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THE LAURENCE LETTER

DEVELOPING OPTIMISTIC CHILDREN

By Laurie Wolke, Head of School

Optimism (noun) - a general attitude of hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something; to anticipate the best possible outcome.

As we work toward educating and raising our children to be confident, resilient, and successful in school and in life, we recognize that one of the essential elements for their success is hope. Hope instills in us the belief that we have the power to make tomorrow a better day. At Laurence, we work to create a safe and hopeful environment, and reinforce that our students' voices need to be heard. Our Character Education theme of "Solve and Evolve" focuses on empowering our kids, through building their problem-solving skills and showing them how they can affect change.

Following Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck's growth-mindset approach, we teach our students how to see mistakes and challenges as learning opportunities and ways to grow, rather than as failure. A hopeful, growth-oriented approach is rooted in science, too! Many studies show that optimism increases physical and psychological well-being and productivity. Optimistic people tend to be more flexible and search for solutions to challenges.

While some people are more optimistic than others, anyone can develop a sense of optimism! Through small, deliberate steps

to approaching challenges and framing them in a positive light, we can help our students develop an optimistic outlook. There are many ways you can help your child at home to develop their optimistic lens. Consider sharing a gratitude journal. At a family meal, go around the table and have everyone share a positive event that happened, a challenge that they tried to resolve, or a mistake that they learned from.

One of my favorite qualities of the Laurence community is our shared sense of hope and our commitment to raising good human beings who want to make the world a better place. I see this in our kids every day, as they remember that "keeping kind in mind" is just as important as their academic and athletic successes. Together, we are raising kind and determined young people.

Thank you for being a part of our Laurence family during this special year, as we celebrate our 65th year, as well as my 30th year here. I am blessed to have found my purpose and my home at Laurence, and I am so proud of the work we do together to develop kind-hearted, compassionate future leaders.

I hope that you enjoy our newsletter. It is brimming with Laurence pride, news about our many programs, and the people who make it all happen for our kids.



"Optimism is an essential ingredient of innovation. How else can the individual welcome change over security, adventure over staying in safe places."

— Intel co-founder, Robert Noyce

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MESSAGE



Dear Laurence Community,

Spring is definitely in the air at Laurence, and the Secret Garden is in full bloom. Many of us are already thinking about the summer and beyond, but it's also a good time to reflect on what connects all of us – our wonderful school and community.

From our students' academic, artistic, and athletic achievements to a cutting-edge curriculum, the school is clicking on all cylinders. Many of these developments are covered in this newsletter. But our school is so much more than what can be written in black and white. The heart and soul of our school are what make it so special. At the center of all of it are our visionary Head of School, Laurie Wolke, who is celebrating her 30th year, our school's founders, Marvin and Lynn Jacobson, as well as our dedicated administrators, teachers, faculty, and staff. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to thank all of them.

And thanks to all of you for your continued support and participation in our community. We are all in this together, with the collective goal of making Laurence the most inclusive, joyful, and supportive school it can be for our children. Although we have so much to celebrate as a school, we are never content to rest on our laurels. The Board and Administration are always looking ahead, ensuring that the school retains its character, educates the "Total Child" for the 21st Century, and thrives well into the future.

We look forward to our journey together.

Michael Lifrak
Chair, Board of Trustees

PARENT ASSOCIATION MESSAGE

To our Laurence Community,

It's hard to believe that the school year is coming to an end! I hope that your children have had an outstanding year, and that you have been able to witness both their academic and social growth.

This year, we've had incredibly successful parent-run events that have been able to bring our community closer together, and at the same time, raise funds for our school's academic and enrichment programs. On behalf of the Parent Association, I would like to thank all of our volunteers for their unwavering support, time and commitment.

Reflecting on this school year, I recognize how fortunate we are here at Laurence. Through volunteering together, we build a stronger and more vibrant community that

enhances the educational experience for our children. I have truly valued the opportunity to work alongside and get to know so many wonderful people.

The PA plays a significant role in our community as the conduit for collaboration and communication between the parent body and the school. As we approach summer, I encourage all of you to think ahead to the fall, and consider making the time to be involved next year. Remember, "We are only as strong as we are united..."

With love and gratitude,

Lesley Boone Teng
President, Parent Association



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

By Eric Hogenson, Director of Grades 3-6 & STEAM Innovation K-6

We couldn't be more proud of our Laurence students' engagement and dedication to extra-curricular activities. As educators, we know firsthand that brain function, concentration, and the ability to manage time all improve when students participate in activities that they are passionate about. For example, high endurance sports can train students to focus and build stamina in times of stress and difficulty. Recent research suggests that students who engage in the arts outside of the classroom will benefit from stronger psychosocial development. When students take risks to try activities that are

outside of their comfort zone, they unlock passions they never knew they had. By diversifying their experiences and the people they interact with, students will undoubtedly broaden their world view and ability to relate to multiple perspectives. Extra-curricular activities give students the break they need from their academics while also allowing them the opportunities to use their newly developed skills in a real-world setting. Please join us in recognizing all of the outstanding contributions that students have made to our community, both in the classroom and out.



CHESS MATES

Laurence chess players have been competing throughout the city in a variety of tournaments, including the 2019 L.A. Super City Chess Championships where Laurence's team took first place. In May, 11 Chess Mates competed in the 2019 National Elementary Chess Championships in Nashville, Tennessee. These students brought home multiple team and individual trophies.



POETS

Fifteen 5th Graders had poems published in the Spring 2018 *A Celebration of Poets, K-6 Edition*. Another 5th Grade student's poem was chosen as a noteworthy entry in the 2018 Youth Honor Awards in *Skipping Stones* magazine. Six more 5th Graders had poems published in the new national anthology, *The Pine Tree Poetry Collection 2018*.



MATHLETES

Our 4th through 6th Grade math club students competed in the Orange County Math Circle ("OCMC") Thanksgiving Tournament, competing for hours to solve highly challenging problems. Our 6th Grade team won first place, and two students placed in the individual round. In April, our 5th Grade girls' team took second place at the OCMC All-Girls Tournament.

LAURENCE INVITATIONAL MATH TOURNAMENT

One hundred students. Twenty teams. Thirty-nine Laurence Mathletes. The first annual Laurence Invitational Math Tournament, created by Laurence Math Coaches Jennifer Kovacs and Lauren Cantrell, kicked-off with a bang this past February. Students from schools including Laurence, Campbell Hall, Center for Early Education, Echo Horizon, Polytechnic, St. Mark's, and High Point Academy competed in individual and team rounds with original math problems created by Laurence Math Specialist, Cathy Hoyt. The problems were challenging, testing students' abilities to problem solve with creativity and ingenuity. Laurence teams took first and second place in both the 6th Grade and 4th/5th Grade divisions. In the individual rounds, Laurence students took first and

second place in the 6th Grade division, and first through third place in the 4th/5th Grade division.

Five Class of 2017 alumna (and former Mathletes) also joined our students, helping administer the tournament along with many parent volunteers.



LAURENCE LIGHTNING ATHLETICS



Our Laurence Lightning athletes have been working hard all school year! More than 90% of our 4th through 6th grade students are participating in our Interscholastic Sports Program this year, and we couldn't be prouder. Our athletes not only excel in their technical skills and winning games, but also in learning important character lessons through sports.

ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Girls Basketball:

6th Grade Blue - Won the Championship Game
6th Grade Yellow - Won the Championship Game
6th Grade Green - Made the Playoffs
5th Grade Blue - Won their Division
4th Grade Blue - Won their Division

Boys Basketball:

6th Grade Yellow - Made the Playoffs

Flag Football:

6th Grade Yellow - League 2nd Place Winners
6th Grade Boys and Girls teams won the annual Golden & Bedazzled Bucket Games

Girls Soccer:

6th Grade Blue - Made the Playoffs
6th Grade Yellow - Made the Playoffs



DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S DESIGNERS & INNOVATORS

By Liz Beck, Director of Technology

At Laurence, we teach the design thinking process in Kindergarten through 6th Grade as a part of our Technology classes. This thinking routine revolutionized the way products are made because it emphasizes that in order to solve a problem or innovate, we need to consider the needs of the people who use our creations, as well as the way people interact with the proposed solution.

Design thinking breaks down the creative process and problem solving into a five or six phase thinking routine. It's marked by the use of empathy and iteration to solve complex problems. Having a growth mindset and accepting constructive feedback is also important because design thinking is cyclical. There are always more observations, learning, empathizing, and feedback to collect, which means that the creative process is never truly done.

We ensure that students graduate with a solid foundation in all aspects of design by including culminating projects that integrate all these important skills in 4th through 6th grade.



PROJECT EXAMPLES



TINKERCAD

TinkerCAD, a kid-friendly version of AutoCAD, is a staple in our 3rd through 6th curriculum because it integrates many academic disciplines at the same time: art, math, engineering, and the ability to ponder and manipulate 3D objects in space. In addition to this, students' designs can be printed out or uploaded into a 3D software and used for architecture or game design.



1ST & 2ND GRADE STRAWBEE PROJECTS

Strawbees are plastic components that can be combined with straws in order to build various kinds of shapes and structures. Projects using Strawbees are conducive to imaginative play and engineering. Students work individually and in groups to complete design challenges, working their way up to integrating lights, motors and sensors to ultimately create a moving sculpture.



KINDERGARTEN LIGHT-UP SCULPTURES

Students learned how simple circuits work and then used that information to light up LEDs using coin cell batteries. They next learned to use Lectrify circuitry parts to light up LEDs using pipe cleaners and battery holders. Students then took their Lectrify circuits to build their own unique light-up sculptures.



3RD GRADE RECORDING STUDIOS

Students created a chatbot in Scratch, which let the user type a question that would be answered in writing with a recorded voice-over. It turned out that it was too loud to record with other students talking, so Mr. Tennyson transformed this project into a design thinking challenge. This led to the students' idea of creating a personal sound studio from cardboard boxes, using foam for insulation. Once completed, students instructed and trained Kindergarteners on how to use the studio.



TECH TEAM ELECTIVE

In our after-school Tech Team elective, students were able to build computers using Piper Computer Kits. While completing this project, students had the opportunity to learn about the components of a computer, build the outer casing to hold the components, attach the circuitry, and then use the computers they built for simple programming projects. Not only are they learning the mechanics of computers, but they are also learning to design them in a way that makes sense for human interactions with the machines they are building.



LEGO ROBOTICS

Our 5th Grade students learned design thinking, engineering and programming through their Lego robotics project using Lego Robot EV3 kits. Working in teams, students came up with a design idea for a robot that would solve a certain problem. They faced challenges and successes while learning how to program the robots to move around, react to obstacles and pick up or move items. Once completed, students shared their creation, design process and even got to do a demo for classmates and parents during their May Exhibition.

GAINING CULTURAL COMPETENCY THROUGH LITERATURE

By Jennifer Levin, Librarian

Building a diverse collection where young readers can directly encounter the “windows and mirrors” in which they see themselves, in addition to seeing others who are not like them in books, is essential to our Library Program. Educating our students so they see diversity as a strength of our country, our community, and our school is a top priority. Multicultural and diverse stories have been infused into the school curriculum and the library collection. Teachers have been enjoying the wide selection of materials in the library as a resource to create and supplement what is being taught in their classrooms. From our Summer Reading List Suggestions brochure to author visits, from library displays and book talks to student book recommendations for their peers, the library has integrated multiculturalism both overtly and organically with both activities and book selections.



DEEPENING OUR TIES WITH THE SIXTO OSUNA MATUTINA SCHOOL



This spring, members of the Laurence community visited the 4th Grade’s sister school, Sixto Osuna Matutina School in Villa Union, Mexico, which is a small municipal within the city of Mazatlán. First grade parent Diana Brown (whose family is from Villa Union), dance specialist Cyntoria Lampkin, and learning specialist Claudia Cadena spent two days with the 6th grade students at Sixto Osuna who have been corresponding with our 4th graders this school year.

Our Laurence envoy brought letters from our students, which they translated. Then they helped the Sixto Osuna students write letters back to Laurence’s kids. Additionally, the students picked out friendship bracelets for Brown, Lampkin, and Cadena to bring back to their Laurence buddies. Lampkin also taught the 6th grade class a dance that she had taught to Laurence students, and the activity was such a hit that the principal let the entire school participate. Before leaving, Brown filmed a video of the Sixto Osuna students saying hello to their Laurence friends. Our 4th Graders were delighted while watching the video, finally “meeting” their buddies. They also loved seeing the whole Sixto Osuna school perform the same dance they had learned!



TEACHING TO A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

By Liz Silverman, Director of Kindergarten - 2nd Grade



LaNesha Tabb (middle) with Laurence School Administration & Faculty

This year we continued our journey toward ensuring that each and every student, family, staff, and faculty member on our campus feels validated and heard. One critical aspect of creating a warm and inclusive environment is to provide Professional Development for faculty so that they have the tools to provide inclusivity in academics, as well as in social and emotional learning. We began the year with a presentation by Alison Park of Blink Consulting. Alison worked with our entire staff, faculty, and Board of Trustees to define what diversity meant to each of us. The year continued with several faculty and staff meetings devoted to identifying our own implicit biases and working through how to have discussions regarding diversity and inclusion with our students. While continuing to work to understand our own identities, we also spent a day with LaNesha Tabb who presented a Social Studies curriculum to our faculty and assisted us in creating units of study which teach Economics, Geography, Civics and Sociology using multi-cultural resources and materials.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF STEREOTYPES THROUGH OUR COMMUNITY READ



One of this year's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives was a community read. The goal was to create a common paradigm for discussions that would allow our school community to further inclusiveness while also expanding diversity. Parents, administrators, faculty, and staff read *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* by Stanford University Professor of Psychology Claude M. Steele. The book is a culmination of Steele's extensive research in the area of stereotype bias and how it impacts behavior and performance in educational and professional settings. In March, Professor Steele visited Laurence, speaking to parents, administrators, faculty, and staff and facilitating discussion about the issues raised in his book.

PERFORMING ARTS



As we celebrated 65 years of Laurence this school year, we carried on the tradition of WinterFest (formerly Brotherhood). Since our founding, these December performances have been an expression of Laurence School's heart - bringing together family and friends. This year, our students sang, danced, and recited poetry emphasizing themes of empathy and kindness, and celebrating the holiday season.



CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG



Students in our 4th through 6th Grade upper division musical wowed our community this past March during their performances of the 1960s classic, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. They acted, sang and danced their hearts out, bringing the drama and comedy of this story to life. Students in our Design and Production elective helped to create the sets and props, and brought the magic of the musical to life on stage, including making a car fly! We are incredibly proud of our students and Performing Arts Team for their hard work and dedication in producing this year's upper division musical.



SERVICE LEARNING



LOWMAN SCHOOL VISIT

Laurence's long history of supporting the Lowman School - a public school for disabled students - includes an annual campus visit with our 6th Graders. Lowman and Laurence kids spend a morning together getting to know each other, playing music and games, as well as celebrating their commonalities and differences. This year's visit even culminated in a dance party! It is one of our students' most meaningful service learning experiences.



FOOD PANTRY

Laurence students regularly collect food and household items for the North Hollywood Interfaith Food Pantry. To deepen their understanding of the impact they can make, students take items to the Food Pantry, meet the people who run the operation, and see how their actions are making a difference.



BOOK-A-BAGEL DRIVE

In a new twist on Student Government's Buck-a-Bagel charity drives, this spring they collected books in exchange for a bagel! The books were donated to Children's Hospital Los Angeles. It was a huge success, resulting in a collection of 300 books.

THE LATEST AT



LAURENCE SCHOOL
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