

# THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

## NEWSLETTER

Volume LII

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October 2019

### Eat Lunch with Your Child 2019

The Black Parent Organization's annual event, Eat Lunch with Your Child was attended by hundreds. BPO parent volunteers arrived on campus early in the morning to begin preparing lunch for students and their parents. Elementary students in **Shondra Thomas's** classes designed logos for a t-shirt and **Nick Sheely's** was selected. The Paideia Chamber Orchestra ensemble played in the Grove. The event was chaired by **Shaun Evans**, and **Carol and Chip Joyner**. Proceeds benefit financial aid at Paideia. More photos on page 5.



### PAIDEIA STUDENTS HONORED BY NATIONAL MERIT

Twenty-one seniors were honored by the National Merit Scholarship Competition and Program based on their PSAT scores. Seven seniors were named semifinalists in the scholarship competition and 14 students were named commended students the scholarship program.

The following students were named semifinalists: **Will Hutchinson, Aidyn Levin, Charlotte Lewis, Josie Miller, Jack Spencer, Emi Wu** and **Anna Zheng**.

The 14 commended students were: **Christina Aaron, Lucas Anderson, Jay Bartelt, Jordyn Bourne, Hunter Collins, Olivia Graner, Jason Guo, Mary He, Chloe Morris, Maxim Mukherjee, Caroline Porkert, Emma Schwartz, Liana Valdes** and **Mimi Wanamaker**.



## Squash Festival Features a Cornucopia of Flavors

*Kirsty Lubicz-Nawrocka, Elementary Science Coordinator*

On October 10th the Paideia Elementary campus celebrated the successful butternut squash crop that was produced this year. Back in the early spring, elementary students sowed trays and trays of butternut squash seeds in their science classes.

In an effort to combat food insecurity around our city, **Tania Herbert**, urban agriculture coordinator, and her high school short term urban agriculture students brought the seedlings to several specific growing sites across Atlanta. These include the Women’s Metro Atlanta Transitional Center, the Brownsmill Food Forest Community Garden, the Thomasville Heights Elementary School Farm, the Paideia Farm and the campus garden beds.

Paideia’s families were invited to take



some squash harvested from the Paideia Farm to cook in their favorite recipes. On October 10, the elementary science room was filled with wonderful warm dishes, both sweet and savory, as well as home-

made butternut squash ice cream!

Students, faculty and lucky high school students who passed by during the feast of flavors sampled all of the different recipes. Satisfied tummies abounded.

## Back at School and This Time Watching Students Learn

*By Kelly Griendling, Paideia Parent Science Club Volunteer*

As a Paideia alum (Class of 2001) and now a Paideia parent for the past six years, it has been fun for me to see all the things at Paideia that are both the same and different from my time as a student. As one in what is perhaps a small minority of Paideia graduates who went into engineering, one of my favorite additions to the school is the elementary science building and the wonderful science teachers inside. On top of that, the elementary science teachers have put together an amazing set of afterschool clubs that have always been the favorites of my budding scientists. It was through these clubs that **Diana Lockwood** and I discovered that we shared a love of helping the students learn to invent and discover, and the idea to team up for a cool aerospace project for the Inventor’s club was born.

We decided on a balsawood glider project that not only gave our young inventors a chance to learn a little about the dynamics of flight, but also gave them a chance to check out and use the school’s Glowforge Laser Cutter. I should probably mention that I currently teach aerospace engineering at Georgia Tech and this project was actually inspired by some of the projects we give to our undergraduate students. The project itself had three phases – an exploration phase where students constructed and tested gliders using a selection of pre-cut pieces; a design phase in which they used what they learned to develop and draw their own designs, which were cut using the Glowforge; and a build and test phase, where they constructed the gliders from their own designs and then tested and modified them until they were satisfied with their final design.

I could go on for pages about the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity of the students

in the club. All of their final designs looked nothing like the standard balsawood gliders that can be purchased in the store, with many performing at a level that was delightfully surprising. Many of the designs featured multiple wings and tails, often placed in unusual locations or at unusual angles – things that most aerospace engineers would have never even considered for the design. Still, these aircraft flew, a wonderful reminder of the power of children’s creativity and problem-solving abilities.

For me, this experience brought much joy. Watching the students discover, experiment, learn, and succeed is extraordinarily rewarding. However, that is compounded by the joy of being able to come back to the school I loved as a student to share with the current students (including my own child) the profession that I love – something that so few have the opportunity to do.

## High School Outdoor Club Backpacks in North Carolina

by Mark Alexander, High School Outdoor Club Faculty Advisor

On the heels of September's record-setting heat in Atlanta, the high school Outdoor Club headed for higher ground and cooler weather on a two-night backpacking trip on the first weekend of October. Ten students, chaperoned by teachers **Mark Alexander** and **Brian Smith**, experienced misty weather along the highest section of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina, where the temperatures barely reached 70 degrees. On Friday afternoon, we hit the trail with loaded packs and set up camp in a meadow near a stream. On Saturday, we enjoyed a fun day of hiking. We ascended to the summit of a 6,000-foot grassy "bald" mountain and had a picnic lunch while shrouded in fog. Later that afternoon, we explored a series of cascades and waterfalls in a narrow gorge, off the beaten path. Back in camp, as darkness settled in, we dined on beans and rice and s'mores in the glow of a warm campfire. We slept to the soothing pitter patter of raindrops on our tents overnight, before packing up and hiking out Sunday. It was a weekend full of discovery, and laughter!



Pictured (from left): Mark Alexander, Joe Kelly, Sophia Kennedy, Tristan Ouweleen, Jane Brock, Miles Kirsh, Sabrina Belkin, Carly Gaines, Ben Kelly, Lylah Bannister, Ella Kim.

## Author Talk with Bernie Shein

Bernie Shein, former Paideia teacher will share his new book *Pat Conroy: Our Livelong Friendship* in reading in the black box theater on December 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Reception and book signing to follow. Books will be available for purchase at the event.



## Volleyball Senior Night

Senior volleyball players **Dylan Levy**, **Sadie Holcomb**, **Claire Hagen** and **Aaren Evans** and team manager **Lila Morrison** were honored at senior night. The seniors are shown here with their parents and coaches.

## Student Achievements

### Paideia Student Photography Wins Award

Paideia was awarded "Best School" based on students' photographs in the Atlanta Celebrates Photography's (ACP) exhibition. It was the second year in a row Paideia won the award.

### Cross Country Teams Win at Area Meet

Paideia varsity boys and JV boys team won the Bob Roller Invitational Sept. 28 at Lamar Murphy Park in Jefferson, Ga. The varsity girls team won third place. Varsity girls and boys placed in the top ten. **Luna McCauley** and **Megan Walter** placed fourth and fifth respectively among the girls. **Elijah McCauley**, **Sam Colton** and **Jay Bartelt** were fourth, fifth and sixth among the boys.

## Paideia Student Recognized for Community Service Work

Senior **Emma Schwartz** was recognized in the Student Spotlight by Giving Point, a nationwide community-based youth development organization that inspires a passion for learning and service. Emma was recognized for her work with Paideia's high school immigration activism club, which she founded. The club has volunteered at the Stewart Detention center and been involved in other community service projects centered around immigration activism. Read more about Emma's work at [mygivingpoint.org/student-spotlight-emma](http://mygivingpoint.org/student-spotlight-emma).

# Why I Teach

## Helping Students See a Larger, Connected World

By Melissa McKay-Hagan, High School Modern Language Teacher

The 2019-2020 academic year will be my 16th year teaching French and Spanish in the high school at Paideia and teaching is still giving my life purpose. (Yes, the girl who said she would never be a high school teacher is now teaching high school!) I love teenagers and I love spending time with them! (I need to keep reminding myself of this since now I have two of my own at home.) Teenagers have an energy that most adults don't have, they are not yet terminally jaded, they are honest (sometimes too honest), they are still trying to figure out who they are and what they want to do. It can be exciting and energizing to be a part of their journey of self-discovery. Being

with teenagers all day inspires me and keeps me feeling young. Despite what lots of people think, I see adolescents as hopeful, energized and hard-working. Just like everyone, they want to find a place where they are understood and cherished. My goal is

to make my classroom a place that helps them on this journey and where they feel they can be themselves.

Being a parent of teenagers while being a high school teacher has its challenges, but for the most part, being a parent has made me a better teacher and being a teacher has made me a better parent. My kids are now in high school. Having two

kids who are very different learners and very different students from each other has forced me to re-think what I do as an educator. It's easy to teach students who love school, make good grades, participate in class and do well on tests. And these relationships bring us so much joy and satisfaction as teachers. But it's not always so easy to make those kinds of connections with every kid in our classroom. Being a parent of two very different types of kids has made me go deeper in thinking about how I reach all students. How can I make sure that every student in my classes feels seen and heard? Figuring out how to make a connection with all of these different kids is a

challenge but it is my ultimate goal. I am not just teaching them French and Spanish. For me, it's about so much more than that.

In these polarizing times when "the other" is demonized for political gain, I believe that as teachers, our job is more important

than ever before. As a modern language teacher, I am first and foremost, teaching students to think beyond their immediate environment and have compassion for people who are different than they are. I am also helping kids learn how to communicate in a different way and with more than just the people around them. In my classes, students explore language



and culture through music, games, literature, history and geography. Learning a foreign language can be a transformative experience, and it can help students see the world differently so that they are connected to it in a more mature and more compassionate way. Once you see how hard it can be to communicate in a

foreign language, you have much more empathy for the accented English of the person you may run into on the street. I often tell my students that a person's broken English should not be seen as a weakness, but rather their ability to speak multiple languages should be seen as a strength. In this way, learning to communicate in another language can be humbling, as you put yourself in someone else's shoes, even for just one class period. As language educators, we teach the next generation to be more open minded, to try to understand different points of view, different ways of life, different ways of communicating, while stressing that we should treat everyone with dignity and respect.

And the wonderful thing about getting to do this here at Paideia is that these goals of compassion, connection and inclusiveness are at the very core of what we do as a school community. No matter what we teach or which part of the school we work in at Paideia, we all value seeing and nurturing kids as unique individuals and helping them to value each other as well. Being a part of this community as a teacher for all these years, and now as a parent has been an incredible gift for me. I look forward to each day that I get to collaborate with such amazing colleagues and teach such cool kids.

## Seen at Eat Lunch with Your Child 2019



Chairs Chip and Carol Joyner and Shaun Evans with Timothy Hardy



## Cross Country Teams Make State

The Paideia girls' and boys' varsity cross country teams qualified for the State Championships at the Region Meet in Fayetteville, Ga. Oct. 24. **Luna McCauley** placed fourth and **Jordan Walter** placed eighth among the girls. **Elijah McCauley** and **Sam Colton** placed second and fifth respectively among the boys. **Jesus Centellano Cortes**, **Alec Harris**, and **Erik Guzman-Dominguez** out the top five scoring male runners. The JV boys and girls teams each placed second.



## Paideia Represented on USA Ultimate National Teams

Two Paideia ultimate coaches have been selected to be part of the coaching staff for the USA Ultimate National teams competing at the 2020 World Ultimate Championships July 11-18 in Leeuwarden, Netherlands.

**Martin Aguilera '96** and **Miranda Knowles '00** will be among the nine coaches for women's, men's, and mixed teams. Martin will be the head coach for the mixed team and Miranda will be assistant coach for the men's team.

Additionally, the following Paideia current and former ultimate players were invited to try out in November for the Junior USA National team for the 2020 World Junior Ultimate Championship: **Sierra Petrash '20**, **Alondra Romero '20**, **Lucy Seward '20**, **Addison Kerwin '20**, **Allie Fridkin '19**, **David Chalmers '19**, and **Ben Dameron '19**. The Junior World Championships are July 18-25 in Malmö, Sweden.

# Overseeing the Alligator Benches

By Paul Bianchi

*In early September the alligator benches outside my office were rebuilt through the generosity of a memorial gift from a good friend of the school. The new benches are true to the original design, which in an historical neighborhood is important. Seeing and hearing them be rebuilt reminded me of an essay I wrote about the benches 25 years ago. I recycle it here with only minor changes.*

Outside my office window in the green space separating the 1509 building from the old junior high are the alligator benches. They have been there since the mid-1970s when Bill Valle, then the lone maintenance person on staff, built them. I cannot remember the original intent of the benches, but their octagonal layout suggests hopes of outdoor seminars. Instead, they are mostly used by young children for games of alligator. Alligator is one of those 'tag-not-it-gotcha' games indigenous to the school in its particulars, but universal in kind. The alligator-child is in the middle of the octagon; the would-be captives hop from bench to bench, but are allowed to stay on a safe bench for only a few seconds. When caught off the bench, the victim is devoured and then miraculously resurrects to become the next predator.

It's a noisy game with all the shrieking one would expect in an alligator chase. Sometimes one of the pursued will hang thoughtlessly on the small limb of the dogwood tree next to the west bench. Keeping that dogwood alive and intact has long been one of the many obsessions of my job. I rap on my office window, a window that doesn't open without a hydraulic lift.

"Get off the tree," I shout using hand gestures proven over the years to be an effective substitute for language. A "what-she-saying?" look comes over the children's faces until someone deciphers the pantomime. "He wants us to leave the tree



alone." Momentary break in the action... Shriek, shriek.

It's been a great view from the window for all these years. If my office were high up overlooking the campus, I would see Paideia only from a lofty perspective and succumb to those detached musings of grandeur that overcome me when I gaze out the window of an airplane. My location is an apt metaphor: the life of a school is on the ground floor amidst the shrieking; the alligator benches were designed for one thing but adapted by children for their purposes. As adults, we oversee them, but half the time they can't hear what we say, so we resort to acting out our message. Children grow up and move on, but we would like the tree to survive for the next generation.

Paideia was not born out of any lofty perspective or utopian pretense. People love a good creation story, but ours is as ordinary as a barn building. No, the school was not started by a few rebel teachers leaving Galloway in pursuit of Truth. No, I did not wake up one morning in the second year of my teaching career possessed by the need to have my own school. When Elliott Galloway first suggested I talk with a group of Emory area parents interested in starting a school, I did not even know

where DeKalb County was. I thought it was where they flew those mammoth C5A airplanes because with my accent, Cobb and DeKalb sounded alike.

A handful of families decided to start the school. They had been frustrated by their efforts to get DeKalb County Schools to be less standardized and more open to innovation as well as integrate. They asked Elliott Galloway to open up a branch of Galloway in Druid Hills, but his school had just opened and was not ready for franchising. He did suggest the name Paideia and gave them my name and probably others. These original trustees contacted me, but being only 24 at the time and not knowing, among many other things, the difference between Cobb and DeKalb County, I told them I was not interested.

The Paideia people forged ahead with their plans. The school would be an elementary school and it would open in September 1970, in space leased from the Jackson Hill Baptist Church. The church deacons approved the lease, but in July, six weeks before the intended opening, the congregation of the church vetoed the contract. After that rejection by the Jackson Hill congregation, the trustees folded up their plans, went on vacation, and vowed to organize anew in the fall. In October

they approached me again. Six months had elapsed and I must have felt that it had been a summer of unusual personal growth because this time when offered the job of headmaster, I accepted.

It would be nice to think that my youthful intelligence and uncommon wisdom got me hired over a long list of experienced candidates, but the truth is that there were no other candidates. How could there be? These parents were trying to hire someone to head up a school with no buildings, no faculty, no students, and no money. It wasn't a school; it was barely an idea. Nonetheless, the job came with a great title, "headmaster", which to my public school sensibilities conjured up images of an Irish setter sleeping in front of my office fireplace as I read history and wore tweeds. Also, some people find me ambitious.

Part of the Paideia creation story is the optimism and hopefulness of its beginning. The school began as one of those alternative school flowers sprouting out of the reform spirit of the 1960s. Eras of reform often bring excess, the proverbial baby thrown out with the bath water. Paideia has experienced such excesses, and those of us who have perpetrated them have agreed among ourselves not to discuss our follies in hope that they will eventually pass from collective memory. But reform efforts are also premised on the optimistic notion that if we work hard, the world can be improved. The original families and teachers who started Paideia believed that there were better ways to educate children and create a healthier environment for their development. Even before we were able to reveal the location of the first building at 1509 Ponce, families of almost 100 children sent in tuition. That's a great deal of faith to place in a school not founded on the promise of heavenly guidance or divine intervention.

The hopefulness of our beginning is a legacy which continues today. It is also, I believe, a metaphor for so much of the optimism that pervades the school. Paideia

remains willing to try something new, to give a kid a new start, to rearrange the institution to foster teaching talent, to venture out on the sometimes thin ice of innovation.

It is tempting to try to view the past systematically or to unearth underlying principles which have guided and now explain our development. We should be appropriately skeptical of such attempts. All of our memories are selective and blurred by the continuous nature of the weavings in the tapestry. There is no big bang theory which explains the school's origin, nor are there fixed ideological principles that have governed its growth. It took us almost 10 years to get around to writing down a Framework of Values, and even then, we were quick to insist that these not be understood as the Ten Minus One Commandments of Paideia School.

Ideology and schools do not mix well. Teaching and learning are too personal and idiosyncratic to be wedged into neat prescriptions or reduced to formulas. Instead of ideology, Paideia has put its faith in people and the liberating effect a healthy community can have on their growth. In order to create the best environment for children, schools need to promote an optimum environment for the adults who spend their days and lives with children: teachers. I have many responsibilities as head of the school, but none is more im-

portant than selecting teachers and working with others to maintain a school where good teachers can do their best work. The buildings, the brochures, the curriculum, and the administrative organization matter only to the extent to which they facilitate teaching and therefore learning. This approach has defined Paideia.

So has the determination to enjoy our time with children, to celebrate our serious work. The Framework of Values speaks to the importance of the present in education. Not everything should be done or rationalized as preparation for life; as John Dewey said, education is life itself. The best way to increase the chances of children having happy and productive adulthoods is to offer them happy and productive experiences in childhood. If we want that environment for our children, we must also promote it for adults. Everyone should want to come to school.

I have loved coming to Paideia each morning for all these years. I love the variety in every day, the unpredictability, the chance to do almost sacred work with unending irreverence. Despite our serious goals, laughter and joy fill the campus. Paideia is a truly wondrous school that all of us have built and are still creating. Mostly we do not to step back and take time to look at all of it. The shrieks from the alligator benches are too alluring, and they fill our lives.



# THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

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THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL is nonsectarian, serving families with children ages three through 18. Paideia does not discriminate in employment or in admissions. It actively seeks racial, cultural, and economic diversity in its student body.

The ancient Greek word *Paideia* conveys the concept of a child's total education: intellectual, artistic, and social.

The Paideia School Newsletter is published 10 times a year. The deadline for the newsletter is the 1st of the preceding month. Send all correspondence to Jennifer Hill, Editor, at Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307. Phone number is 404/377-3491, ext. 339; e-mail address is [hill.jennifer@paideiaschool.org](mailto:hill.jennifer@paideiaschool.org). For information about sports schedules and upcoming events visit our web site at [www.paideiaschool.org](http://www.paideiaschool.org)

## Ready, Set, Slither!

The 2019 Slither, Paideia's 5K Road Race, will take place on **Saturday, Nov. 23 at 9 a.m.** The Tot Trot will take place at 9:45 a.m. The race benefits financial aid and the Python athletic department. More detailed information and the online registration is on the school website.