

PDSpirit

WINTER-SPRING 2004

Teaching for Understanding— A 21st Century Renaissance





Presbyterian Day School
Building Boys, Making Men

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& Early Childhood Head**

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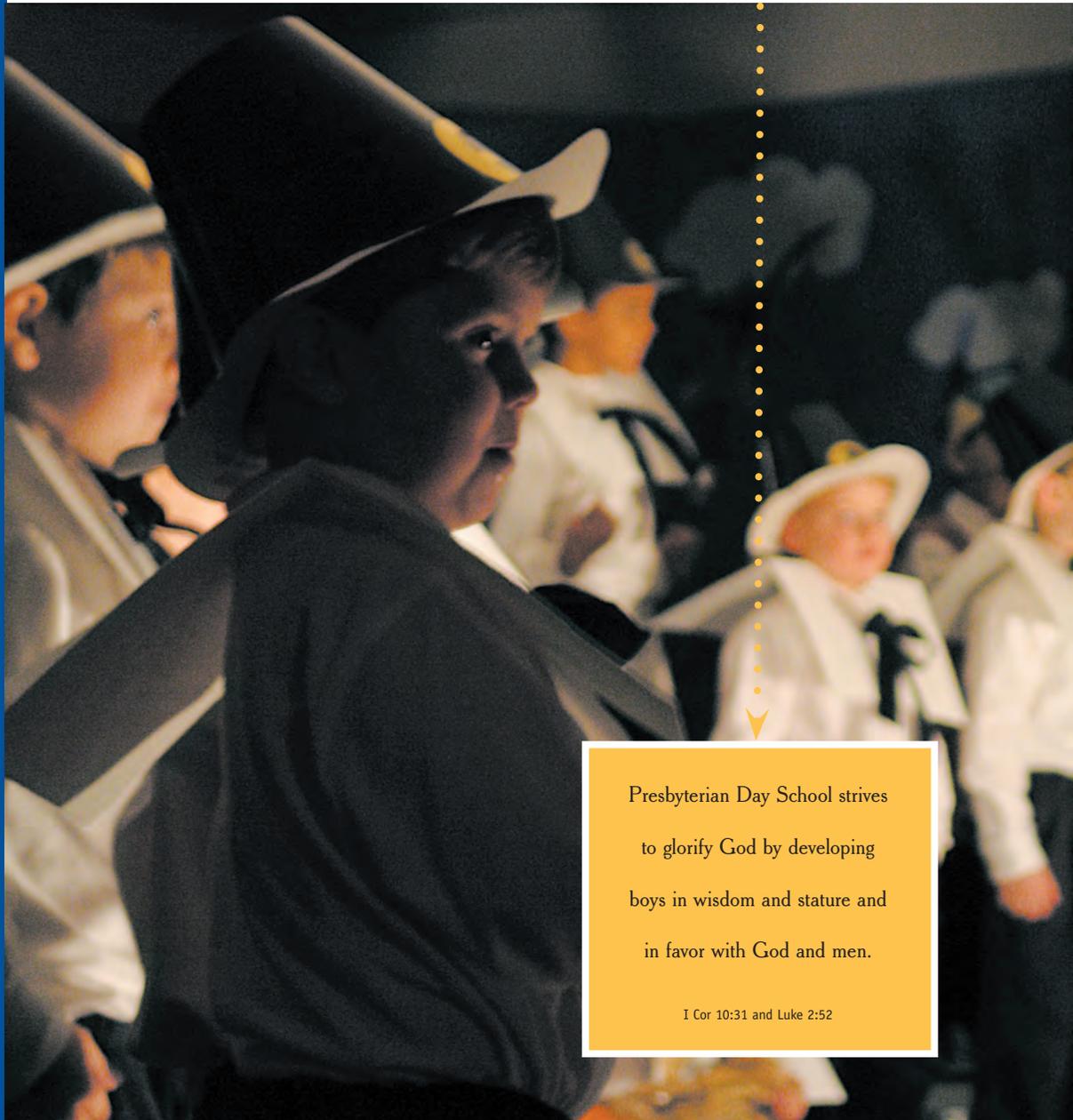
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Cover Art: Charles II as Prince of Wales by Van Dyck, 1637



Presbyterian Day School strives
to glorify God by developing
boys in wisdom and stature and
in favor with God and men.

I Cor 10:31 and Luke 2:52

In late December Presbyterian Day School launched a revamped version of its Web site. With this new version, we sought to address some of the issues that parents and faculty have raised and to lay the foundation for future enhancements. Our goals were to improve navigation and printing of homework assignments, to implement a full-featured calendar, to improve the usefulness of the home page, and to bring the site in line with the appearance of other PDS materials.

Some features to note in the current Web site:

Calendar

Our calendar received the most radical make-over. When in doubt, check the Web site calendar for the most up-to-date scheduling information. Not sure of student pick-up times on special days? Wondering if a basketball game has been cancelled? Our online calendar is the definitive source for all PDS scheduling information.

PDS Today

Once a feature like our video on Apollo astronaut Charlie Duke is moved off of our main page, it doesn't just disappear. Use the *PDS Today* link to access photos, videos, and articles about PDS events and items of note.

Browser Versions

Also a note about keeping your browser up-to-date: over time Web browsers are evolving to allow more and more sophisticated means of animation, interaction, and design. Before designing version 2.0 of the Web site, we analyzed our Web server's log files to determine what browser versions our visitors were using. There are more efficient ways of laying out pages in the most up-to-date browsers that would allow us to speed up the display of pages on our site. Keeping your browser software up-to-date will allow us to implement such features in the future.



Winston Baccus
Webmaster

The Future

Finally, a note about some of the features we're working on for the future: we are refining the navigation options and re-organizing to improve the user friendliness of our site. An often-requested feature is a password-protected section where parents can view grades and other information about their boys. During the next school year, we will "test drive" software with these capabilities with our teachers and administrators. Expect to hear more about this feature late in the next school year.



Understanding Education and the PDS of Today

by Lee Burns, Headmaster

IN A COUNTRY THAT HAS EXPERIENCED dynamic and systemic change in the last century and especially in the last fifteen years (much of it for the better), it is interesting to note that our schools, as far as what happens in the classrooms, generally have not changed all that much. An observer of a 1920's or 1950's classroom or of a classroom today would, in most cases, see a teacher at the front of the room, often in front of a marker board, talking to students lined neatly in rows transcribing the teacher's paraphrase of the large, mass-produced textbook the class is racing to cover from beginning to end. Periodically, an easily graded quiz or test, consisting primarily of right or wrong answers, would be administered to see if the students remember what has been taught. Most of the information is quickly forgotten until a unit- or semester-end test would make it necessary to "re-remember" for a few days what never really stuck in the first place.

In such classrooms, what is primarily rewarded and valued are the abilities to paraphrase, remember, and perform redundant operations—important skills, to an extent, but not what is lasting or sufficient for the world of today and tomorrow.

For the last three years, PDS has invested a great deal of institutional energy in examining existing and often entrenched paradigms of

teaching and learning in an effort to articulate what our students need to know, be able to do, and carry with them after PDS. Schools usually do not undertake such a critical self-examination of what and how they teach, nor do they open themselves up to new ways of doing things. Most schools and teachers—even many of the best ones—are change-averse, complacent, or unwilling or unable to stretch and grow.

Yet schools that do not challenge themselves to examine their practices betray the heart of what they do, which is to encourage growth through new ideas and deep reflection. Additionally, such schools will one day wake up to realize that they are preparing their students for the world of yesterday rather than tomorrow.

What, then, do the students of tomorrow need, and what should the schools of tomorrow be about? At PDS, we believe that students need to develop the ability to think critically and creatively: to research, analyze, synthesize, solve problems, connect ideas, and communicate clearly. Schools that teach this way graduate students with deep, conceptual understandings—what educational consultant Grant Wiggins calls "essential understandings." Designing and facilitating learning activities that develop essential understandings, coupled with assessing in terms of application, interpretation, and perspective, involve a great investment of hard work, time, teacher col-

laboration, and intellectual capital. We are presently in the midst of such hard and stimulating work.

Our Teaching and Learning Committee, constituted eighteen months ago and consisting of numerous teachers and administrators, has, in addition to other tasks, spent a year developing institutional philosophy statements and beliefs about teaching and learning. Among other things, these statements emphasize the importance of teaching for understanding rather than stopping with skills and knowledge; they highlight the individual and differentiated ways we learn and the varied teaching methodologies that we must utilize; and they state



that competition against standards rather than against one another makes sense for schools.

As a full faculty, we talk constantly about our academic philosophies and beliefs and their implications for what we do. We read books together during the school year and over the summer. We meet often, formally and informally, by grade, by subject, and by division, to reflect and plan. We have a two-day retreat in February. We bring leading educational thinkers to PDS, and we send our teachers to conferences and workshops around the country. We align each teacher's professional development goals with our institutional goals. There is, I think, a great deal of conversation and thought about our academic programs.

At the same time, we have mapped the entire school curriculum, delineating in each subject of each grade exactly what content, skills, and assessments we use every month of the year. We are in the midst of our analysis of those maps, considering not simply gaps and redundancies, but also opportunities for creatively connecting different disciplines. When a history teacher, an art teacher, and a math teacher are talking and planning together, such collaboration opens up a range of exciting ways to teach and assess for understanding, and it pushes our students to think more creatively about the world around them. At most schools, teachers are usually isolated—often happily—from what their colleagues are doing, and they rarely have the time devoted to plan collaboratively anyway.

While all faculty members are involved in the mapping process, about a quarter of them have also been studying how we can be more intentional about being a boys' school. We call them the Committee on Boys, and in their readings and research, they are bringing to all of us recommendations about what and how we teach that will be most engaging and exciting to boys.

Our philosophy statements, curriculum maps, and Committee on Boys are currently informing another process—that of adopting exit goals and benchmarks for each grade. Over the next few months, we will have a new Plan of Studies that will serve as our specific academic road-map for each grade level. The Plan of Studies will surely confirm and hence continue much of what we are already doing, but it will also guide us in making some important curricular adjustments over the next few years.



All of this work is slow and time-intensive, involving much research, conversation, and debate. The process and progress are methodical. Classrooms will, I suspect, continue to move in a direction that is more learner-centered, with more discussions, questions, and active student participation. There will be less teacher lecture and fewer textbooks, more student projects and portfolios. Assessments will continue to be more creative, asking students to demonstrate deep understandings in a wider range of ways. Subjects will be more integrated with one another. We will continue to use technology when it adds value to the learning process. We will be more boy-friendly and boy-specific...and better informed by brain research on boys.

We will continue to invest heavily in our teachers, especially in their on-going professional development. And we must assure that we carve out the time for them not simply to read and reflect on educational research and best practices, but we must also give them the time to design classes that will cause the sort of learning we think our boys need. Such design is neither simple nor fast, and its execution is sometimes messy—like good learning often is.

It is impossible to say exactly what our classrooms will be like over the next decade, but it is safe to say they will look different, for we will continually examine and fine-tune what we are doing. One of the many

Schools that do not challenge themselves...betray the heart of what they do, which is to encourage growth through new ideas and deep reflection.

things I admire about our school is that we are not afraid to ask tough questions about ourselves; we are hungry to learn about research and best practices; and we want to study—and measure ourselves against—the finest elementary schools in the country. 

21ST CENTURY EDUCATIONAL RENAISSANCE

by Mark Carleton, Head of Upper School

THERE IS AN EMERGING RENAISSANCE IN education characterized by a shift from traditional and objectivist approaches to learning to approaches now being described as progressive and constructivist. At the heart of this constructivist Renaissance are two central ideas: the first asserts that the focal point of any classroom must be the inquiries of students who “construct” their own learning. The second idea emphasizes that in addition to addressing knowledge and skill in their classrooms, educators should also focus on teaching for **understanding**—the ability that allows us to make sense of what we know and to use that knowledge in a variety of contexts.

A Paradigm Shift

Once cultivated in this way, our understanding will tell us what our knowledge means and why our skills are important in terms of six “facets” (see sidebar, page six), according to the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. To teach for understanding necessitates a paradigm shift on the parts of educators not unlike that experienced by the artists of the Renaissance: students’ questions become the driving force behind a curriculum that no longer revolves around the binaries of knowledge and skill, which allow only for “right” and “wrong” answers. The 21st Century’s learner must be able to apply an understanding that combines disparate skills, discrete knowledge, and critical thinking in a number of authentic situations.

In his book *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action* (ASCD 2003), Robert Marzano provides the most recent meta-analysis of the positive effects that constructivist approaches to teaching for understanding are having on learning. An exhaustive study, Marzano’s work lays out three principles to explain the student-centered approach to teaching for understanding.



Principle One

Learning is enhanced when a teacher plans with the end in mind, identifying specific types of knowledge and skill that a unit or lesson will develop. In their work on teaching for understanding, Wiggins and McTighe urge teachers to acknowledge the complimentary roles that knowledge, skill, and understanding play in elementary schools. Along with Marzano, Wiggins and McTighe argue that the best constructivist lessons are grounded in **essential questions** that reveal the “big ideas” residing at the center of all learning. To be sure, specific content knowledge and “skill ability” must anchor deeper student understanding. It becomes the teacher’s primary job in the constructivist classroom to make the content underlying a lesson authentic and meaningful to students in order to guide them into asking the sorts of questions that will produce lasting understandings. Such a teacher accomplishes this task by planning lessons and units “backwards”—starting with what will be assessed and revealing that to students while thoughtfully guiding their inquiries.

Principle Two

Learning requires engagement in tasks that are structured or sufficiently similar to allow for effective transfer of knowledge. Simply put, we cannot really say that we understand something unless we can apply it to a variety of different contexts. Wiggins and McTighe give the ability to transfer (also known as application) such significance that it is one of their six facets of understanding. Constructivist classrooms

...imagine restricting an artist to the use of only one color in his or her work. Ridiculous, to be sure, but when we regularly value only one type of work from a diverse group of learners, we are shackling them in just the same way we are the artist...

require that students produce their own distinctive meaning about the content they are learning. However, this charge to “make meaning” has saddled student-centered classes with a reputation of lacking focus and specificity. Again, a look at Marzano’s research reveals the best constructivist classrooms are guided by teachers who are structuring their teaching and learning tasks in ways that will produce the sort of meaning making that “transfer-ability” requires. Critics of constructivism may continue to bemoan its lack of “structure,” but Marzano’s research and the PDS program recognize the necessary place of structure in an environment that is balanced by student inquiry and exploration.

The Six Facets of Understanding





The Six Facets of Understanding

from *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe

Someone who understands possesses these Six Facets:

1. **Explanation**—the ability to discuss why and how: “show your work”
2. **Interpretation**—making sense of things that might be counterintuitive; showing meaning: “knowledge built from the inside”

Misconception Alert: Some interpretations are better than others if they are more grounded, more reasonable, and more rooted in knowledge and skill—interpretation should not lead to relativism

3. **Application**—using knowledge; taking what you have learned and applying it to something new: “the use of knowledge in context”

Assessment Ideas: Performance Tasks put things into authentic contexts and allow students to demonstrate their ability to use knowledge and skills.

4. **Perspective**—getting outside of our own points of view: “seeing answers as points of view”
5. **Empathy**—getting inside the shoes of someone else; “be the thing”—walking in the shoes of someone/something else
6. **Self-knowledge**—awareness of our strengths, weaknesses, and prejudices: “know thyself”

In a sentence: “Teaching for understanding aims at having students explain, interpret, and apply while showing insight from perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge” (Wiggins 1998).

Principle Three

Lasting learning necessitates multiple exposure to and complex interactions with knowledge. Assessment time is the opportunity for students to “show off” their learning and to demonstrate what they know and can do. To be sure, assessment is the critical area of disagreement between the traditional/objectivist classroom and the learner-centered/constructivist one. In the former, assessment almost always takes the form of an end-of-unit, high stakes test that measures students’ ability to regurgitate in the most artificial of contexts what their teachers have said in class. Such an approach to assessment, considered in terms of our Renaissance metaphor, might look something like this: imagine restricting an artist to the use of only one color. Ridiculous, to be sure, but when we regularly value only one type of work from a diverse group of learners, we are shackling them in just the same way we are the artist in the example above. Instead, we need to allow these learners access to a more complete “palette” that assessing with understanding in mind insists on. In this model, students are offered a variety of opportunities and contexts to interact with their knowledge and to reproduce their own unique understandings of it. As a result, learning in the constructivist classroom is no longer merely “a matter of ‘right versus wrong’ but more or less naïve or sophisticated; more or less superficial or in-depth . . . it is a matter of degree on a continuum” (Wiggins 1998).

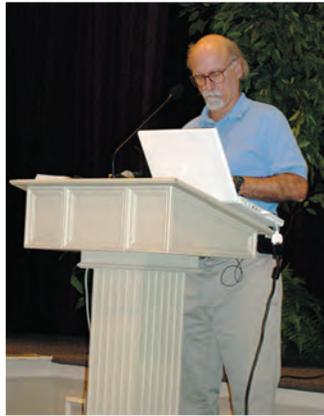
In the current Renaissance in education, successful schools like PDS will be working toward making themselves more and more “constructivist,” empowering students by encouraging their inquiry and discouraging the cases of “answeritis” that plague the best intentioned teachers but that inhibit truly constructive understanding. Like the real Renaissance, however, this sort of dynamic change will not and cannot happen overnight, but happen it must, and in the end the effects of this change on the artists/students of this generation will prove no less dramatic than those of centuries ago. 

References

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding By Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

PDS HOSTS NATIONAL CURRICULUM GURU GRANT WIGGINS

One of the country's leading thinkers and writers on teaching and learning, especially curriculum design, spent two days at PDS in October. Grant Wiggins traveled to PDS from New Jersey and was the keynote speaker for a day-long professional development conference PDS hosted for our colleagues from ten fellow independent schools. Approximately 600 teachers and administrators joined the PDS faculty and staff to listen to Wiggins discuss what understanding is, how to assess it, and how to design learning activities that lead to true understanding in students. The day included cross-school groups to share ideas and



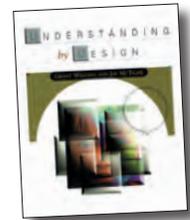
Understanding by Design author Grant Wiggins speaking at PDS

respond to his challenges as well as opportunities for each school to meet by itself.

During his second day at PDS, Wiggins met with teachers in their small grade level

groups to critique learning activities they had designed. "He has really helped to stretch our thinking about how we design and assess learning," says Lower School Head Susan Droke. "He challenged us and gave us practical ideas but also affirmed and complimented much of what we are doing."

Last summer, all PDS employees read Wiggins's book, *Understanding By Design*, and many faculty meetings this year have been devoted to discussing its ideas and implications.



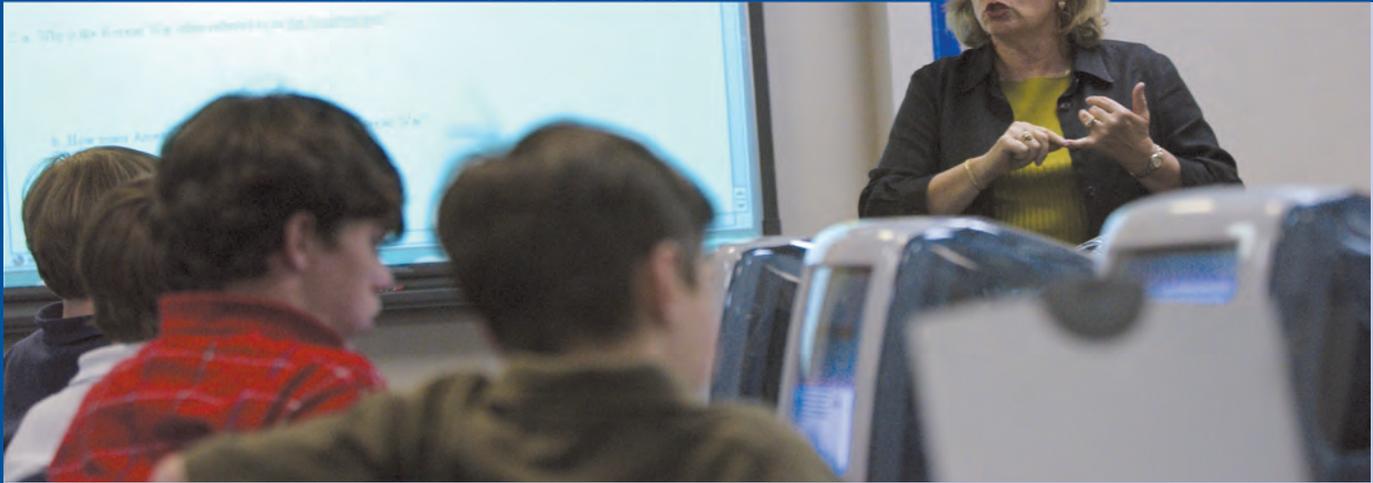
TRADITIONAL CLASSROOMS

Look at part to whole.
Adherence to a fixed curriculum.
A heavy reliance on textbooks and workbooks as the source of curriculum.
The minds of the students are "blank slates."
The teacher is a disseminator of knowledge using a didactic manner of instruction (the SAGE on the STAGE).
Focus on answers , generally settling for one that is "correct."
One or two modes of summative assessment, providing a "snapshot" of student learning
Students work alone, usually at a desk lined up in straight rows with little or no talking or help from other students.

CONSTRUCTIVIST CLASSROOMS

Look at the BIG picture.
Curriculum is led by student needs.
Use of manipulatives and hands-on curriculum materials; view the textbook as one of many resources in the curriculum design process.
Students have background and/or experiential knowledge.
The teacher is a facilitator, using interactive models of instruction (the GUIDE on the SIDE).
Focus on essential questions that ultimately get at the big ideas behind the "correct" answers.
Multiple modes of assessment including performance tasks, portfolios, and research projects that are both formative and summative, providing a "photo album" of student learning.
Students work collaboratively to learn about cooperation and group problem-solving.

Then and Now: Stories of PDS



THE DIFFERENCES IN THE CLASSROOM OF TODAY AND YESTERDAY AND THE FUTURE OF education were the focus of a recent discussion with three PDS teachers—two veterans, Jean Nabers (sixth) and Sharon McCall (second), and one new to the profession, Melissa Jardina (first).

Describe your classroom when you began teaching and your classroom today.

JN: In 1971 I taught every class in the sixth grade; boys did not switch classes like they do today. I did very little (if any) group work, and our desks were in rows as opposed to groups like they are now. At the end of every unit, I gave a “paper and pencil” test as my only form of assessment. Today, I still give tests, but I mix in PowerPoint presentations, oral reports, and other performance tasks as well.

SM: Jean’s comment about group work is one that I see as well. When I started teaching, there were limited opportunities for cooperative or collaborative learning. Now I see myself intentionally pairing stronger students with those whose skills are still developing as a way of reinforcing the teaching that I’m trying to do.

You have both mentioned collaborative learning; is there another instructional strategy that has emerged in the last five years that has caused a more “student-centered” change in your teaching style?

JN: That’s an easy one for me: teaching with technology! The Internet has opened up the world of information to

my students in ways that a textbook or my own knowledge of content never could. In my history classes in particular, Internet research now allows for the students to draw from primary sources such as audio clips of pilots detailing their missions during the Battle of Britain or Churchill’s famous “Iron Curtain” speech. This sort of “first-hand” information makes the subject matter really come alive for the boys and lets them discover ideas on their own without me as the filter.

SM: I think that teaching with technology reflects a more “hands-on” approach to learning that is particularly effective with our boys. In my classes we don’t use the computers as much as Jean’s sixth graders do, but through our new Everyday Math program we are moving away from the rote experience of computation that characterized math years ago toward an approach that uses games, manipulatives, and partner work in an effort to engage the boys more actively. This approach to math has really been going on for a while here at PDS: two years ago we adopted an excellent program that came with spiral review assessments and complete sets of math tools and manipulatives.

MJ: “Hands-on” is definitely big right now. Even though I’m pretty recently out of school, I know that was a huge focus in our college classes and in my own class today. Like

Sharon we use Everyday Math in first grade, and I notice that in addition to the manipulatives and the games there's an effort to promote a "real-life" context for the learning that's taking place. Problem solving is really emphasized, and instruction is individualized so that students with different skill levels will all have their needs met.

Problem solving and individualized instruction are both hallmarks of teaching for understanding. How do you see yourselves planning and designing for understanding along with knowledge and skill in your classes?

JN: This is really a new idea for me this year, but I know that I look at assessment in very different ways as a result of discussing teaching for understanding. I am constantly looking for other sorts of tasks that I can give my students in addition to tests and quizzes that will give me the best possible picture of the degree to which they understand what I am trying to teach. Also, I've begun using rubrics as a way of evaluating my assessments so that I can capture a little bit better the shades of understanding that the different learners in my class possess.

MJ: In first grade we are working together to create grade level rubrics for reading that will do just what Jean is talking about; they are developmentally appropriate for where the boys are or need to be at any given time of the year. I would also add that teaching for understanding has encouraged us in first grade to think about lessons and units in terms of big ideas or what are called essential questions. For example, we do year-long activities in first grade that culminate in our International Night, and we have been thinking that a great question that could serve as the focus for our study is, "How does where we live affect how we live?" We really hope the boys will be able to see the connections that we do as a result of considering this question.

In what direction do you see education going in the future based on what you've mentioned already?

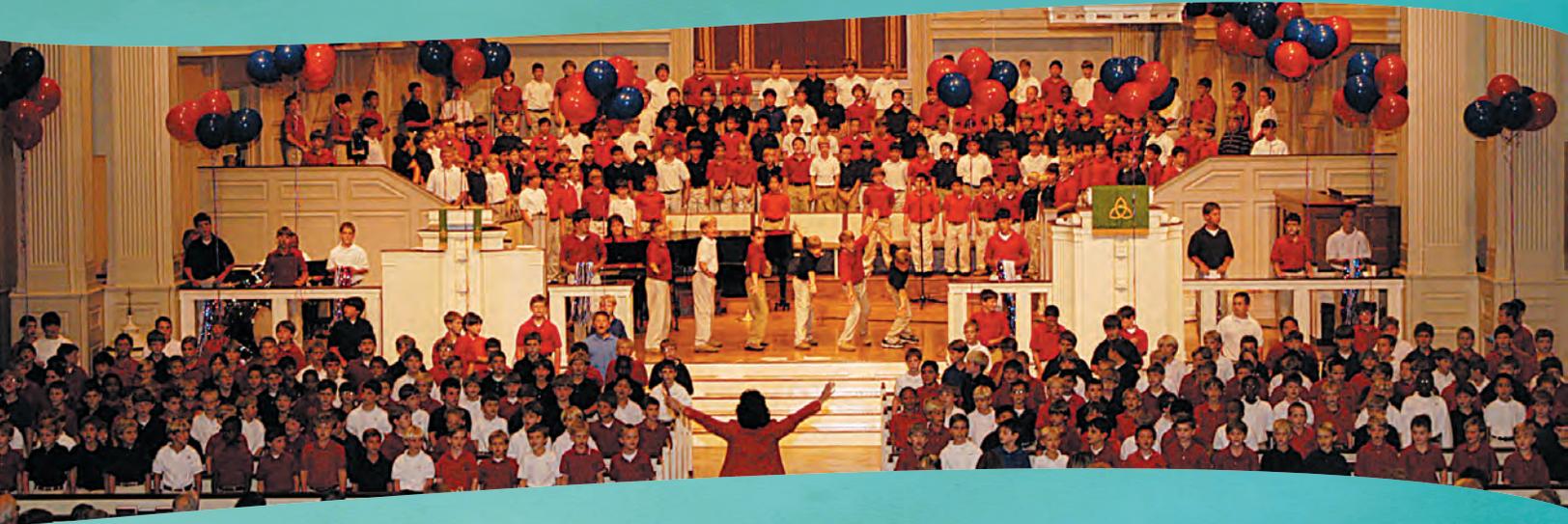
SM: I'd return to the idea of spiraling that I talked about earlier. I find myself constantly building and reinforcing skills and concepts over the course of a unit with the goal being to develop my boys' abilities as thinkers—especially when we're talking about improving logic and math intuition. I also think that there's a move to make learning more fun so that boys develop skills in an enjoyable and relaxed setting where freedom of thought, discovery, and understanding are nurtured and developed.

MJ: I would certainly echo that and say also that differentiated instruction and assessment are going to be important in the future as well. We're so much more aware today of the presence of different learning styles in our students, so I think teachers will continue to have to address those styles in unique ways in order to be sure that each learner is afforded the opportunity to "get it right."

JN: The curriculum will definitely be more flexible; it already is far more flexible than when I started teaching, and I think that comes back again to technology. Students of the future will do more electronic presentations; they'll use more spreadsheets, graphs, and tables to exhibit data; and they won't have textbooks—or, they'll only use their texts as a resource for the learning they are doing electronically.



PDS SALUTES GRANDPARENTS: FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA GRANDPARENTS' DAY - 2003



It seems just yesterday that the campus of PDS was teeming with excitement as Grandparents' Day 2003 saw the return of over 1000 grandparents to visit their grandsons at school.

Every other year, PDS honors grandmothers, grandfathers, and special friends with a day of celebration, musical performance, and visits to classrooms.

This year's event truly will be a cherished memory for all of us who were blessed to be a part of such a celebration.

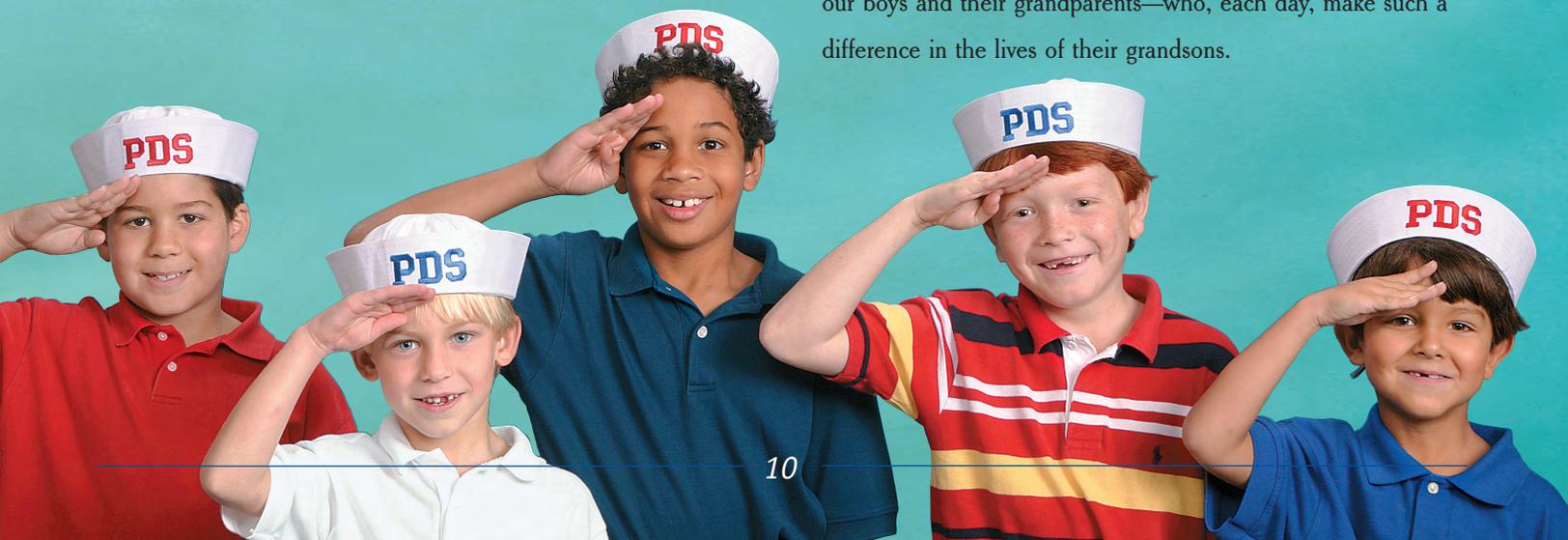
The theme, "From Sea to Shining Sea," was fitting as the boys, under the direction of Sharon Hutchison, performed a collection of pieces full of humor and sentiment. The audience was entertained by the "walk through American History" and stirred by the tribute to our community service workers and military representatives.

One of the highlights of the performance was certainly the special honor given to grandparents who had served in the armed services at some time in their careers. As men and women stood across the crowded sanctuary when their respective branches were called, the generations represented in the room were connected emotionally as such a powerful tribute brought tears to the eyes of many present.

The events of Grandparents' Day will hold special memories for a long time to come for both our boys and their grandparents—who, each day, make such a difference in the lives of their grandsons.



Lysbeth Francis
Grandparents' Day Chairman



Advancing to New Heights



Jim Duncan
Chief Advancement
Officer

Change is the word that comes to most people's minds when they consider what has been happening at PDS over the past three years. New leadership, new programs, and new décor have all helped to breathe new life into

our school. Over the past twelve months as the Development Office has transformed into the Advancement Office, change has been no less significant. The strategic plan that PDS adopted two years ago established three new positions in a revamped Advancement Office. Those three positions, Director of Marketing, Webmaster, and Director of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations, are now in place and staffed by three uniquely gifted people under the leadership of Chief Advancement Officer, Jim Duncan. The positions help us present our programs to the public, connect with our parents and other constituents, and increase philanthropic support, thereby strengthening the education we can provide our boys. They will return dividends in both the short-term and long-run.

Renea Medlin assumed the duties of Director of Marketing in January 2003 and is responsible for the creation and coordination of all school communications. Renea brings a great deal of knowledge from the private sector on the essentials of effective public relations. One of the critical tasks of her role is ensuring that all PDS communications send a consistent message on the mission of our school. She is the mother of Taylor (PDS sixth grader) and Victoria (a second grader at St. Mary's).



Winston Baccus also brings a wealth of talent to the position of Webmaster. The new features and updated look of our Web site are a part of his creative vision. As we continue to become increasingly reliant on technology in communications, it is important that our web pages be rich with information presented in a user friendly fashion. Winston's experience and expertise in graphic design will also play a vital role in shaping the image of the school in our community and to the larger audience of prospective families for years to come.

Alumni and current parents play such a significant role in the continuing growth of any school like PDS. In her position as Director of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations, Lee Rantow leads the effort of reaching our alumni base and coordinating our parent volunteers for our annual giving drive. Giving is fundamental to the success of PDS because more than twelve percent of the school's total budget is designated by private donations. Lee has two sons at PDS, James (third) and William (SK), giving her unique insight into the needs of both parents and boys.

Some say that change is the only constant in our world. Certainly the changes made over the last few years have been key in keeping PDS a constant leader in educating boys in the Memphis area. Building Boys, Making Men may seem merely a catchy slogan, but it is so much more than that—it is at the heart of the mission of PDS.

2003-2004 Annual Fund Update

To date over \$300,000 has been raised for the 2003-2004 Annual Fund — over 50% of our total goal

Over 75% of PDS faculty made gifts totaling in excess of \$20,000 — the largest amount in PDS history

Restricted gifts have been made this year for scholarships and tuition assistance, technology, athletics, music, and science

Over 200 parents have made contributions or pledges to date

Contributions have been received from more than 100 grandparents

For more information on making a contribution,

contact Jim Duncan at (901) 842-4602.

CALLING ALL PDS ALUMNI



Lee Rantzow

Since assuming my role as Director of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations, I have experienced an exciting fall semester at PDS. While my focus has been largely on the important area of annual giving, I am also developing plans to reconnect with former PDS Crusaders. We believe through maintaining relationships with our alumni of all ages, we can greatly enhance the lives of our current students.

In this issue of the PDSpirit, we are proud to feature an outstanding former student, Wes Scott. We hope you enjoy

reading about our visit with him, and we look forward to sharing news from other alumni in future issues.

So that we may communicate as effectively as possible, we are updating our mailing list. If you are a PDS alum or are related to one, please provide the Advancement Office with current contact information including name, address, phone, and email address. Feel free to contact me at (901) 842-4613 or send an email to lrantzow@pdsmemphis.org.

We would like to invite our PDS Alums to visit us when you are in the area. You will be amazed by the energy and enthusiasm at PDS.



WES SCOTT RETURNS TO PDS

Football fans of all ages are very familiar with the University of Mississippi's # 17, Wes Scott. He has enjoyed an outstanding college football career with the Rebels for the past four seasons. However, many of our readers may not know that he is an alum of Presbyterian Day School!

Wes graduated from PDS in 1993 and is the son of Butch and Teresa Scott, a fourth grade teacher at PDS. After PDS Wes played football for MUS and graduated in 1999. He went on to earn his undergraduate degree in accounting from the University of Mississippi in 2003 and will complete a masters' degree in Accounting and Taxation this spring. A few weeks ago, Wes stopped by the PDS campus, and we sat down with him for a chat.

LR: As you are here today at PDS for a visit after several years, I am wondering what comes to mind? How have things changed here since you left PDS?

WS: As I arrived here today, I really didn't know where I was. All the buildings have changed. It is brighter and newer looking. I was glad to see two of my former teachers, Mrs. Jean Nabers and Mrs. Gladys Slappey.

LR: Would you share a little of what you've been doing since your days at PDS?

WS: After graduating from PDS in '93, I went to MUS for six years, and then I accepted a football scholarship to Ole Miss.

LR: In what ways do you feel PDS prepared you for your next steps to high school and now to college?

WS: Fundamentally, English and math are the key components that I learned and used at MUS and Ole Miss. I also learned critical thinking skills at PDS.

LR: Do you have any comments about attending an all-boys school?

WS: I think one of the benefits of attending an all-boys school is that it offers fewer distractions, and it is more conducive to learning.



PDS Alumnus Wes Scott and Lee Rantzow



LR: What memories of PDS still stand out in your mind even today as a young adult?

WS: I remember the day I graduated. I also remember some classroom settings as well as playing sports, but mostly I remember the

friendships. It is nice to have carried them with me after my days at PDS.

LR: We talk a lot with our boys about goals and dreams...that you should really go for your dreams. Did you know that you wanted to be in sports when you were younger?

WS: I had always dreamed of playing football and playing in the NFL. I didn't really realize what all it takes to be a professional football player. Fewer than one percent of college football players get drafted for pro football. It makes getting your education even more important.



4th Grade Teacher Teresa Scott with son, Wes

LR: Wes, what advice would you give to our graduating class, the Class of 2004?

WS: Always work on your academics because whatever your dream is...sports, music, whatever...you will need a good education in the real world. You need a solid education because not everyone can be the star!

LR: Thanks, Wes, for dropping by and giving us the opportunity to share some memories with you.

SPORTS Update

**From the Office of Dennis Smith,
PDS Athletic Director**

Last fall the Athletic Department started the year in full swing with a month packed with activities. In September the fifth and sixth graders participated in separate overnight retreats at Victory Ranch. Later in the month, the sixth grade boys traveled with their dads to St. Louis to be part of their Father-Son Trip. The intramural football program kicked off its season with a fun-filled football jamboree and picnic for the student body and their families.

The PDS Crusaders' 5th and 6th grade football team began practice in the sweltering heat of August. They opened the season with the annual PAA Jamboree at St. Benedict School. After an overtime victory at Harding Academy, the Crusaders marched through the remaining games and finished the season undefeated. Focusing on teamwork and the fundamentals of the game certainly paved the way to a winning season. "The players exhibited sportsmanship and great humility throughout the season," said Head Coach Dwight Creasman.

Once again, the Crusaders earned a perfect record and a second straight PAA League Championship.

The 2004 school year promises to be filled with even more excitement with the continuation of the basketball season, the ever-popular Student/Faculty basketball match up, soccer season, Field Day, and the annual Sports Banquet. New this year in May, the sixth graders will join their fathers for a year-end retreat at Victory Ranch.





THE TRUE FRIEND



THE HUMBLE HERO



THE SERVANT LEADER



THE MORAL MOTIVATOR



THE HEART PATIENT



THE BOLD ADVENTURER



THE NOBLE KNIGHT

Year One: A Solid Foundation for the *Building Boys, Making Men* Program

In September PDS launched an ambitious two-year program to help give its fifth and sixth grade boys a vision for manhood. Called *Building Boys, Making Men*, the program focuses both on boys and their parents and utilizes a number of formats to provide guidance on how to approach the journey into manhood. The program aims to be both theoretical and practical and draws from the Bible and leading thinkers and writers on male adolescent development. Approximately fifty different events, ranging from retreats and Bible studies for boys to special lunches, meetings, and videos for parents are being held.

The *PDSpirit* sat down to talk to Headmaster Lee Burns about the program.

In a nutshell, what is the program about?

The program is an answer to the question of what it means to be a man, and more specifically, a Christian man. It is a series of programs, curricular initiatives, and retreats to help answer that question and thereby inform the choices boys make on a range of topics at PDS and beyond. The program focuses primarily on our fifth and sixth grade boys and their parents.

Where did the idea for this program come from?

A couple of years ago, one of our sixth grade dads told me that he and some other fathers were planning a surprise ceremony for their sons around the theme of growing to manhood. The dads had all been reading the same book about raising sons. I talked to many of the dads and sons after the evening, and they all said it was very powerful. I think the inspiration in general terms came from that, and the specifics grew from some internal things at PDS.

As for the part more specific to PDS, I think you could trace its origins to several things. First, we are trying to be a whole lot more intentional about being a boys' school. In our conversations about this percolating around the school, we started pushing up against questions and beliefs about manhood, which naturally

help shape thinking about boys. In the sixth grade Bible study we began in the winter of 2001, we also started bumping into some important male teenage issues. Second, we know some of our graduates make poor choices in their teenage years. Those choices cause concern for us. So our discussions about our boys began projecting further out than before...well beyond graduation day. As we expanded our thinking to manhood, it struck us—and it obviously has struck others as well—that it's hard to find a good vision for manhood. There are so many negative stereotypes, and it seems to us that a lot of the bad decisions that boys and men make stem from these poor stereotypes. Finally, we have been talking a great deal about essential questions as a faculty—big, overarching questions, and that conversation pushed us to develop the big question to frame the whole program: what does it mean to be a man?

What did it take to turn a big idea into a reality?

A lot of time. A handful of us began meeting last winter to try to wrap our arms around it. We said we wouldn't develop any specific program until we felt like we had an answer to the question of what it means to be a man. And we said our answer had to be Biblically based and informed by research from leading thinkers on male development. So we did a lot of reading and talking and praying and more reading and talking and praying. We went through a lot of revisions (I think eight in all) to simply answer that question. We landed on seven virtues that we think are exciting and accessible concepts to our boys. We bounced our ideas off others and had a couple of focus groups in the summer and early fall. Then we narrowed it down to key topics and selected dates and times.

Why start with fifth grade?

The question of what it means to be a man is a big one, and we thought we might need two years to answer it for our boys and their parents. Also, a lot of things start changing around fifth grade—boys become so much more aware of themselves and themselves in relation to

others—and we wanted to have a large framework for addressing some of these things in fifth grade. Finally, children are exposed to things so much sooner now, and we didn't want to give some of society's messages and standards a bigger head-start than they need. We need to be out there, too.

What are some of the topics the program covers?

Our anchors are the seven (virtuous) examples of manhood we adopted (true friend, humble hero, servant leader, moral motivator, heart patient, bold adventurer, noble knight). Each month, we hold a specific parent session on one of the virtues. Chris Hill works the virtues into his Bible class, and the Upper School faculty does as well in different settings. Each month we also have a more focused topic for parents on things like self-esteem, drugs, puberty, girls, and so forth. Those are the same topics we are covering with the boys in our voluntary Bible studies. We tried to hold the session for parents in advance of the same topic for the boys.

How is a session prepared?

We have two or three sessions that we call the BBMM think-tank. Chris, Mark Carleton, Barbara Harris, Susan Droke, Cyndi Jordan, and I will meet for an hour or so to brainstorm. One or two people are selected as session leaders, and they work together on a draft that they bring back to the group. A session leader probably spends ten to twenty hours on research and writing. We debate and discuss, and we challenge each other to assure that it has a Biblical foundation and is informed by research. I really enjoy our conversations. It is very stimulating, and I think we all learn from one another. Each session is truly a collaborative effort.



For you personally, what have been the highlights of the program?

My favorite time at PDS is the time I get to spend with boys, so my highlights have been the two overnight retreats and the Friday morning Bible study with the sixth graders. Leading a parent session is a highlight in that it is a stimulating challenge to research, study, and write. Helping pull together the session on alcohol and drugs was especially interesting because of the surveying we did of our ninth and twelfth grade alumni.

What has been the parent reaction?

From what we hear, it has been good. Most of what we hear is appreciation for the conversation spawned beyond the sessions. I think more parents are getting together to talk about some tough issues sooner than in the past. And I think some fathers are having more focused and intentional conversations and activities with their sons. Dads (or a significant male role model) have such a decisive role to play in how a boy enters and understands manhood.

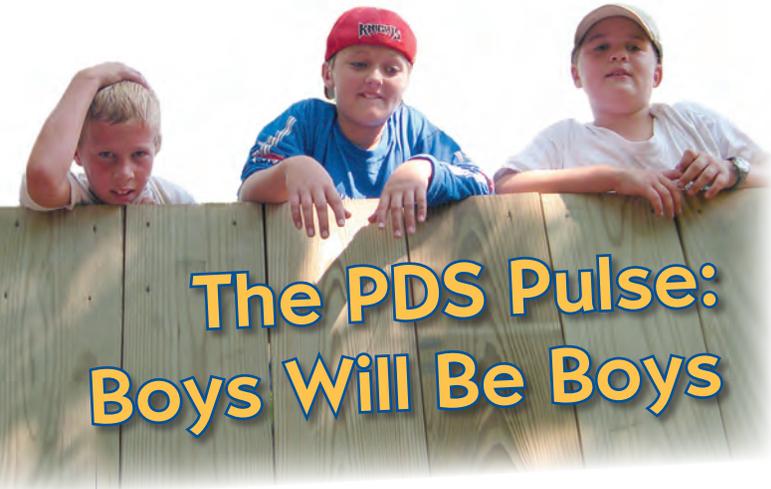
What if I am interested in this but my son is not yet a fifth grader?

We are having a four-part video series on raising boys, as well as a Book Club. Both of those are open to parents in all grades. Also, we would be happy to suggest some resources to read on raising boys.

Where does the program go from here?

There is a lot still to do this year, including the Father-Son Day and Dinner in mid-May for the senior class. That is the culminating event for the program. Beyond that, we hope the program will continue to grow in the upcoming years. Five years from now, I hope we can say it is among the very finest things we do at PDS. As we have more experience, we should be able to improve upon it, and I hope its momentum will grow. 

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE NEW BUILDING Boys, Making Men program launched this year for fifth and sixth grade boys and their parents, two off-campus retreats were held early in the fall at Victory Ranch, during which time boys challenged themselves in the areas of teamwork, leadership, and collaboration.



The fifth grade retreat focused on teamwork and what it means to be a part of a truly motivated and elite team of committed young men working together toward a common goal. By means of teambuilding exercises and unique elements on a variety of challenge courses, the boys were forced out of their sometimes self-centered comfort zones in order to seek each other out for encouragement and companionship.

The sixth grade retreat had as its focus compassionate and concerned leaders who are, like Christ, unwilling to embrace the image of power that the world urges and who are unwilling to use their position for anything but good and right. Sixth graders were asked to find their ideal leader in the person of Jesus, who saw leadership as a matter of action and not position and who saw every person he met as someone in need of servant leadership. Here are some retreat reactions from our boys:

Fifth Grader: I'll never forget how hoarse I was at the end of the retreat; I've never yelled that much for my classmates since I've been at PDS. We were all encouraging everybody the whole time; it was the best time I've had at PDS. I can't wait for next year.

Fifth Grader: The ropes course was awesome. I was pretty scared at the beginning, but then when we had to get off I was like, "Already? Can we do it again?" Some of my friends didn't think they would do it, and they were the best ones out there.

Fifth Grader: The bonfire at the end of the first day was definitely the best. We roasted marshmallows, made s'mores, and listened to Coach Creasman's corny ghost stories. Then, at the end, we sang songs and had prayer requests. I didn't want to go to bed because that would mean that it was ending.

Sixth Grader: The Pamper Pole was the ultimate test. I went last in my group because there was no way I was going up there. But by the end of our rotation, the other guys were encouraging me so much that I couldn't let them down. I've never been so scared in my life, but I got to the top thanks to my teammates.

Fifth Grader: We played football for two solid hours, and Mr. Burns is a pretty good quarterback! There were guys on my team that I hadn't ever played with before, and now they are my friends.

Sixth Grader: At the beginning of 5th grade, another boy and I got into a disagreement at recess and didn't really get along too well for the rest of the year. Then, during the retreat, we were on the same team and wound up yelling and supporting each other for two whole days. I guess we each learned something about each other.



ASTRONAUT LANDS AT PDS



Most of us will never make it to the moon or fly in a rocket ship, but hearing about the wonders of space from a real live astronaut might just be the next best thing to being there. Earlier this year, the boys of PDS got to do just that.

On a January morning, excitement filled the room where former NASA astronaut, Charlie Duke, prepared to speak to our students. The boys were exceptionally attentive as Mr. Duke talked for almost an hour about his experiences as an Apollo 16 lunar module pilot. Mr. Duke's 1972 Apollo mission was the United States' fifth landing on the moon.

Reliving the years leading to his trip to the moon, Mr. Duke shared that choices he made as a youngster in school paved the way for him to eventually train as a fighter pilot and later serve his country as an astronaut with Apollo

10 and Apollo 16. Dedication to his studies, his physical fitness, and to his faith gave him the courage to become a man who ultimately walked on the moon.

During the Apollo missions, only twelve astronauts have actually walked on the moon. PDS boys certainly are privileged to have met one such man.

Special thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Alan Garner (parents of fourth grader Alexander and second grader Andrew) for their help in making Mr. Charlie Duke's visit to Memphis possible.



Professionally Speaking...

New Early Childhood Head Selected



Debbie Isom
Early Childhood Head

Debbie Isom, a person familiar to many educators and families in Memphis, has been selected as the new Early Childhood Head at PDS, effective July 1, 2004. Mrs. Isom replaces Dr. Barbara Harris, who will be assuming the Principal position at the ECS Ridge Lake campus at the conclusion of the school year.

Mrs. Isom is currently serving as Lower School Head at Hutchison School, where she oversees senior kindergarten through fourth grade. She has also served as the Early Childhood Head at Hutchison, leading their three and four-year-old programs. Prior to her administrative positions, she had served for eighteen years as a first grade teacher at Hutchison. She brings to PDS strong curricular leadership, broad perspective and experience, a passion for single-sex education, and a love for the Lord. Mrs. Isom is married to Gale and is the mother of Matthew, age 16.

“We are fortunate to attract Debbie Isom to PDS. She has distinguished herself at an outstanding school similar to PDS. Our interview team found her not only to be a great fit for our educational philosophy and vision, but they admired her warm and gracious spirit and inspirational, servant leadership. I know she will help us continue to build upon the wonderful things already happening in our Early Childhood division,” says Headmaster Lee Burns.

2003 Professional Development

The school has made a commitment through our professional development initiative to ensure that our teachers and administrators are on the leading edge of new educational processes. Each year, approximately \$100,000 is budgeted to offer our faculty the opportunity to attend conferences and training seminars regionally and nationally, as well as bringing experts to PDS in consulting roles.

The following is a partial listing of professional training events that PDS faculty members attended this year:

Conferences

Memphis City Technological
Florida Educational Technology
Tennessee State Kindergarten
Everyday Math Users
What's New in Children's Literature
Tennessee Council of Teachers of English
Tennessee Educational Technology
Association
Association for Supervision and Curriculum
Development
Tennessee Association of Independent
Schools Liaison Retreat
Understanding by Design Academy
Marketing Institute for Independent Schools
Educational Records Bureau
Elementary School Headmaster
Association
International Boys' School Coalition
International Reading Association

Workshops

Everyday Math Workshops
Kindergarten Teachers Workshop on
Nutrition
Computer Programs in Early Childhood
Boys and Girls Learn Differently
Council for Advancement and Support of
Education Workshop
Maintaining the Campus (Independent
School Management Workshop)
Staff Development on Learning Styles

Special Guests

Grant Wiggins presented at fall in-service
workshop and met with teachers in small
groups
Bill Weary met with administrators to
discuss campus planning



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

DR.
MARK CARLETON
HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL

Perhaps it was his own time spent in an all-boys school that gave Mark Carleton his natural affinity for single gender education.

Or maybe it's more aptly called a "gift" for guiding and molding young boys into critical thinkers and well-rounded young citizens.

You don't have to be around Mark very long to see that his number one focus is our boys. While his role at PDS is administrative in nature, he is deliberate about taking time for the boys, always keeping an "open door policy" regarding his availability to listen and interact with them throughout the school day. He is affectionately called "Dr. C" by our upper school boys and can sometimes be found walking the halls talking with boys with an apparent ease.

Since Mark began his role at PDS in the spring of 2002, he has worked with energy and zeal (just as he asks the boys to do) to be deliberate about making our upper school the absolute best place for our boys. He is constantly challenging the status quo and strives for excellence in every area that touches our boys' lives and school experience.

The PDS Spirit discovered a few interesting things about Mark that may hold a few surprises...

How would you describe yourself as a pre-teen?

Thank you very much for making me re-live that wonderful time of my life! Picture this: pants pulled up to mid-chest, glasses as thick as coke bottles, the same blue pants and yellow shirt every day, hair like one of the Beatles...You get the picture. I was the geek of all geeks when I was a pre-teen—so much so that my mother tried at least twice to leave me at the grocery store for someone else to pick up.



Mark with his wife Laurel and daughter Camille

What are your favorite foods?

Easy—anything fried and anything Tex-Mex. One of my favorite haunts happens to be On the Border. My belief about food is a simple one: everything (and I do mean everything) tastes better if it's fried and dipped in ranch dressing.

Do you like sports? Which is your favorite? Did you play in high school?

I love sports of all kinds, but baseball is my favorite, and I actually played and coached baseball in high school and college (Centenary College).

What's your favorite book?

My wife Laurel and I are huge fans of the Harry Potter series and had the *Order of the Phoenix* delivered to our house. But my favorite book is either *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner or *All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren. (Sorry, I realize that's not Highlights or Mad Libs, but that's just me.)

What kind of music do you enjoy listening to?

I love old jazz vocalists like Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holliday, Frank Sinatra, etc. I also really like Norah Jones.

How does it feel to be a dad?

Very humbling. Every morning I wake up and am amazed that the Lord trusts me with such a beautiful and amazing creation. I especially hope He is watching over me when I'm changing those diapers!

What do you like most about your job at PDS?

From 7:50-8:10 in the morning and from 3:05-3:20 in the afternoon, I am in the hallways of the Upper School talking to our boys. They tell me about their trials and their triumphs; we celebrate their birthdays in special ways; they update me on their after-school exploits. Our boys are wonderful, energetic, and faithful fellows. I am blessed by them every day!

PDS PICS

E A R L Y C H I L D H O O D



Junior Kindergarten boys look on as they await the arrival of the farm animals on Farm Day.



Early in the school year, Junior Kindergarten dads shared donuts with their sons.



Senior Kindergarten and Transition boys shine in their annual Christmas program.

L O W E R S C H O O L



Members of Mrs. Webber's Enrichment Class share a friendly game of chess.



Third Grader Mac Trammell shows off his science experiment at our annual science fair.



Second Grader Phillip Nichols samples one of the accelerated reader books.

U P P E R S C H O O L



Nate Utkov shows off his baby flying squirrel in the Science Lab.



6th Grade Father-Son Trip to St. Louis in September



Fifth Graders send off the busses of 6th grade boys as they embark on their Father-Son trip.

FIFTH GRADE HUNTSVILLE TRIP

This is the second year that the PDS fifth graders have journeyed to Huntsville, Alabama, to visit the Huntsville Space and Rocket Center. This year's trip was November 21, when fifth graders along with their teachers and chaperones left school at 6:00 am and returned at 8:30 pm. During their visit, the boys toured a muse-



um that includes exhibits and space-related activities, and they enjoyed a rocket park and space rides—including the Space Shot. Boys were treated to a showing at the IMAX called, "The International Space Station." This year the boys participated in a scavenger hunt in the museum where

they had to find five dates and events in space history so that upon returning to school they could create timelines on laptops.

To prepare for this visit each year, our fifth graders complete a unit on space that includes history, the Space Shuttle, living in space, and astronomy. According to Mrs. Yarwood (fifth grade science teacher), one of the highlights of the trip was seeing a real Saturn V rocket, just like the one Charlie Duke traveled in to the moon. She also added this final note:

"...this year the boys had learned so much, they surprised Charlie Duke with their knowledge."



PDS Announces New Board Members

Steve Allison

Steve is self-employed and manages a consulting firm that serves the Midsouth providing training programs for diversity in the workplace. He and his wife Penne have one son, Benjamin, who is a second grader at PDS. Steve is a member of Mississippi Baptist Church where he serves on several committees. He is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and is a former professional soccer player.



John Buford

John is a Vice President and Portfolio Manager with Southeastern Asset Management, Inc. John and his wife Dana have a son Bailey, who is a 2nd grader at PDS, and a daughter Alex, who attends St. Mary's School. John has been actively involved in the Perea Preschool, which is a privately funded school for inner-city children at risk. He is also a past member of the Board of Trustees at Christian Brothers University. John is a graduate of the University of Texas. The Buford family are members of Christ United Methodist Church.



Joe Morrison

Joe is the Chief Investment Officer for the Regions-Morgan Keegan Trust Company in Memphis. Joe and his wife Brandon have five children. Joe, Jr. (fourth grade) and Murray (SK) are both students at PDS. Their three daughters, Allie (eighth grade), Ruthie (seventh grade), and Jane (first grade) all attend St. Mary's School. Joe has been a member of Second Presbyterian Church since 1987 and has served as past Chairman of the Diaconate. He currently serves as an Elder. Joe is an alum of PDS ('72) and a graduate of Vanderbilt University. He later earned an MBA from the Owen School of Management in 1989.



Dr. Susan Warner

Susan and her husband Bill have one son, Ross, who is a fourth grader at PDS. She earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Tennessee and later completed her medical degree at the U.T. Medical School. She holds board certification in pathology, and she practiced with the Pathology Group of the Midsouth before becoming a full-time mother. Susan is currently a member of the LeBonheur Club, a sustainer in the Junior League of Memphis, and a member of the PDS Parent Club board. The Warners are members of Christ United Methodist Church.



*O happy hours of work and play
The classmates that we join each day
Our flying colors, red and blue,
To thee we promise to be true
Oh, PDS we pledge to thee
Our reverence and our loyalty.*



Presbyterian Day School

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