The Class of 2019 graduated Sunday, May 19. The ceremony was held at Symphony Hall in Atlanta. Class members gave speeches and performances that were interspersed during the awarding of diplomas. Performing “Over the Rainbow” by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg in an arrangement by Larry Lapin were the Senior Singers: Andrew Baxter*, Ali Beskind, Josh Beskind, Samuel Boswell, Maddie Boulis, Ben Dameron*, Matthew Davidorf, Hunter Furman, Jordan Gross, Alejandra Hardin, Max Karnik, Nora Lee Sampson, Carson Sanford, Daniel Sanz, Josh Taylor-Klaus, Margot Thompson, Nanseera Wolff, and Hannah Zelden* (*solists). Jack Parker, a pianist, played “Glassworks I Opening” by Philip Glass. Matthew Davidorf sang “Lonely House” from Street Scene by Kurt Weill. Caroline Kirk performed a dance she choreographed entitled “Coastline.” Billy Joel’s “So It Goes” was sung by Andrew Baxter, Josh Beskind, Samuel Boswell, Ben Dameron, Matthew Davidorf, Max Karnik, Carson Sandford, Daniel Sanz, and Josh Taylor-Klaus. Hannah Zelden sang “She Used to Be Mine” from the Broadway show Waitress. Nanseera Wolff sang her own song “Maama” inspired by her family’s two-year separation.

Students speakers were Lilly Bencich, Jacobi Copeland, Jenna Delgado, Joanie Dorfman, Alejandra Hardin, Lucas Kidd, Biibi Muse, Drew Nickels, Ahalya Ramgopal, Casey Serrano, Oscar Taub, Margot Thompson, Olivia Willingham, and Nanseera Wolff.

Mary Poppins Jr. captivates audiences with its energizing song and dance. See page 28 for more.
Of Monsters and Magic: Author Gideon Sterer Enchants Students

By Natalie Bernstein, Elementary Librarian

“Hey Monster! You in there? ‘Cause I’m ready for you. Let’s do this thing. Let’s get this thing over with. I’m ready to take you on!”

Many, many children are afraid of the dark, afraid of the monster in the closet or under the bed. Author Gideon Sterer enthralled our students when he told them of his own childhood technique for dealing with his fear of monsters: he would dress up in his Ninja Turtle underpants, Ninja Turtle t-shirt, Ninja Turtle cape and dare them to come out. He showed us proof: a photo of him in that awe-inspiring power outfit at around age 5. And the denouement – no monster ever came out. Ever. Gideon never got taken. Or bitten. Our students were nodding in agreement, acknowledging their fears, and chiming in that they too, like the idea of the Night Knights – out there, guarding, protecting, making sure we are safe. One child told me afterwards, “I think of the Night Knights now every night when I go to sleep. It makes me feel so happy.”

Sterer is the author of three picture books – Skyfishing, The Night Knights and Not Your Nest. He came to share his own story, and his stories, with us on May 20. Each book is full of puns, surprises and emotional nuance that grab our students in unexpected ways. As I shared his books with children in advance of his visit, we talked about feeling sorry for aging grandparents, the idea that everybody is sometimes scared, and that every so often, we experience the distress and fury when somebody takes away something that belongs to us. Especially if we are little and somebody else is bigger—and yet, we can move toward remorse, kindness and a communal, if goofy, solution.

Meeting, in person, the author of a book that you loved is a profoundly satisfying experience for children. Our students couldn’t hear enough about Sterer’s unusual childhood. He grew up in upstate New York, surrounded by woods. His parents owned a little petting zoo and, after hours, Gideon would run around and let the animals out – he has always loved animals. He even used to take the worms that were washed onto the street after a rainstorm and carefully place them back in the dirt, and once, he rescued a fish his father had caught for dinner, flinging it back into a different pond and keeping in touch with it for years after. The family portrait from his childhood includes a giant live python draped around him, his parents and sister. Ours students were brimming with questions. Some were practical: “How do you make the cover of the book so hard?” Some questions were about details of design, and Gideon explained the different jobs that people do in creating a book, including “the Art Design Queen” who decides how a book will look. He talked about his many drafts that aren’t yet books because they just weren’t good enough, and how he had to revise, revise, revise: “The first thing you write won’t be perfect,” even if it’s the hilarious book that he wrote about whale farts. (Not published…yet…But our kids can’t wait.) Our teachers noted that it helps a lot to have a published author reinforce the concepts of revision, perseverance and resilience in the face of rejection. One student, and one librarian, really liked it when he said, “When I decided I wanted to be a children’s author, I went to my public library and I checked out 100 books and I read them all. Over and over.”

Near the end of his presentation, a third grade student raised her hand and said, tentatively, “I want to make a book, but I think I’m just an illustrator. I’m just not a very good writer.” Gideon got down on one knee, looked her in the eye and said, “You are probably a way better writer than you think you are. Way better. Keep writing. Of course, keep up with the illustration, but you can be a writer if you just keep at it. Email me if you want more advice.”

Since so many children approach an author with a little piece of paper for an autograph after a visit, I created a bookmark with images of his book covers. Gideon signed it, we photocopied it, and he knelt down and handed one to each child as the child left the library, making close eye contact and thanking each child for coming. They left with personal souvenir and a personal encounter with an author – they loved his books, and they loved him.
Tradition!

The elementary sing-along dates back to the early days of Paideia when the entire school was in the 1509 Building and Paul Bianchi would play the piano and students would sing along at the end of the day. Today it takes place in the theater on the last day before the holiday break and the last day of school. Students from half day to rising seventh graders join in for raucous renditions of such crowd favorites as “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” and “The Garden Song.” The rousing, foot-stomping grand finale is the school song, “O Mascot of Might.”

Paideia Students Winners in International Haiku Contest

Paideia Student Haiku Paideia had an outstanding showing in the United Nations International School (UNIS) Haiku Contest this year. Over 1300 haiku were submitted this year in English, Japanese, French, Spanish, and Arabic. In the elementary division, Russell Hardin was awarded first and second place for his two haiku, Nathan Holmann received an honorable mention. In the middle school division, Lucas Tangpricha received first place and Andrew Reveno received second place. Amelia Darling, Carolina Hardin, Kelsey Eiler, and Andrew Reveno all received an honorable mention. In the teacher category, Becca McCauley received third place for one of her haiku. She and Tom Painting also received an honorable mention.

The awards ceremony was held at UNIS on June 1, and the ambassador of the Japanese Embassy, H.E. Dr. Toshiya Hoshino, presided over the event. Attendees were entertained by a jazz ensemble led by guitarist Yoshiki Miura. After the awards ceremony, winners and family members were treated to a sushi reception. Winners were given a printed book containing their haiku and judges’ comments. First through third place winners also received a cash prize.

1st Prize/Elementary
fallen leaves
my scarf
follows
—Russell Hardin

2nd Prize/Elementary
grey day
the rain
finally starts
—Russell Hardin

1st Prize/Middle School
sleepless night
I stare
at the intimate moon
—Lucas Tangpricha

2nd Prize/Middle School
she gives
what she has
Reese’s
—Andrew Reveno

Honorable Mention/Middle School
young woman
in the library
an open book
—Andrew Reveno

spring rain
drops slip off
the ends of my hair
—Carolina Hardin

Valentine’s Day
my dog gives me
a piece of the couch
—Amelia Darling

3rd Prize/Teacher
edging up my windshield
the lone leaf
suddenly takes flight
—Becca McCauley

Honorable Mention/Teacher
climbing tree
my daughter explores
the upper limits
—Tom Painting

dark driving rain
a silent respite
under the bridge
—Becca McCauley

Honorable Mention/Elementary
the kitten
shadow looming
over the mouse
—Nathan Holmann
Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams spoke to Emily and Kaela’s class shortly before school ended. The class had studied mountains all year. “One unit within our bigger central subject was looking at people who are climbing personal or societal mountains, we call them “mountain climbers,” said Emily. “Some people that we looked deeply at were Martin Luther King Jr., Malala Yousafzai, Cesar Chavez, Jackie Robinson, Marian Anderson, Nelson Mandela, Wilma Rudolph, and Amelia Earhart.

“We also learned about the greater Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s through MLK Jr.’s journey and leadership. We looked at what qualities help people climb mountains in their lives and what different mountains can look like. We also wrote about mountains that we are climbing in our own lives. We were fortunate enough to have Stacey Abrams come and talk to our class because she is a mountain climber that is currently climbing mountains.”

Abrams spoke to the class about the obstacles she encountered as she attempted to become the first black woman governor in the United States. The class had prepared questions and listened intently as she kept them engaged with answers that combined current events and some family history. When asked why she wanted to be governor, Abrams told the students that her parents had told her and her siblings that everyone should have to the right to a good education and they should try to help those who were less fortunate or lacked access to resources to enable them to better their lives, and that making good education accessible to all students was one of her goals as a candidate. In addition, she shared that her father had been a civil rights activist and had helped to register black people to vote. His activism was her inspiration she said.

When asked how she felt after her close loss to Gov. Brian Kemp, she said, “Mad, sad and determined to start climbing again. I started an organization to make it easier to vote—that’s my mountain.”
A Final Goodbye

On the last day of school, elementary teacher Lina Wessels got a 21-potato gun salute on the elementary playground. Twenty-one students from her class lined up on the woodchips and pointed clear plastic cylinders loaded with potato slugs, and plunged them, sending bits of potatoes into the air to the cheers of the entire elementary. The salute was in honor of Lina’s last day as a teacher after 33 years and in recognition of her having introduced the potato gun to Paideia.

Joining Lina in a final day at Paideia was elementary and junior high art teacher Henry Leonard. Henry was also given a fond farewell earlier at the Black Parent Organization’s end of year celebration.

In the high school, longtime music teacher Kate Murray raised her baton for the last time. Earlier in April, Kate was honored at a concert where several alumni performed during alumni weekend.

Also retiring was high school counselor and social studies teacher Nisha Simama. High school math teacher Ansley Yeo-mans interviewed Nisha at one of the high school’s final Monday Morning Meetings about her many years in the high school.

Community

Chicken Inoculations Provide Hands-on Lessons

This spring, students from elementary to high school found ways to care for Paideia’s chickens that reinforced subjects learned in the classroom. From providing a brooding box for eggs to hatch, then “candling” them to check development, to inoculating newly hatched chicks against deadly Marek’s virus, the ongoing chicken urban agriculture project provided plenty of hands on experience.

It was the third time Neda and Olivia’s class had collaborated with the urban agriculture program led by Tania Herbert as part of the class’s central subject study and understanding of scientific elements of sustainability. The elementary students canded the eggs a week and a-half after incubation, with the help of high school biology teacher Magnus Edlund. They also learned about immunology from parent and Paideia board member Vandana Ramaswamy, including considering the questions of why people choose to vaccinate and how vaccines work.

As for the AP biology students, it was the first time they had been called on to link their study of immunology to actually inoculating baby chicks with a vaccine to prevent Marek’s virus. Caring for the chickens in these different ways has made for a healthy flock, and possibly future medical professionals, as students in Miranda Knowles’s AP class overcame squeamishness and held the less-than-day-old chicks and gently vaccinated them using needles.

Esme Dunbar, an intern in the urban ag program, helped the elementary students learn about Animal Welfare Approved guidelines. Esme’s mother, Jennifer Dunbar, who is a veterinarian, spoke about the vaccine—how to dilute and administer it—then the students proceeded with caution.

“This is a special way to learn, rather than me just lecturing the students,” said Esme Dunbar.

continued on page 7
Paideia Odyssey of the Mind Places at World Championship

The Paideia sixth grade team won second place in the Odyssey of the Mind World Competition at Michigan State University May 22-25. Two other Paideia Odyssey of the Minds competed in the world championships, which had over 800 teams from every state in the U.S. and more than 25 countries.

The winning team members are Alok Ahn, Sammie Estep, Mika Hernacki, Porter Higgins, José Moreno, Rhea Patel, and Konner Seefried with coaches Paul Hernacki and Kevin Seefried.

Also competing were Alice McIlvoy, Katie Darling, Matthew Steps, Aida Pardo, Reginald Moorman, Jesus Noe Reséndiz and Rodney McBride coached by Lisa and Chris McIlvo; and Chandler Kirkland, Stella Gegax, Charlotte Sommerfeld, Nora Critz, Ryan Liu, Saurav Subramanian and Henry Van Ness coached by Trent Gegax, Robert Liu and Sally Brockington.
Paideia Community Read Save the Date: Wednesday, August 28

By Sarah Schiff, High School English Teacher

All Paideia community adults are invited to join the high school students in reading a selected book over the summer. This year, we will be reading Tara Westover’s memoir *Educated*. The goal of the Community Read program is to bring our high school students, faculty, staff, parents, grandparents, alumni, and alumni parents together over a shared book and conversation. The story of a young woman raised by Mormon survivalists in Idaho, *Educated* takes on important and relevant topics ranging from family and relationships, patriarchal power, abuse, poverty, mental illness, and, above all, the value of an education. In a time when university systems are wrestling with admissions controversies, when so many people in our nation and world don’t have equal access to education, and yet when so many members of our society view higher education as a prerequisite to adulthood, if not a God-given right, this book feels especially urgent.

Our committee of around 20 Paideia faculty and staff members has spent much time discussing how to best prepare students for this book. *Educated* does include some violent scenes. Westover narrates specific accounts of some of the physical abuse and harrowing accidents she experienced in her family. However, because her experience of violence is told in a rather objective way, and because it is her personal story, it does not resonate on a systemic level—although it is definitely wrapped up in patriarchal power. Her accounts of violence are not gratuitous or for entertainment purposes. They are her truth, and they are instructive. Secondly, there is a chapter in which she uses racist language to recount the way one of her brothers attempted to shame her. Westover wrestles with her whiteness and white privilege in thoughtful, honest, and highly relevant ways, but we wanted to prepare our younger readers especially for this brief but intense moment of the book. Additionally, as Westover herself puts it, this book “is not about Mormonism. Neither is it about any other form of religious belief. In it, there are many types of people, some believers, some not; some kind, some not. The author disputes any correlation, positive or negative, between the two.” Finally, we consider *Educated* appropriate for high school age readers and adults; for younger readers, we encourage parent-disccretion and guidance.

*Educated* is required summer reading for all Paideia high school students. If rising ninth grade students feel nervous about tackling the book over the summer, we’d encourage them to wait until near the beginning of fall term to read it. That way, they’ll be able to process their reactions to the books within the environment of the classroom.

The book is available at local independent bookstores; MBS (our online bookstore); your public library; and in Paideia’s OverDrive ebook collection. You are welcome to listen to the audiobook if you prefer that format.

If you have any questions, please contact me at schiff.sarah@paideiaschool.org.

We hope you get a lot out of the book and will join us the evening of Wednesday, August 28 for an event that brings our community together over a shared book and rich discussion. Paul Bianchi will be leading a conversation with members of our own community and the educational fields more broadly about their experiences. Stay tuned for details. In the meantime, let’s read!

Inoculations continued

Miranda, AP biology teacher.

“Marek’s disease is a virus, part of a group of herpes viruses. The students had an opportunity to study this in a real setting...they had done the reading before and then had the opportunity to do the skill,” she said. Despite the challenge of wiggly, less than 24-hour-old chicks and preparing the vaccine and administering it with a needle, the students were able to complete the inoculations. Junior Alondra Romero was especially skillful at the chore, so she got more than her share of inoculations to carry out.

“It was a couple of months ago, and there were 15 more left to go after class, so I just did them. The first time you do it, it’s scary, but then you get the hang of it,” said Alondra. She said that reading a scientific journal about Marek’s disease and discussing what it really is, then looking at the immune system and how it works was key, she said.

“Learning about viruses and how deadly they are and what a mystery they are to scientists—it’s horrifying, but vaccines prevent all of that. Education is key, “she said. Her main takeaway from the experience was that it is beneficial to apply what they learned about vaccines and how they can make a difference in helping people. Not surprisingly, she’s hoping to study medicine and one day be a doctor.

Tania said that the idea for students to learn about inoculations and then carry them out came about as a question to Miranda. “I asked her if there was a learning opportunity here, and she said, ‘Absolutely.’”
Senior Dinner

The Class of 2019, family, friends and faculty and staff gathered for Senior Dinner on May 15. Members of the class performed and spoke. The Senior Singers, Andrew Baxter, Ali Beskin, Josh Beskin, Sam Boswell, Maddie Boulis, Ben Dameron, Matthew Davidson, Hunter Furman, Jordan Gross, Alexandra Hardin, Max Karnik, Nora Lee Sampson, Carson Sanford, Daniel Sanz, Josh Taylor-Klaus, Margot Thompson, Nanseera Wolff and Hannah Zeldin, performed “You Are the New Day,” by John David and arranged by Peter Knight. Josh Taylor-Klaus sang “Come Fly with Me” by Jimmy Van Heusen and Sammy Cahn. Daniel Sanz, accompanied by Josh Beskin on the guitar, sang “Photograph” by Ed Sheeran. A band featuring vocals by Andrew Baxter and Max Karnik with Sadd Sadd on guitar, Xavier Straungh-Turner on bass and Cade Woodcock on drums performed the song “Some Day” by the Stokes. Student speakers were Cory Dorfman, Ali and Josh Beskin and Jack Stiefel. Also speaking were senior parent Todd Zeldin and Brett Hardin, high school principal and senior parent.

“May the Bubble Be with You.”

Excerpts from Paul Bianchi’s Senior Dinner Speech

There is certainly a frenzy leading up to tonight and graduation on Sunday. The final days and weeks have the BASH, deadlines for work not gotten to and internships not completed, state championships competitions, careful planning by the girls in the class about what to wear to all these events, and trips to the closet by the boys to see what’s not in the wash.

Part of the frenzy is the emotional turmoil surrounding how to leave.

Some students, I’ll just talk about students even though adults also have issues, some students hug their way out the door. I’ve seen seniors do a Goodbye Tour of places and people important in their Paideia years. They become wistful over the cuteness of the half day toilet, or their favorite spot on the fire engine, or the idyllic memories of Field Days past. They go to the junior high to find someone to talk to about their emotional issues.

Others leave by picking a fight. A good fight helps them get out the door, severs temporarily the emotional connection. They might behave in ways that they never did before. They miss deadlines, park where you’re not supposed to, be late for everything. For those of us on the receiving end of leaving behavior, it is much more pleasant to be hugged than kicked in the shin, but we don’t get to choose. Sometimes one gets hugged and kicked at the same time.

Of course, a culminating event at school is the Senior Countdown which is happening this Friday. For those family members who do not know about this peculiar tradition, let me explain: the Senior Countdown features a shaving cream fight in the theater courtyard involving almost every one of the 107 seniors. It’s a mess: after five minutes, most everyone is unrecognizable in the same way that white frosting makes it impossible to know what kind of cake is underneath.

Many parents come to the Countdown to nostalgically goo and gah on the sidelines. Some them cry. I on the other hand am on the sideline asking myself where in hell this tradition came from and why does it happen every year.

These students, those of you sitting right down front, are an impressive and thoughtful group of young people. You have been nurtured carefully by your parents and also in a school that has a Framework of
A Tight Community Helps Ease Tough Transition

Excerpt from Jack Stiefel’s Senior Dinner Speech

Some people have a mid-life crisis. I like to say that I had an early life crisis. I came to Paideia in the fifth grade, and to say the least, it was a traumatic experience. Let’s just say that the Jack of September 2011 would have been quite surprised, to see the Jack of 2019 graduating from Paideia. I had always known about Paideia, mostly because I live a few hundred yards from the school, and by the summer after fourth grade, my brother went to Paideia and my sister was headed there next year with me. It didn’t hit me until the night before that I would be going to a completely new school, with a set of kids that I did not know.

I couldn’t sleep the night before the first day, and I remember crawling into my parent’s bedroom with hopes that they could comfort me. I had never experienced anxiety before and my Dad explained to me that I had butterflies, and that they would go away. He said that everything would be fine in the morning. When morning rolled around, things were not “fine” like my Dad promised. During my 300-yard journey to school, with both parents and siblings by my side, I felt sick and tears streamed down my face. I remember wondering, how could Scott Imlay be so cheery when he helped me across the street and enthusiastically welcome me to school. I entered Python Hall, a building that still gives me moments of anxiety as I walk by it. My parents tried to drop me off in Martha and Patrick’s fifth and sixth grade class. I emphasize the word “tried” because I had no intention on being left in this place. I looked around and saw a classroom full of kids scattered on couches, which was quite a change from my previous Catholic elementary school. Most of the kids were talking with each other, while others were playing with blocks or other games. But I chose crying as my activity of choice.

Values, none of which mentions shaving cream. For the most part you have worked hard. It’s all good, but then, on your final day at school, you chase around and cover each other with Gillette Foamy.

To the extent that you are thinking at all nowadays, I’d like you to remember this strange event the next time you find yourself reading about a distant society or cult that has some incomprehensible rite of passage, such as killing one’s great aunt or making love to a porcupine. Remember that your rite of passage from Paideia School to quasi-adulthood was smearing shaving cream on each other. That makes as much sense as romancing a porcupine.

As I said, I’m not sure where this tradition comes from. I know where the cross-age relay comes from and the eraser toss. But this one puzzles me. One hypothesis recently occurred to me that maybe the use of shaving cream represents some core belief of the Paideia community. Hear me out.

We have all repeated (again and again) that Paideia is a bubble, a protected space apart from the outside world. Well, you can’t smear bubbles on each other because they are transparent and pop and go away.

But if you look closely at shaving cream, like under a microscope, it has thousands of little bubbles in every squirt, and those bubbles do not pop and go away.

So my theory, and perhaps the larger meaning of this ritual, is that you are rubbing the essence of the Paideia experience onto each other to inoculate you, to protect you from the dangers of life outside the bubble. Perhaps what you are really saying is, “May the Bubble Be with You.” It’s a plausible hypothesis.

Another theory is that you are all just nuts.

continued
I was met with concerned and bewildered looks from most of my new classmates, many of whom are here tonight. They couldn’t understand why I was so upset. I remember exchanging looks with Jackson Kallen, another new kid in the class; he was also clearly upset, and we both had this, “Damn, we’re stuck here, aren’t we?” look on our faces. Eventually, I found myself in Mary Lynn Cullen’s office, the principal of the elementary, someone without whom I probably would not be here. She let me talk to my Dad on the phone. By now, it was about noon and considering I had been crying non-stop for three hours, Mary Lynn and my parents felt that I should probably go home and try again the next day. So, I went to my Dad’s office, a place I would become familiar with in the next few months.

I continued to have the same problems the next day, and the next, and the next, and so on, so Mary Lynn and I devised a plan. The plan was that whenever I got anxious in class, I could take a break and go to her office. I became a regular in her office. I would often occupy it when she wasn’t around; it would have made sense to put my name on the door under hers.

Eventually my parents, therapist, and teachers decided that I should take a break from school all together. So, for maybe about a month or so, I followed this schedule. I would wake up around 8 to 8:30, then I would leave for work with my dad. On the way to Piedmont Hospital we would stop at Alon’s for breakfast. I got some croissants and a Martinelli’s apple juice. This was the beginning of my love affair with Alon’s. Then, while my dad was seeing patients, I would do my school work, or play games on the computer. By noon it would be about lunch time, and so my Dad and I would head down to the doctors’ lounge. I can’t tell you how many people asked my dad if I had the day off from school, but he would always say the same thing, “Jack’s taking a break for a while.”

The doctors’ lounge was filled with all the free food that you could imagine. Pasta one day, Pizza the next, and desserts everywhere. It was a big upgrade from Pi-Bites. I’m sure that I stuck out like a sore thumb in the doctors’ lounge. I was definitely the youngest person by at least 30 years: lots of old guys with white hair and me. I even considered getting a white coat just to help me blend in. After lunch, my Dad and I would go outside and throw the frisbee for about 30 minutes — It was a kind of recess. After a while I became a regular at Piedmont hospital, I was that random 11-year-old who was always around for some reason. And I’m not going to lie: I liked this schedule, in fact I loved this schedule.

However, all good things must come to an end, and so I had to return to school. After all, it had been almost two months. But I didn’t return to Martha and Patrick’s class. Instead, Mary Lynn and I agreed that I should change classes, and so I went to David and Becca’s fifth and sixth grade class.

But I didn’t go straight back into a full school day. I would say that my school days followed more along the lines of a typical second semester senior school day. You go to a period or two in the morning, and then take the rest of the day off. And I also did not go alone. I insisted that my Dad come to school with me. So every day for about a month or so, my Dad would be sitting on his computer doing work, in a room full of fifth and sixth graders. I honestly didn’t think he minded coming to school with me, after all I had gone to his office. Not only was my Dad there, but my sister was in the classroom next door.

Over time, the more I started to go to school, the more I started to like it. If I was able to keep myself in the moment, then I really enjoyed my time. My first two real friends were Jon Schuler and Harris Goodwin, who I think Mary Lynn actually told to be my friends — not sure if they still have a deal going today. But, I began to feel comfortable in class. In fact, on the last day, I cried because I didn’t want to leave.

As I have thought about this in the years since, I realize that I probably couldn’t have done what I did at any other school. It’s unlikely that there would be another principal like Mary Lynn who would share her office with me, or let me go to school part time. And in my past eight years at Paideia I’ve grown to love it, not only the great friendships with many of my classmates, but also the great friendships with many teachers. I know I’ll miss Paideia next year, and I hope I don’t end up in the president’s office at Davidson College.

Being Twins and Discovering Individuality at Paideia

Josh: Hi, I’m Josh
Ali: I’m Ali, and for those of you who don’t already know
Both: We’re twins
Josh: Now that we’ve gotten that out of the way, we’re up here today to answer the burning question we’ve been asked countless times:
Both: Do you like being a twin?
Josh: The answer is obviously
Both: Yes/No
Josh: Being a twin has its ups and downs.
Ali: Sometimes you are each other’s best friend.
Josh: And sometimes you date the other’s best friend.
Ali: But, at the end of the day, being a twin means you always have someone to rely on, someone you’ve known your whole life.
Josh: Awww
Ali: Shut up.
Josh: Anyway, it hasn’t always been easy to have a sibling in the same grade as you.
Ali: Especially when that grade only has 107 kids.

continued ➤
into junior high I was a really bad per-
some of Ali’s insensitivity because going
Josh: Apparently, I must have picked up
the ball was out. Sorry, Liv, but
I screamed “OUT!” after she bounced the
cry when
Liv Cohen
memory of making
unleash its full fury. I have a specific
allowing my scary competitive side to
way up to king of the foursquare court,
Throughout the year I also worked my
baseball was being played by all boys
right to the woodchips where a game of
recess on the first day of school, I walked
into the Paideia environment. During
Ali: I, on the other hand, jumped right
into the Paideia environment. During
recess on the first day of school, I walked
to the woodchips where a game of baseball was being played by all boys
and demanded I be placed on a team.
Throughout the year I also worked my
way up to king of the foursquare court,
allowing my scary competitive side to
unleash its full fury. I have a specific
memory of making Liv Cohen cry when I screamed “OUT!” after she bounced the
ball outside of the court. Sorry, Liv, but
the ball was out.
Josh: Apparently, I must have picked up
some of Ali’s insensitivity because going
into junior high I was a really bad per-
sen. And for that, I sincerely would like
to apologize to everyone in Martha and
Greg’s class about how I acted in eighth
grade. I was kind of a bully, especially to
Sarah Jordak, who had been one of my
best friends. All of that changed when
I made her cry after pulling her aside at
lunch and chastising her for not partici-
pat ing enough in our class’s emotional
discussions. I know, right- what a jerk?
But don’t worry we’re friends now, so it’s
all good, right Sarah?
Ali: Unfortunately my competitive spirit
had now translated to what my eighth
grade teacher Jennifer Swift called the
Grammar Olympics. The Grammar Olym-
pics was a year-long competition in which
students could earn points by watch-
ing videos, completing worksheets, and
practicing diagramming sentences. No
one was even close to my total number of
points because absolutely no one else
cared. You can imagine my utter disap-
pointment when I walked into class on the
last day of school and saw written on the
whiteboard: “Sisay Tadesse is the Gram-
mar Olympics Champion!”
You see, my classmate (and now mortal
enemy) Sisay decided to watch 20 videos
the night before the competition ended.
I earned 400 points over the entire year:
Sisay earned 500 points in one night. How-
ever, I was a good sport, swallowed my
rage and, as it worked out, have
talked to Sisay in four years.
Josh: It was for me. Our paths
diverged in high school as we
found our own passions. Ali dis-
covered her passion for musicals and ultimate...
Ali: and Josh discovered his
passion for warming the bench
on the tennis team. Throughout
high school, we only had one
class together: chorus, where I
was obviously better. I mean
listen to how much his voice
clacks.
Josh: I don’t know what you’re
talking about.
Ali: We didn’t have many teachers in
common either.
Josh: Well, we both took “Stealing Fire”
with Donna, and she obviously liked me
more.
Ali: I’m not so sure about that one.
Both: Donna?
Josh: One thing we can both agree on is
that Paideia, despite its small size, has en-
abled us to become individuals and thrive
on our own.
Ali: By having different journeys through
high school, Josh and I have been able
to branch out and sometimes away from
each other, allowing us to discover our
own personalities and interests.
Josh: It was for me. Our paths
diverged as we
found our own passions. Ali dis-
covered her passion for musicals and ultimate...
Ali: and Josh discovered his
passion for warming the bench
on the tennis team. Throughout
high school, we only had one
class together: chorus, where I
was obviously better. I mean
listen to how much his voice
clacks.
Josh: I don’t know what you’re
talking about.
Ali: We didn’t have many teachers in
common either.
Josh: Well, we both took “Stealing Fire”
with Donna, and she obviously liked me
more.
Ali: I’m not so sure about that one.
Both: Donna?
Josh: One thing we can both agree on is
that Paideia, despite its small size, has en-
abled us to become individuals and thrive
on our own.
Ali: By having different journeys through
high school, Josh and I have been able
to branch out and sometimes away from
each other, allowing us to discover our
own personalities and interests.
Josh: It was for me. Our paths
diverged as we
found our own passions. Ali dis-
covered her passion for musicals and ultimate...
Ali: and Josh discovered his
passion for warming the bench
on the tennis team. Throughout
high school, we only had one
class together: chorus, where I
was obviously better. I mean
listen to how much his voice
clacks.
Josh: I don’t know what you’re
talking about.
Ali: We didn’t have many teachers in
common either.
Josh: Well, we both took “Stealing Fire”
with Donna, and she obviously liked me
more.
Ali: I’m not so sure about that one.
Both: Donna?
Josh: One thing we can both agree on is
that Paideia, despite its small size, has en-
abled us to become individuals and thrive
on our own.
Ali: By having different journeys through
high school, Josh and I have been able
to branch out and sometimes away from
each other, allowing us to discover our
own personalities and interests.
Josh: It was for me. Our paths
diverged as we
found our own passions. Ali dis-
covered her passion for musicals and ultimate...
Ali: and Josh discovered his
passion for warming the bench
on the tennis team. Throughout
high school, we only had one
class together: chorus, where I
was obviously better. I mean
listen to how much his voice
clacks.
Josh: I don’t know what you’re
talking about.
Ali: We didn’t have many teachers in
common either.
Many of you know me as the parent who teaches a short-term high school class on entrepreneurship.

So, I want to let all of you in on a secret. I am a failure. Let me explain. According to Cambridge Dictionary, the word “failure” is firstly defined as a lack of success in doing something. In other words, if you don’t succeed, you fail. By that definition, I am a failure. In fact, I am a frequent failure. I should start a frequent failure club where one could accumulate points and redeem them for self-help books. I don’t mind sharing with you just a few of my many failures with the specific objective not to guarantee you that you won’t fail but that when you do fail, and it is inevitable that you will fail, you will fail fast and fail forward. Over three decades of failing has resulted in my embrace of this philosophy.

When I was 16 years old, my family moved from Spring Valley, New York to Indianapolis. To me, Indianapolis was a race track built around a corn field. Moving prior to my junior year of high school was challenging to say the least. I had no friends in Indy and it was difficult to stay friends with those back in New York. Phone calls were expensive and handwritten letters took days to arrive. I even had to learn an entirely new language – no, I don’t mean like “chuckin’ the deuces” or “boss up on ‘em.” I spoke New York and the locals spoke Midwest. Soda was called pop. Lights were not closed but turned off. And nobody ever heard of sneakers...everybody wore tennis shoes, even the basketball players!

Several weeks after I had mastered my new bilingual abilities, my parents suggested that I get a job. So, I marched myself into our local hardware store, Mighty Handy, and persuaded the manager to give me a job despite not knowing the difference between a clamp and a plier. Just two weeks into the job, a woman entered the store and asked me if I could make her a copy of a house key. Having only watched my manager make a key once, I told her that I would gladly make her a key. I found a blank key that matched the type of house key I needed to replicate. I put the blank key on one side of the machine and the original house key on the other and started the key carving process. Within seconds I realized that I had reversed which keys go on each side and I shaved the original key completely flat. The woman stared at me in complete disbelief and started shouting at me. My manager walked over to us to inquire what had gone wrong. I looked at him, removed my Mighty Handy apron, and told him, “I’m fired” and walked out of the store. Fail fast, fail forward.

Although my hardware career was over very quickly, I needed to make some money and soon started providing private piano lessons to neighborhood children. Although I was not a great pianist, I was surely good enough to teach beginners. Even back then I knew that I loved to teach. Within months I had dozens of students, was making much more money, and was doing something that I truly loved. I moved on from my failure very quickly. Join me in the refrain – fail fast, fail forward.

After high school and a gap year abroad, I attended Indiana University, where my daughter will attend this fall. I figured that I would follow in the footsteps of my father, who has a PhD in chemistry, and my brother, who majored in chemistry and was attending medical school. I declared myself a chemistry major and pre-med student. On my first chemistry test, I received a 17! Not even the curve saved me from a failing grade! After class, I marched myself straight to the registrar’s office, dropped chemistry and became a psychology major! Fail fast, fail forward.

I have experienced two great downturns in my real estate business. In early 1998, my firm was growing rather quickly. I decided to open an office in Chicago and hired quite a few people. Although 1998 was not a great year, I figured that 1999 would be much better. At the end of that year, I reviewed our financials and Chicago was losing a lot of money for me. Still, I figured that 2000 would be the year things would turn around. Suffice it to say, things got worse. By the time 2001 arrived, the economy was slowing and my Chicago office was bleeding cash. My decision to open a Chicago office was a diabolical failure, but what made matters worse is that my failure was a failure. By the time I closed the Chicago office in mid-2001, I had lost a lot of money and my entire consulting practice was in jeopardy. Fortunately, I was able to build the company back up in the ensuing years. I had to remind myself to fail fast, fail forward.

In 2008, our family decided to move to Costa Rica for six months to have a new and exciting cultural experience. The few months prior to our departure were not good performing months for my company. I could sense that the market was turning quickly. Only a couple of months after we moved to Costa Rica, I returned to Atlanta on one of my monthly trips back home and I eliminated 80 percent of my staff. That move literally saved my company. Fail fast, fail forward.

You see, the second definition of “failure” according to the Cambridge Dictionary is not doing something you should have done. Terminating employees is among the most difficult task that any business owner faces. You hear people say, “It’s not personal, it’s business.” In fact, hiring people to work for you is entirely personal. It is an awesome responsibility to hire others. They and their families depend on their wages, healthcare, vacation, and retirement benefits. The people who work for you must be taken care of, in good times and in bad. My recognition that I had to fail fast afforded me the opportunity to continued
Connections: The Ties that Bind Strong Communities

Excerpt from high school principal
Brett Hardin’s Senior Dinner Speech

The theme of my talk is community connections at Paideia: What drew me in? How the slow work of making 1:1 connections strengthens this community for all of us? And what I hope, you, the Class of 2019, takes with you.

In the fall of 2006, I was a second year doctoral student with newborn baby number two, and was working two part time jobs — a three-quarter-time job at Paideia, and a half-time job an educational non-profit. It was a challenge to balance the two professional worlds, and I struggled with which full-time path to take the following year. I finally decided in early January 2007 that I would go full-time with the non-profit that July.

I vividly recall that a few months after making that difficult decision, I attended Paideia’s Field Day, and as I watched the magic of the cross age relay unfold before me, I felt a vaguely familiar, sentimental tug about leaving the school. However, I’d already made a different commitment, so I didn’t entertain the tug, and off I went that summer.

Over the next year, I traveled the state providing support to teachers of economics who often had limited instructional resources for their classes. Seeing first-hand the distinct obstacles facing so many of our counties was humbling, especially as I got to know teachers in the rural districts. Even though this work was meaningful, I found myself missing the ebb and flow of a school year and the close relationships that characterize being a part of a school community, this community in particular.

As some of you might know, my wife, Lisanne, jokes that I am sometimes a minimalist when it comes to communication. In early November of 2007, I embarked on what, in hindsight, was essentially a secret mission to head back to Paideia. It was only a secret because I only shared it with Lisanne. Perhaps I should have included others in the process, like Paul, who was actually responsible for hiring, but it seemed too early.

It eventually dawned on me that I would need to let Paul in on the secret, which I did over a lunch at Manuel’s Tavern in March 2008… and so here I am 11 years later, speaking at Senior Dinner on behalf of the faculty and making my eldest daughter endure just one more of my talks before she graduates on Sunday.

Leaving Paideia and scheming to return is actually something I have done twice. I mentioned earlier that I am an alum, which is a fundraising term of endearment the development office bestows upon anyone who attends our school for a year or more. I entered the school at age 4, during its second year of existence, and stayed through the sixth grade, moving to Cleveland, Ohio for junior high and high school. During those early years, my parents were quite active in this community, doing all they could to support the school and its growth. With the limited skill set of an elementary school child, I tried to do my part, mostly by playing kickball or four-square, though never developing into a top tier player like one of this year’s seniors, Liv Cohen.

One of my earliest memories took place on the playground behind the 1509 building. Back then, Paideia did not have any state-of-the-art recreation equipment. We had overgrown bamboo, giant, construction-grade tubes for hide-n-go-seek, and a space to play ball. We did not have any soccer balls for recess, so I used to bring my own. As you can imagine, ownership of the soccer ball was the equivalent of social capital and power on the playground. If the game ever turned against me, I would simply announce that I was taking my soccer ball home.

At some point during that school year, my teacher made a life-changing announcement: The school had purchased soccer balls for the playground and students were no longer allowed to bring their own. In my childhood memory of that moment, it seemed that all of my peers turned to smile, almost triumphantly, at me. Lesson taught, lesson learned. I learned

continued
that although sharing is hard, it’s fair, and although life isn’t always fair, fairness and equity are good for building a community.

Our lives are filled with the happy buzz of activity across many types of communities – family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. We all feel more settled when we find a community that supports and challenges us.

We build strong communities by creating and maintaining connections, big and small, like sharing life goals, being there for each other when times are tough, or simply sharing an inside joke.

As a school, many of our connections are anchored in a moment of learning. As a teacher, people often ask me how I manage to discuss the same ideas every year. I address that assumption by explaining that, while I have taught economics for over 25 years, I have never had the same class twice. Teaching creates a space to reflect on an idea or an experience, interpret it, and apply it in a new way. We have the privilege of engaging in this process every day with our students, wondering how the experience will unfold for each of them.

We love our craft of helping inventive minds explore curious concepts.

The art of teaching economics to a fresh group each fall intrigues me, and I love that we get to develop our own community within the classroom each year. Class of 2019, as you continue the journey you began here, we hope you keep finding the joy and creativity in academic conversations and relationships. Ours is a school that relishes the inquiry as much as the answer, and I hope you will hold onto that gift.

We are also a community that honors hard work, which each of you have contributed here. Whether pouring your heart into a literature paper, a performance of Les Mis, the Bad Movie Club, or an ultimate state championship, you have persisted and are now reaping the benefits. Students, faculty, and parents know what it takes to succeed here, and there is no doubt that you are an accomplished class.

Another benefit of our school community is that we embrace learning from making mistakes. Although I cannot recall any of you ever making a mistake…, I’m sure you would agree that sometimes the best learning occurs when we wrestle with an issue or a question. Being vulnerable is uncomfortable, however, asking for support instead of being prideful, listening with intellectual humility instead of arrogance, and working to rebuild a relationship instead of holding a grudge, are precisely the skills we need you to have as leaders in this world. Feeling uncertain, hurt, or frustrated, is only a short term challenge in this long-view game, and once you realize your ability to recover, it becomes easier to admit mistakes and repair the damage. Of course, any healthy community that embraces mistakes needs to balance it all with loads of humor.

For instance, thanks to Jack Stiefel, there are apparently some in the class of 2019 who believe I lived through the entire 20th century. I bet you didn’t know that I launched the Wright Brothers’ plane at Kitty Hawk, signed the Prohibition Act, and sang backup for Elvis.

Other students took me a little too seriously when I used my personal finances to demonstrate basic financial literacy and shared that my salary as an educator is roughly $3 million a year.

Through Tom Haskell’s branding efforts for his 50th birthday, most students think I wear a uniform of khaki pants and blue shirts Monday through Thursday, switching to jeans and a black Polo shirt on Friday. This notion is ridiculous, as everyone knows I sometimes branch out into grays and even a touch of yellow.

It’s not so much whether the stories or jokes are accurate – the point is that they are all examples of how small connections begin and grow. Those kinds of connections helped me to find my way back to Paideia, and as you leave here, I hope the heartfelt and humorous connections you have made will bring you back over the years. I hope that Paideia will always be a part of your story, like it has been for me and many others.

We have reached that inevitable time when our paths must diverge. I hope you have found enough joy in learning to keep at it, embracing any mistakes along your path forward. Though your memory of the specifics here may fade over time, I hope you will always remember the enthusiasm and humor we have shared. The faculty and I will miss you so very much, and wish you all the best.

2019 Class Stats

Fifteen students came to Paideia in half day and are lifers. As Paul Bianchi explained in his speech: “If you came in the half day, we call you a Lifer. If you came at the beginning of the half day (age 3), then you’re more like a Diaper Lifer.”

Forty-eight students came during elementary.

Twenty-one arrived during junior high.

The remaining 23 “came in high school, mostly ninth grade.

In the fall, students will be attending 55 different colleges and universities.

“That’s my favorite statistic in the college report — that you are going to 54 different colleges and universities. This kind of spread is unusual in other schools. The dispersal reflects the individual approach that has characterized much of your experience here, and you respond in kind,” said Paul. You can see where the class of 2019 will attend college on page 27.
From the Headmaster

“Seeing the world more clearly, more realistically...is a strength”

Excerpt from Paul Bianchi’s speech at graduation

A few weeks after graduation last year a student told me that my graduation talk was particularly gloomy, that the horizon I described for our young graduates had too many clouds.

I was surprised to hear that. I thought I had been more upbeat and positive than the times warranted, and that I had even successfully faked optimism a few times. Nobody wants Cassandra or Chicken Little to speak at a graduation. I thought I tried to see the bright side. For example, I remember commenting on the notable progress in our country in the few decades since Paideia’s founding. When we opened in 1971 Richard Nixon was president, and now, 47 years later, look where we are now. Furthermore, I was surprised, and a little flattered, that the student was even listening and had remembered any of my words.

The pressure to say something that is mildly profound, a little humorous, and has a chance of being remembered is something that I have lived with for many years. It is always tempting to stand up here and try to get in the last words, digestible morsels of advice that graduates should not forget as they dash out the door.

But remembering that I was admonished last year not to be gloomy, it is important to speak to the genuine progress we have achieved in our society and the positive impact on the lives of these young people. Let me just mention a few.

First, these millennials are strikingly and genuinely more tolerant of people of different backgrounds, lifestyles, and abilities. They are more comfortable with diversity and therefore can pursue relationships that enrich them and strengthen the social fabric. We still have work to do before we get to Martin Luther King Jr.’s “beloved community,” but we have come a long way from the blatant and palpable prejudice of the America that many of us grew up in.

Connected to this is a heightened awareness of privilege. If one can separate it from guilt...perform a personal guilt-ectomy — this awareness of privilege is liberating because it enables us to see the world more clearly, see it and act on it.

Seeing the world more clearly, more realistically is another strength of so many of these young people I know. For example, in my modern American history class, we are charmed and amused by Lyndon Johnson’s bold promise in the mid-1960s to rid America of poverty in just one generation, and then allocating pennies to do it. Exorbitant expectations are a set-up, and when they don’t work out, they boomerang back to disillusion you. Better to tackle big and complex problems realistically and with humility.

Another strength that I find encouraging among these young people is that they take their friendships seriously. They seem to know that being connected to other people and investing in relationships are vital to their own emotional health and to the greater good. It’s easy in this candy store world to go for the superficial sweetness that doesn’t sustain us and miss out on the nutrition of deep friendships. They do much better than that.

For all the nostalgia for a simpler America and world to grow up in, lots of that America was not so great. The evolution from then to now has often come with struggle and contention, and it will likely continue to. But progress is more likely with a generation more tolerant, realistic, and compassionate. The generation represented by these students on stage is not perfect, nor do they have to be, but I believe they hold much promise, which is a good thing because we have left them a lot to do.

And so, dear graduates, as you run out the door, my parting advice is that you accept and play to your strengths, and then do what you can to fix ntings. We trust that you will. It is, as always, a privilege to welcome you as graduates of Paideia School.

Congratulations.
PERSONAL VIGNETTES

As part of graduation, several students from the graduating class share personal reflections.

Ahalya Ramgopal

When I started working at an Indian restaurant two years ago, I never expected to be one of only two Indians on staff. I didn’t even expect to work in an Indian restaurant in the first place—in fact, given my eagerness to repress my Indian identity, I would’ve preferred not to. But none of my other job pursuits worked out and with many rejections in hand, I accepted the one job offer I had.

The only thing I can confidently say I know about India and its culture is its food. One thing I once knew was the language. Growing up in New Delhi, my first words were in Hindi. Yet, somewhere between the moving trucks, or the 19-hour flight, or maybe during the layover in Amsterdam, or while making macaroni art in kindergarten, I just forgot it. All of it. My five year old brain managed to remember her stuffed toy but lose an entire language. My parents, alarmed I’m sure, became insistent that their food, my food, remain familiar to me. During lunch periods, I’d reluctantly shove pieces of roti and daal down my throat, all while bitterly eyeing my friend’s square slices of pizza.

When I came to Paideia in Junior High, I became more comfortable being myself because here, as we like to tout, it’s cool to be different. I made fun of those appropriating my culture of bindis and naan, even as I did the same. Like the hipsters I mocked, I ignorantly followed the trend—until I began to work at Chai Pani a couple of years ago.

At school, I was used to being looked at as the cultural expert. At Chai Pani, the “All-things-Indian” expert was a white guy—from South Carolina. He was the one who taught us about India through mandated cultural trainings, which I thought would be refreshing—but was actually humiliating. I was being schooled about fairly obvious parts of MY culture! By a white guy, nonetheless. Then this guy, Daniel, would start speaking to customers in fluent Hindi as I sat there, aghast. Him? Really?

Something in me snapped. Embarrassment morphed into determination to learn more, to pick up Hindi again, to embrace Desi music, and to get involved in conversations about race and identity at Paideia. The food I serve, Indian-Southern fusion cuisine, represents my identity, but at work, a multitude of diverse American experiences are celebrated. In the mornings before a shift, I flit in and out of the kitchen dancing to the Latin Pop music the Mexican cooks play and eating their specially made homemade chilaquiles for breakfast. After a shift, I can sit down and savor a hot Vada Pav from the same kitchen, while enjoying Hindi pop music. It’s a microcosm of the best this country can be. Heading off to college, I’m excited to take part in and give back to communities embodying the values Chai Pani and Paideia have taught me—being proud of who I am, remaining curious, and celebrating and reveling in our differences.

Alejandra Hardin

My vignette is about my dad. Brett Hardin. His name is printed on the diplomas. High School Principal. As some of you may know, when it comes to my dad’s dietary intake during the school day, he is known for being strict, methodical and predictable. Between the hours of 10:00am-11:00am, one can always find him eating his cucumber slices, sliced the long way, drinking his plain Darjeeling tea from a Contigo mug, and eating his green, granny-smith apple. He never snacks at meetings and has developed a reputation because of it. Let me tell you why. It is for his ice cream. Some of you may think my mother, who also works on campus, is the love of his life. A reasonable guess, but wrong. Ice cream is his true love. It is really like nothing I’ve ever seen. When I was younger, he would get out one of our big white bowls, about the width of a soccer ball, and fill it above the rim with Homemade Brand of chocolate chip ice cream, which can only be found in the freezers of Fresh Market. He would eat the whole thing after dinner. Since then, he has reformed himself to just a pint of Ben and Jerry’s a few nights a week. He eats such a regimented diet at school in order to consume vast quantities of ice cream at home. The healthy eating is just School Dad. Home Dad is a different, high calorie and lactose consuming man.

Sometimes, School Dad and Home Dad are the same. For example, other than when my siblings and I are running late in the morning, my dad does not yell. He is known for being calm and steady. These qualities made him a good candidate for teaching me how to drive. When I turned 15, I was desperate to get my learners’ permit. I passed the permit test with a resounding 75%, and, two days later, I insisted that I start driving. My dad took me for my first lesson at the old Emory Clinic on Briarcliff Road, full of empty driving space. My first venture at the facility was successful. The next day, we ventured out again. My confidence had grown so much that I was now ready to practice using turn signals. As I turned onto the main
continued ▶
Lucas Kidder

A short, unremarkable freshman walked anxiously into a small black theater for his final period of an excruciatingly long first day of high school. After his initial surprise at the theater’s darkness wore off, the boy took a seat in a chair he had no idea would become “his” for the rest of his high school years. The students’ jazzy and unrestrained teacher arrived, and began inducting the new kids into Paideia acting troupe culture. He noticed the boy’s nervous attitude towards acting and assured him that he would become a romantic lead by the time he finished high school. The theatre atmosphere filled the boy with apprehension, yet, for the first time in his life he did not paralyze himself with overthinking and took the leap.

That freshman boy was me, of course. I was petrified. During my freshman year, our teacher — Jesse Evans — used seemingly silly games to shape us into actors. At first, I was awful at these games, but as time went on, I finally let go of my fears and resolved to audition for that year’s winter play: Harvey.

This was a huge step for me—the only time I had auditioned for anything was the seventh grade musical, in which they cast me just because there were not enough boys. The fear I felt as I pushed open the black box doors for my Harvey audition nearly overwhelmed me. Trying to subdue my intense anxiety, I walked in, took a deep breath, and made my way right back out.

For some odd reason my mind was not controlling my body, and in a moment, I was running from the building at full speed. While running away may seem like a setback, it was an enormous step in the right direction for me. I had pushed myself to do what I never thought I could, and even though I failed to begin my audition, just walking through the door felt like an accomplishment. Feeling more confident, I soon found myself on stage in a full-length play, as Bradley, a nerd. Later I worked my way into being cast as one of the two lead roles in last year’s drama The Best Man, in which I got to scream at my friend Gio on stage.

Finally, in the winter of my senior year, I played the lead role of an impotent man in the comedy, A Flea in Her Ear. Jesse finally got his way: I was a “romantic” lead.

On his final period of an excruciatingly long 586th day of high school, a tall, slightly-less-unremarkable senior walked confidently into the small black theater. Undaunted by the sheer darkness of the room, he greeted his classmates. He took a seat in “his” chair next to two of his closest friends. Hours of acting, writing, and complaining had transformed him from a timid underclassman to an ardent actor. The boy was no longer afraid of others seeing him on a stage. He knew that due to the years he had spent in that strangely dark room, hidden in the back of the school, he would always find that the most natural place for him to be was a stage.

June-July 2019 • The Paideia Newsletter | 17
Jack Reilly

I’m going to let you in on a little secret. I’ve sometimes been known to be late.
*Hold up speech*
This is the speech I turned in two days and nine hours late.
*steps away from stand and rips up previous speech*
This is my real speech. I finished it this morning.
Anyway, I knew there was a problem when I rushed into my first period lit class ten minutes late to my classmates betting on when I would arrive. I know, it’s bad. Students gambling on campus? Absolutely disgraceful. Ok fine, maybe I am also one of the problems. I am late to breakfast, late to school, late to going to sleep, late to picking up my bash date (fade), I was late to graduation rehearsal on wednesday, again my bad... hell, I’m taking a gap year. [pause] I’m going to be a year late to college. But it is fashionably late, I think. I’ve always embraced the ideology of fashionably late and I do believe it is up to who ever is late to make their lateness fashionable. Ask my first period teachers, when I rush in late, I play it off like I’ve being doing this for my whole life... Then again, I have.

I think I’m often late because I love sleep. I actually have a shirt that says, “I love sleep, it is like being dead without the commitment.” My parents tried to solve this problem by purchasing the amazing alarm clock, “Clocky” [I know, creative name], who had wheels I had to chase around the room to turn off. And if that didn’t work, I woke up literally getting clocked in the face by my mother. Kidding, not kidding, kidding. Love you mom.

While I am sorry, mom and dad, for the stress this habit has caused, and the money, approximately one thousand four hundred dollars that I have wasted based on the estimated time I’ve been late over my four years, I have learned a great deal from it. Here I stand with a group of people who are about to take their life into their own hands, and even the most punctual students of this graduating class such as Libby Budenholzer, Abby Moore, or Matthew Davidorf, will find themselves late to something very important in their future. You will feel like it is the end of the world. This is the moment you’ve been thinking about for such a long time and now you are about to be late. Don’t fret. I’ve been in this situation possibly thousands of times, here are a few pointers I’ve picked up along the way that will help you out.

**Step one:** remain calm. No one wants a frantic person busting into the room. Give off the illusion that you have your life together. Keyword there …illusion.

**Step two:** apologize, but not profusely. A quick sorry will do because let’s remember you are late, better get to it.

**Step three:** smile. Always smile. Smiles solve everything. I would much rather have a happy person in the room than someone beating themselves up for being late. Be happy you made it.

**And step four:** get your act together and contribute right away. Everyone else had five minutes to settle in, but you did not. Bring your best self to whatever you are doing, even if you are bringing yourself five minutes, I don’t know ten minutes, maybe twenty minutes, even a day late.

So there you have it. My 4 tips that will undoubtedly improve everyone’s life from here on out. You’re welcome. I’m probably a little late finishing this speech but really nothing new for me. I wish the best for this class and I look forward to strolling into reunion lunches half an hour late, attending receptions but not weddings, responding to that “whatcha doing today” text with “nothing, you?” a month later, and whatever else I can manage to be late to. With any luck, I’ll be late to my own funeral. Anyway, thank god I’m not graduating late. It has been a great four years. Thank you all. And best of luck to you.
Hello my name is Oscar Sandor Taub. And I’m gonna tell a story. This story takes place at Jewish sleepaway camp or as many call it “camp.” This is the place where Jewish parents send their kids to meet other Jewish kids to marry. The first year I attended this camp was the summer after sixth grade. That year I had a “girlfriend” who I talked to once and hugged on the last day. My counselor could see that I was good with girls and told me, “Next year you will be in teen village and every night you will be sneaking out to the tennis courts and hooking up with girls.”

So I went back to school for seventh grade and I told all of my friends that I was gonna hook up with girls every night the upcoming summer. These claims were met with skepticism but I was 100 percent convinced. That summer I went back ready. Hooking up at Jewish camp means kissing by the way.

In the first three weeks I had only talked to maybe three girls and these had been very brief chats about nothing with no lead towards a hook up and at this point I was kind of scared.

I had yet to hook up with a girl or talk to more than four girls and I definitely had not lived up to the expectations of my counselor from the previous years, nor hype I had built up for myself for my Paideia friends. I could not go back to school un kissed.

By the last day I had lost all hope, not only was I not hooking up with girls every night, I was not even gonna get my first kiss.

As the final day came to a close I walked to the village porch to get a drink of water where Rachel was sitting. She told me, “Oscar, it is the last night I’m so desperate I would hook up with anyone.”

“You too!” I responded.

She then quickly said, “Not you.”

Oof, it was not looking good.

I then went to watch a last night performance I sat next to this one girl. During the performance I put my arm around her. We then went with the group to the chapel to hang out and we saw a creepy shadow so we all ran and while we ran I grabbed her hand and we held hands.

At this point my smoothness had taken over. We then went to the tennis courts and we lay down to stargaze with the group and I once again held her hand. I think I even asked insightful and interesting questions like “Did you enjoy that performance?” And “How has your last day been?” The group then left and asked if we wanted to come and we responded “Nah”, and we stayed there holding hands.

All of a sudden two older girls walked over giggling. They saw us and said “Oh my god, are you guys hooking up?”

We both responded “No,” and they ran away. After this we looked at each other and said, “Wait, are we?”

Still in my suave mode, I said, “I have not had my first kiss have you?”

She responded, “I have not either.” We then both stood up and I got on my tip toes for the kiss and I got like the top of her lip and her nose, I pulled away and said with calmness and grace, “Um, do you want to try that again?”

She ran away. I could not wait to tell my friends.
Jacobi Copeland

One of the most common motivational quotes that I can remember people telling me is to be myself. It is such easy advice to rattle off to someone, and it can be even easier to follow through with. My only problem with that idea is that “being myself” never stopped me from being insecure or feeling anxious. “Be yourself” just felt like a way to rationalize the discomfort that was brought about by social awkwardness. However, thanks to my family and my friends, I finally learned that I had to go beyond being myself and actually accept myself.

Maybe it is just me, but “being yourself” and “accepting yourself” are two extremely different concepts. Anyone can be themselves; in fact, that is the easy part. But the real work comes in when you have to embrace the person you are around other people, no matter how weird that person may be.

Take me for example: I learned what Star Wars was before I could even talk. I am basically fluent in Japanese from all the Anime that I have watched since third grade. I even thought about skipping a day of school so that I could see the new Avengers movie early. And for a long time, I felt like these qualities were something to be ashamed of. Time and time again, what I loved was out of step with what the mainstream loved, and while there was nothing wrong with that, it just made a nerd like me feel out of place. Being myself was not a problem, but I still felt uncomfortable.

It was not until these last four years of high school that I learned how to accept myself. I learned it from the people I knew who were brave enough to be the truest version of themselves in public, regardless of quirks that others may consider strange. From them I learned that accepting myself means not only being true to myself, but also not being afraid to show that person to the world. And, while I know how much you all crave life advice from a teenager fresh out of high school, believe me: accepting yourself is not an easy skill to master. It takes time and work, a different amount for everyone, but regardless, the end result is worth it.

You get to feel confident about yourself while also getting the chance to find your own tribe of people who share your interests and ideas. That, in of itself, is a lesson that allowed me to embrace the nerd that I am and always will be.

Drew Nickels

Here’s an untold truth of Paideia: there’s a shortage of electives. Before you all immediately try to refute this statement citing band, orchestra, chorus, photography, ceramics, painting, yearbook and so on, let me ask this simple question: What do you do with a rising freshman who can’t sing, was told by their art teacher that they, “do art wrong”, and vowed to their parents that he would never touch his trombone again? Well here’s the answer, you have him join Paideia’s most read high school newspaper – The Forum.

So, for the past four years, I have spent every fourth period in a basement computer lab working with my fellow journalists trying to produce quality news. As an elective journalism has a very different pace than other classes as everyone is required to write two articles a month, partake in the editing process, layout the paper, and work on the monthly newscasts shown to the school.

I am now the retiring Editor-in-Chief, and after 4 years still do not know how to layout the paper. After just one attempt to teach me, our teacher, Jennifer Hill, decided I was better at telling people where and how they messed up. That decision proved to be a catastrophic mistake as she created a monster. For the next three years, I was able to critique, complain, and berate my fellow journalists all under the guise of “editing their stories”.

This allowed me to seize control of a school elective despite my many shortcomings such as: being late to class, not getting my stories in on time, forgetting to return edits, and of course, not knowing how to log into the computers.

The amazing thing about being an editor in journalism is it can take you to new heights of hypocrisy. There were countless times I would be yelling at someone for failing to meet the deadline for their second story while I was trying to remember what my article was about. But hey, isn’t that the beauty of leadership?

All jokes aside, the brave few who subject themselves to this intense workload deserve loads of recognition, especially those who sit behind computers laying out pages, editing articles, and producing newscasts… pretty much everything I don’t do.

For someone who can’t sing, The Forum can help you find your voice. For someone who does art wrong, The Forum can let you paint pictures through your writing. And for someone who lacks instrumental talents; well, The Forum is pretty far away from the music rooms. The opportunities provided in The Forum are ample and there are many chances to sharpen your academic skills…man, I really wish I took advantage of them a bit more.
Kendall Seefried

I am looking into the bath of chemicals in the darkroom and watching the blank piece of paper transform before my eyes. Remembering the time it took to get the lighting and the filters exactly right. I enjoy always given me the advice I wanted to hear, I saw the way she looked out for me. One such moment stands out to me when I asked her about putting up a sanitary pad wall in the high school commons. This was something I saw online after the Women’s March in D.C. I knew that the administration may not have approved but I went in asking for her opinion. What she said has stuck with me and influenced many things I did on campus. She told me to go ahead and do it, and that she would make sure that I would be okay. When I asked about getting in trouble, she said Paideia kids do not really get in trouble, at least not the kind of trouble you are thinking of. She likely has no idea the impact that statement had on me and I realized what she meant.

Paideia students get in trouble but for the most part, the consequences are minimal compared to what I was use to in public school.

Well, the sanitary pad wall did not end up happening but Nisha helped me and the other leader of TRIBE speak to Paul about a walkout of Monday Morning Meeting we had coordinated for Black Lives Matter. She helped us understand that we were not asking to protest, we were telling them.

These memories are not the only ones I will have of Nisha. My favorite is the summer before junior year, she came all the way out to Stone Mountain to take me out lunch. She knew I had gone through a lot my sophomore year and she wanted to make sure she could support to me. Over the years, Nisha has become one of the people at Paideia I will never forget. Nisha is the kind of woman I wish to find after leaving Paideia. I wish to find a haven everywhere I go the way Nisha provided a haven for me these past few years. The way she provided a haven for Black students at Paideia since she started working here. Thank you so much for all you have done for me and for our people, Nisha.

Biibi Muse

As I look back, I realize that Paideia has changed me in ways I can never put into words. The truth is that I would have never been able to be the person I am today without the experiences I had here and a big part of that is due to Nisha, Paideia’s high school counselor. As many of you may know, this is Nisha’s last year at Paideia and while she’s been here for many years, I am only going to talk about the four I had the privilege of having with her.

I do not quite remember the first time I met Nisha. I just remember seeing her around campus. It was not until a leader of TRIBE, the Black student organization, I had study hall with, formally introduced me to her that I understood the importance of Nisha to the Black students at Paideia.

It was not until my sophomore year that I began to experience and appreciate Nisha for what she did. While she may not have continued
life. When I arrived on my first day of photography, I was fully prepared to sign up for a study hall the next year.

I found a lifelong love. And it wasn’t study hall. Photography is the ideal fusion of artistic expression and science. From actually taking the picture to the development procedure to the final product, I loved the process of creating something. At first, it was challenging. I had trouble even asking my family to help me by modeling for my photography projects. I was self-conscious and had a hard time taking pictures of myself for a specific project during my sophomore year. I felt out of place when shooting in public with my camera. Before every critique, I would spend a solid day worrying about people seeing something that I had made.

As a naturally shy person, my camera is both a bridge and a shield between me and the rest of the world. As a bridge, photography has significantly improved my confidence. Taking photographs in public and of people requires me to have a sense of determination and courage that I found daunting before embracing this art form. I am more comfortable and self-assured when sharing my work, which often has personal qualities to it. Photography is much more than an artistic outlet for me; it enables me to explore my interests more intimately and to express my personal narrative visually through the lens of my camera.

Through photography, I have also learned that it is okay to stay silent sometimes. I have always been told to speak up more, and through photography, I found that there is nothing wrong with my desire to listen rather than speak. Oftentimes being invisible enabled me to capture an image I would not have been otherwise able to. Photography has challenged me to observe the minute details of my surroundings. After four years of photography, I have discovered my artistic side, confidence in my work, the ability to speak up, and patience that will last me for the rest of my life.

I don’t normally speak in public. I have received many an advisor report where my teachers encourage me to speak up more in class. But as you can tell, that’s not entirely true anymore. And now, I can see that the image was not the only thing that developed in the darkroom. I did as well.

Lilly Bencich

My classmates usually get confused when they find out I’m an acolyte at church. Based on how many times I “take the lord’s name in vain” on any given day alone, I can’t say I blame them. I only know two other acolytes at Paideia, and none of my close friends are regular churchgoers, so my religious preferences are not something I’ve had to explore much. Early on, however, my mom made it clear that I was going to acolyte. She grew up in the Greek Orthodox church but as a woman she was not allowed to serve. In fact, to this day, her church only allows boys to serve. That’s probably one reason why she switched to the Episcopal church around the time I was born and forced me into acolyte training in eighth grade.

The role of acolytes at my church is to assist the clergy in carrying out church services. At my first training, they went through all the rules, behaviors, and symbolism, and I kept feeling like all of this was arbitrary. For my first two years of acolyting, I didn’t want to be there and did as little as possible to keep my mom happy. But later on, I started opening up and found that I was actually beginning to enjoy it. There were little moments that occurred during every service that would make me smile - like helping the vergers quickly finish off the leftover communion wine in the sacristy behind the church.

Acolyting was a way for me to get to know other kids who didn’t go to Paideia and, by the end of my junior year, I had built relationships with so many of the other acolytes. In fact, I was so involved that the clergy asked me if I wanted to become a captain.

So, why would I spend my Sundays assisting church services if I’m not religious? The simple answer is that it’s fulfilling to be in a leadership position. I’m grateful to my church for believing that I could be a leader even though my personal beliefs weren’t in perfect sync with theirs. For me, the role of captain isn’t as much about religion as it is about community and service. Through my church, I get opportunities to volunteer and build relationships with people who have very different beliefs from me. I get to spend Thanksgivings picking the meat off countless trays of turkey bones in the basement of a soup kitchen while discussing with the verger if the Bible should be considered a work of literature.

I have attended Paideia since first grade, almost a lifer, and sometimes everyone seems to have similar views here. So, I’ve come to be extremely grateful for the new ideas and perspectives the members of my acolyte team have introduced me to. Plus, it’s fun to spend time with a group of people who come from different backgrounds. I doubt my mom expected me to like acolyting so much for such non-religious reasons, but that’s good I think.

From acolyting, I’ve learned how to not just tolerate, but to respect other people’s beliefs, which I would consider one of the most important lessons I’ve learned in my 18 years. I have learned from and connected with people who view the world differently, which is a big part of what I’m looking forward to after I leave the Paideia bubble.
Olivia Willingham

“Ha! If I were funny, I’d say this,” is a mantra I’ve repeated mentally for years. I’ve thought it during class, during dinner at my cousins’ house, and even hanging with friends. I’ve allowed perfect setups to go by, thinking, “If I were funny, I’d say this.” I’ve hoped someone else would say it, and then I could laugh at my joke.

I’ve never found myself particularly funny… well, I have, but I fear I’m only funny to myself. I make myself laugh but have to stifle my laughter for fear of laughing out loud and appearing insane. I’m a perfectionist and a teenager, so I’m very afraid of judgement from others. I rehearse difficult conversations a thousand times. I like having a script, so being funny is too spontaneous for me.

As a junior, I took Jim Veal’s satirical lit class. I was very shy because the students were mostly seniors, so I would practice my satirical remarks with my teacher after class, so he would like me. He did. Then, we had a field trip to see a local production of Twelfth Night and went by bus. I was terrified; I had to find somebody to sit with. I sat down next to Aiden, because he’s friendly. As I expected, he broke the ice immediately. But after a little while, I made him laugh!

“That was funny,” he said, clearly surprised.

“Thanks.” We kept talking and I did it again and again! No script. Genuine laughter from both of us. I’d revealed my super power.

A few months later, I attended a family engagement party. I get especially shy around my extended family, so I was a wreck that morning.

I would greet my uncle in a whisper, and he wouldn’t be able to hear me, so he would say hello again. At this point, my aunt would have seen me. “Oh, Olivia, how are you?!” I will get stuck between greeting my uncle louder and greeting my aunt. Meanwhile, a little voice in my head would be hissing, “A normal person would know how to handle thisss and talk loudly enough to be heard. A normal person would even know whom to hug and whom to shake hands with, but not you, Olivia.”

So, before I went into the party, I said to myself, “Forget the script!” Then I was utterly charming.

I said whatever popped into my head. Sometimes, I stumbled over words or acted dorky, but much to the shock and awe of my mean little inside voice, I made everyone in the room laugh.

Humor was a hidden super power that is revealed now that I am all grown up. I was like Aquaman in the desert or Frozone without his super suit. Hey! That was pretty funny.

Jenna Delgado

Everything I needed to know I learned in fourth grade at Paideia. In Peter and Luke’s class, or Puke as we liked to call ourselves, fourth grade was weird and I loved it. Peter Richards retired from Paideia several years ago and lives in Maine. Luke still teaches in the elementary school with Alessandra. I learned many useful things such as how to tolerate the taste of Spam, the prime numbers two through around 337, and the words to Monty Python and The Holy Grail.

While all these things seemed valuable to me at the time, Peter had warned us that our parents would fact check the things we told them when we went home. Each day, when I got in the car, my mom would ask what I had learned that day, and I would produce facts about how they disposed of human waste in the Middle Ages or the number of penises in the Bayeux Tapestry (93). However, I think my parents really started to wonder how I was spending my time at school after one very cold day in the winter. As soon as it went below 32 degrees, Peter went outside to pour a bucket of water on the slide so it would freeze over so we could go extra fast and more people would be flung off the end of the slide when we played watermelon.

Peter told us the 1509 [building] is haunted and, if you all didn’t know, Paideia has a ghost, Buford, who lives under the staircase and whose humble abode is appropriately referred to as the lost and found. That room continued
is scary. It had several lonely shoes, which I and the other ghostbusters worried belonged to Buford’s victims. Not only were we scared of Buford, but also the possibility of splinters, spiders, and the nails sticking out of the very low ceiling. Whenever we would tell Peter we were off to go hunt for Buford he would always say, “Have fun and watch your head.”

Peter knew how to get us to enjoy our activities while also doing a lot of work although his tactics of ghost hunting and Yumbos may have seemed far fetched in other classrooms. Peter taught us how to manage our money with a currency called eggs and even convinced several kids in our class to sell their soul to him for five eggs (he has since returned their souls). We also learned our times tables and how to draft a paper. For Valentine’s Day, we had a “five-star meal” with several forks and knives to teach us how to behave in a restaurant. Without Peter’s class I would not only lack copious amounts of useless information but also life skills that I now use daily. Peter’s class was my favorite experience of the “Paideia way” and when I walk by the playground and see fewer and fewer of Peter’s giant wooden blocks, I miss PUKE.

Nanseera Wolff

One night, when I was about twelve years old, my youngest brother, Mikka, came into my room in tears.

“Nanseera, I miss Kai.” One of Mikka’s closest friends had recently moved away. I explained to him that even though people move away from us, we are still connected to them, tethered across oceans and continents. Little did I know how difficult it would be to remember this in the future.

Almost three years ago, my family faced a major separation. Because of a visa complication, my mother was not allowed to enter the United States. At first we were told that it would take six to nine months for her to get a visa. We thought we could handle that. It turns out we could handle much more than that because nine months turned into ten months, then a year, then two years. For two years we were a stretched family, as my father would say. All this happened as I was about to begin my Paideia career. The strength of our family was being put to the test with everyday interactions being reduced to WhatsApp texts and occasional video calls. Sometimes these conversations just left me feeling farther away from my mom. I had trouble remembering the very advice that I had given my brother. It took an extra effort to remember that we were still connected despite our separation. That may have been one of the hardest parts about her absence.

Thankfully my family was reunited in July of 2018 after two long years. I have been blessed to be living under the same roof as my mom for my whole senior year. But now that the year is over, I will be the one to leave.

We each have very different relationships with our families and mentors. We are all heading off into a world where those people will no longer be constant figures in our day-to-day lives. This will come with a great deal of freedom, along with a great deal of difficulty. I know that for both families and graduates, this longing may be heart-wrenching, but somewhere beneath the pulling pain of separation is an unbreakable love that, like I explained to my brother, tethers us to each other.

So the song I am about to share is for my fellow graduates, and for all their loved ones. It is okay to knock on someone’s door one night because you miss someone. This song is also for my family: my extended family, my brothers, my papa and, of course, my mama. Twe kaabye nyo, naye/kati tu lina amaanyi.
**Graduation**

**Joanie Dorfman**

On my first day at Paideia, I stepped into the junior high building with my face hidden underneath a gray hat and a long mop of hair. I didn’t have much to say and was just content to just sit alone with a good book in the back of the classroom. That’s what I had done at my old school, after all.

The year before, I had watched all of my friends go off and find other friends, so I just got used to being alone. I felt abandoned. I ended up spending so much time blocking out other people with the words on a page, that soon it was like I didn’t know anything else.

But at Paideia I was forced to interact with other students. About once a week, my junior high counselor had me meet outside with a few other kids for pizza during lunch hour. It didn’t take long for the group to disband, but one of the kids in the group continued to ask me when we were meeting again, no matter how many times I told her that I didn’t know.

My mom, who is a lot smarter than I am, suggested that maybe she was just looking for an excuse to talk to me. So, while I still trusted my books more than the other students, I invited her to eat lunch with me. This went on for months. We’d meet up in the PiBites line and I’d nervously ask her to come eat with me in my classroom.

I remember the first time I saw her heading for my classroom without me even asking. It was such a small thing, but it made me think that perhaps it was worth it to give people a chance.

Fast forward five years and she’s still one of my best friends, of whom I am fortunate enough to have quite a few. So I want to thank Paideia for helping me realize that there’s more to life than just a good book. For as much as I love to escape to the world of literature, there’s a lot waiting for me in the real world if I just look up.

I have no way of knowing who I’d be if I’d never gone to this school, but I imagine I’d be a much lonelier person.

**Margot Thompson**

The drive from my house to Paideia takes approximately fifteen minutes depending on the day. I know this route so well that I can recall the color of each house I pass along the way and exactly where the potholes are on Ponce to avoid and which trees turn the brightest red in the fall.

My time at Paideia can be traced in the miles from Michigan Avenue to Erie Avenue to Ponce de Leon. Each morning, the tires of my car carried me to my friend Nanceera’s house, where she always ran out hurriedly with shoes in one hand and a bagel in the other. We set off to school, always a few minutes late, with windows down and music playing in the background of our conversations.

This drive saw some of our best and loneliest times together. I can tell you at which traffic lights each conversation of unspoken contention and reconciliation occurred, and I can tell you just how short or long a fifteen minute drive can feel. My time at Paideia has been much like our relationship over the years: complicated, determined, painful, and loving. Each year we faced new challenges, Nanceera and Paideia and I, and each year demanded more effort and intention.

And yet these little efforts and intentions have been my proudest accomplishments in the past four years. They gave me a reason to keep driving from Michigan Avenue to Erie Avenue to Ponce de Leon. Only now have I begun to understand the relationship between friendship and learning—an ever evolving and continuous process.

Without Paideia, I would have never met Nanceera, and without Nanceera, Paideia would have been remarkably lonelier. I’m grateful I found them both.
Casey Serrano

When people ask me what my biggest fear is, I say “global warming” because as a gen-z kid I am conscientious of my personal brand; follow me on Instagram @ unofficialcaseyserrano. However, my biggest fear is much less trendy; it’s falling behind and getting left behind. In elementary school one of my teachers told our class that we should all join rec sports, so that we could learn to fail, and I remember thinking: “No thanks, I’m bad at sports. Everyone on the team would hate me.” Clearly, I didn’t get the message.

I’m a little older now and I play two sports, Cross Country and swim team, that are designed to prey on my fear of getting left behind. Even more precisely designed to prey on my fear is the 500 yard freestyle. The 500 freestyle is 20 laps up and down the pool where everyone can see you and where people are counting your laps and know just how far behind everybody else you are. Most swimmers can complete the 500 in around 6 to 7 and a half minutes — it takes me over eight.

This season, my coaches put me in the 500 without telling me until we got to the meet, probably so I could not protest. That 500 was awful. I was so stressed out about falling behind everybody else that by the end of the race I was crying in my goggles.

My self esteem dropped so low that I convinced myself that I was so far behind everybody else that I had to keep swimming even when I saw the red card indicating it was my last lap, and I ended up swimming an extra 50 yards. During this 50 the other swimmers got out of the water because the event was over, which made me think that I was so far behind everyone else that they were abandoning me, further stressing me out. I hit the emotional low of my swimming career on the last 25 of that 550, but when I got out everyone was laughing. They all thought it was funny that I missed the count, and they did not mind that I was slow they were just happy I finished. Once I saw everyone else starting to laugh, I began to be able to laugh at myself and my situation. At the swim banquet this year I said that 550 was one of my favorite swim memories. I can laugh at myself after I make a mistake, but I still have not mastered the art of laughing at myself in the moment. When I only focus on getting left behind, I do not have the mental capacity to think about anything other than how stressed I am, much less how ridiculous my situation is. I do not have any life changing advice for how to address a tendency towards tunnel vision, but as I think about where I want to end up after these next four years, I hope it is in a place where I can at least recognize when I am in a ridiculous situation.
Where They Will Be in the Fall

Members of the Class of 2019 will attend more than 50 different colleges and universities in the fall. Here is where they will be.

Max Karnik .................................................. University of Michigan
Lucas Kidder .................................................. George Washington University
Caroline Kirk .................................................. University of Michigan
Johnny Klein .................................................. University of Georgia
Kiran Kowalski ............................................... Wesleyan University
Lilah Krugman ............................................. University of Vermont
Marie Levisay .............................................. University of California, Santa Barbara
Ian Lippincott ............................................. Carnegie Mellon University
Oscar Mayorga ............................................. Oxford College of Emory University
Naiya McCalla ............................................. New York University
Olivier Merlin-Zhang ....................................... Davidson College
Alana Mermin-Bunnell ..................................... Stanford University
Chip Miller .................................................. Case Western Reserve University
Abby Moore ................................................. University of Wisconsin Madison
Bibbi Muse .................................................... Macalester College
Drew Nickels ............................................... Davidson College
Giovanni Padovano ......................................... Drexel University
Jack Parker .................................................. Northwestern University
Davi Pressman ............................................... University of Vermont
Bryson Prince ............................................... Georgia State University
Ahalya Rampopal ......................................... Wellesley College
daisy Reid ..................................................... University of Colorado at Boulder
Jack Reilly .................................................... Dartmouth College
Sadd Sad ...................................................... Northwestern University
Leo Saltzman ................................................ University of Miami
Nora Lee Sampson ......................................... Furman University
Ben Samuels ................................................... Berry College
Isaiah Sanders ................................................. Undecided
Carson Sanford ............................................. Emory University
Daniel Sanz ................................................... Emory University
Jon Schundler ................................................. Yale University
Kendall Seefried ........................................... Georgia Institute of Technology
Casey Serrano ............................................... University of Georgia
Julian Shrader ............................................... University of Georgia
Abigail Shuman ........................................... University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Jack Stiefel ................................................... Davidson College
Xavier Straughn-Turner ..................................... Stanford University
Sisay Tadesse ................................................ Duke University
Oscar Taub ................................................... University of Chicago
Josh Taylor-Klaus ......................................... Brandeis University
Margot Thompson ......................................... George Washington University
Thuan Tran .................................................... Harvard University
Jaylan Troutman ........................................... University of West Georgia
Alec Tubbs ................................................... Georgia Institute of Technology
Victor Urquiza ............................................... Delaware State University
Grace Whissel ............................................... Florida International University
Olivia Willingham .......................................... Emory University
Nanseera Wolff ............................................. University of Miami
Cade Woodcock ............................................. Brown University
Audrey Woodward ......................................... Oxford College of Emory University
Meg Woodward ............................................. Oxford College of Emory University
Leonardo Zamora ......................................... Undecided
Hannah Zeldin ............................................... Indiana University Bloomington
Mary Poppins Jr. Flies High

The cast of the junior high musical, Mary Poppins Jr., sailed along with the title character into audiences’ hearts with their toe-tapping performance of the musical based on the books of P. L. Travers. That literary legacy was highlighted by the large storybook prop used to great effect to visually advance the plot.

From the brush-wielding chimney sweeps to corps of marching bank employees to Jane and Michael and Mr. and Mrs. Banks and the rest of the cast, audiences were treated to a “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” performance.