

PDS Spirit

The Magazine of Presbyterian Day School



Stephanie Taylor
*Making Homeroom
Feel Like Home*

SPRING 2018

Steve Nash
*A PDS Parent Moving
Memphis Forward*





PDS Spirit

SPRING 2018

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A Letter from the Headmaster



The single greatest asset of Presbyterian Day School is the dedicated and talented faculty. I find myself repeating this message nearly every day as I speak with prospective families, donors, alumni, and friends of PDS. It seems fitting that we would devote much of this issue of the *Spirit* Magazine to the life-changing work of our faculty.

When I interview potential teaching candidates, I am always listening for a few key items. First, I want to hear that the teacher senses a calling from God to do this important work. I want to know if he or she loves working with boys and how teaching boys can and should be different than teaching girls. Teachers need to have a passion for their subject area and know many ways to teach the same skills and concepts. The “bag of tricks” must be deep.

PDS is filled with faculty who inspire me every day. Collectively, they are constantly learning and trying to be better at the craft of teaching. I am in and out of classrooms every day. Within the walls of the classroom I see creativity, compassion, collaboration, and a love for the boys that is deep and wide and simply inspiring.

If you know a teacher who is inspiring, I encourage you to write a note of thanks. Teachers love knowing they have made a difference in the life of a child. Please enjoy these inspiring stories.

Sincerely,

Steve Hancock
Headmaster



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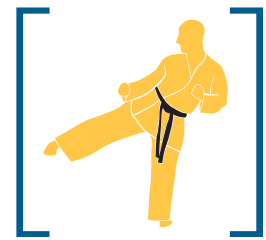
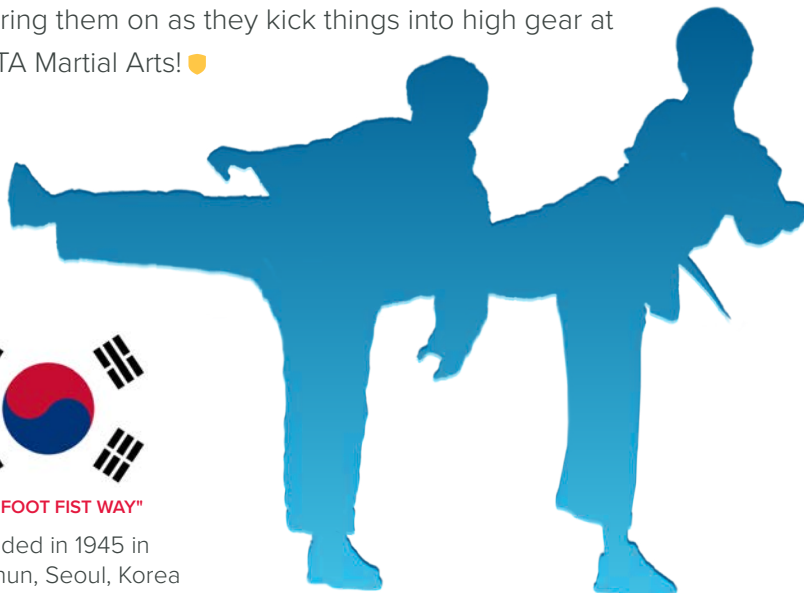
PDS Boys Pack a Powerful Punch

This winter, we watched as Olympic athletes competed for the gold. Five PDS boys are competing for a different color this spring — the black belt. Sohum Valaulikar (4th), Will Patterson (3rd), John David Patterson (1st), Clay Patterson (3rd), and William Levy (6th) (not pictured) are hoping to join Sohan Ganguli (5th) and Tyler Dang (6th) in the black belt club. Join us in cheering them on as they kick things into high gear at Wright's ATA Martial Arts! 🟡

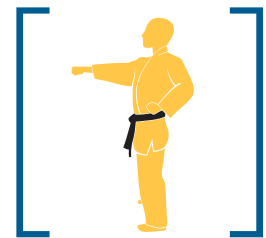


"THE FOOT FIST WAY"

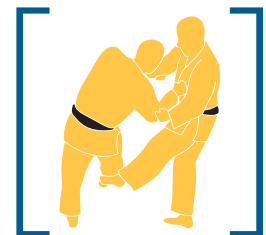
Founded in 1945 in
Yong Chun, Seoul, Korea



FUMIKOMI
"Stomp Kick"



CHOKU ZUKI
"Straight Punch"

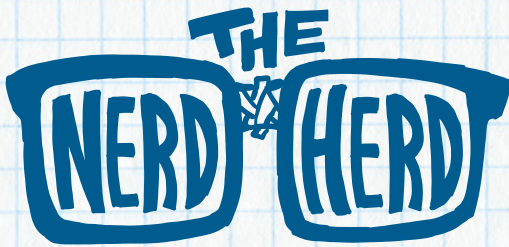


ASHI BARAI
"Foot Sweep"

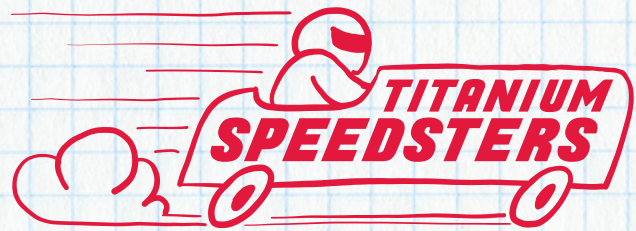
Ready, Set, *Imagine!*

And then there were five. These five teams put their brains — and their brainstorming — together to compete in the Regional Destination Imagination Tournament on February 24th. Competition was fierce in the Hutchison gymnasium that day, but it was no match for the creativity of our Crusader contestants — look no further than their epic team names!

Shout-out to our faculty for stepping up to coach. With their guidance, a multitude of brainstorm sessions turned into skits, set designs, costumes, event depicitors, drop-zone structures, Instant Challenge solutions, and out-of-the-box fun!



Margorie Porter
4th Grade



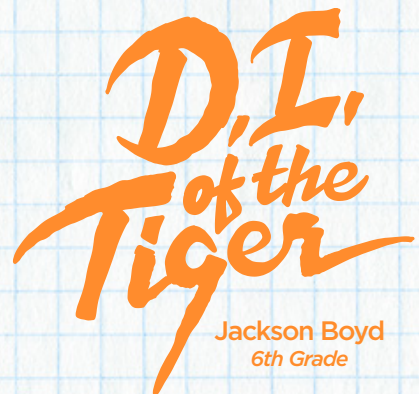
Susan Love
5th Grade



Lili Frye
5th Grade



Laura Glenn
May Montague
5th Grade



Jackson Boyd
6th Grade

We are thrilled to announce that **ALL FIVE** teams are advancing to the State Tournament in Nashville in April. Congratulations to Memkids, who received the Da Vinci Award at Regionals for outstanding ingenuity. Good luck boys! 🐅



Teacher Feature: Lili Frye

Elementary Mandarin Teacher

What is your background?

I was born and raised in Shanghai, China. I graduated from East China Normal University in Shanghai with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Chinese Language and Literature. I came to the US in 1989 and have taught at a community college and a private school prior to PDS.

How did you get interested in teaching?

I grew up on the campus of East China Normal University. Normal universities in China are teaching universities. I grew up surrounded by teachers and professors. My father is a retired professor, and my mom and sister both taught at the school and university level. My brother is a professor as well. So, teaching is not foreign to me.

Why do you teach?

When I was in the seventh grade, I had a physics teacher who had a very powerful impact on my life. He was honest, kind, smart, and funny. The way he interacted with students was different than any of my other teachers. Unfortunately, he passed away when I was in my twenties, but I remember telling his son that I would always remember him and that I wanted to be just like him. Since coming to the US as an immigrant, I have met the most incredible, giving, and kind people. I am forever grateful, but I knew I would never be able to pay them back. The way I see it, it's by God's grace that I have a teaching job today, and it is a great opportunity for me to pay it forward.

Why teach at PDS?

I was looking for a full-time job. When I saw PDS had an opening, I applied. I think it's because of the boys that I am here at PDS. I had a boy come up to me at graduation last year and tell me he stopped by my room everyday to speak to me, even on the days when he didn't have my class. How could I not love teaching these boys? I also love teaching at PDS because of my coworkers. I am blessed to work with a lot of intelligent and caring teachers at PDS.

What do you enjoy doing when you are not at PDS?

I like to spend time with my family and learn new things. I love the national parks and visiting all of them is on my bucket list. The last one I visited was Joshua Tree. Visiting all the Civilian Conservation Corps projects is also on my bucket list. Additionally, I enjoy being a volunteer member with the National Language Service Corps and being a volunteer Mandarin teacher to the children at Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya.

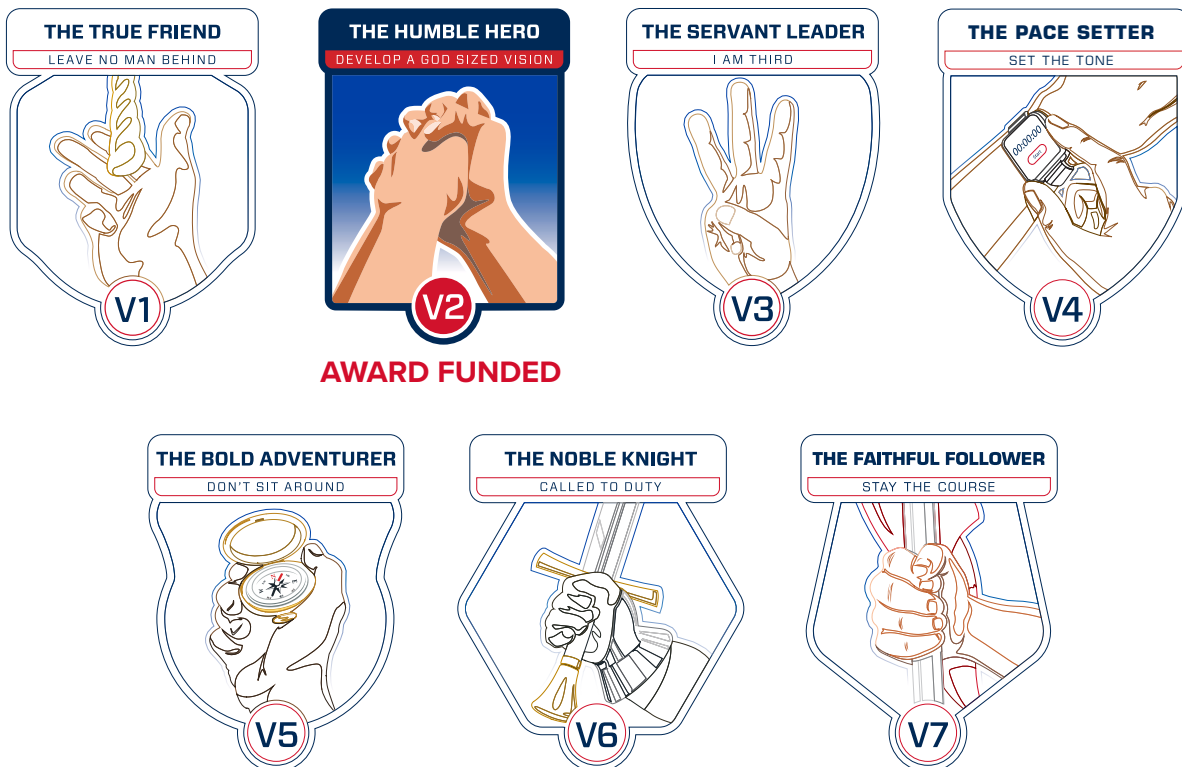
What is the most important life lesson you want each student to learn?

1. We live every day by the grace of God.
Everyday is a gift, and that is very humbling.
2. The world we live in is bigger than our familiar environment. Be respectful of other cultures and people who are different from you.
3. Treat others the way you want to be treated. ●

Strategic Initiatives: Honoring Our Teachers

Last May, we awarded Junior Kindergarten teacher Shari Caruthers the Dewitt Shy, Jr. Faculty Award for her exemplary work ethic. Since then, our Board of Trustees has created a special task force to fund seven annual merit-based monetary awards to honor teachers who exemplify the characteristics we work to instill in our boys. PDS is blessed with teachers who are qualified educators as well as excellent role models.

This Strategic Initiative gives back to the teachers who bless us with their gifts every day. Please consider joining us in this mission!



🔍 To learn more, check out our new Strategic Initiatives webpage: <http://www.pdsmemphis.org/si>

The Leadership Team on Teaching & Teachers



Mark Fruitt
Elementary Principal

How have you seen teachers exemplify PDS' Seven Virtues of Manhood?

To me, the virtue that best describes our teachers is Humble Hero. What they pour into the boys 10 months a year, five days a week, seven-eight hours a day, is simply amazing!

I've heard it said that very few fields require as much emotional labor as education. Our teachers are the reason why we have a culture at PDS of nurturing, caring, and expecting the absolute best from every boy — all while fostering a growth mindset. Besides the teaching, they attend ball games, recitals, write Happygrams, bake cookies, and partner with parents. The list could go on and on.

These *Humble Heroes* are not motivated by external rewards, which are few in the education business, but by the internal reward found when they see a boy reach his full potential.

"To me, the virtue that best describes our teachers is Humble Hero."



McKee Humphreys '95
Director of Development

What made teaching at PDS unique?

Growth mindset. Fail up. Try new things. These three phrases helped shape my time in the classroom at PDS. But underlying all of these was an unwavering sense of purpose. This word aptly describes my experience at PDS as a 5th and 6th grade teacher.

I sought out PDS because it is a place that holds fast to a distinctly clear purpose: to glorify God by developing boys in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. Teachers at PDS live out their mission directly in the classroom, modeling the character they seek to instill in their boys. So many people struggle with the "why behind the what" in their chosen profession. Teachers at PDS do not. Our job, our purpose, and our mission are clearly defined and are a joy to carry out.

Transitioning into an administrative role has allowed me to share this gospel-driven purpose outside the classroom. Each time I get to tell the story of what God is doing in and through PDS, I am reminded that none of it would be possible without our teachers.



Laura Glenn

Head of Elementary School

How do teachers encourage you in your role as head of elementary?

Happygrams are not just for boys! It's amazing how finding a little piece of yellow paper on my desk or in my box has the power to make a not-so-great day much better. Because PDS teachers thrive on building meaningful relationships with boys and each other, it's hard not to be encouraged daily.

This is what sets us apart. These relationships are why we're here. We respect each other, assume the best, exude empathy, practice patience, and always extend grace. The most encouraging moments of my day are always found in a PDS classroom. PDS teachers view each day with their students as an opportunity, not a burden; see boys as energizing, not deflating; live the PDS mission, not just memorize it; believe that teaching is a life purpose, not just a job.

As a result, when I walk into a classroom, I'm never sure exactly what I am going to find. What might appear as a paper fight is a fun grammar lesson on contractions. Are the boys wasting time talking about the most recent Grizzlies' game? No, they are discussing the players' statistics and figuring shooting percentages.

Learning should be messy and connected to our lives. Seeing this in action on a daily basis at PDS is beyond encouraging, and it's only because of our teachers!



Debbie Isom

Head of Early Childhood

How does the creativity and care set our early childhood education apart?

"I am just a teacher." How often when asked, "What do you do?" will an educator respond with, "I just teach"? That is a response that no educational professional should ever make. One does not *just teach*. One touches hearts, sets academic trajectory, inspires, challenges, changes lives, impacts the future, empowers, instills confidence, nurtures, loves, and, yes, educates. But *just teach*? I don't think so.

PDS Early Childhood teachers touch the hearts of these boys every day. They hold to the belief that each child is a gift from God with the potential for personal greatness. They continually look for that one thing that sets each boy apart and makes him unique. Is it his energy, interpersonal skill, intellect, artistic or musical talent, athletic potential, sense of humor, compassion, or sense of style? How will his zest for life and bulldog determination serve him in the future? How do we channel that enthusiasm in constructive ways? How do we celebrate a shy disposition and build confidence in non-threatening ways? The willingness to ask the hard questions enables EC teachers to know, nurture, and love each boy.

In my twelve years as Head of Early Childhood at PDS, I have experienced first-hand the depth of faith and selfless service displayed by these extraordinary teachers. I say with all certainty that PDS Early Childhood teachers make all the difference in the life of the school and the lives of these boys. Without exception, they are the most creative, gifted, and compassionate group of professionals to be assembled anywhere. And, I count it a blessing to be among this group of professionals. My life and the life of each EC boy is blessed and made richer by the amazing group of men and women who teach at PDS.

"[PDS Early Childhood teachers] hold to the belief that each child is a gift from God with the potential for personal greatness."



Steve Nash, Founder
Advance Memphis

Moving Memphis Forward, One Step at a Time

By Marshall Hatcher

In a city like Memphis, there is plenty of room for non-profits to make an impact. Like many American metro areas, Memphis has great needs in regards to public health, education, and employment. So as I drove on a Wednesday to meet Steve Nash, founder of Advance Memphis and father of Stephen Nash, for lunch, I felt I had at least a general idea of what his company might be about.

Pulling up to the spot, I noticed that I would be parking — quite literally — in a city park across the street from the front door. The building itself is in an industrial part of town, but I noticed how humble it looked from the front. The main door is painted bright yellow, which matches a vibrant insignia on the left of the brick façade. Yet, I still felt I had a pretty good idea as to what I was about to step into — a small company of people making variable waves in the community.

Stepping inside, however, I left those expectations behind. Walking into the front office, the first thing I notice is that each office has a huge window that looks out into the lobby. The lack of privacy seemed strange at first until each person working in his or her space smiled, waved, and welcomed me into the building. Steve Nash met me at the front desk and we began our tour of Advance Memphis. Surely a short one, I thought? But as Steve showed me around, the complexities of this office space began to amaze me. What seemed to be just a small, unassuming building from the front now seemed to go on and on. Steve walked me past classrooms, meeting spaces, offices, a common area decorated with beautiful art, and a ping-pong table. Nearly all of these spaces were filled with groups of people working together to strengthen their community in different ways. During those few hours with Steve, he gradually unveiled the complexities of their mission at Advance Memphis — one that I had underestimated standing on the sidewalk just moments before.

Steve explained to me that one aspect of his company is focused on

"The mission of Advance Memphis is to serve adults in the South Memphis neighborhoods of 38126 and 38106 by empowering them to acquire the knowledge, resources, and skills to be economically self-sufficient through the gospel of Jesus Christ."

employment. In fact, Advance Memphis has provided 98,000 hours of work for community members. Advance outsources temporary, part-time, and full-time employees to 20 different companies in city of Memphis, from Corky's BBQ to Mitsubishi Electric. Yet, Steve and his colleagues do not focus solely on finding work for those who need a job. Advance teaches classes that focus on work-life balance, financial planning, professionalism, and GED equivalency courses. "We believe in the dignity of all mankind. Each of us has unique gifts and talents," says Steve as he talks about Advance's push towards full-time employment for people in the community.

"Advance is all about reciprocal learning relationships," says Steve, as we sit down for lunch. "It's about receiving just as much as it is about giving." While we ate, his words were being lived out in each of the small groups working together to find balance between daily life and work. During those sessions, people learn more about each other, which makes Advance Memphis so special. Everyone who walks through the door is a friend and neighbor. Volunteers, employees, community members, and partners all know each other by name. Their mission is one that thrives on working hand-in-hand.

"It's truly amazing what positivity does for the human soul, and we seek to build on that in our work here." Steve explains that even on the simplest level someone's bad day can affect others at home or at work. On a deeper level, that bad day might affect someone's ability to even get to work. The more Steve spoke about Advance, their success, and even some of their failures, I began to understand how important a second visit would be. My experience with Steve and Advance Memphis on that first day was very similar to my experience

with the building itself. At the door, it seems one-dimensional, but upon entering, there are so many directions, missions, stories, relationships, and lives from which to learn.

The next week, Steve welcomed me again to Advance. We walked a short distance to their 24,000 square foot warehouse, which allows Advance to partner with other business and non-profit organizations. Along the way, Steve pointed out the community garden that is run in partnership with Memphis Tilth. There were plots of fertile soil and a small greenhouse in use. Memphis Tilth uses a good portion of the Advance warehouse to teach gardening and food preparation. Inside, there was even some tilapia being cultivated in an aquarium. Hydroponic planters and an industrial kitchen range highlighted the impressive space.

In the other half of the warehouse, Steve showed me an impressive combination of business start-ups, art studios, and machinery. Sherry Avery works to complete a project for National Guard Products, manufacturing small components which will be shipped to NGP's headquarters. There is another station where workers package products for Sorbent Green, a company in South Carolina specializing in commercial waste cleaning. There are a multitude of employment options in this warehouse, but Steve says there is room for more. "We are always looking for businesses offering full-time opportunities to come through Memphis. This is a great space to house those projects." Advance Memphis has been integral providing work for community members and the space for businesses to complete projects. If you own a company in need of production in any facet, the Advance warehouse is a potential partnership from which both your business and the people of Memphis could benefit.



Presbyterian Day School has built a strong partnership with Advance Memphis through an annual office supply drive for the various courses offered by Advance. The Hancock family has volunteered their musical talents during the Art for Jobs exhibit, a celebration held in Advance's warehouse. PDS's art teacher, Casey Smith, has had his art displayed in the hallways of Advance. The students, colleagues, and families involved in this partnership can attest to the character building morals of Advance Memphis, many of which PDS is instilling in its boys every day — servant leadership and true friendship.

When Steve and I returned to the main office, I began to realize that I may not be able to convey what is happening at Advance Memphis in one article. There is so much to be said about the many ways they help people find success in the South Memphis community. In addition, there are



multitudes of poverty issues against which Advance is fighting. But Steve is not focused on the short-term successes of finding someone work. "We are looking to build long-term relationships with people rooted in love and the gospel," he says to me reassuringly. Advance Memphis is working each day, face-to-face, with people to find hope in a broken system.

Stepping across the threshold, as I did on a Wednesday morning last week, as Steve Nash and his colleagues do on a daily basis, one realizes the importance of their work and the redemptive relationships it can build. There are so many ways to volunteer with Advance Memphis in their mission to restore community through faith, perseverance, and relationships. I think that's the most important thing — learning about others. Listening to and understanding their stories. Stories that go much deeper than what we might assume from the front door. 🍅

Teachers Tell All

How well do you know our teachers? Read on to quiz yourself!

"I'm petrified of birds." ①

"I won Miss Congeniality in a pageant!" ④

"Coach Spain taught me driver's ed and caused me to run into an ATM machine." ②

"I have never gotten a speeding ticket. Knock on wood!" ⑤

"I met Tom Hanks and Cheech Marin in the same day." ③

"I gut deer and pluck turkeys in my free time!" ⑥



Jackson Boyd
(5th & 6th Grade Science)



Stacey Hays
(1st Grade Small Group Teacher)



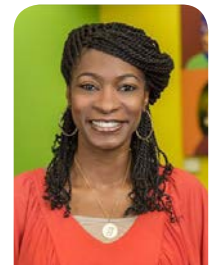
Windy May
(5th Grade)



Tony Rudzena
(5th & 6th Grade Bible)



Ross Spain
(Dean of Students)



Tosha Thomas
(Senior Kindergarten)

1 - Ross Spain (Dean of Students); 2 - Stacey Hays (1st Grade Small Group Teacher); 3 - Jackson Boyd (5th & 6th Grade Science); 4 - Tosha Thomas (SK); 5 - Tony Rudzena (5th & 6th Grade Bible); 6 - Windy May (5)

Boys Tell All

Our students have caught these teachers in some less-than-serious moments. Read on to find out more!



"TO HELP US STUDY FOR OUR 18TH-CENTURY HISTORY TEST, HE DIVIDED US UP INTO THREE TEAMS AND WE PLAYED JEOPARDY! THE GAME CAME DOWN TO THE LAST QUESTIONS, AND WE WERE ON THE TWO TEAMS THAT WERE TIED. IT WAS SO INTENSE! BOTH OF OUR TEAMS RISKED ALL OUR POINTS ON THE LAST QUESTION, AND THE WINNING TEAM GOT JOLLY RANCHERS FOR A PRIZE!"

— Bennett Owen (6)
& Felix Lange (6) on
Mr. Hatcher (5-6 History)



"EVERY TIME WE COME TO CHINESE CLASS WE SING OUR EARLY MORNING SONG. I DON'T ALWAYS SAY THE RIGHT WORDS, BUT IT'S FUN TO SING ALONG!"

— Tucker Humphreys (SK)
on Ms. Oliver (EC Mandarin)



"SHE IS NICE AND ALWAYS LAUGHS AT CHARLIE HARRIS'S JOKES - EVEN WHEN THEY'RE NOT FUNNY!"

— Remon Brown (4) on
Mrs. Creasman (4)



"HE PRETENDS TO IMPERSONATE US WHEN HE PLAYS BASKETBALL. HE SHOOTS FREE THROWS AND THREE-POINTERS BUT ALWAYS MISSES THEM! HE ALWAYS DOES THESE FUNNY MOVES WHEN HE TRIES - THEY MAKE ME LAUGH A LOT!"

— Wilkes Harris (1) on
Garrett Harrison (Coach)



"SOMETIMES WHEN WE'RE SOUNDING OUT VOWELS, SHE DOES FUNNY VOICES SO WE DON'T FEEL AS SILLY WHEN WE DON'T KNOW A WORD!"

— Hamilton Eggers (3)
on Mrs. Schaefer (3)



"SHE DOES FUNNY FACES WHEN SHE LOOKS AT US, LIKE CROSSING HER EYES WHEN SHE SINGS. SHE'S TRYING TO BE FUNNY - AND SHE IS!"

— Cannon Thakkar (4) on
Dawn Southerland
(Vocal Music)

Stephanie Taylor Puts the Home in Homeroom

By May Montague

I can hear them before I can see them.

It's 10am on a Tuesday morning, and Stephanie Taylor's second graders have assembled on the carpet in front of her smart board, aiming rapid-fire words toward their target: "How many different types of graphs are there?" "What kinds of things can you graph?" "What sorts of jobs use graphs?" As I enter her room, I am greeted by neither chaos nor boredom but rather with the inquisitive minds and listening ears of fifteen mathematicians exploring the uncharted territory of the graph.

Much like the sound a light bulb makes as electricity runs through its wires, curiosity whizzes through the air toward second-grade teacher Stephanie Taylor.

Stephanie Taylor's classroom is a place where boys learn, grow, thrive, and have fun!





Where Learning is Off-the-Charts

Much like the sound a light bulb makes as electricity runs through its wires, curiosity whizzes through the air toward second-grade teacher Stephanie Taylor. She greets each question with a smile that grows wider with every eager, raised hand; her fingers compete against the boys' curiosity to write down each question she hears. Rather than short-circuit these questions into simple answers, she guides them through a thinking routine she learned while at Harvard's Project Zero Classroom.

The room doesn't have to be dark for me to see light bulb moments happening left and right.

"I always tell my boys, 'We're going to come up with questions, and not all of them will be answered.' Kids are so naturally inquisitive, but at some point along the way, they quit asking questions." Ms. Taylor begins each lesson with this posture of curiosity. That way, "Each day becomes more of a conversation and less of a script," she explains to me excitedly, "and therefore the learning goes deeper than you originally planned or ever could have imagined."

Where School is Out-of-this-World

Sitting "criss-cross applesauce" on the carpet with her students that morning, I found myself in a place that felt both familiar and foreign, when it dawned on me — I was in a different world! Much like a foreign country has its own language and culture, a second-grade classroom has its own other-worldly energy. While the boys worked collaboratively at their desks on a graphing assignment, I had the chance to ask more in-depth questions about the curriculum. Ms. Taylor's face lit up as she talked about the number of professional development opportunities PDS has provided for her and her colleagues. In addition to Project Zero, PDS has encouraged and supported Stephanie to attend the FUSE Design Thinking Conference, John Hunter's World Peace Game Master Class, Orton Gillingham training, and Columbia's Klingenstein Summer Institute. Ms. Taylor feels blessed that PDS provides opportunities for teachers to be inspired by experts, thus providing all teachers with tools to enrich their classrooms.

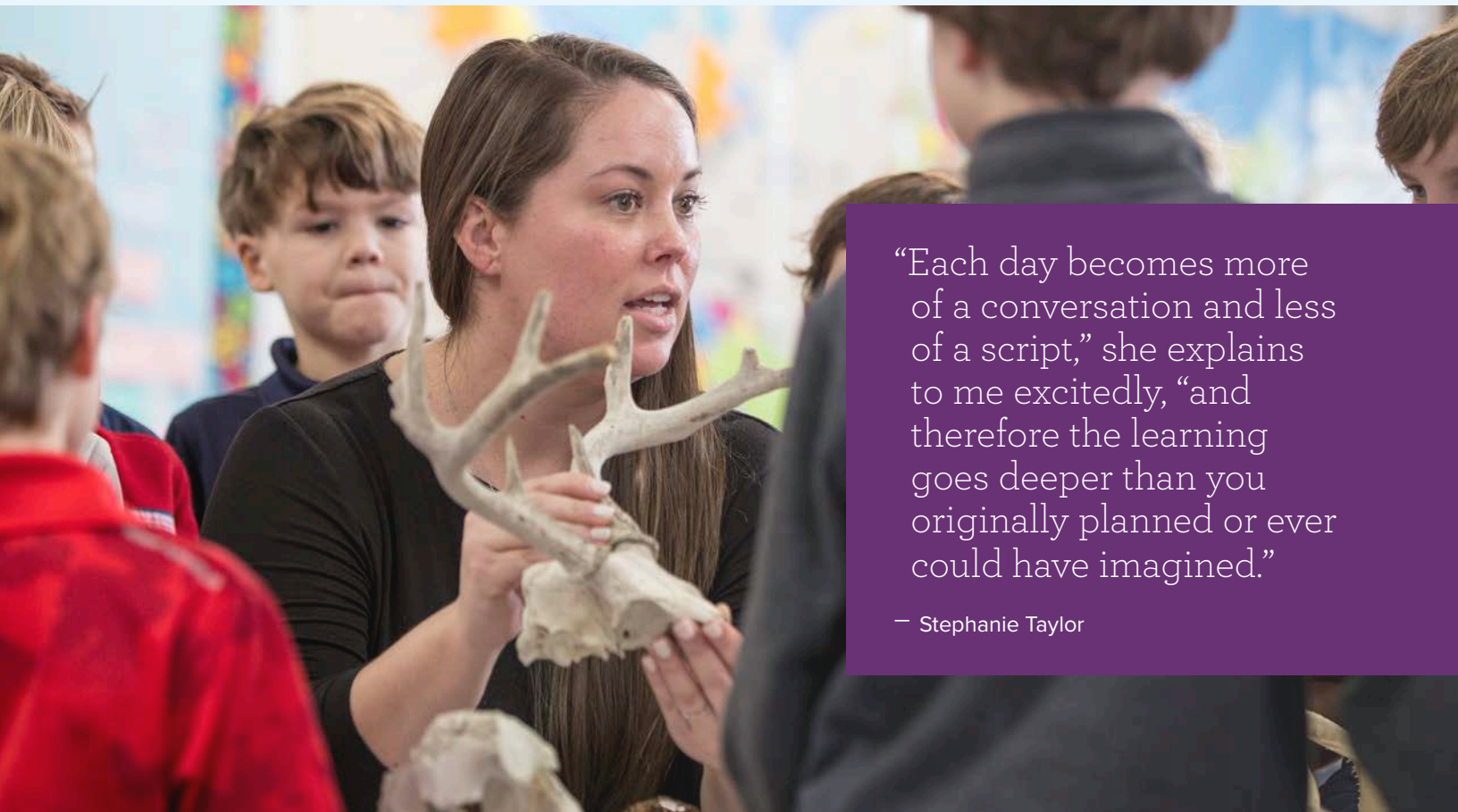
One such inspiration began as a simple idea but, with the help of fellow second-grade teacher Beth Diaz, has since bloomed into... Zoolandia! “Great schools incorporate games,” Diaz and Taylor wrote in an article published on the National Association of Independent School’s blog called *Inspiration Lab*. The name of their game is formally known as the adapted edition of John Hunter’s World Peace Game, but it is affectionately known by her students as “Zoolandia.” “Zoolandia allows students to learn through gaming—something that continues to improve education for boys.” She goes on, “The goal is to maximize engagement by capturing students’ interests and inspiring them to continue learning. Zoolandia involves collaboration, inspiration, innovation, and design-thinking,” she writes. It doesn’t hurt that she can gather props such as deer antlers, turtle shells, and fox skulls from her own backyard to introduce the animal kingdom. She smiles as she calls these elements “God-given props in nature.”

Where Reading is a Home Run

Zoolandia is not the only game her second graders play. With the hopes of instilling a love of reading in her boys, a love she admits not having

at their age, Stephanie thought of something most boys have no problem loving — sports! So our teacher-turned-coach drafts her students onto a scholastic baseball team, her first picks being all-American readers of course. *Suddenly, her boys have found themselves in Wrigley Field. And it’s the bottom of the ninth. Bases are loaded.* To Stephanie, “The baseball field is really just a motivator. The best way to get boys engaged as readers is to steer them to a book series. When they know another book is coming, they want to press on and finish. They’re reading more, and their love for reading grows. Piquing their interest is my role as their teacher.” With a little help from baseball, reading feels a little less like a chore and a whole lot more like a home run.

Sitting still on her carpet, I “turn my voice off and my listening ears on” during one of Ms. Taylor’s daily read-alouds. All of a sudden, her narration is interrupted by a chorus of “*Comparison!*” Instead of scolding the boys for speaking out, Stephanie looks up from *The Magic Finger*, smiles, and nods affirmingly. Roald Dahl, indeed, had used a comparison to depict his scene. Just as the best authors draw readers in with a good hook, Stephanie picks the most imaginative books for her



“Each day becomes more of a conversation and less of a script,” she explains to me excitedly, “and therefore the learning goes deeper than you originally planned or ever could have imagined.”

— Stephanie Taylor



read-alouds — ones where boys turn into birds, and fingers are just as magical as wands. Are her second-graders hooked? You bet.

While Ms. Taylor's read-alouds are full of fantasy, her small-group book discussions delve into the heart of reality. Here, the comparisons go deeper. Her boys learn to develop new understandings of the world through characters like Gregory in *The Chalk Box Kid*, whose family has recently moved into a smaller house in a poorer part of town. He's picked on at school for being new and different, but worst of all, his backyard at home is a concrete slab rather than green grass. Stumbling upon a nearby chalk factory one day, Gregory begins to draw his own backyard — creatively painting his bleak situation into a colorful, hopeful one. As his chalk garden grows, so does his voice, confidence, and hope. Storytime with Stephanie is every bit as silly as it is serious; cracking smiles and sparking conversations that nurture a sense of empathy for the characters they meet in fiction and the friends they make in life.

As her boys rushed off to PE, a time where their minds rest and their bodies release, I stole away to see some of their own artwork. Above their lockers, a parade of journal entries is tacked to the wall. The prompt asked the boys to journal and doodle about their favorite body part, an exercise in creative self-expression. One of the great things about teaching at an all-boys school is that, "art is no longer seen as a 'girl-thing,'" she tells me. "With that stigma removed, art becomes a tool that I can use to supplement my lessons and enhance their learning. Art is so sensory, and so are these boys. It allows me to make learning personal." Art with Ms. Taylor celebrates all that the body can do, the mind can learn, and the hands can create.

Art is also the gateway Ms. Taylor uses to talk about another taboo topic — *feelings*. The good and the bad, the ones we want to embrace and the ones we'd rather ignore. "Boys are told they're not supposed to be emotional, but feelings are what make us human. And these boys are humans just like we are — just younger. They face what we face. We work to recognize those feelings by communicating them rather than hiding them. I hope my boys leave with a language for these feelings." Stephanie integrates intentional carpet time for her boys to share what's on their mind and heart and to bring both before the Lord in prayer. By doing so, she gives them a license to feel deeply. She delights in hearing them share without fear, anger, or shame — three masks we all seem to find as we come of age. Fortunately, her boys haven't found them yet, and Ms. Taylor wants it to stay that way.

It has long been said that there are three foundational "R"s in education: reading, writing, and arithmetic. Second grade at PDS is, without a doubt, the best version of all three. Ms. Taylor knows her students won't remember every specific thing she taught, no matter how well-planned or thought-provoking. What she does hope they remember, however, is that God's love was demonstrated to them in a powerful way in a classroom that was — and always will be — a safe place to risk vulnerability. Lessons like these can't be discerned with the head; they can ultimately only be felt with the heart.

When Ms. Taylor's students walk into PDS each morning, they find themselves in a world that is one part math lab, another part zoo, sometimes a stadium, and always an adventure. And when they reach her room? Well, there's one thing they don't have to question — they are home. ■



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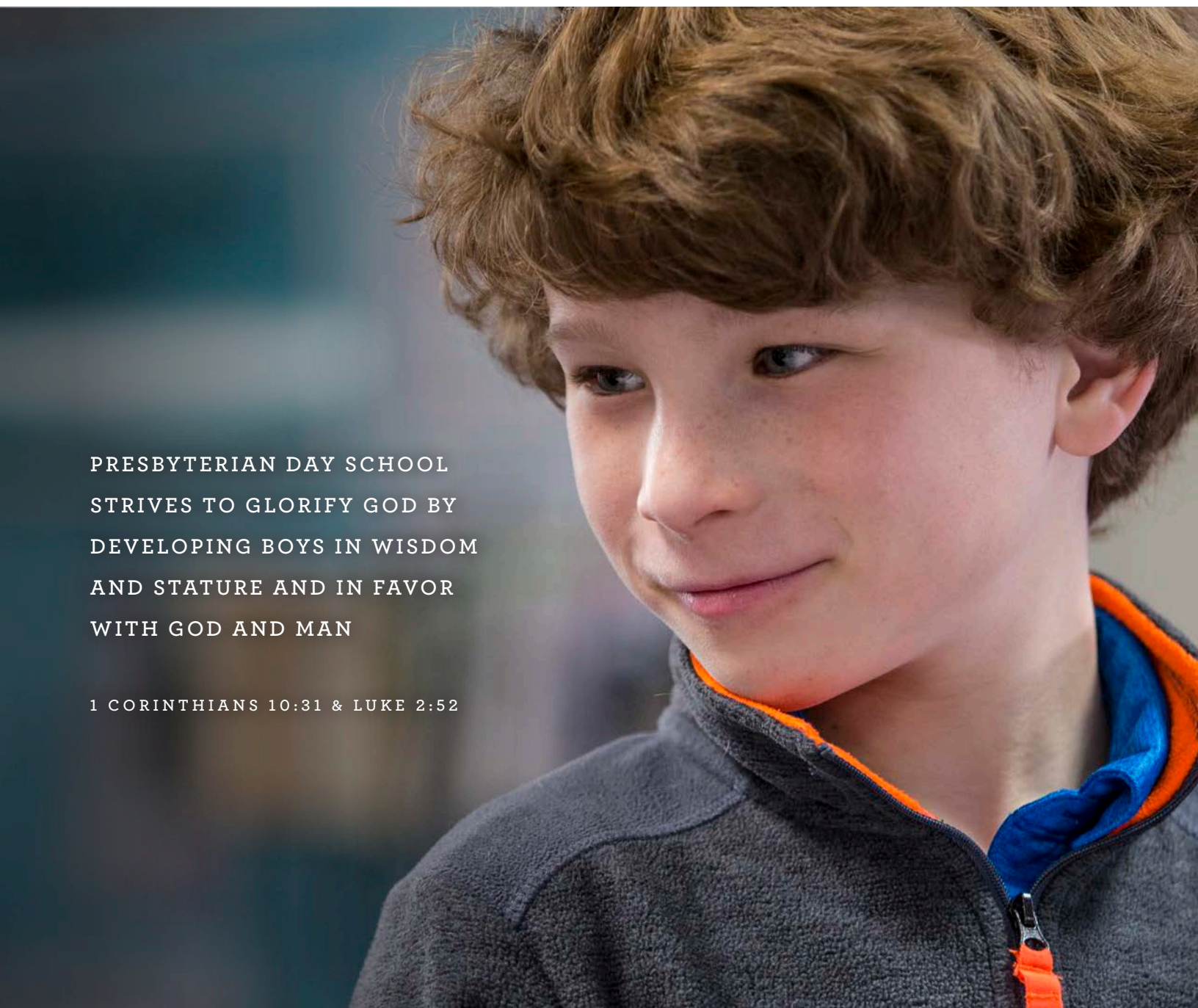
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1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 & LUKE 2:52