

PDS Spirit

The Magazine of Presbyterian Day School



Growing in Wisdom

Harnessing the Power of Outdoor Learning to Boost Performance and Well-Being at PDS

WINTER 2024



Begin with the End in Mind

A Foundation of Learning and Leadership at PDS



PDS Spirit Winter 2024

PDS Spirit is a publication of Presbyterian Day School.

Chief Advancement Officer
Chris Oliver

Director of Communications
Winston Baccus

Contributing Photographer
Lisa Buser

Change in your address?

Email avanderhave@pdsmemphis.org

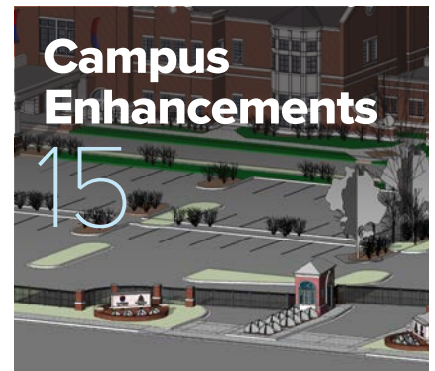
PDS maintains a nondiscriminatory policy with regard to race, color, and national or ethnic origin.



A Foundation of Learning & Leadership 12



Outdoor Learning 8



Campus Enhancements 15



Professional Development 5

PDS Hosts Innovative Conference

On the Cover:

Did you know that when we launched our band program in 2015, it was actually a relaunch? In 1953, we also had a band!

From the Head of School

Reflecting back to the first publication almost twenty-five years ago, the *Spirit* magazine's intention was to capture those important and meaningful moments of school life with images and stories of PDS boys and our alums. As you would expect, you will find more of those special moments of PDS traditions as well as our alums in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the school.



Every *Spirit* magazine typically reflects highlights of past semesters and showcases what's next on the horizon. This year's only difference is that we're looking much further back in time, celebrating our past. Of course, a single magazine cannot properly capture 75 years of PDS history. We have a special publication titled 'PDS at 75' coming in spring 2024. It will walk us down memory lane, commemorate this historical milestone by revisiting our history and traditions, and celebrate our alums who made PDS what it is today. We look forward to sharing this with you soon!

Secondly, we have exciting news about additional security enhancements planned for our campus. In the following pages, you will see new renderings of our main parking lot along Poplar Avenue with added fencing and a designated security entrance.

You may recall the announcement in the *Spirit* magazine last year that PDS would have a more defined entrance, marking and illuminating the school's presence along Poplar Avenue with branded entry signage. Those plans are still moving forward as part of these security enhancements being made in conjunction with Second Presbyterian Church (2PC). We are incredibly grateful to 2PC for their partnership and collaboration as we join hands in this intentional project.

Lastly, in each *Spirit* magazine, we highlight and hear from PDS faculty regarding strategic initiatives, the latest findings in boy education, and reflections on the PDS classroom experience. In this edition, I encourage you to read three articles by our faculty. Emily Lequerica, Director of Research and Innovation, shares in her article, 'PDS Champions Boys' Education,' reflections about PDS recently hosting the International Boys' School Coalition Conference for elementary independent schools across North America.

We all know the importance of being outdoors; however, the importance of outdoor learning to overall well-being and performance for boys is critical to their education. To understand this from a PDS perspective, please read Jackson Boyd's piece on 'Harnessing the Power of Outdoor Learning to Booster Performance and Well-Being at PDS.' Mr. Boyd is PDS' fifth and sixth grade science teacher and serves as a member of the Research & Development team.

From the beginning until the end of a PDS education, ten years spent with PDS faculty and the shaping of a boy's academic foundation and future, our Head of Elementary, Laura Glenn, gives us a snapshot into the exceptional learning our boys receive that is reflected in independent school data through ERB scores.

We hope you enjoy this installment of *PDS Spirit*. Happy reading!

Brad Sewell
Head of School

Coming This Spring: Book Reflecting on PDS at Seventy-Five



What are the seventy-five programs, traditions, people, experiences that make us who we are in 2024?

Our upcoming book explores the history of Presbyterian Day School and what makes it the special place that it is today.

PDS Named One of “Top Work Places” in Memphis

Presbyterian Day School has been awarded a Top Workplaces 2023 honor by The Commercial Appeal Top Workplaces and ranked first in the midsize companies category. The list is based solely on employee feedback gathered through a third-party survey administered by employee engagement technology partner Energage, LLC. The confidential survey uniquely measures 15 culture drivers that are critical to the success of any organization.



3rd Annual Party!

Friday, March 1 • 6:30pm
FedEx Event Center at Shelby Farms

Enjoy food and drink, preview some of the online auction items, and bid on themed baskets!



This event is for adults only. No children.

PARTY!



PDS Champions Boys' Education with Innovative Conference



by Emily Lequerica, *Director of Research and Innovation for Boys' Education*

Presbyterian Day School continues to be a global leader in elementary boys' education, committed to advancing, sharing, and implementing best practices. To further this commitment to excellence and in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the school, PDS hosted a two-day, regional conference in October, titled *Building Blocks of Boyhood*, in association with the International Boys' School Coalition (IBSC).



Founded in 1995, IBSC is a non-profit global organization that connects educators and boys' schools of diverse settings through research, programs, engagement, and advocacy. Their current roster includes nearly 300 member schools from more than 20 countries and five continents.

Building Blocks of Boyhood was a first of its kind. The conference highlighted research practices in elementary schools for boys, and, in contrast to a typical educational conference, PDS boys remained in session. The conference attracted educators from around the world who desired to further explore the foundational aspects of boyhood and to observe firsthand what PDS does so well on a daily basis.

There were a variety of breakout sessions led by experts and thought leaders, including ten of our own PDS faculty members. They presented on topics such as service learning, curriculum integration, character education, outdoor learning, and spiritual formation. Many delegates also participated



Keynote speaker

David Thomas, executive director of Daystar Counseling Ministries and author of 10 best-selling books.

PDS CHAMPIONS BOYS' EDUCATION WITH INNOVATIVE CONFERENCE

in an elementary learning walk, which allowed PDS to showcase its classrooms and creative spaces. Delegates were able to see first-hand as first-through sixth-grade boys engaged in collaboration, movement, exploration, play, teachable character moments, and multi-sensory learning.

Reflecting on her experience at the conference, Laura Sabo, IBSC Action Research Coordinator and Research Coordinator at the Center for the Study of Boys stated, "Attending the IBSC regional conference at Presbyterian Day School was a professional highlight of my semester. I truly appreciated the opportunity to visit a school that is teaching with innovation, creativity, and a keen understanding of what works best for boys. I gained so many ideas from keynote speakers, workshop sessions, and scholarly discussions and was excited to share key takeaways with my colleagues. Most of all, I felt welcomed by the warm and friendly staff of PDS and look forward to an ongoing relationship."

PDS was honored to host two highly regarded keynote speakers at the conference as well. Dr. Alex Russell, clinical psychologist and author of *Drop the Worry Ball: How to Parent in the Age of Entitlement*, joined us virtually from Toronto, Canada, and David Thomas L.M.S.W., Executive Director of Daystar Counseling Ministries, joined us in person from Nashville, TN. Thomas is a frequent guest on national television and podcasts, has been featured in publications such as *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*, and is the co-author of ten books, including *Raising Emotionally Strong Boys* and best-selling *Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys*, which PDS faculty read this past summer.

Dr. Russell shared his expertise on raising



"Attending the IBSC regional conference at Presbyterian Day School was a professional highlight of my semester. I truly appreciated the opportunity to visit a school that is teaching with innovation, creativity, and a keen understanding of what works best for boys."

emotionally healthy children, how to navigate building resiliency, and the importance of non-catastrophic failure. He proposed that failure is a means of learning in children and through the process of failure, children mature into resourceful and emotionally balanced individuals. He not only encouraged educators attending the conference but also parents in the local community during a live-streamed evening event, titled "Keeping Them Safe While Helping Them Grow."

David Thomas intentionally unpacked four of the five stages of a boy's development: the explorer, the lover, the individual, and the wanderer, defining traits and identifying biological needs every step of the way. Thomas presented scientific research on the male brain, identified what boys need from the adults in their lives, described boys as learners, and encouraged delegates to honor each stage of development. Thomas also noted global trends, sharing that boys today are now more likely to bow out of sports, are resistant to getting driving permits, less likely to go to college or get a job, and are being monitored closely as a result of the US Surgeon General declaring a mental health crisis

post pandemic. Thomas endorsed Dr. Russell's suggestion of more healthy risk taking as a means of building purpose-driven, resilient boys.

Dr. Derek Porter, Research Coordinator at the Center for the Study of Boys, was inspired by both keynote speakers and stated "The impactful keynote speakers, notably David Thomas, equipped me to immediately integrate the stages of boy development framework into my role as a father, teacher, and professional learning leader."

As a means to empower one of the most important elements in a boy's education — the teacher/student relationship — PDS faculty and staff took part in a special breakout session to learn more about emotions in the classroom from David Thomas. The presentation was based on his newest book *Raising Emotionally Strong Boys*, which was read by members of the PDS parent book club as well as the PDS faculty and staff during the 2022-2023 school year.

Thomas shared similar global trends and focused on reading, regulating, and responding to emotions in boys. With the worldly message for males to numb their feelings and the research on anxiety as a current childhood epidemic, Thomas focused on resourceful scripture references and strategies for teachers, coaches, and mentors to use. He emphasized that boys having emotions is not bad, but it is how they express them that is most important. Ultimately, he challenged us to assess our own anxieties as adults in order to better serve the boys in our care and model positive coping techniques. As he advised, "Calm is contagious."

Although a very heavy topic, Thomas' delivery was inspirational and encouraging. He expressed gratitude for PDS and the intentional, holistic approach we take in nurturing the mind, body, and spirit of each boy during the most formative years.

Having the opportunity to work alongside the International Boys' School Coalition and to support their mission was truly an honor. Like IBSC, PDS strives to be a leading voice in best education practices for boy schools worldwide. The conference was truly a unique opportunity for teachers and administrators from different schools to team together to champion boys' education by collaborating, building relationships, hearing from thought leaders, and engaging in peer-led learning experiences. Our hope is that delegates left with a renewed sense of energy and enthusiasm for the boys they serve and a strong confidence in the work that PDS is doing for boys in an elementary setting.

Amy Ahart, Chief Operating Officer for IBSC, responded to the conference by saying, "PDS put together an extraordinary experience and were generous hosts. A sincere thanks to PDS for their time, energy, and expertise. Attendees arrived in high spirits, participating in a learning modality that made this gathering both valuable and incredibly special." 🍷



GROWING IN WISDOM

PDS SPIRIT • WINTER 2024 • PRESBYTERIAN DAY SCHOOL



Harnessing the Power of Outdoor Learning to Boost Performance and Well-Being at PDS



by Jackson Boyd, *Fifth and Sixth Grade Science Teacher*

It is easy to find evidence of the positive influence of outdoor learning at PDS. Whether it is Lydia Butler's senior kindergarteners studying the life cycle of plants and animals or Stephanie Taylor's second graders weeding their garden, boys are leaving their classrooms to further their learning outdoors.

The research on outdoor learning is extensive and suggests that learning outside the classroom yields a range of benefits. Recent studies have revealed that time spent outdoors improves cognitive function, reduces anxiety, and increases attention span and confidence; as 2nd grader Aaron Eason puts it, "I just feel better when I get some fresh air." According to research conducted by the Child Mind Institute, the average American child spends less than ten minutes outside each day. The same research goes on to illustrate that time outdoors is especially beneficial for boys — especially boys with learning differences like ADHD. Mrs. Butler can see the benefits of outdoor time first hand with her senior kindergarteners; she reflects, "When the boys spend time outside, they are more focused and less likely to have behavioral issues." Boys tend to remain focused even after they have returned to the classroom. For example, Charlotte Everett often takes her third graders to the lawn on the east side of campus before a test or quiz. Why does she do this? She has read the research proving that physically active boys who have spent time outdoors perform better on formative assessments. She also notes that boys enjoy reading time, class discussions, and class work outside. Each fall, sixth graders in science class search for signs of chemical changes on the 2PC soccer fields.

Outdoor learning also lends itself to experiential learning. Second graders grow cucumbers, green beans, white summer squash, zinnias, greens, corn, watermelon, carrots, and radishes in an outdoor space by the library. The boys develop independence and feel a sense of ownership over their time in the garden. Boys plant seeds, dispose of harmful insects, water, weed, and harvest. A sense

Benefits of Outdoor Classrooms

- Improved test scores and grades
- Unstructured play outdoors promotes creativity and problem-solving skills
- Decreased behavioral problems
- Reduced symptoms of ADHD

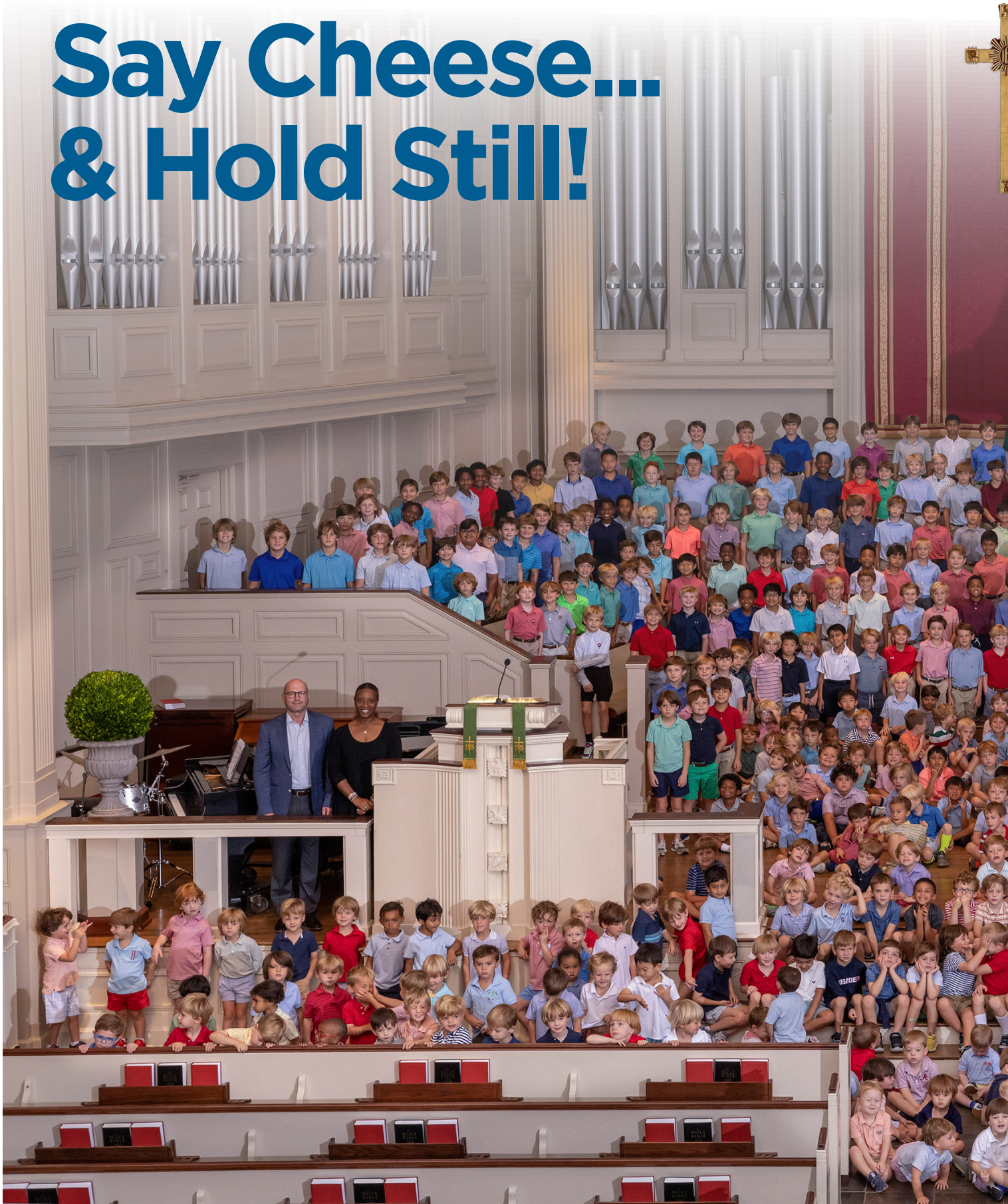
of community between grade levels is felt each fall when boys harvest carrots that were planted by last year's second graders. They also cut flowers to be delivered with a Happy Gram as an appreciation gift to faculty and staff, host a giving garden, and grow closer to God's creation. As Tony Rudzena explains, "We are called to be image bearers (Romans 1:20) and vice-regents (Genesis 1:20) of God's creation." As you can see, outdoor learning is also essential to our boys' spiritual growth.

While the benefits of outdoor learning vary from reduced anxiety and impulsivity to increased visual acuity and creativity, the educators of PDS know that the best reasoning is often the most obvious: boys enjoy being outside! 🍀



Say Cheese... & Hold Still!

PDS SPIRIT • WINTER 2024 • PRESBYTERIAN DAY SCHOOL



When we took the 50th anniversary school photo, we didn't have YK or PK classes! Sitting still is a tough task for boys, especially when they are full of energy and enthusiasm, ready to explode with excitement and curiosity at any moment. They are like a wild stallion, always ready to run free and explore the world around them.

So, if you want a boy to sit still, you better have a good reason, or else he'll be off like a rocket in no time!



Begin with the End in Mind



A Foundation of Learning and Leadership at PDS

We've all heard the saying, The days are long, but the years are short. No one feels this more than a PDS sixth-grade parent. When looking back on a student's path at PDS, one thing is clear — our program sets a foundation of learning and leadership that will help students thrive beyond our walls. We are very intentional about equipping students to become responsible for their own learning and guiding them to future leadership roles. And, here's the secret: We begin with the end in mind. A sixth-grade boy is asked to synthesize all of his experiences from his early childhood years through his elementary years and emerge as an academic leader in the school. In May, PDS is proud to call him an alumnus.



by Laura Glenn,
Head of Elementary

A PDS graduate is a critical thinker. As a sixth-grader, boys are asked, for example, to explore history through controversial concepts, investigate scientific phenomena, conduct research, draw literary conclusions, examine word choice, and analyze mathematical concepts. These skills have been on a continuum of development since hatching chicks in senior kindergarten or researching famous Americans in third grade. However, by the time the students reach sixth grade, they have a host of

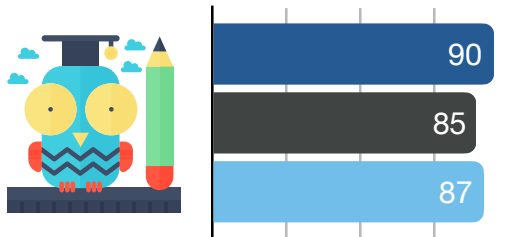
Despite being the youngest students to participate at Model UN, PDS boys frequently bring home Outstanding Delegate and/or Outstanding Resolution awards.



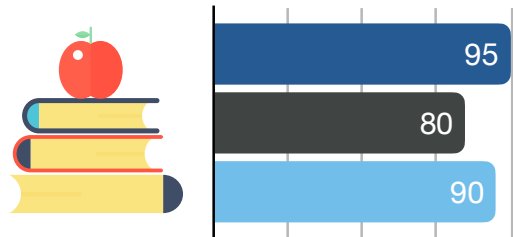
opportunities available to them to put their critical thinking skills to work. Whether working through our advanced curriculum or participating in electives such as Math Olympiad or Model UN, sixth-grade boys are challenging their mental stamina and succeeding. With each success, they learn the value of hard work. We continue to measure our student success through the Comprehensive Testing Program, developed by the Educational Records Bureau (ERB). This rigorous program tests student achievement in content areas and assesses a student's reasoning abilities. Year after year, our students outperform their peers in other independent schools across the nation.

A PDS graduate is a communicator. During the spring semester of sixth-grade, each student works through the writing and research process to compose a personal speech and then delivers the speech in front of his peers. Our students are rarely nervous about this assignment because PDS boys have been performing for one another since as far back as the Junior Kindergarten fall harvest program. Their oral communication skills have been honed year by year—whether reading journals aloud in class, singing in the Christmas pageant, or presenting during a Class Day program. By the time our sixth-grade boys begin writing their speeches, they have participated in countless writing workshops, attended conferences, and worked through numerous drafts

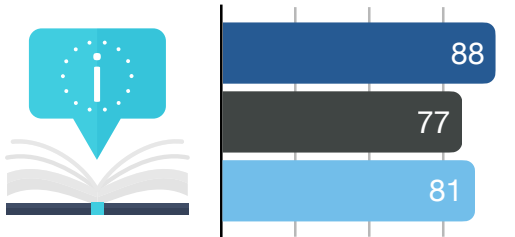
PDS boys *outperform* other independent schools and the best public schools on ERB tests.



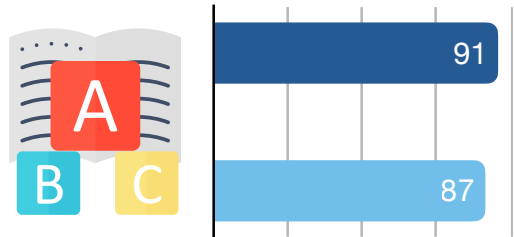
VERBAL REASONING



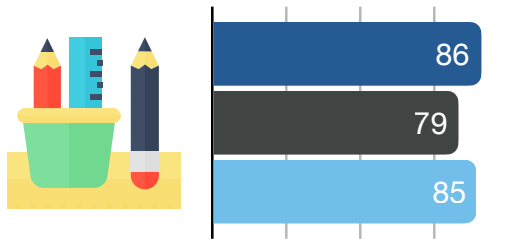
VOCABULARY



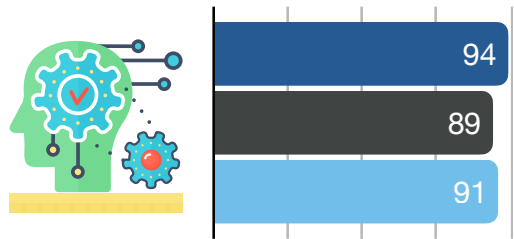
READING COMPREHENSION



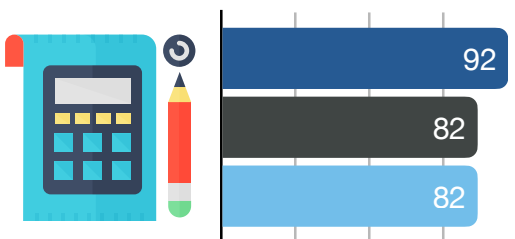
WRITING CONCEPTS



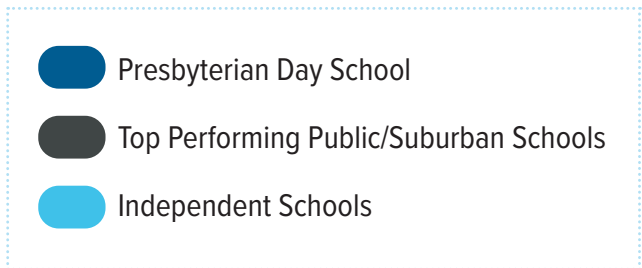
WRITING MECHANICS



QUANTITATIVE REASONING



MATH



*These scores represent the National Percentile Rank of median scaled scores for boys at PDS in 4th-6th grade, the Suburban/Public school norm group, and the Independent norm group.

of narratives, informational writing, and opinion pieces. Every year PDS teachers push the boys to write “longer and stronger” and give a fair warning—“Don’t forget the punctuation!” It’s important that we measure our students’ writing progress as well. In 2023, the average scaled score for a PDS sixth-grader taking the WrAP (Writing Assessment Program developed by ERB) was 49 points higher than the average scaled score for the Independent Norm Group.

A PDS graduate is a collaborator. Sixth-grade students are expected to share ideas and contribute to group work, listen respectfully to others, make connections with other people to enhance learning, exercise flexibility and compromise when necessary to accomplish common goals. It’s not surprising to read that our youngest students, the Young Knights, are also focused on learning to share and play cooperatively with one another. It’s a skill we focus on early and feel is imperative to master for success in life. Sixth graders are collaborating in classrooms all over the school, and their drive for competition can often be the catalyst for team collaboration. Whether participating on the Lego Robotics team, competing on the MathCounts team, or working with classmates to prepare for the upcoming Battle of the Books against St. Mary’s Episcopal School, our sixth-grade boys are collaborating with a goal to win!

A PDS graduate is a creator. Wild ideas are OK! Wild ideas are OK! Wild ideas are OK! This mantra filters into the hallway from the EDGE Design Studio as students encourage one another to dream big and risk failure. Throughout early childhood and elementary years, students create a large volume of original works. Some will go on to be framed on the wall or displayed on a shelf, but it’s also realistic to note that the vast majority will be quickly retired to a trash can. That’s OK! Adam Grant, bestselling author and professor at The University of Pennsylvania

Wharton School, presents research in his book *Originals* that the most prolific idea generators end up with the most iconic original ideas. For example, he notes that Thomas Edison had over 1,000 patents, but he is most known for just a handful of his inventions. For this very reason, PDS will continue to place great value on teaching our boys to be creators rather than consumers. As our students mature, it’s a privilege to watch their creativity begin to serve others. Our sixth-grade boys have been known to knit hats for the homeless, build food pantries for known food deserts in Memphis, auction off original corn-hole boards to raise money for cancer research, and design paracord bracelets for the U.S. military.

A PDS graduate is a leader. Being the line leader in an Early Childhood classroom is a big deal. Without the line leader, how would the class know how to get to P.E. or a special area classroom? But, by the time PDS boys are in sixth grade, they are trusted to navigate the hallways all by themselves. Line leaders are no longer needed; servant leaders, however, are in demand. Although it’s been a while since they called the Early Childhood building their home, sixth-grade boys are eager to return in September to meet their PK buddies for the first time. It’s a full-circle moment for most of the boys, and they feel pride in being the king of the castle, the oldest students on campus. All year long, the boys step up to a variety of leadership roles. They are called upon to see a need and meet a need on a daily basis. From acting as chapel leaders to making morning announcements on the intercom to serving as admission ambassadors, PDS sixth-graders are actively giving back to the school they have called home for quite possibly 10 years, the longest they will attend any academic institution.

Grade level upon grade level, we lay a foundation of learning and leadership at PDS. We begin with the end in mind. The end just comes too soon! 🏡





Security Enhancements Coming Soon to Campus

Fencing with Security Gate to Transform Poplar Avenue Entrance to PDS

We are eager to share news about additional security enhancements planned for our campus!

The first phase of this project, and its primary focus, is to control access to the parking lot along Poplar Avenue. Included in this message are new renderings of our main parking lot along Poplar Avenue with added fencing and a designated security entrance. The new fencing will span the length of the main PDS parking lot and connect at the northwest corner of the main church building. To simplify traffic flow, we plan to remove the middle entrance as well.

At this point, we are well into the project's final planning and city review phase. Once construction begins, it is expected to take six months to complete. We will communicate logistics regarding access to campus for PDS families as we near construction.

You may recall the announcement in the Spirit magazine last year that PDS would have a more defined entrance, marking and illuminating the

school's presence along Poplar Avenue with branded entry signage. Those plans are still moving forward as part of these security enhancements being made in conjunction with Second Presbyterian Church (2PC).

We are incredibly grateful to 2PC for their partnership and collaboration as we join hands in this intentional project.

The safety of the boys as well as our faculty and staff is our top priority. As we conduct security assessments each year and lean on our security team's expertise, we are always looking to update, enhance, and improve security measures.

Thanks to a generous lead gift and several other gifts from supportive donors, 60% of funds have been raised, allowing us to begin implementing this initiative.

We hope you will consider joining us in this very important endeavor. Please contact Chris Oliver (coliver@pdsmemphis.org) to make a donation. 🟢



Reflections: Alumni on the Impact of PDS



As part of our 75th anniversary celebration, we interviewed several alumni to hear how Presbyterian Day School made a difference in their lives. These reflections were compiled into a short video, which you can find via the QR code on the bottom right.



PDS was a major part of my life providing a foundation for learning that was the basis of all my future activities.

Fred Smith '56



I hope the next generation of PDS graduates continues to leave with the same kind of values that PDS graduates have been leaving with for many decades now. I hope that next generation also looks more and more

like Memphis, which I think has been a positive change for PDS since I was there.

Ross Glotzbach '93



You can look around and see some very influential leaders in our community that got their roots here at PDS. And I think PDS had a lot to do with growing those leaders.

And I think we're doing it today with future leaders.

Bo Allen '80



PDS is a vital part of my upbringing and my background, and it was a transformational experience.

These days when nettling problems are confronting us on all sides and when a world is confused by the

efforts of men to solve those problems by the use of theories and man-made philosophies, it is gratifying to observe daily the development of youth in a school such as Presbyterian Day School where God has made the center and is recognized by every member of the staff and faculty as the one who alone is capable of guiding us to a trustworthy solution to all our problems

Trow Gillespie '59



PDS was the first place that I ever really saw a group of people who cared for each other, who wanted the best for each other. And when you think about people you want to work with or be with, those certainly are qualities that I feel are important to bring out and allow me to be successful.

If I could describe my time at PDS in one word, it would be fulfilling. I left here with a full heart, a full mind, and a spirit.

Michael Faber '90



There was a lot of team-focused exercise, not only in the classroom, but sports were big for me. And this is where I kind of got my start in organized sports and in a convenient way and in a safe way and in a way in that all participants were valued equally. So I think that the value of collaboration is something that has started here at PDS and I've carried with me throughout.

I felt confident that I was receiving the best education. Being able to thrive in that environment then gave me the confidence that I could thrive elsewhere as well. The teachers and faculty preached confidence and the power in the individual to overcome challenges.

Brandon Arrindell '98



My most memorable teacher was Mrs. Hodgson. She was stern but very witty, and she taught us boys the book of Proverbs. That is a book of wisdom that goes back to King Solomon. And I'm sure that every one of her students can remember Proverbs 6:6. "Go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise."

And that instruction for us boys was to go look at the ants and see how industrious they were and not be a slaggard and not be lazy. And that sticks with me to this day.

David Work '67



I believe really the value of integrity was drilled in me from a very early age and that really meant more than anything. Always doing the right thing, telling the truth, not telling stories. People have to trust you for who you are and what you say and that you'll do what you said you're going to do and that you did it yourself and you didn't copy somebody else.

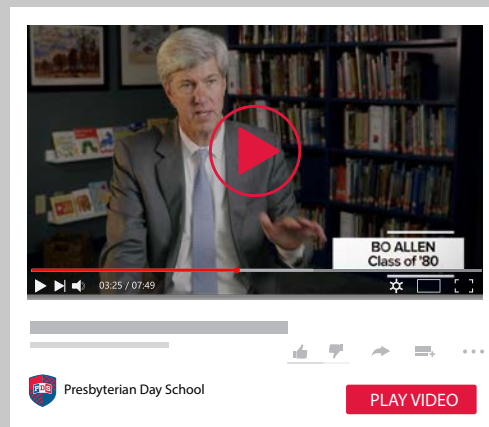
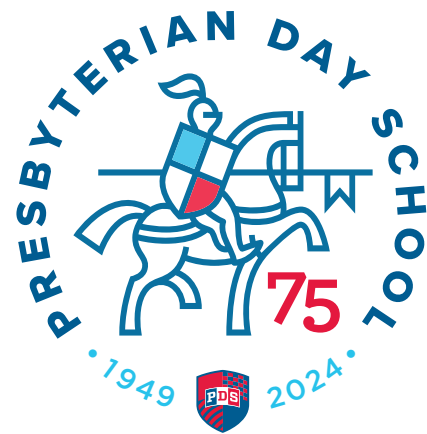
Joel Hobson '66



At PDS, at such a young age, you're forming your first friendships. You're, for the first time, learning what a brotherhood is. That comes with the responsibility of learning what it means to be selfless.

And that's a characteristic very clearly ingrained in the PDS curriculum from speeches on what it means to be a servant leader to even the Edge Design Learning Studio where you feel empathy in action. I think that PDS really put meaning to what it means to be unselfish and trained me to have an outward perspective on life.

Parth Mishra '17



Watch the Video:
Alumni Reflect
on 75 years of PDS





75th Anniversary Alumni Party

On Friday, December 1, 2023, alumni from every era gathered at Chickasaw Country Club for a time of celebration and fellowship.







Presbyterian Day School

4025 Poplar Avenue | Memphis, TN 38111
901-842-4600 | pdsmemphis.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
MEMPHIS, TN
PERMIT NO. 554



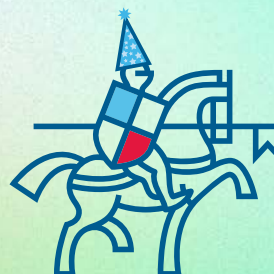
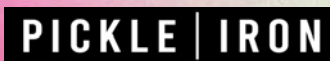
MARCH 1-5, 2024!

Our 15th annual
online auction!



Bid on getaways,
experiences, sporting
events, art, fashion,
& much more!

PRESENTING SPONSORS:



**LAUNCH
PARTY:
FRIDAY, MARCH 1**