their teachers seemed to be either gathered around a rope, or pulling hard on it. I wondered what was happening---was this a teambuilding, tug-of-war exercise? When I took in more of the scene I saw Andrew, 8th grader and resident tightrope walker, standing on the rope as the crew around him began to miraculously hoist him off the ground. As it happened, he lost footing and jumped down. But that's not so important; we've all seen Andrew walk a tightrope successfully. What was memorable was this crowd, in deep concentration, lifting up a boy with such commitment, such investment. It was pure Center School. It was strength in practice. The Andrew moment reveals a school that exceeds mortal expectations in nurturing the young people it serves. It literally lifts them up.

Presently, just shy of 34 years

in the business of progressive education, the Center School can boast knowing itself and its kids remarkably, especially well. Having been here for a while, studying on this, I think I can explain why. It is because we function as so much more than an 8am-3pm school full of pencils, snow-pants, and lunchboxes. Ours is a school and a community base, a church or temple without the prayers. "The Center School hums," Laura Baker, our previous Head, used to always say. You often can't find a room or a hallway that's not alive with practice, wonder, laughter, or purpose.

The School isn't teachers teaching kids and serving parents who pay tuition, it is teachers, kids, staff members, parents, alumni, and community members learning together... on a journey through the "in between." Which is not to say there aren't some wonderful ends or results that punctuate the process, for our Graduation ceremony is truly a rite of passage worthy of note. In fact, a huge benefit of the School knowing itself so well at this point in its history is that it can produce incredibly polished moments that mark success and thoroughly enjoy the messy learning, the grappling, and the unself-conscious confidence that comes with being an established and distinguished institution. We walk that tightrope well. Established, trusted, and refined are counter-balanced with playful, experimental, and rugged.

The Board of Directors and I have formed a great partnership in my years as Head, and much has been

accomplished. We have a strategic plan and five year financial plan in place, we have reviewed by-laws, best practices, and personnel guidelines. And for me, most significantly, we (alongside the faculty, staff, and Parent Union) have revised our mission and philosophy. That experience brought us back in tune so to speak (we sing a lot around here, which you'll do with us when you come!). All of that deep work, from which we grew, also brought us into closer contact with our growing edges. We have envisioned ambitious future goals, whilst acknowledging that a slow and steady, process-oriented approach suits us best. The School's clear next steps will involve focusing attention on our old and infirm buildings; on our bottom line by keeping up momentum on marketing and outreach for increased enrollment; and on fostering ties with our newly grown-up, first generation of alumni who are poised to support the Center School.

On a practical note, when you arrive for your visit the Center School's landscape will be full of flowers, Frisbees, and burgeoning 8th graders ready to fledge. You will meet us where we are right at that moment, with a new Preschool, a morphing 8th grade program and so much more...

We look forward to welcoming you to our home.

With best wishes,

*Charlie Spencer
Head of School*

Room For All Raising Rainbows Scholarship and All-Gender Bathrooms



As we went to press, the Center School made local news – papers and TV – because of our new scholarship for transgender, gender nonconforming, and gender creative kids.

Why do we have all gender bathrooms?

Because it's the best way to be inclusive. Because we want kids to feel safe. Because we want all of our community members to feel welcome and not scrutinized.

Why the scholarship?

The Center School's Raising Rainbows scholarship provides tuition support for Center School students who are transgender, gender nonconforming, gender creative, or who have family members who are. The scholarship was inspired by a beautiful, brave Center School transgender student who transitioned when she was in kindergarten. In addition the initiators of this fund recognize the wonderful Lori Duron and the loving story of her gender creative son as added inspiration.

Annual Fund Report

We're having a tremendous year, Center School! Thanks to all who've committed to this year's annual fund campaign. We still have until June 30th to reach our goal of \$80,000 and hope that -- by the time this Chronicle reaches your mailboxes and we've celebrated our first Center School Day giving challenge -- we're nearer to our goal.

To date, 268 of you have contributed. We have raised 62.41% of our goal. Thank you to those alumni, grandparents, families, staff members, aunts, uncles and friends who've given so generously!

Last year's Annual Report:

GOAL: \$70,000
RAISED: \$71,572
348 donors

- Gifts ran the gamut from \$4 - \$12,100
- The average gift was \$200, which is on a downward trend (\$240 in FY14, \$300 in FY12, \$540 in FY11)
- 88 of you gave to the School for the first time!
- 86% families participated (97% of returning families) and 100% of board and staff

The Annual Fund supports our staff and faculty, pays for books and technology, field trips and professional development. It also contributes to our financial aid budget which benefits over 60% of our fam, band-aids and paperclips, technology, paint, beakers, and more.

If you haven't yet made your Annual Fund contribution, please do so now. Please honor the teachers, the founders, the students -- our mission -- and give today. **It takes all of us! Please give today!**

Year-to-Date Progress

(as of June 3, 2015)

GOAL: \$80,000
RAISED: \$49,928 -- 62.41%

268 donors

SPECIAL THANKS to this year's anonymous donors who sponsored matching challenges for Valley Gives Day AND Center School Day. This community LOVES a challenge!

We still need to raise \$30,000 by June 30th! You can use the enclosed envelope or go online NOW to give: centerschool.net. **THANK YOU!**

Founder's Voice

The Greenfield Game

By Ruth Charney with Wisty Rorabacher

We're on the first shift at the Greenfield Coop but after we get out of work, there's no food left at the farm. What are we going to do?

I'm unemployed. I just sit around all day. I don't like sitting around all day. It's not fair. I need a job.

If I don't get my two vegetables, I lose "wellness points" and have to go to the doctor. But if I go to the doctor, and I pay the doctor, then I don't have enough money for vegetables.

No, these are not corporate heads or government policy wonks sorting out the economic realities of the day. These are the insights of the Mups Class, seven and eight year olds playing "The Greenfield Game." They are engaged in a role-playing thematic unit that investigates the way town systems work, and how citizens collaborate in a community. The game was invented by teachers Oliver Brown and Sara Johnson as a way to make the elements of a town relevant to students' day-to-day lives. Equally important, was the goal of allowing students to make choices and exert their own agency in the town's activities as a way to make life better for everyone. In the process of the game, students confront real-life problems such as road congestion, failing businesses, unemployment, overflowing landfills, limited resources, limited



The Greenfield Game in action!

budgets and the best use of tax money to make needed improvements. Sound familiar? Remarkably, the problems students encountered do sound familiar, and lead to real fact-finding missions, ongoing fieldwork and problem solving "town meetings."

The post office ran out of funds. The Pet Store was flourishing but pet supplies were draining the resources of the shoppers and there was a food shortage experienced by those on a second work-shift, which could not be solved by adding more grocery stores. To remediate food shortages, for example, the residents eventually decided to pool money, buy more land and develop more farms. (As

did their real life counterparts!) Thus, within a carefully framed structure, students deliberated open-ended choices that had real economic consequences. In this masterfully crafted thematic unit, learning became active, inventive and rigorous.

And not just for the children. Oliver noted how much he learned seeing the students handle “complexity.” Sara was also struck by how much the students reached out with empathy to help one another succeed. Both teachers reported that as the game progressed, so did the student’s active engagement, which constantly pushed the game in new directions. Yet always with the underlying focus that “together we make a community work.”

All this and it’s still a game: A game with dice, cards, a map (large enough to walk on) and risk. A game defined by open-ended possibilities. Game, as in, there are certain givens, which rotate on a daily basis to include: a job (unless you’re unlucky enough to pick one out of the five unemployment cards), earned money, a car, a house and wellness points. Your task is to carry out your job, eat healthy meals, help your fellow citizens and maybe even (if you happen to be one the 3 parents in the town) make sure your children get to school on time. (That wasn’t the most popular option!) And spend your money. Money that is not spent on required food or gas, for example, may be used to open a business that may benefit the town. Money must also be used to pay taxes (every three days.) Students

then decided the best use of the tax revenue based on identified problems. Congestion continues to defy solutions last we heard.

Wisty and I were deeply moved by the degree of trust invested by the school in its faculty to construct age-appropriate curriculum and then the degree of trust the teachers invest in the students to construct and solve problems. A word both teachers used frequently to describe the experience was “agency.” Agency was not an accidental by-product, but a core belief in how we best learn. It came with the opportunity to translate learning into active play. It came with being able to try on roles and explore connections. It came with the fundamental design to connect each student’s work, one to another, and then to the larger town system. Agency scaffolds each the steps of the process. Oliver and Sara stated their belief that “we are all part of a system, not a perfect one, but with proper diagnosis, we are bound to make it work better for all of us.”



And it was fun. As in all of our favorite games, there was always the matter of luck, the roll of the dice, the pick of lucky and unlucky cards (only a few of those) and the thrill of making good deals. There weren’t losers here, though

some will fare better than others on a given day, but then there is the next day and the generosity of peers to count on.

The Greenfield Game is one part of the teacher-designed curriculum that so informs the Greenfield Center School's philosophy. However, that it persists at a time of standardized, prescribed practices, including "teacher-proof" packages is also significant. So, in the end, we had to ask Oliver and Sara, about risk and their own courage. Both seemed a bit perplexed by the question, but not because the "courage to teach" wasn't basic to their practice. For Oliver, it was a natural outcome of his "drive to get at the bigger picture" and his utter dedication to helping children become active learners. And for Sara, it was always informed by her trust and faith in the children. Even children who struggled with organizing and planning, or who were not always able to grasp social cues, learned to navigate the game with skill. And if and when things got messy, if things failed at moments, there was always the wonderful opportunity to learn from failure. "What were problems for you? What are ways to solve the problems? Let's see how it works next time."

One last stipulation about the Greenfield Game, the teachers wanted to make sure we grasped. The town might need a garbage dump and a doctor's office, but it was also critical that the children feel that the project was "theirs." "Theirs" meant that it could be place where their dreams and passions might be fulfilled. When one

of the students wanted a subway system, just because he loved trains, Greenfield Town got trains.

We are hoping the Greenfield Game might go viral. We are hoping more teachers have a chance to learn from and then share similar projects with their students. We are thinking we'd like to play. Maybe all of Greenfield, including its planning boards and administrators, might want to join the Mups for a round or two. And we thank you Oliver and Sara and Center School.

"If your pet needs food and you can only afford one vegetable, what should you do?"

Ruth Charney is a co-founder of Center School, a former teacher, consultant and author. She told ghost stories at All-School, ran literature seminars and writing workshops in the Uppers for over twenty years. She loved having a grandchild in the Littles last year and is just so grateful that this brave and wonderful school continues to grow.

Wisty Rorabacher was a classroom teacher for over thirty years. Her experiences ranged from helping develop the original city-wide program for special needs preschoolers in Minneapolis to creating a progressive / alternative public school program for highly creative, intelligent students who rejected the conventional high school program in Fayetteville, Arkansas. In 2007, Wisty and her partner moved to Greenfield in order to be more involved with their family, including Anni Greenbacher (granddaughter) who is in Mups.

New Family Profile

Interview with Lou Barlow and Kathleen Billus

By Charlie Spencer, Head of School

How'd you find the Center School?

Kathleen: Initially, I assumed we would simply send the children to a good local public school. The decision to move and the act of moving all happened so fast that I didn't even consider other options outside of public schools. In fact, I focused my housing search for the kids and me, in Northampton and Amherst, as general consensus indicated those were the best options. When Lou suggested we apply to the Center School, I looked into it and thought it seemed ideal because it espoused everything I believe in (social justice, empathy, respect for play, strengthening confidence, and more). All credit goes to Lou for finding the Center School and I'll be forever grateful.

Lou: I'd heard about it through Kim Gordon and Thurston Moore. I had met them initially when I was 19 and my band, Dinosaur Jr, toured with Sonic Youth. Respecting Kim and Thurston creatively I was also curious about the decisions they made as parents. Hearing that they were sending Coco to a school -all the way up- in Greenfield was interesting to me.

Why did you choose us? What were your initial impressions?

Lou: My family -- my sister, her partner and my parents, were living in and relocating to Greenfield (all of them very enthusiastic about



Kathleen, Hendrix and Hannelore

the town), My first thought, before even finding a place to live, was finding a school for Hannelore. I wanted a 'center' to focus our move knowing that Kathleen and I could potentially end up in different towns. The move entailed relocating Adelle and me, along with Kathleen and the children, so it was complex. After doing some preliminary research I was encouraged by the reasonable tuition rates at the Center School and thought the time was right to explore an alternative after feeling ambivalent about the test-heavy public school Hannelore went to in LA.

Kathleen: I came here and sent Hannelore to the Center School with a bar set high for school. Hannelore went to Ivanhoe School in our Silver Lake neighborhood which had a sterling reputation in the city and shortly before we

left town, was designated a “distinguished” L.A. public school. I volunteered actively from the time she started kindergarten and was regularly blown away by her teachers (one particularly vicious P.E. coach being the notable exception), the administration and my fellow parents. Whenever we had an issue, the principal or teacher was ON IT. I had so much fun working there on fundraisers or whatever was asked. I loved that school so much that it made leaving L.A. all the more torturous.

So, I hope I make it clear that the bar was set super-high. But, I started being blown away from the interview and tour and on from there. I’m surprised anything is left of me but little tiny bits. First, I was so happy to learn at the interview about the “social scaffolding” that is set up so that kids aren’t really in a place where bullying and ostracizing can start. Then, Hannelore started blossoming in the fall. There is so much at this school that’s fantastic. I constantly say to everyone I know that *I* wish *I* went here. There are opportunities at this school that I almost can’t fathom. Swimming? Skiing? Canoeing and kayaking? In school? Oh, and a play? And a variety show? What? And the teacher: student ratio?

And, your teachers eat lunch with you? Are you kidding me? So many parents, the faculty, staff, everyone is so incredibly welcoming and kind.

What has it been like to be a new family here?

Lou: I feel like I’m still settling in (only recently did I find out what an “All School” is!) And have yet to

really delve in but everyone has been very kind.

Kathleen: I’m made to feel welcome and valued every step of the way here. And, I’m blown away all the time. I’ll never forget the first few times that



Lou, Hendrix and Hannelore

little children would say “hello” and “excuse me” in the halls. Just knock me down with a feather. For as much as Ivanhoe in L.A. was awesome, THAT would never have happened. Or hold the door open for me. No way. Can’t believe it, but it’s true. And then at the Middles U.S. Fest last month, every single student was engaging, warmly inviting me to try food they brought, offering to answer questions that it almost made me dizzy. I thought, as awesome as Hannelore’s L.A. school was, there’d be maybe 2 kids like that in a class. And, then, there’s All School. I attend whenever I can and it never fails to blow me away. The first time I attended, I cried, and was assured by a few moms

that it's okay, that happens. Why did I cry? Because the kids are all so freaking awesome! I kept having

SHOUT OUT
to Mike Skillicorn '00,
our first alumni board
member!

to ask "How old are these kids?" Answer: Uppers (11-14). What? I wasn't this poised when I was 30. These kids are INCREDIBLE.

Recently, I volunteered to drive Middles to a hiking trip in Shelburne. When I was sitting with my daughter and a few Middles while we painted landscapes, one student said she loved the Center School and hoped she would always be able to attend. On the hike, I had such great conversations with 3 moms. The kids were all so lovely. The teachers were lovely.

I had so much fun from the car ride to and from, that I felt reluctant to go home to my apartment where it felt like it was just cleaning and tidying that awaited me. I didn't want to go home. It was all too much fun. I overheard Charlie saying she was super busy and asked if I could help in any way. I was put to work at the front desk on the phone and continued to have so much fun dealing with so many cool, sweet people that I was sad when it was apparent that there was no other way I could be more useful that day and I had to head home. *I tell everyone I know that the Center School is the best thing about moving out here.*

What does Hannelore like

most about the school so far?

Kathleen: Hannelore's acclimation has been exceptionally great. She has told me on her own, things like "Wow, even the boys at Center School are nice." (Boys, being sometimes, well, you know, challenging.) She told me 2 weeks ago that she used to be okay with saying hello, but now, at the Center School, she can actually talk to people. Wow. Hannelore had a tough time finding friends at our L.A. school. She has found real rapport, encouragement, support, challenge, attention and care. I can't think of anything more I could possibly want for her.

Lou: She doesn't really get into her day-to-day specifics with me. I don't press her about it. We have been discovering Greenfield piece by piece. But I can say that she seems relaxed and natural in a way that I don't know would have been possible in LA. She seems more confident and it is easy to get her up in the morning. I take that to mean she likes it!

What does Hendrix think about our preschool?

Kathleen: Hendrix hit the ground running at the Center School. He cheers when it is time to go to school. He loves his teachers. It was a big deal early on that the Center School had a "boy" teacher (Dan).

Lou: Hendrix spends 3 days a week at the Center School and 2 days at the Y. He has, in all seriousness, said to me "Center School is my jam, Dad. It's more chill."

Lou's bio: Born in Ohio, raised in Michigan and Massachusetts. Early

jobs in healthcare until music career 'took off'. Full-time musician since 1989. Married and divorced. Two children: Hendro and Hanne. Re-married 2015. As an adult I lived in Boston 8 years, Los Angeles 17 years and now Greenfield.

Kathleen's Bio: I grew up in Connecticut, graduated from

Smith College in '89, having met Hannelore's dad halfway through. I lived in Boston for 7 years working mostly in computer science publishing, managing Lou's music career and doing Escargot, a 'zine about music and the Internet. I moved to L.A. in '98 and worked in educational media.

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Congratulations Graduates!!! *Where are they going?*

Class of 2015 High Schools

Edwin Anderson: To be decided

Tai Coppinger: To be decided

Cassidy McDonough-Penson:

Northampton High School

Andrew Nordell: The Putney School

Sky Phillips: Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School

Margo Schocket-Greene: Northampton High School

Emma Worth: To be decided

Class of 2011 Colleges and Such

Cami Bluh-Derricote: continuing at Academy at Charlemont (due to chronic illness, she missed a great deal of school last year. She is doing well!)

Seamus Freeman-Hawks: GCC/gap year; planning to record music

Mollie Fuller: UMass Amherst, gap year first

Jules Gillis: Skidmore College

Grace Powers: Drexel University

Isabelle Reynolds: UMass Amherst/ Isenberg School of Management

Chris Turner: Not known



Staff Profile

Meet Amanda!

By Alison Greene, 2014-15 Board Chair, 8th Grade and Alumni Parent

You have to meet Amanda. When a harried parent walks into school with a clutch of field-trip permission slips, medical forms, and pizza money, Amanda gathers up the wrinkled papers and smooths them into their proper channels. When a tearful MUP presents a freshly wounded dignity, Amanda applies the best band-aid in just the right place. When the Head of School needs to track Annual Fund donations right now, Amanda works her magic on her laptop. You have to meet Amanda.

Officially, she is the Office Manager, Preschool Administrator, Board Member, Parent Union representative, and the mother of two Center School students and one GCS alumna. But unofficially, and more accurately, one teacher calls her the backbone of the school. Her superpower? Grace under pressure. She is the confidence keeper. She knows more about this school and its inhabitants than anyone else, and you'd never know it. As people



Daughters Sierra, Uppers (left), Sasha Class of 2013 (middle), Eva, Mups (right)

meet Amanda in the front office, they are invariably drawn by her warm serenity and awed by how unbelievably competent she is.



Before she took the Center School in hand in 2011, some of her favorite jobs were professional photographer, running a teller line at a local credit union, and teaching preschool. When she's not editing an AISNE Self Study or pulling a tick from a tousled head, Amanda says her favorite moment of the day is "When all the kids are in class and I get to take a walk around the school, peeking in the windows to check out what they're all up to. I loved seeing the kids engaged and excited about learning. There's always something interesting to see, from art projects and dramatic play in the Littles to reading Beowulf and woodworking in the Uppers."

She thinks her powers are pretty basic and not so heroic: "I try to be a good listener, and always give a hand, hug, or encouraging word to those who need it, whether it's a student, staff member or parent." At the Center School, these are the qualities that precisely define heroic.

Community Voice

Morning with the Littles

By Lisa Ranghelli, Alumni Parent

It's the Tuesday morning after the Memorial Day weekend, and there are a dozen kids in the Littles classroom today. When I arrive, I marvel at how the old Mups classroom, where my son Noah thrived in 2nd-3rd grades, has been transformed for these pre-schoolers, with a direct bathroom entrance to boot.

Three girls are coloring animal shapes with crayons while they chat with Amy about seemingly random topics like whether any

of them has ever eaten frogs' legs. Two girls take a break from assembling wooden puzzles to inspect some new supplies—two giant round cardboard tubes and many small toilet paper tubes, and they begin to engage in imaginary play with the intriguing objects. Two boys are over by the chalkboard playing with matchbox cars. Another child sits on the small couch with Dan reading a book.

Littles' parent Maggy is dawdling at drop-off, chatting with teacher Caitlin next to the guinea pig's cage. Asked what the Littles means to her, Maggy reflects, "I went to this school. I started as a Prime.

Now I'm coming at it from a new lens. It's a comfortable community, it feels safe. There are a lot of really cool dynamics going on here." Maggy takes a break to "lick" a pretend lollipop, an offering from her daughter Mia, which she made

by stringing together large wooden beads on a stick. "The program has a homey environment, like going to grandma's house." Actually, grandma is Chris Pinney,

who taught at the Center School for many years, so perhaps that's not surprising. "Here, you're not a number in a classroom," she adds.

This theme of valuing individuality within community recurs throughout my brief visit with the Littles. I see how the kids are encouraged to explore their own interests while getting support to be responsible members of the group. "I want the kids to experience what it means to be a community member," says lead teacher Amy. "And I want the kids to be able to take risks, to push their boundaries, see where their growing edge is," which will be different for each kid. "Some explore physical boundaries, and



for others, it's about the emotional connection to everything."

The girls drawing animals recount for me recent art adventures, including "paint skating," in which the kids put paint on a canvas and then slide on it, and another activity that involved painting on the windows that overlook the school grounds. Also, each child is given a canvas at the beginning of the year and works on it over the course of the semester, allowing each piece to "evolve," as Amy notes.

Teacher Dan calls together the morning meeting circle on the floor. After leading the group in some songs, he reads *Up in the Garden, Down in the Dirt*. "Why are we reading this book today?" he asks. A boy answers confidently, "Because flowers are growing **right now!**" Around the classroom are indeed the signs of spring—tadpoles are swimming in an aquarium, plants the children seeded are growing by the window sill, and large photos document their outside explorations in the woods.

As I join the circle, a kind girl welcomes this newcomer by giving me her stuffie, Dylan, to hold for a spell. Another girl is gently reminded not to talk over others but rather wait her turn. When a third girl starts to cry because she wasn't called on, Dan asks the group, "Does everyone get a turn all the time? When you don't, is that hard?"

Dan says he likes teaching at the Center School because it is a school "where there is a teacher who knows your child really well.

We embrace the kids' individual personalities, respond to what each needs." He adds, "We are colearners, learning side by side along with the kids, discovering together. It is a strong community feeling."

Now it is time to "clap out" the Uppers, who are going to the Cape (6-7th graders) and New York City (8th graders). For some kids, a lot of loud clapping is scary (which is why older kids have learned to applaud the Littles with hand-waving during their presentations), so one group heads to the clap-out with Caitlin while the other stays behind to do sharing with Dan.

As I say my reluctant goodbyes, I recall the sustainability meeting that brought together board, staff and parents to envision the school's future. Having sat on the ad hoc committee that explored the preschool concept, it's a marvel to see it so firmly and successfully established after only two years. Head of School Charlie Spencer notes, "The notion was that a preschool would serve as a feeder for the main school, and that's what it became. We'll be feeding 3 kids into the Primes next year and more the year after. That feels like a real success."

**Shout Out
to Mike Vear for
his promotion
from Caretaker
to Director of
Buildings and
Grounds!**

Administrator Amanda Richard adds that it's a great asset for the teachers who have pre-school age kids, another perk envisioned by the ad hoc committee. "It's great for the teachers to have their kids at the school. It's the kids' school now too, not just mom's or dad's school."

Charlie and Amanda observe how having the 2-4 year olds in the brick building has a "softening" effect on the older kids. "They become caring and calm in the presence of the younger kids. The Uppers love to come hang out with

them every week."

Next year the Littles will grow from 13-15 kids per day up to 18-22, allowing the group to be divided into two classrooms by age, which ranges from 16 months to 4 ½ years. I recall Amy's answer as she recounts being asked by the AISNE visitors what her favorite part of the Center School mission is. "To know and see the kids as individuals, I think that is fascinating." I have no doubt that as the Littles program grows, so will each Little blossom in her or his unique way.

Alumni News

Lots of great updates this edition! Settle in!!

Darius Marder '88 lives in NYC. Darius writes and directs movies. His kids Asa and Esther are 10 and 15. ("Asa is 6'4". Crazy!") Darius says, "I think about you good



Will and Maggy Sawma

people at GCS all the time. Those were great years!"

Alice Proujanskny Murry '94 is photojournalist covering birth, education and women's work and teaches photography in under-served schools. Alice in Brooklyn, NY with her husband, son, daughter and dog.

Will Seigel-Sawma (Sawma) '94 is living in Queensbury, NY working as a program coordinator for Mediation Matters, with a focus on judicial and agriculture. He has been married to his wife, Heather, for five years. Will is also a fire fighter for Pilot Knob!

Jesse Sheyda-Losick '94 has been working in the travel industry for more than a decade, first managing operations and sustainability

with an adventure travel company that takes students around the world and most recently as a consultant with a global nonprofit focused on making the travel and tourism industry more sustainable. In between he got an MPA in Development Practice from Columbia | SIPA in order to better understand how the travel industry can positively impact rural communities and the environment. He got married last summer to a woman named Jessica and recently moved

from Brooklyn to California to be closer to my wife's family. Jesse says "my wife and I will be taking an extended honeymoon this summer to, guess what, travel!!"

Dylan Cutler '95 is living in Boulder married (to Christie) with a one year old girl (Clare). Dylan is a section manager/engineer at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and focuses on deployment of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. Dylan says "I was doing a lot of skiing....but then had a baby (which is maybe even more fun!)"

Bekah Rottenburg '95 lives, with her girlfriend, Michelle in Hood River, OR. Michelle is a veterinarian and Bekah teaches science in a high school "that epitomizes every low performing, dilapidated school you've ever heard about." Bekah previously taught for Da Vinci Charter Academy for

5 years in Davis, CA. "Da Vinci was a super cool, public charter school that focused on project-based learning and technology, and I've become pretty rooted in the project based world." This spring, Bekah was awarded the National Geographic Grosvenor Teaching Fellowship, and just returned from a ten day expedition in the Galapagos. Bekah also mountain bike races for the Lost Coast Brewery, a northern California-based team.

Kim Hake '96 works at a funky little place called the Center School. She lives with her husband and daughter in Leyden.

Leah Pepper '96 lives in NYC and just started a new job doing PR, Events and Social media for Victori-nox Swiss Army.

Shout Out to Lydia Anderson '13 and Sasha McCraney-Montalvo '13 for making the honor rolls at Stoneleigh Burnham and Ralph C Mahar Regional School, respectively!

Sarah Schwartz-Sax '96 attended the University of Michigan where she studied social and environmental justice, and spent a semester in Cuba. Sarah worked in the non-profit sector on issues of economic inequality, explored through direct-service, policy-level work, and community organizing. After realizing that her heart was with social change at an interpersonal level, Sarah attended the Smith School for Social Work, and graduates in August 2015. She currently lives in Durham, North Carolina with her partner, Meg. Sarah continues to thank GCS for such a formative beginning.

Kelly Schatz '96 lives in

Northampton and has been a professional photographer for 12 years. Kelly is in the middle of a transition to Occupational Therapy (side note: “Rosa Kessler’s mom was my professor this year, and she was incredible!”). When Kelly has spare time, I sing in a hospice chorus, travel, and hang out with people she loves. “I still feel excited when I pull into the Center School parking lot.”

.....
: **Shout Out to Gus Can-** :
: **tieni ‘13 and Isabella** :
: **deHerdt ‘13 for winning** :
: **two esteemed academic** :
: **awards at Northfield Mt** :
: **Hermon!** :
.....

Becky (Hawes-Sivitz) Tew ‘96 lives in Amherst with her husband (as of last August!) Andy and their dog Tilly. She works as a child and family therapist in Northampton and runs a therapeutic after school program for the Department of Mental Health. Becky just taught her after school kids “Rock and Roll” and it was a huge success. She says it “makes me think of the good old days”!

Nell Champoux ‘97 lives in Syracuse, NY with her husband, stepdaughter, two cats, and a pond of koi and goldfish. Over this summer Nell is doing the final edits on a dissertation on medieval Christian magic and will soon have a PhD in Religion from Syracuse University. Nell is an adjunct professor at LeMoyne College where she teaches wonderful students in Religious Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, and in the interdisciplinary Core Curriculum

Program. Last summer, Nell traveled to Perugia Italy to celebrate fellow Center School alum Marielle Pleasant’s wedding – Center School friends rule!

Pippi Kessler ‘97 lives in NYC and is an independent consultant and speaker. Pippi travels around the country and leads workshops about active listening, leadership theory, social justice education, and working with kids! She says, “Doesn’t that sound like the kind of thing a center school kid would end up doing? Hope you’re all doing great, sending love to y’all!”

Marielle Pleasant ‘97 has been living in the San Francisco Bay Area and working for the bio-pharma company Genentech for 9 years. She was married a year ago (see Nell Champoux, above). She and her husband, Andrew are expecting a baby in September!

Isaac Kaplan-Woolner ‘98 is now a public radio producer living in Seattle with his golden retriever, Griffin Dingleberry. Isaac is a producer for the radio show Travel with Rick Steves, heard on some 300 public radio stations across the country. He also moonlights as a producer and music writer for the independent radio station KEXP, reviews shows for a number of local music blogs, and serves on the board of the nonprofit Fremont Abbey Arts Center. When not attending concerts, Isaac loves to stand up paddleboard and play kickball and softball on irreverent Seattle leagues.

Maggy (Sawma) Potter ‘98 is back in the Center School world looking through a new lens as a parent of a “Little”, Amelia (Mia)!

She and her husband, Nick are expecting their second child this summer. They have recently moved to Ashfield, MA to raise their growing family and expanding excavation business.

Micah Hawes-Sivitz '99 recently joined the design team at Shyp.com. Before Shyp Micah spent 5+ years at Livestream.com leading their design team. He and his wife are moving from NYC to San Francisco this coming month—"so fun times ahead!"

Grace Lesser '99 I moved back to the country, after nearly four years working in public health in East Africa. Grace just finished the first year of an MBA/MPH graduate program at UC Berkeley. She is getting married this summer in Conway! She'll be growing the food for her wedding on her parents' land.

Leah McGowan '99 is living in the Boston area and is finishing her 5th year of teaching students with special needs. Leah also recently started working as a doula and looks forward to becoming an advocate for women's rights in this field. Leah just celebrated my 1st year anniversary with Jen Troy and they are looking forward to some great summer adventures together.

Henken Bean '00 resides in Philadelphia where she works for Comcast as an Art Director and User Experience Design Lead, primarily focused on mobile application design. Henken graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2008 with a BFA in Interactive Media. She enjoys going to local theater and dance shows and walking everywhere in

Philly for fun and health.

Heather Skutnik '00 writes "I am closing out my second year as an Adjustment Counselor for students in grades 7-12 at a middle/high school in the area. During the upcoming summer break, I will be getting used to life with a newborn!"

Micah Nussbaum '01 went film school in Maine for 3.5 years and worked in the independent film circuit in Maine. Micah recently moved to Massachusetts last year to be with his family and for work. Since then he's been busy: he and the love of his life had a baby! Micah is also helping to raise his 9 year old stepson. Micah is now a lighting technician for million dollar, mainstream movies around the east coast.

Josh Stuckey '01 graduated magna cum laude from UMASS Dartmouth in Mechanical Engineering with an option for Manufacturing. (He actually had the 3rd highest GPA of the Mechanical engineering graduating class, but Jane found this out secretly and added it!) Josh is doing an internship this summer for the Army Research Laboratory in Aberdeen Maryland.

Dominique Walk '01 got her BS in Human Ecology and Marine Science at College of the Atlantic. Dominique currently work for Marine Mammals of Maine as the stranding and rescue coordinator and as a veterinary technician at an animal emergency hospital.

Devon Kelleher '02 says "I am married to a great partner as well as the very proud mother of two

wonderful boys!” Devon graduated from Baypath University in 2013 with a BA in forensic psychology. She is nearly finished with her MS in clinical and mental health counseling. Devon is a social worker for the Department of Children and Families.

Caitlin McCleod-Bluver ‘03 went to Wesleyan University and is now in her 4th year teaching high school ESL and History in Boston Public Schools. Caitlin says she hopes “to instill in my students with the same love for learning and exploration that the Center School helped me develop!”

Jake Stuckey ‘03 graduated magna cum laude from UMass Amherst with a degree in Political Science.

Nenelwa Tomi ‘03 says she “would not be the human being she is today without the mentorship, support, and love that she received as an inquisitive young scholar at the Center School.” Nenelwa fondly remembers All School, sledding down the massive hill of doom, and most importantly the “illustrious golden rule that has served her well in multiple academic and social settings.” Upon graduating from Goucher College in 2011 with a degree in Anthropology & Sociology and a minor in Music, Nenelwa set out to rediscover her Tanzanian roots through a yearlong internship-turned-work experience in Arusha at the Nyerere Center for Peace Research. Thereafter, she

had a consulting gig with the African Leadership Academy and then found permanent work at her alma mater working in the Undergraduate Admissions office. This fall Nenelwa will begin her Master’s degree in International Education at The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development. Nenelwa is personally and professionally invested in the continent of Africa and its progression. She hopes to become a pioneer in the field of International Educational Development through leading youth and Africans in the diaspora to revolutionize the future of Africa.

**Shout Out
to Rebecca Golden,
Science teacher,
and Lea Wulfkuhle,
Spanish teacher,
whose babies are
both due this
August!**

Hallie Bean ‘04 lives in the Philly area and works at Comcast. Haley is a User Experience Designer primarily focused on mobile application design. She graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design

in 2012 with a BFA in Graphic Design. In her free time she likes to paint, sew, and go on bike rides.

Saki Fujita ‘05 is in her fourth year at Hokkaido University, studying forest science at the College of Agriculture. Her major is Silviculture. Saki is doing her thesis on the effects of nitrogen on hybrid larch and is planning to go on to Master’s course. Saki also works part time teaching English to young children.

Upon graduation from the University of Pennsylvania with a Sociology degree, **Cecelela Tomi ‘05** served as an AmeriCorps Fellow

with an education non-profit organization in Washington, DC, where she helped middle school students from low-income families attend top-tier high schools in DC and beyond. As an Outreach Coordinator and Tanzania Program Manager for an international organization called Rustic Pathways, she spends her days driving through the Grand Canyon, the Aspen Mountains, and various states encouraging young people to travel the world, and is currently spending the summer in her native East African land gazing at the majesty of Mt. Kilimanjaro (and leading community service trips with students). Cecelela is also the proud owner of “the bell”, (classroom chime to signal quiet) courtesy of Jane, which reminds her to slow down, reflect, and breathe. ASANTE SANA!

Elena Bellino '06 is studying at HCC for early childhood education. Elena hopes to transfer to Umass in spring of 2016.

Zoe Cavanaugh Green '06 has spent the last few years “roaming around, mostly in the capacity of a farm hand/other intern of sorts.” This spring she spent some time in Arizona herding sheep and working for Black Mesa Indigenous Support with my partner, and will likely return in the fall. Zoe left Warren Wilson College this year and is dedicating most of her time to studying plant medicine, and specifically trying to address questions of class, accessibility, privilege/oppression, cultural appropriation, and stigmatized/underserved areas of healthcare within the herbal healing community. Zoe’s plan for the summer is

to be traveling around the U.S., doing work around the intersections of environmental issues, colonialism, and race-based violence.

Megan Foster '06 is in her final year at Emerson College, where she is majoring in Writing, Literature and Publishing Besides working as treasurer for the Emerson Review, Emerson’s primary literary magazine, Megan is also interning at Karmaloop, a “multi-platform web retailer” in Boston. While fashion has become a more recent passion, her main pursuits are literature and Mandarin— for the last two summers Megan has taught both disciplines as an intern at Eaglebrook School’s Summer Semester. Instead of returning to the Pioneer Valley this summer, Megan will be pursuing more writing experience in the Boston area, and completing her first novella, *El Corazón*.

Rosie Marsters '06 graduated last year from the University of Vermont. Rosie now lives in Boston and is working as a legislative aide in the State House for Representative Steve Kulik.

Michael VanCott '06 is living and working in NYC in some of the best beverage programs in the city. Michael has worked in wine under a master sommelier and two James Beard nominated beverage programs. Mostly with fresh product-driven cocktail menus. Michael enjoys traveling and looks forward to his next big trip—probably Europe. Michael I has been involved in activism work, against the militarization of our police forces & civil rights, most recently after the death of Eric Garner.

Olivia VanCott '06 graduated

this spring from Greenfield Community College with a liberal arts degree. She graduates as a member of Phi Theta Kappa, an honors fraternity for two year colleges for granted to graduates in the top 10% of their class. Olivia works part time at Northfield Mount Hermon in the advancement office of NMH.

Hannah Wulkan '06 is heading in to her senior year at Brandeis University, doing an independent major in Communication and Media Studies and also majoring in American Studies and minoring in English. Hannah just returned from a semester abroad in London where she studied film and television and interned at an independent production company called Nomadic Films. She is captain of the Brandeis Equestrian Team and an editor at The Justice, the student newspaper at Brandeis. Hannah will be interning in Brooklyn over the summer at a documentary production company called Hard Working Movies.

Shira Catlin '07 just graduated from College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine with a degree in Human Ecology and a Maine Initial Teaching Certificate for grades K-8. She will start her Masters work at BU this summer in Physical Education. Shira writes: "My entire educational outlook is based off of my experience as GCS -- I student-taught in 3rd grade this winter and we worked on multiplication tables... I often referenced how I learned mine with my piano. During one of my integrated teaching methods classes we read one of Bob's books. I wouldn't be any-

where without Center School--- it's where I found myself as a learner." In Shira's free time she enjoys working with her Reading Education Assistance Dogs and participating in road races and triathlons. (Jane remembers that Shira created and completed a triathlon for one of her Uppers projects!)

Myles Brown '08, a University of New Haven student, recently changed his major from Marine Biology to Hospitality and Tourism Management. Myles is currently Public Relations Manager for his school's a cappella team, Vice President of the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality and General Manager of a 100% student run cafe at the University of New Haven. Myles says he's "loving every single minute of it and can't wait to enter the world with the knowledge and experience I've obtained."

Mollie Tobey '08 will graduate next year from Fitchburg State University's four year nursing program with a BSN in nursing. She was recently inducted as a member of Sigma Theta Tau international nursing honor society, which supports the learning, knowledge and professional development of nurses making a difference in global health. Mollie is an active member of her community and volunteers regularly for associations like the American Red Cross. After graduating Mollie is interested in working as a traveling nurse for a short period of time before continuing her education to be a Nurse Practitioner in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit taking care of premature and sick newborns.

Student Voice

Poetry Mashup

By Rufus Seward, 7th Grade

This year, the 6th and 7th grades worked on a poetry unit that was split up into three groups, with each group studying a different style of poetry. One such group, taught by Rebecca, studied Pablo Neruda's poetry. Neruda is a famous Chilean poet, who is most famous for his odes, the type of poetry that we studied in the group. We read some of Neruda's odes, looking for literary devices, such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and personification. The class then wrote their own odes, using these techniques in the style of Neruda.

An example of a simile:

"...Finally, one day, a little boy like a clean spring rain, came in and pointed to it..." (From *Ode to Chocolate Fudge* by Kathleen)

An example of hyperbole and metaphor: "...While front pockets live the life of peasants, the back pocket takes the carrying privileges of picks and phones." (From *Ode to Back Pockets* by Henry)

In another group, the 6th and 7th grades worked on freeform poetry, led by Josie. The group started off by combining words to create playing cards that each had a phrase on them. They then each were given four of five of



Rufus

these playing cards as phrases to use in order to compose a poem.

For example: "...Chortle pasta falling from their phony ant mouths. I burst into hazardous dance, my toenails flashing..." (From *A Poem Regarding Phony Ants and the Color of Sleep* by Ellie)

The class also tried some interesting challenges, like writing a poem based on a Yankee Candle scent, writing from the perspective of a rock, and then eventually making a second deck of cards. In the third group, the class worked on Shakespearean sonnets, taught by Chris. The form

of a sonnet uses the ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme, meaning that every other line rhymes. Then there's a rhyming couplet at the end.

For example:

Ice, it covers the ground, sending cold air.

The thud of snow on my roof, sliding ice.

*All the fun from this year's winter fair rides,
the warm fire as we play a game with dice.*

(From *Winter* by Avani)

Chris taught the group about some vocabulary that goes along with the form of a sonnet, and gave the class about a week to turn in two sonnets. This was certainly challenging, but in a (mostly) good way, that the majority of the class could handle.

**Shout Out
to board member,
Gretchen Bukowick,
who comes to us from
the Northeast Founda-
tion for Children
(our school's found-
ing organization)!**

Overall, the unit provided an interesting spectrum, between the very different styles of poetry, as well as the individual challenges in each. Personally, my favorite group to be in was the one oriented toward freeform poetry, as I enjoyed the freedom it gave, and the bizarre styles we chose.



A peek inside Alison Ryan's classroom.

Faculty Voice

What? Teachers Doing Stand-Up?

By Sara Johnson, Mups teacher, Center School parent, 2014-15 board member



Oliver, Josie and Kim

The poster read, “February 27, 2015. Stand Up For...The Annual Fund, featuring Kim Hake, Kathryn Greenwood Swanson, Josie Dickson-Dull-es, Oliver Brown, and Barb Lockhart. Standing outside of the Finer Building looking in, the All School room seems to glow, like a beacon in the dark on this cold February evening. Inside, small lamps softly light the room, a stark contrast to the bright overhead lights that usually shine during the day. At the front of the room, where you might ordinarily find a group of students sharing a skit from their Lit. class, or the school band playing “Quest For Spinach”, a single spotlight shines onto the stage where Barb Lockhart has captured the audience. Only moments before, the line for this event had spilled out the door and wound down the walkway, with eager friends and family wondering,

Will this be like real comedy? Can teachers really be funny? Peering in through the window now, you can see Barb on stage. It looks like she’s whistling and doing something with a cloth napkin as the crowd reels with laughter. In fact, they’ve been laughing, and will continue to laugh, all night, griping their sides and gasping for air. They’re really funny, I overhear a parent lean over and whisper to another parent, as her doubt fades away with every giggle and snort.

So, in response to the big question in the room, can teachers really do stand up? The answer is a resounding YES! The truth is, we kind of do it every day. If you think about it, being a teacher is a bit like being a stand up comedian; we tell engaging stories to captivate the listener, we improvise quickly when there’s a blip in the plan, and moreover, we’re all actually pretty funny most

of the time! I'm happy to announce that the Center School staff has agreed to perform again next year. Please join us again next February

when the winter months feel never ending and we're all in need of a little laughter.

Board Member Voice

Curtain Up on the Middles!

by Dr. Sue Keller, Middles Parent and Board Member



On a Tuesday afternoon in May, twenty-four Middles (4th and 5th graders) performed *Colored Eggs*, an original dramatic comedy written by none-other-than-the Middles, in a collaborative effort that began back in February. Teachers Emily Cross, Alison Ryan, and Margaret Fasulo challenged the class to think about their audience, places that would be interesting (and possible) to set the story, and which characters might appear there. From these brainstorming sessions, a plot was hatched, quite literally.

As a class, students then worked on plot outlines. These were then pieced together in the writer's room—hashing out ideas and

gently placing others aside. With an agreed upon plot outline, small groups of Middles were assigned a scene to then write dialogue for—attempting to consistently show characters with agreed upon character traits. From these drafts a script was born (only to be edited and revised continuously throughout the rest of the creative process and on-stage).

With sixteen pages of script complete, the Middles took three weeks to design and create all costumes, set pieces and props. Following two weeks of rehearsals, they were ready to share their creation and acting skills with the entire school and visiting parents.

Writing an original play is an annual ritual for the Middles. This year was unique as the first year that a trio of characters was in the lead. A rainbow-obsessed and honest Unicorn, loquacious and bossy Centaur, and a famished improvisation-savvy Angel lead the audience on a journey from Sky City through a cloud warp into eight consecutive fairy tales, looking for an egg in each to build a rainbow to get back to the sky. "I've read this in a manual at the Rainbow factory. You can hatch a rainbow from colored eggs. You just have to get one of each color. I thought I'd start with red since that's the first color of the rainbow," said Unicorn.

The plot progressed for thirty minutes with humor, drama, slapstick comedy and a broad cast of characters from eight fairy tales: from the little chicken of *Chicken Little*, to the *Tortoise and the Hare* (Angel "He's too fast to catch, I bet his stomach isn't empty and growling"), *Robin Hood* (Unicorn "I can try and pick the lock with my horn"), *Little Red Riding Hood* (Little Red "But what bad breath you have." Wolf "I had garlic last night with dinner." Unicorn "Spit up that grandma that you ate."), *Winnie the Pooh*, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*, and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. When the Angel can't resist temptation and eats the yellow egg, he has to return to the Giant's table for a golden egg. Will it complete the rainbow? "We'll just have to believe that it will work. It's the thought that counts." Sound ambitious? Daunting? Not everything went as planned.

Scenes changed under the patter of dialog and the clatter of props. The characters improved reactions to downed props. One of the leads was actually an understudy who joined the class less than one month ago and took over as Unicorn when the cast student became seriously ill in the preceding weeks. Like all stories with a happy ending, the original Unicorn was able to perform in the final scene.

Through it all, our Middles performed as polished professionals. They had fun on the stage and with each other. They were ready for their cues and focused despite many scene changes. They were articulate and garnered well-deserved laughter and applause from the attentive and appreciative audience. Bravo!

That's it for this edition of the Chronicle!

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