

SPECIAL EDITION

SPRING 2023

CURRENT

THE MAGAZINE OF CHARLES RIVER SCHOOL

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A True Community Leader

Honoring Gretchen Larkin
and celebrating nine years of
accomplishments together



CHARLES RIVER
SCHOOL

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING, HIGHER ACHIEVEMENT.

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Honoring and Celebrating Gretchen Larkin, Charles River School's 10th Head of School

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"Gretchen naturally and warmly interacts with the children and 'jumps' into any activity when she enters a room. Her warmth for our students is reciprocated; you feel students' excitement when they see her around campus." —Theresa Leone, Grades 1/2 Co-Teacher

CHARLES RIVER SCHOOL MISSION

Charles River School honors the pursuit of academic excellence and the joy of childhood. We nurture each child by igniting curiosity, encouraging creativity, and cultivating intellectual engagement. Our graduates know themselves, understand others, and shape the future of our diverse world with confidence and compassion.

COMMUNITY EQUITY INCLUSION STATEMENT

At Charles River School, community, equity, and inclusion are essential elements of our curriculum and community and are central tenets of our Mission Statement. We are dedicated to our efforts to create a school community in which everyone is welcomed, recognized, and valued both as an individual and as a member of the Charles River School family. Through our culturally responsive teaching practices and the authentic learning experiences we provide for our students inside and outside of the classroom, Charles River School shows a deep dedication to graduating well-rounded students who "know themselves, understand others, and shape the future of our diverse world with confidence and compassion."

We commit ourselves to:

- **Cultivating** intercultural competence and anti-bias mindset and actions through our curriculum and co-curricular work with our student body, our faculty and staff, and our parents and caregivers
- **Deepening** our community's knowledge of and respect for the multi-faceted nature of identity and culture as they exist in ourselves, our local communities, and in our world
- **Providing** a school environment and an education that equips community members with the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills to become successful, contributing members of a global society
- **Developing** historical and contemporary understandings of the implications of systemic oppression, power, and privilege and how our work as a school can play an important role in dismantling those systems
- **Engaging** in the complex work of equity, inclusion, and belonging with careful thought, enduring dedication, and ongoing self-reflection

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Gretchen Larkin

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CHARLES RIVER
SCHOOL

PHOTO BREAK



It's been an exciting year and we're looking forward to big things this spring.

1 Kindergarteners Dahlia Zisfein-Shea, left, and Sam Apfel say hello from the playground.

2 Ashley Westerling, left, and Kate Earley build "thinking caps" during an anatomy lesson in Grade 4.

3 Adele Leung '30 uses Cuisenaire Rods, math manipulatives that represent different number values.

4 From left, Milo Kjellander, Sam Murphy, Lily Maley, and Tenley Rogers take in the sounds of the Wetlands during a sixth-grade music class.

5 From left, Ronan Lyman, Cole Miranda, and Nicholas Albornoz, all Class of 2023, observe a soluble reaction in the lab.

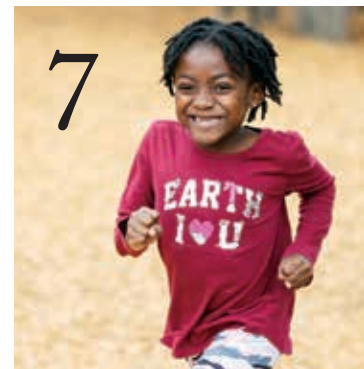
6 Learning is always more fun with a partner! Kayen Sandaradura '32, left, and Morris Kinder '31 work together in the PreK/K multi-age room.

7 London Parkes '29 is all smiles at recess.

8 Third graders Ethan Branton, left, and Sahan Mathew laugh during a three-legged race during Fall Festival.

SNAPSHOTS

A GLIMPSE OF OUR YEAR TOGETHER



Letter to the Head from the Class of 2023

Each year, Gretchen dedicates a quote in the yearbook to the eighth-grade class and the words then serve as inspiration for her own remarks at graduation. Over the years, she has shared words of wisdom, encouragement, and hope from Maya Angelou, Amanda Gorman, and Nelson Mandela to name a few. This year, the Class of 2023 wanted to return the gesture and chose a quote that embodied the best of what Gretchen has given to our community over the last nine years. They also paired it with a few words of their own.



“Don’t count the days, make the days count.”

MUHAMMAD ALI

Dear Ms. Larkin,

You lead this school with kindness and empathy. You lead with your head held high and your smile wide. We all really appreciated our one-on-one time with you this fall. It made us feel so cared for when you gave us hot chocolate and snacks to make sure we were calm and ready to take the conversations seriously. Thank you for taking the time to stop and talk with us anytime we see you on campus; we will miss chatting with you at carpool.

We love the Otter; it represents how we both love to play and have fun as well as to problem-solve. We know that you listened to students when they said they wanted a mascot and you believed in us. We also love our middle school. If it weren’t for you, we wouldn’t have such a cool building, especially the Atrium. We adore looking out on the playground and it helps us feel closer to the little kids.

Your closing speeches at Sharing Assembly always brought the community together; we love it when you say, “Let’s play some music!” as we leave. We are sorry to see you leave but we know that you are looking forward to going home. Your new school is lucky to have you. Finally, since you always give the eighth grade an end-of-the-year quote, we’ve shared a quote with you that we thought you would appreciate. “Don’t count the days, make the days count,” spoken by Muhammad Ali, describes how you spent your time at Charles River School and we are grateful that you made your days count here with us. 🐾

Best Wishes,

The Class of 2023

Nicolas, Akira, Alex, Idahlia, Declan, Cole, Nicolo, Casey, Aiden,
Ronan, Rose, Cole, Caleb, Sydney, Caroline, Cole, and Dudley



From left, Alyssa Xue '30, ▲
Bita Perim Collis '31, and Rachel Lin '32.

Climb Higher

THIS FALL, Charles River School announced Climb Higher, a campaign to transform the playground into a central campus treasure and to build financial aid resources through the endowment. Since the official launch party in October, the community has come together to not only meet, but exceed the initiative's \$1.4 million goal to directly support the mission of Charles River School. "It is hard to question a campaign that combines play, wonder, joy, and access to a Charles River School education," says Head of School Gretchen Larkin. "These two tenets of the Climb Higher campaign will directly benefit every CRS student. This project is truly a community builder—and that is worth celebrating."

Since the campaign's launch, the Board of Trustees, along with members of both the Campaign Committee and the Playground Design Committee, have been hard at work in the planning process. They've heard from all corners of the community about the design for the fully accessible, inclusive playground; students have drawn pictures, teachers have created their wish lists, and parents and caregivers starred their favorite ideas. The Board and committees have also heard how vital financial aid support is to the community. Ensuring that a CRS education is possible for a socioeconomically diverse group of students truly makes for a better experience for all. A past recipient of financial aid writes, "Without financial aid, education for our children at Charles River School would have been out of reach for our family. To have all children and families feel like they are a part of the community whether they receive financial aid or not is a testimony to how Charles River School gets it right."

In the coming weeks and months, we'll have more information to share about the campaign's progress, including construction plans and timelines for the playground. Stay tuned for details!



Culinary Ties to the Curriculum in Grade 3

CULTURAL CUISINE AND TRADITIONS around gathering with food are an important part of many communities' history. In Grade 3, as students travel along the Silk Route in their studies, they have several opportunities to learn about different cuisines. This year, they made their own pasta in class and enjoyed an Italian feast together, and helped our dining services staff prepare an Indian-themed lunch for the entire school. In addition to learning about history, hands-on lessons in the kitchen also incorporate reading, writing, math, organization, communication, and collaboration.

In world language class, third-grade students also explore the French-speaking world through cooking. They study ingredients and utensils essential to popular recipes from various Francophone countries and then make these recipes in the kitchen. Over the past several months, they have followed recipes from France and now are studying the geography of the Canadian province of Quebec before learning about popular recipes from this region.

Luca Perim Collis '28 rolls pasta dough ► during a hands-on "visit" to Italy.



Inaugural Orientation for New Families of Students of Color



▲ From left, Emerie Tull '30, Norah Zhang '32, and Jaya Raghava '28 work alongside other students at the start of orientation.

WE WANT EACH OF OUR STUDENTS

and their families to consider CRS their home. All students should be able to see themselves at CRS, should be comfortable navigating campus spaces, and know who to turn to with questions. At the beginning of this year, in addition to our new student orientation for all incoming families, Charles River School hosted Compass, an orientation for new students of color and their families. Faculty, staff, and administrators were joined by current families to welcome our newest Otters.

Led by Director of Equity, Belonging, and Community Life Nia Jacobs, Compass kicked off CRS's slate of events designed to build a sense of community and belonging specifically focused on our families of students of color. Some of this year's activities have included a session on building positive racial development for students of color in predominately white institutions and a spring dinner.

Sharing Assemblies: A CRS Tradition

Lily Levine '28 ► beautifully sings "Let It Snow."



A group of first and second graders talks about thematic learning.

A performance from the CRS Chorus is always a Sharing Assembly highlight.



▲ Rose McMillan '23 shares a classroom discovery.

ONCE A MONTH, the community gathers together in Foster Hall for a little bit of that CRS magic. Sharing Assemblies bring pure joy; it is simply inspiring to watch students showcase something they've been working on as a class or practicing on their own. This year we've already learned from fifth-

grade math enthusiasts and found ourselves in awe over a talented third-grade dancer. We've watched PreK and Kindergarten students perform an original puppet show and listened to eighth graders discuss climate change.

At these assemblies, even our youngest students become comfortable with

public speaking and performance with presentations that range from original poems and speeches to songs, duets, and dances. They enrich our curriculum, strengthen the community, and build student confidence in a friendly, supportive environment ideal for self-expression.

When Teachers Ask, "What If..."



Kindergarteners Morris Kinder, left, and Vicente Jimeno-Miller experiment with color mixing. ▲

IN EVERY CRS CLASSROOM, teachers engage their students by connecting knowledge, wonder, and outcomes. In one PreK/K art class this year, Mary Oliveira first asked students what they already know about mixing colors. She listened as they explained that mixing blue and yellow makes green, and red and blue makes purple. Then she started asking, "What if..." questions about mixing colors that made students eager to get back to their workspaces to discover the answer for themselves. This early introduction to a basic visual arts skill—understanding color—is foundational; students will continue learning and mixing colors through the older grades when the "answers" are much more complex. This particular art lesson helped our PreK/K students learn about primary, secondary, and even tertiary colors. It also encouraged scientific thinking skills like cause and effect, making predictions, and analyzing the results.

New Videos Offer Glimpse at the Best of CRS

CHARLES RIVER SCHOOL partnered with Main Paige Media this fall to create a series of new videos for our website, including an updated admissions video and an introduction to the next Head of School Gabe Burnstein.

In the new admissions video, alumnus Owen Asnis '15, Director of Athletics Paul Rupprecht, Grades 1/2 Co-Teacher Sarah Wong, Grades 7 & 8 Teacher Tessa Steinert Evoy, and Trustee Tracy Ann Bain P'18 '22 talked about the benefits of a CRS education, highlighting the cultivation of curiosity and love of learning that CRS fosters. With scenes from our campus and classroom, viewers can see our program and approach to education in action. In a second video to reintroduce Gabe Burnstein to the community, our next Head of School shared his philosophy on progressive education and his excitement to join the CRS community this July. Both videos were shared widely on social media and on our website and will be used as a tool to help prospective parents get to know the school. The videographer will be back on campus this spring to shoot more footage of our campus and our middle school program, so stay tuned for even more!



Amy Lisbon Branton '95, P'26 '28 works with students in her literacy group. ▲

Faculty News: CRS Literacy Specialist Accepted as Orton-Gillingham Academy Fellow

CRS LITERACY SPECIALIST AMY LISBON

BRANTON '95, P'26 '28 has been accepted as a Fellow by the Orton-Gillingham Academy. Becoming an O-G Fellow represents the highest level of credentialing from the Academy and the achievement represents more than 800 hours of coursework and teaching. Orton-Gillingham is a scientifically supported approach to reading instruction and is grounded in principles that focus on the social and emotional well-being, personal strengths, and educational needs of each learner. Reaching the Fellow Level is an extensive multi-year process that entails hundreds of hours of training, classwork, reading, writing, curriculum development, presentations, and evaluations.

As a Fellow-In-Training, Amy assisted as a Language Supervisor in both the Associate and Certified Training Programs at the Carroll School, in Lincoln, Mass. In concert with her training, Amy presented twice at the Orton-Gillingham Academy Annual National Conference on the topic of Oral Reading Fluency. Prior to beginning her study to become a Fellow, Amy worked as an Orton Gillingham Language Practitioner in the summer program at the Carroll School.

▲ Behind the scenes with our next Head of School Gabe Burnstein





▲ A group of fifth-grade students measures and explores the power of 10

What the Brain Reveals About Movement, and Visual Representation in Math

OUR FIFTH GRADERS engaged in a project this winter that uses students' height as a numerical unit to explore powers of 10, specifically with $1/1,000$, $1/100$, $1/10$, 1, 10, 100, and 1,000. Students don't often get the opportunity to look at these values side by side, which can limit their understanding of the numbers' magnitude. Using the same unit to visualize all of the numbers helps them to see the relationship and think about how they move from one to another by multiplying or dividing by 10. The final part of the project involved creating a museum of the "Very Large and Small."

"Brain science research demonstrates five different pathways that are used when people think about mathematical ideas, and two of them are visual," explains Grade 5 Co-Teacher Rachel Miller. "Making math visual for students helps them learn and hold ideas in powerful ways in their brain. Movement is also an important pathway. When students move with math the mathematical idea is held in the sensory-motor portion of the brain, which helps students understand the ideas powerfully."

Grades 1/2 Thematic Exploration: What Symbols Do We Use?

THEMATIC EDUCATION is an interdisciplinary adventure for children. CRS teachers design our thematic program by weaving learning experiences into a conceptual whole. Activities are related and build upon one another, integrating language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, and the arts and providing a meaningful context in which students develop their skills. This year's theme in Grades 1/2 is "Community," allowing students the opportunity to dive deep into the study of anthropology and how anthropologists think. The theme operates under four essential questions: Who am I? Who are we? What is a community? How do communities thrive?

Throughout the theme, first and second graders interview, observe, question, and explore different people and communities in order to draw conclusions about lifestyle, habits, and beliefs. They also learn the importance of symbols to represent ideas and narrow their study to learn about the people who lived on our land first—the Indigenous Nations of the Wampanoag and the Iroquois. One of many activities connected to the theme is the class' state flag project. They look at the state flag, examine its current symbolism, and ask questions about who or what those symbols represent. Then they have the opportunity to reimagine the flag and create something they think reflects the community.

"As part of getting our kids prepared to create their own visions for a Massachusetts state flag, we examined and took notes on each of the state flags of New England. The lesson helped to solidify their knowledge of which six states make up our region and larger geographic community, and it gave them practice with note-taking," explains Grades 1/2 Co-Teacher Jordy Hertzberg. "Students shared their ideas in a small group and had numerous opportunities for active participation. We also engaged in group critical thinking as we analyzed the flags of different states and made inferences about the significance of each of the symbols and choices."

Students immerse themselves in their studies while honing their critical thinking and collaboration skills. They are able to draw vital connections from one context to another, which helps them engage in learning.



▲ Piper Carney '29 and William Murphy '29 work together in thematic studies.



Spotlight on Our Enrichment Program

WITH A SLEW OF NEW ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

and pop-up clubs this year, our Extended Day Program (EDP) has become the center of a robust after-school world.

- Students in afterschool STEM Lab classes develop engineering, science, and collaboration skills with hands-on projects such as building wind-powered cars, creating movable hands with joints, and launching rockets.
- Each week, an excited group of students joins Master Jung, our martial arts instructor, for an action-packed enrichment program. Master Jung teaches martial arts, focus, and respect with loads of fun and laughter.
- Every afternoon, students head to one-on-one or small group music lessons, which CRS offers in partnership with Keys for Kids. Students from all grades learn the guitar, ukulele, piano, and drums; the end-of-session recital this winter was a highlight of the enrichment program.
- PE Teacher and Coach Billy Beauzile hosted a three-session soccer workshop for Grades 2 and 3 this fall. Students worked on skills and developing an understanding of the game. CRS also offered a multi-grade yoga class this fall. PreK students, eighth graders, and everyone in between worked on meditation, breathing, and other calming exercises for the mind and body.
- In the winter, we introduced Scenes and Songs, an afterschool musical theater and acting class for Grades 3-5. Students in this class performed two songs and a series of short scenes for community members just before March Break.
- Students can choose from a number of pop-up clubs, such as Sewing Club and Art Club. The EDP teachers want the offerings to be student interest-driven and encourage families to reach out with suggestions for pop-ups!

▲ Students in the Martial Arts enrichment program stand ready at the start of class.

A Lightbulb Moment in Grade 4 Science

WHEN FOURTH GRADERS learned about the different parts of an electric circuit, including components of both open and closed circuits, they couldn't wait to try building their own. They started by writing, drawing, and labeling in their science notebooks before moving on to the experiment in electricity. When a student successfully completed the task and made the lightbulb glow, they immediately started helping and troubleshooting with classmates. Collaboration comes easily to Charles River School students.



Will Apfel '27 lights up at his successful experiment. ▲



From left, fourth graders Ayda Zisfein-Shea, ▲ Oliver Poe, and Pax Welch-Wood work together.

Building Life Skills One “Kindness Prank” at a Time

AFTER A DAY OF BACK-TO-BACK MEETINGS

this fall, Head of School Gretchen Larkin returned to her office to find it filled with student-written notes taped to the walls, windows, furniture, and even light fixtures. These handwritten, anonymous notes of gratitude and kindness made her day. “I love this,” she exclaimed, before asking, “Who did this!?” She wasn’t able to figure it out—and that was the whole point. The Kindness Prankers have been pulling off joyful pranks at random all year long, but the reason why we have a Kindness Prankers group on campus isn’t random at all.

Understanding place value or being able to analyze primary source documents are valuable skills. Offering an apology or being kind to others are valuable skills, too. All too often, however, schools distinguish between “academic skills” and “soft skills,” drawing a line that unfortunately doesn’t serve students well. We know full well that mastering a skill takes repeated exposure and regular practice; we would never ask a student to read musical notation without multiple opportunities to do so or without approaching it from different angles. But labeling some skills as “soft” can encourage us to choose which skills schools should be explicitly teaching and which skills can simply be implicitly gathered along the way. If we don’t expect students to be able to analyze a primary source without exposure and practice, why should we expect that it would work any differently for kindness?



▲ The Kindness Prankers left notes for our PreK/K students to find.



▲ Associate Director of Facilities Zack Swale got “kindness pranked.” Students decorated the Gator with notes of gratitude for all Zack does on campus.

Cue the creation of the Kindness Prankers, the mysterious group that has emerged at CRS this year under the guidance of Director of Equity, Belonging, and Community Life Nia Jacobs. The goal given to kids is simple—play harmless pranks of goodwill to uplift the community. And, while that goal itself is incredibly worthwhile, the reasoning behind asking students to be a part of such a group is even broader.

By acting as Kindness Prankers, students practice and develop their kindness skills in the same way that they practiced their close-reading skills in a literacy block. We all have the fundamental need to belong and a deep desire to feel connected to those around us. Taking part in the planning and execution of a prank connects the prankers to each other—a connection that will serve them well in their other collective engagements as a grade. Research also shows that being kind impacts the brain and body. On a biochemical level, when we show kindness to others, our brain releases chemicals such as serotonin and oxytocin, naturally produced chemicals shown to improve mood and focus and reduce stress and anxiety. Acts of kindness also produce endorphins and activate the areas of the brain connected to feelings of happiness and trust. Empathetic, enthusiastic, engaged kids who feel safe at school? Sounds like a recipe for days filled with the joy of childhood and academic excellence—the heart of the CRS mission.

And so, we wait for the Kindness Prankers to strike again. Who will be next?



▲ Akira Baruni '23 snaps a selfie with author Jason Reynolds.



▲ Liam Kerr '24 connects with Reynolds at the book signing.

Best-Selling Author, National Ambassador Visits Charles River School

THIS WINTER, Charles River School was honored to welcome *New York Times* best-selling author Jason Reynolds for a special program with students in Grades 5-8. Reynolds served as the inaugural National Ambassador for Young People's Literature through the Library of Congress. He is a Kirkus Prize winner, a two-time Walter Dean Myers Award winner, an NAACP Image Award winner, a National Book Award finalist, and the recipient of a Newbery Honor, a Printz Honor, multiple Coretta Scott King Award honors, and a CILIP Carnegie Medal. Reynolds was also the American Booksellers Association's 2017

and 2018 spokesperson for Indies First. His many books include *When I Was the Greatest*, *The Boy in the Black Suit*, *All American Boys* (co-written with Brendan Kiely), *As Brave as You*, *For Every One*, the *Track* series (*Ghost*, *Patina*, *Sunny*, and *Lu*), *Look Both Ways: A Tale Told in Ten Blocks* and *Long Way Down*. He has appeared on *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert, *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah, *Late Night* with Seth Meyers, *CBS Sunday Morning*, *Good Morning America*, and various media outlets. Reynolds is on faculty at Lesley University for the Writing for Young People MFA Program, and lives in Washington, DC.

Reynolds discussed a range of topics related to reading, writing, learning, and life when he visited CRS, and implored students to go after what they wanted, regardless of how hard the work might

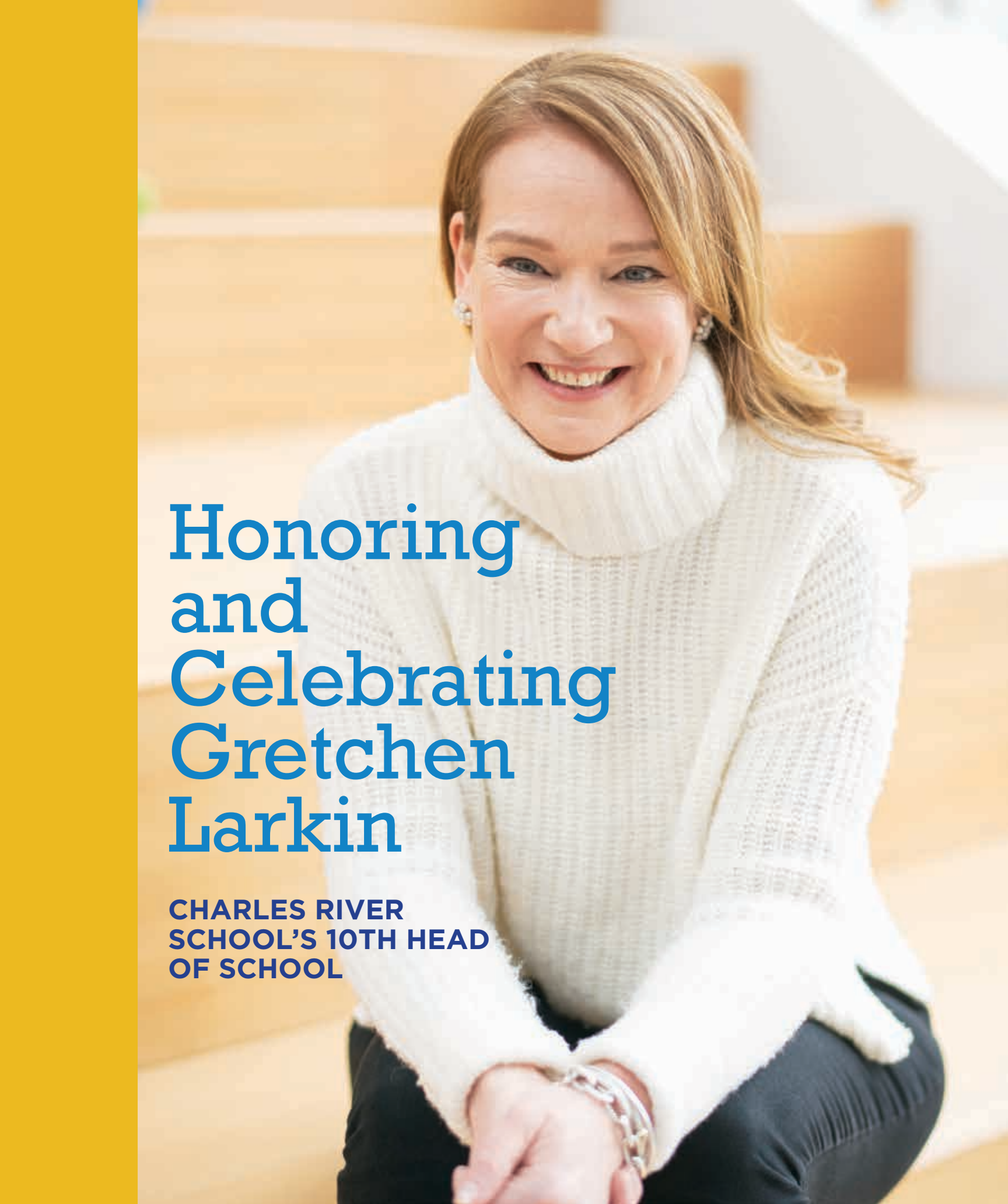
be. "Adults will ask you a million times, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' I want to know - who do you want to be today? What habits are you going to impart today?"

Following his inspiring discussion with students and faculty about his work, his thoughts on young adults and literature, and the impact that our students' generation can have on the world, Reynolds signed books and posed for photos with some of his biggest fans. "Excellence is a habit," he said in his wrap-up. "Everyone wants to be great. You need to figure out and then develop habits that will help you achieve excellence."

A special thank you to Trustee Aqueela Culbreath-Britt P'24 for connecting Jason Reynolds to CRS!

Director of Equity, Inclusion and Community Life Nia Jacobs moderated the discussion and took questions from middle school students.





Honoring and Celebrating Gretchen Larkin

**CHARLES RIVER
SCHOOL'S 10TH HEAD
OF SCHOOL**

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF OUTGOING HEAD OF SCHOOL GRETCHEN LARKIN,

CRS has remained a school in forward motion over the past nine years. Her strategic vision and endless hard work helped launch transformative additions to both the campus and programming, created notable growth in enrollment, and actionably reinforced the school's deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With a combination of her signature warmth and willingness, Gretchen jumps into everything she does with everything she has, whether it's filling in to teach a French class, developing strategies with the Board of Trustees to increase financial assistance, or joining an after-school kickball game. She exudes love for CRS and uses what is best for the students, faculty, and the greater community as the guiding post in her leadership. Even in making the decision to leave CRS, she had the school's best interests at heart. Gretchen announced her departure from Charles River School two years in advance of moving on to give the Board the time it needed to conduct a thorough, thoughtful search for the next Head of School and ensure a smooth transition to her successor, Gabe Burnstein.

As she prepares to step away from CRS at the end of this school year, Gretchen has done everything she can to keep the momentum going for a school and community she cares for deeply. From all of your Otters, thank you, Gretchen.

In the Community's Words

"As I scroll through the camera roll on my phone, I have so many pictures of Gretchen fully immersing herself in all that is CRS. Whether she is singing along in a PreK/K Spanish and Music class, vacuuming up a spill (while wearing the vacuum cleaner backpack, no less), or sitting on the roof of the Community Building to generate attention on CRS Giving Day, Gretchen fully embraces all that CRS is and can be. Her enthusiasm is contagious and her commitment is genuine. She has left an indelible mark on the school, and on all of us lucky enough to have joined her on this journey. We will miss you and all that you bring to CRS every day."

LAURA WOODRING

Executive Assistant to the Head of School



"I am very grateful for Gretchen and all that she has done for me over these last eight years. She has been a tremendous help with the growth of my career. Early on in my time at CRS, she encouraged me to go back to college and pursue my dream of being a college graduate. She has been very supportive of me and helped shape my identity. Thank you, Gretchen, for your continued support and belief in me and my future."

ZACHARY SWALE

Associate Director of Facilities



“I love CRS! I really love CRS!” Those words from Gretchen when she first started and often repeated throughout her nine-year tenure as Head of School encapsulate her: Gretchen loves Charles River School. Her passion, commitment, and can-do spirit have permeated the school, leaving a lasting legacy evidenced by the new Middle School building, the Wetlands Laboratory, the renovated Community Building, the innovative multi-age PreK/K and 1/2 programs, and countless other initiatives and improvements Gretchen championed at CRS. Beloved by students and parents alike, lauded by the Board as an effective and skilled administrator, and recognized by peers for her extraordinary leadership, Gretchen has left a lasting legacy at CRS. She will be missed.”

JOANNA TRAVIS P’19 ’21
Trustee

Adam Quackenbush '20, center, celebrates his CRS graduation with parents John and Mary. ▶



“For us, one of the things that makes Gretchen an exceptional Head of School is how deeply she invests herself in people. She isn’t just an administrator, she is a partner and a touchstone for an entire community—teachers, staff, families, and, most importantly, the students themselves. One memory for us that illustrates Gretchen’s commitment to knowing and understanding others was forged when Adam was in the fourth grade. We had run into her after a Sharing Assembly and started chatting. Somehow—as can happen with parents prone to looking years ahead of where their child is in life—the conversation turned to high school. We vividly remember how her face brightened up as she talked about Adam. She said to us, ‘I know the perfect high school for him—one that you should consider,’ and then proceeded to share her insights and observations. Little did we know then how Gretchen’s understanding of our son as a student and as a person was so informed, so spot on even at that early grade, that the guidance she gave us would lead to Adam attending a high school tailor-made for him, one where he loves every school day and is academically thriving. This one recounted event is more than a simple anecdote of an everyday interaction. It’s the countless interactions that Gretchen has been a part of that make her tenure as Head of School extraordinary and meaningful and just one reason why we are so grateful for all she has done for the CRS community.”

**JOHN QUACKENBUSH AND
PAST TRUSTEE MARY KALAMARAS P’20**
Past Parents

WHAT WE’VE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER

2014

Gretchen Larkin is named Charles River School’s 10th Head of School

2015

The community chooses the Otter as the CRS mascot

Led comprehensive campus master plan process

Creates two, new senior positions and appoints both the Director of Communications and the Director of Academic Technology

2016

Creates strategic vision, including a plan to attract and retain expert teachers, a commitment to STEAM, the addition of innovative learning spaces, and meeting the need for financial assistance

Implements a professional development program that centers equity and belonging

Created new, multi-age model for delivering early childhood education

2017

The CRS Wetlands Laboratory opens to give students of all ages hands-on, STEAM learning opportunities

Launches historic \$10.8 million comprehensive campaign, Elevate & Celebrate, for endowment, the Annual Fund, and capital projects

Named a member of the AISNE Board of Directors

“When I was interviewing for the school counselor role, my first meeting with Gretchen was scheduled for April 3. I let her and her assistant Laura Woodring know that I was nine months pregnant and due any day, so I would let them know if I needed to reschedule. I was nervous that I wouldn’t make it to the interview and, of course, I went into labor and had to cancel! I remember so clearly telling my husband Greg at the hospital, ‘Go into my email and tell them I can’t make it because I am about to give birth ... but that I am still interested! I really want this job!’ Two weeks after our daughter Nell was born I emailed Laura and Gretchen and told them that I still wanted to interview if they hadn’t filled the job yet. Gretchen has never forgotten Nell’s birthday and has always been the most amazing boss to a new mother. I really felt like she gave me so much grace, especially in my first year, and I am so grateful that she always checked in on me as a mom, not just an employee. It has meant so much to me that she remembers that story as I do.”

HANNAH SOKOL
Associate Director of Admissions

“It’s a great feeling knowing Charles River School had a caring, capable person like Gretchen at the helm. She worked hard for everyone around her. We want Gretchen to know that we appreciate how she has helped our children grow. They have become independent thinkers, problem solvers, and

leaders who are full of zeal and grit. Gretchen will always be remembered as one of the best that walked through the halls of CRS. Blessings and lots of love.”

GERALDINE, KENNY AND MICKIE LAGUERRE
Class of 2026



◀ Gretchen greets Mickie Laguerre '26 with lots of love on the first day of school.

“Once Gretchen became our Head of School, it was hard for me to believe she had never been a Head of School before coming to CRS. She immediately had an instinct for what needed to happen and how to proceed. Her learning curve was steep and she met every challenge with grace and skill. Not only has she been an amazing Head of School for CRS, but she has also been a wonderful mentor and colleague. I will miss her dearly.”

ELIZABETH CLAYTON P'17 '20
Associate Head of School



▲ From left, Gretchen, Director of Admissions Kat Whitten, and Associate Head of School Elizabeth Clayton

2018

The Media and Design Lab opens, allowing students of all ages to learn and build 21st-century skills

Partners with Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence to introduce the RULER program

The state-of-the-art Travis Middle School Building opens, transforming campus and the educational experience for students

CRS attends NAIS’s inaugural Strategy Lab, one of only six schools to be invited

2019

Receives the 2018 Division I Chief Executive Leadership Award by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), an award traditionally given to leaders of colleges and universities

2020

Named a member of the Belmont Day School’s Board of Trustees

2021

Creates two, new senior positions and appoints the Director of Auxiliary Programs and the Director of Equity, Belonging, and Community Life

2022–23

Named a member of the Carroll School’s Board of Trustees

Launches capital campaign, Climb Higher, for a new playground and endowed funds for financial assistance



Sarah Lapides P'18 '21, left, laughs with Gretchen. ▲

“Gretchen and I were quite the combination during her early years. She was a first-time Head of School and I was a first-time Board Chair. She made me go to Washington, D.C. my first month on the job to meet with Heads and Chairs from across the country. We had to play all these awkward ‘getting to know you’ games that Gretchen knew I would hate but it definitely forced us to bond. We had so many laughs, tears, and arguments over those years. We both learned so much from one another. There were so many hard decisions to be made when Gretchen arrived and she handled them with confidence and strength. I will miss her dearly and wish her all the best in her new endeavors.”

SARAH LAPIDES P'18 '21

Past Board President

“One of the first projects I worked on with Gretchen was filming a re-cut version of the school’s admissions videos. We were filmed by a videographer outside the Community Building on a scorching hot August day, about a month into Gretchen’s headship. At first, it was incredibly nerve-wracking to be out of my comfort zone in front of my new boss but by the end of the shoot, we got increasingly comfortable making mistakes and starting over. We helped each other articulate what we wanted to convey and dissolved into laughter in 90% of our takes... all while feeling as though we were melting on the blacktop. This moment encapsulates everything I have loved about working with Gretchen: her ability to collaborate, her sense of fun, her willingness to roll up her sleeves and do the uncomfortable things, and the high standards that she held us to. I’ve learned so much from her about what it takes to lead a community and I am grateful for the support, friendship, and laughter we have shared these past nine years.”

KAT WHITTEN P'16 '18

Director of Admissions

“There were a lot of things that drew me to CRS, and the opportunity to work with Gretchen was absolutely at the top of the list. Although I have only worked with her for a short time, under her mentorship I’ve been able to grow both professionally and personally. Her strategic thinking, commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and dedication to the mission of this school have been an inspiration to me, as I know it has been to countless other employees during her time at CRS.”

NIA JACOBS

Director of Equity, Belonging, and Community Life



“Gretchen demonstrates true care and kindness as a leader in her interactions with faculty and staff, children, and parents. She makes all of us here at school feel that we are valued and that what is important to us is important to her. She has helped me navigate challenging relationships and situations here at work with the perfect balance of advice, support, and empowerment. I couldn’t have had a better start to my time at CRS than working with Gretchen.”

NETRA SRIKANTH P'28 '29

Director of Auxiliary Programs





Q&A with a Kindergartener

Shortly after Gretchen announced her departure from CRS, Kindergartener Libby Dow had a lot of questions for our Head of School. We thought we'd give Libby the chance to ask Gretchen the questions on all of our minds as only a five-year-old can.

LIBBY: *Everyone LOVES CRS because it's the best school ever. Why are you leaving?*

GRETCHEN: That is a great question, Libby, and I couldn't agree more: CRS is the best. It was such a difficult decision, but the truth is I have the chance to move closer to my family in Connecticut. I'll be closer to my parents, my sister and brother-in-law, and my nieces and nephew.

LIBBY: *What are you going to miss the most about us?*

GRETCHEN: There are a lot of things I'll miss. First and foremost, I'm going to miss all of you. CRS students have a very special place in my heart. I like being at a school where I know every student's name.

LIBBY: *I knew you'd say that!*

GRETCHEN: I'm also going to miss Sports Day, Sharing Assemblies, and Winter Festival. Those are some of my personal favorites here.

LIBBY: *What is your new school called? What is it like?*

GRETCHEN: It's called Eagle Hill School; in some ways, it's very different from Charles River School, and in other ways, it's really similar. The children at Eagle Hill are the same ages as the children at CRS. They have sports teams and art programs like we do. One way it is very different is some of the children in the middle school are boarders, meaning they sleep on campus Monday through Friday.

LIBBY: *Do they serve lunch there?*

GRETCHEN: Yes, they do.

LIBBY: *So, they have a cafeteria?*

GRETCHEN: Yes.

LIBBY: *What do you think your favorite foods will be there?*

GRETCHEN: Excellent question. I'll have to let you know after I have tried them all! I hope they have kalamata olives like we do.

LIBBY: *Is Eagle Hill a big school or a small school?*

GRETCHEN: It is a little bigger than CRS. Students at Eagle Hill School

learn differently than most students at Charles River School. Teachers use very specific techniques to help students learn in the best way possible.

LIBBY: *Who will be the new principal here? Have you met him?*

GRETCHEN: The next Head of Charles River School is Gabe Burnstein. I have had the pleasure of getting to know him over the past few months and, I have to tell you, he also knows that CRS is the best school ever. He is very excited to be here and I know all of our Otters will welcome him and his family with lots of love.

GRETCHEN: I have a question for you, actually. What is one thing that you think I should do or experience at CRS before I leave?

LIBBY: *You should definitely have Chef Christian make a big cake. And, maybe ice cream. We can have the special treat at a huge, all-school recess party for you!*

GRETCHEN: You got it, Libby. 🐾

“There is a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt: ‘A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader, a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves.’ Gretchen always encourages us to have confidence in ourselves and we appreciate her for that; I appreciate her for that.

“I have no doubt that the future looks bright and wish Gretchen the absolute best as she takes the helm at Eagle Hill. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being such a caring soul who entrusted me to care for our dear little Mr. Philly in his golden years. He will be well cared for and is really enjoying retirement!”

LILY YEE
Director of Finance and Operations



▲ Philly the rabbit, living out his retirement with the Yee family



“I’ve always appreciated how encouraging Gretchen is for us to develop a curriculum that bends the arc of social justice towards greater understanding and respect for our various communities. From the expansion of our observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday into Days of Action, to the intentional adoption of Learning for Justice’s 4 social justice standards into all of our classrooms, Gretchen has led our community with thoughtfulness and care towards growing students who will undoubtedly help to make the world a better and more just place.”

JORDY HERTZBERG
Grades 1/2 Co-Teacher

“Gretchen led the school through some of its most extraordinary times: significant operational and financial restructuring; the conception, funding, and completion of the middle school building; and a peer-leading COVID response. She propelled CRS forward with her vision, persistence, willingness to have difficult conversations, thorough understanding of the CRS mission, and deep connections within the CRS community. We are the grateful beneficiaries of her remarkable accomplishments!”

LAURA KUNKEMUELLER ’80
Trustee



▲ Gretchen celebrates the ground-breaking of the Travis Middle School Building with the community

“Among her many talents as a leader, Gretchen is gifted at guiding a community through difficult situations. I will never forget the systematic, measured approach she took in leading the school through COVID. She demonstrated thoughtful command of a situation that no one had ever encountered before, always centering the health and wellness of students, faculty, and families. Gretchen engaged experts in the CRS community and beyond to advise on the best course of action and made numerous complex decisions in order to keep the school open and running smoothly. When I look back on how CRS weathered such a difficult time, I will always remember how Gretchen brought our community together and led with grace under pressure.”

LESLIE JACKSON JUDGE ’91, P’24 ’26
President of the Board of Trustees

“From my first meeting with Gretchen, she has been very encouraging to me as an educator and supportive to me as a parent. I will forever be grateful for her kindness, especially during my first year at CRS when I had to balance teaching, motherhood, graduate school assignments, and pregnancy. Gretchen reassured me every step of the way that she sees a bright future for me here, and I will truly miss her leadership. I wish her all the best at her new school.”

DOROTHY GREGOIRE
PreK/K Co-Teacher



◀ Gretchen joins the fourth-grade as students unveil a classroom construction project.

“From day one of Gretchen’s tenure she laid the groundwork for a more robust environment of inclusiveness, beginning with parent workshops on cultural competency and cultivating new staff. This culminated with rounding out the administration with the Director of Equity, Belonging, and Community Life position in 2021. Gretchen followed her convictions with a positivity that belied the complexity of issues facing the school. With out-of-the-box thinking, she has achieved success in all areas. (Well, perhaps not all areas: the goat incident comes to mind. In order to efficiently and creatively remove poison ivy from her school-adjacent yard, Gretchen brought in goats to eat the plants. I am not sure if they ate all the poison ivy, but they definitely ate the bushes that screened the parking spaces!)

“Gretchen’s initiatives fulfilling the school’s educational mission, done with input and partnership with community members and projected out to the world, are substantial and

impressive. As a Trustee during [the pandemic], I had a glimpse into what life was like for a school Head, but I know I cannot fathom the challenges she and her fellow educators faced. To say that Gretchen was an inspired leader during this time would be a massive understatement. I recall thinking that the pandemic revealed the role that institutions play in our lives, and when those institutions are found lacking, how devastating it can be to us and our loved ones. Gretchen’s leadership enabled children to continue their education at home, and then eventually return to school. Led by Gretchen and Nurse Carol Ahearn, the staff went above and beyond to provide the whole Charles River School experience. Students could not only safely attend school, but they did not miss out on academics, critical social-emotional learning, and just the joy of being a child. I know that the actions of Gretchen and her colleagues were replicated in schools across the country, but this does not diminish the magnitude of the task and the herculean effort the staff put in.

“I repeat what I initially observed about Charles River School back in 2011, now including-Gretchen and her present-day colleagues: These are members of a caring and open community, confident in taking on the responsibilities as stewards of a school for young children and guided by common sense. Tenth Head of School Gretchen Larkin added to the community first with her intent, then her actions, subsequently leaving a lasting legacy.”

YVETTE HOCHBERG P’19

Past Trustee



“When I think of Gretchen, I think of grace. She understands and honors that students, faculty, staff, and families are multi-faceted, multi-dimensional people who need room to stretch, grow, bump, reflect, and try again. She leads with her humanity and genuine care for the people around her. She has nurtured a community-wide culture of kindness, compassion, and generosity and renews her commitment to these practices even in life’s most challenging moments. She remembers to find the laughter and joy in every day and to share them with others. Gretchen—you will be so very missed. It’s been a full circle moment to spend these three years together and an absolute privilege to know you as a mentor, champion, and friend. My gratitude is endless.”

SARAH CLANCY

Grades 3-5 Public Speaking, Grades 7 & 8 MultiArts Teacher



“One thing I love about Gretchen’s leadership style is that she always includes herself when looking for a solution. I’ve seen her cover music classes, recesses, lunches . . . wherever she asks people to help, she is there,

too. She is so fully a part of our community—it will really leave a noticeable space when she leaves.”

MICA MOELLERING P’18

Head of Performing Arts



A Campus Transformed

The Lowitt Family Atrium ▲

Over the last decade, Charles River School's beautiful 16-acre campus has changed quite a bit. Like everything at CRS, even our space speaks to the mission; our state-of-the-art buildings and facilities provide students with unique opportunities to learn and lead.

CHARLES RIVER SCHOOL HAS ALWAYS BEEN COMMITTED to educating the whole child. Core to the school's identity is the cultivation of students' academic success, enrichment, and social-emotional development. Our teachers know that this balance makes brilliance; every day in their classrooms, faculty help develop strong, resourceful learners who are curious about the world around them. The physical campus, from the academic buildings and play spaces to labs, studios, and athletic fields, has a vital role in support of the learning that happens here.

When CRS first moved to its Dover campus in 1917, the Victorian house, known as Founders House today, was the central classroom building. As enrollment grew and the program expanded over the years, through philanthropy and the generosity of the CRS community, the campus was updated with facilities that met the specific needs of students throughout the decades. With the construction of each building—including the Community Building, the Early Childhood Building (ECB), and the Activity Center—the school carved out exactly what it needed with each age-appropriate educational facility. In the early 2010s, it started to become clear that we needed to expand again. When Gretchen Larkin was appointed Head of School in 2014, she quickly started conversations with faculty, staff, and key stakeholders about what should be next. She led a critical campus master planning effort and, out of that strategic vision, several projects were identified. Together with the community, Gretchen went from planning to fundraising to shovels in the

Middle School students have flexible seating options and work spaces in the Travis Middle School.

ground in a short period of time. The results? An impressive outdoor Wetlands Laboratory, an innovative Media and Technology Lab and connected art room, and the truly transformative Travis Middle School Building.

When the idea of the Wetlands Lab first arose, a generous donor offered to fund the startup costs, including what it would take to have scientists from the Massachusetts Audubon Society come to campus to do a botanical survey. When the wetlands experts arrived for the visit, they immediately recognized the potential of the space. Together with a team of outdoor architects, engineers, and other environmental experts, CRS started exploring the possibilities: in addition to outdoor classroom space, there would be room for walking trails and an observation deck. In 2015, after months of working with the town of Dover and Mass Audubon, along with extensive curriculum mapping with faculty, final plans for the CRS Wetlands Laboratory were in place.

Gretchen and the administration secured financial support for the project from members of the CRS community and the Wetlands opened in 2017. The space has had an enormous impact on the educational program; all students benefit from the wetlands curriculum in a variety of classes, including science, math, writing, music, and art, to name a few. It also serves as a resource to the greater community; CRS encourages seniors, school groups, and any other organization interested to use and explore the Wetlands.

Also in 2017, as CRS celebrated 100 years on its Dover campus, it launched the historic \$10.8 million comprehensive campaign, Elevate & Celebrate, for endowment, the Annual Fund, and capital projects. The centerpiece of the campaign was a new middle school building to give our sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students the 21st-century space they needed to learn. Again, Gretchen led



▲ Judy Samelson GP'19 '21, left, and former science teacher Pam Moor P'00, GP'29 cut the ribbon to open the Wetlands Laboratory.

Students work with Grades 3-5 Science Teacher Annie Kenney in the Wetlands. ►

Far right: Students from the Class of 2021, here in sixth grade, explore in the Wetlands. ►►



Casey Grimm, now an eighth grader, stands at the entrance to the Wetlands after it first opened. ►

Far right: The Middle School building is home to state-of-the-art science laboratory space. ►►



the community through the process of planning and fundraising to meet the needs of the school.

“Gretchen immediately understood that our middle schoolers needed a more up-to-date and modern space for learning. She quickly put this need at the top of her five-year strategic plan for the school,” says Kent Rouillard, Middle School Advisor and Grades 5-8 Spanish Teacher. “Gretchen worked tirelessly to see this project to fruition, and the new building has provided us with increased space for collaboration and community-based activities, bringing us closer together as a middle school.”

In the spring of 2018, the Travis Middle School Building opened and completely transformed the campus. The beautiful, modern building stands tall on campus with its distinctive floor-to-ceiling windows. From the outside of the building looking in, you can see the unique Atrium where students gather for middle school community meetings, one-on-one meetings with advisors, or to grab a sunlit spot to study. If you’re in the middle school looking outside, you see the heart of campus—the playground and recess yard—where students from across the grades come together each day. It’s a fitting metaphor that the two angles exist side by side: the joy of

childhood right at the door of academic excellence, even for our oldest students.

There is more to come for our campus. Charles River School is the premier school for progressive education in Boston’s MetroWest (and beyond!) and will always look for innovative ways to deliver what our students need. Whether that is a new, inclusive playground (coming soon, once again because of the generosity of our community) or the important upgrades to our academic facilities, it will be guided by the foundational planning and work of Gretchen and so many others who have been committed to achievement at CRS. ☘

A Night at the Opera

Alumna Janna Burke Spock '98, Senior Director of Patron and Institutional Giving at The Metropolitan Opera in New York City, talks about her love of learning and her love of music with equal passion.

WHETHER SHE'S SINGING IN HER FREE TIME

with a local a cappella group or leading a behind-the-scenes tour of The Metropolitan Opera's newest production in her role with its Administration, Janna Burke Spock '98 knows how to command a stage. The key is to lead with confidence, maintain a strong presence, and, of course, let your true passions take the spotlight. This trio is something she learned, with iterations both in and outside the classroom, at Charles River School. "Toward the end of my time at CRS when I was going through the secondary school process, I remember getting feedback that admissions interviewers were impressed with my 'presence.' CRS fostered that in me in so many ways."

Those closest to Janna would say that she has always been a creative person. She is a curious, innovative thinker and an open-minded collaborator and has been so since she was a child. It's no wonder that Charles River School was the perfect fit for her. "My parents loved the close-knit community at CRS and the school's approach to lesson planning and thematic teaching," Janna explains. "I really thrived and felt supported there."

Janna started at CRS in Pre-Kindergarten and attended through eighth grade, with the exception of her first-grade year when her family temporarily



Janna Spock
as Donna Elvira
in Mozart's
Don Giovanni



Janna Spock at a Metropolitan Opera fundraising event. ▲

moved to Germany for her father's work. In addition to her performances in many CRS productions, Janna says that the world languages curriculum had a huge impact and helped prepare her for a career in and around opera. It is critical that opera singers learn at least three classical languages and, for Janna, that part of her journey began in Helen Parnas' French class. "I fell in love with languages at CRS," says Janna. "Madame Parnas took all of us in seventh- and eighth-grade French to Paris for a week. It was one of those remember-it-for-a-life-time experiences."

After graduating from CRS, Janna attended Thayer Academy while concurrently studying at the Franklin School for the Performing Arts. She describes both schools as welcoming places where she felt comfortable working with and talking to her teachers—just as she had at CRS. During her senior year, while she was trying to decide between attending a larger conservatory or a smaller school where she could continue studying the arts, her college counselor encouraged her to consider Muhlenberg College. When she visited the campus, she fell in love with the small community of passionate learners. She double majored in music and English,

honing her writing and editing skills. Later, she pursued her Master's at Duquesne University, where she studied under renowned vocal coach Claudia Pinza, daughter of world-famous Italian opera singer Ezio Pinza. "It was incredibly special to study under Claudia," says Janna. "She was an amazing mentor and invited me to spend two summers at the Ezio Pinza Council for American Singers of Opera in Italy. She was the one who told me I could have a career in opera."

With her trademark mix of confidence, poise, and passion, Janna moved to New York City. In between auditions, she took a part-time job at the Metropolitan Opera's call center and immediately did well in the role. She easily engaged with patrons, talking about the organization's repertoire, casting and performers, and rich history. When a full-time position opened up in the Development Office for the Met, she decided to see where it would take her and applied. "It changed my life," says Janna. "I worked with some of the most talented fundraisers in the world and quickly formed real relationships with many of the patrons. It's inspiring to me to hear how passionate they are about opera and supporting the arts."

After several years at the Metropolitan Opera, Janna moved on to explore different fundraising roles at the Brooklyn Museum in 2013 and The Fashion Institute of Technology in 2015. She truly enjoyed building a career in philanthropy by cultivating donors and inspiring them to support the cause closest to their hearts—the arts. In 2016, Janna returned "home" to the Metropolitan Opera to help run the Patron Program and most recently was promoted to Senior Director of Patron and Institutional Giving.

Today, Janna and her husband, Greg, who is also an opera singer, live in New York with their 4-year-old son. It's hard to believe that he is the same age that she was when she first started at Charles River School, eager to learn and discover the world around her. "My CRS teachers taught me to think independently, to ask important questions, and then to work hard in order to find those answers. When you engage in learning that way, you have the confidence to voice your ideas on a subject," Janna says. Clearly, these lessons have taken Janna far and with each passion pursued and connection made throughout her education and career, she has made her CRS family proud. 🍷

▼ From left, Head of School Gretchen Larkin, Janna Spock '98, and CRS Board President Leslie Jackson Judge '91, P'24 '26





The CRS Climate Assessment

KNOWING WHERE TO BEGIN

By **Nia Jacobs**, Director of Equity, Belonging, and Community Life

DURING THE SPRING OF MY JUNIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL, I had the opportunity to attend The Mountain School in Vershire, Vermont, a rural farming town with a population of fewer than 700 people. Most students at The Mountain School came from urban and suburban independent schools and typically didn't arrive with a lot of outdoor orienteering skills, which are necessary to thrive for five months living on a working farm and exploring the surrounding wilderness. And so, the first few weeks at The Mountain School were very heavily dedicated to helping us learn to use a compass and read topographic maps. When the faculty decided that we were ready, we were put into small groups, blindfolded, and driven away from campus. After what felt like ages, my van came to a stop and my small group and I found ourselves in a large field in the middle of nowhere. We were handed a compass, a general reference map of central Vermont, and a topographic map of the area and told to make our way home

for a celebratory dinner. With no further instructions, the van unceremoniously drove away.

My group assessed the situation. We knew we had to figure out our endpoint (where was The Mountain School on the maps?) and then we had to figure out how to actually get there. At first, we had absolutely no idea what we were doing, but then we found a small stream running about an eighth of a mile from where we had been dropped off. We were able to use the direction of the water flow and the surrounding hills to place us accurately on the topographic map and then we used our compass to direct ourselves back to campus. With only a few missteps along the way, we made it home in only a few hours and in plenty of time for dinner. In the hours after we returned to campus, other groups trickled in, but when dinner time rolled around, there were still two groups missing. One group arrived partway through the meal. When the last group had not yet arrived by the end of dinner,



faculty prepared to set back out to find them. Just then, the group arrived riding in the back of the truck of a farmer who had found them four towns over and couldn't bear to let the "lost city kids" walk home in the dark alone.

This orienteering adventure has stuck with me for the last 25 years. It has resonated because of the camaraderie built on the journey itself, but even more so because of how valuable the debriefing of this experience was. Listening to the groups that had been most successful, I realized that there were many different ways in which those groups had made their way home. Like mine, some had used the landscape to help guide them, others had relied heavily on their compass, and others had ended up in towns and used the roads to find their way home. But what struck me most was that there was an almost exact similarity between all of the groups that had not been as successful. They shared the same problem: they had been unable to properly place themselves on the map when they started. They didn't know where they were, so they hadn't been able to get home. Even with their best efforts, they lacked the correct information they needed in order to be able to get properly started, let alone finish their journey successfully.

It never ceases to amaze me how often I can apply this story to life, and I thought of it once again when we began the Climate Assessment as part of our equity, belonging, and community life work at CRS. Through a thorough review of school data (demographics, procedures, curriculum, etc.), survey data, and numerous 1:1 and small group interviews, the consultant produced a report that has helped us understand where we are starting so that we can clearly define the best path forward for CRS. Our goals as a school are clear: to be an increasingly more equitable and inclusive community that centers academic excellence and joyful learning. CRS's unwavering commitment to working toward that goal is rooted in our mission to graduate students who "know themselves, understand others, and shape the future of our diverse world with confidence and compassion." If we wanted to continue to fulfill the mission and do the deeply important work of creating a culture of belonging at school, we needed to know exactly where we stood as a community. The Climate Assessment offered us the invaluable ability to be strategic, to know which tactics would be the most successful, to assess which levers to pull, and to decide what further data to collect and analyze.

We are a community that is purposeful in cultivating an environment in which all members learn skills and develop the tools necessary to thrive in the ever-changing, 21st-century world. CRS has always been dedicated to welcoming, recognizing, and valuing its community members both as individuals and as part of the bigger school family. Simply put, we want everyone to feel like this school is their second home. And now, maps in hand, and with a clear vision of where we started, CRS is sure to make it there safely (and in plenty of time for dinner). ☺

Experience the CRS Curriculum

Throughout the school year, CRS invites parents and caregivers to topic-specific Curriculum Coffees so they can learn more about our approach to a rigorous academic education as a progressive school.

CHARLES RIVER SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN BY DOING.

As we often like to explain, “Our students explore different angles and think through disciplines by way of real-world themes and hands-on projects.” So, it makes sense that when we invite parents and caregivers to learn more about our curriculum, we design an interactive, hands-on experience for them as well.

So far this year, we’ve hosted three Curriculum Coffees for parents and caregivers: Math and STEM, Health and Wellness, and Community, Equity, and Inclusion. The goals for each of these events are twofold; first, they offer an opportunity to “lift the hood” for parents and caregivers to see the inner workings of our academic program. Second, they serve as a renewed invitation for all families to actively partner with the school in their children’s education. Each Curriculum Coffee offers stations that showcase different elements of a specific subject or co-curricular strand from throughout the grades, highlight the skills students gain, or challenge parents to participate in learning activities. Students themselves or teachers explain what’s on display; after guests make their way through the stations, a speaker or faculty panel presents more information on the topic before a Q&A session.

At the Math and STEM Curriculum Coffee, for example, the Dining Hall was transformed into an interactive exploration of mathematics at CRS. Grades 7 & 8 Math Teacher and PreK-Grade 8 Math Curriculum Coordinator Lizz Albany and Associate Head of School Elizabeth Clayton provided parents and caregivers an opportunity to play with and sample some academic offerings and join rich math discussions. As guests walked through the room, they could quite literally see the math scope and sequence across PreK-8 at Charles River School. At the conclusion of the hands-on portion, the event shifted to a brief conversation with Lizz about the changing math landscape and how the philosophy of our real-world approach combined with the acquisition of foundational math skills prepare many of our students for the rigor of honors-level classes in high school.

Both the Health and Wellness and the Community, Equity, and Inclusion Curriculum Coffees followed the same format. Parents and caregivers explored resources used in classrooms, learned about themes in the curriculum, and participated in related activities. 🍷



▲ The Community, Equity, and Belonging Curriculum Coffee also provided room for discussion of the Climate Assessment, which you can read more about on page 27.

Grades 1/2 Co-Teacher Sarah Wong presents literature that teachers use in social-emotional learning (SEL) at the Health and Wellness Curriculum Coffee. ▶



◀ Our Math and STEM Curriculum Coffee challenged parents and caregivers with math from our PreK-Grade 8 classrooms.



Go, Otters! Director of Athletics Paul Rupprecht writes, “Our sports teams had tremendous fall and winter seasons! Student-athletes improved with practice, learned to work as a team and gained skills, and showed us how fiercely they can compete. They have been so fun to watch and we’re looking forward to the spring season.”

Flag Football made outstanding progress this season with its young group of athletes. Our returning players were terrific leaders and helped spring-board the new players to a higher level. The future of the flag football team is bright!



Field Hockey showed incredible improvement over the course of the fall season and ended with some strong wins.



Cross Country ran miles this season, exploring trails in Noanet Woods and racing other schools. As a team, CRS won two out of their three home meets at Powisset Farm and missed winning the third meet by only one point. Ellie Apfel '25 placed in the top 10 at both the Park Invitational and Roxbury Latin Invitational, both of which include area ninth graders.



Boys and Girls Combined Soccer only lost one game this year as a team. Both groups brought out the best in each other and they truly shined together.





Girls Basketball had a fantastic season and at one point had a seven-game winning streak. Players made remarkable improvements throughout the season, and their hard work showed.

Boys Blue Basketball focused on skills and drills this season. The players had fun and loved being competitive in their games. **Boys Gold Basketball** as a team gave 100 percent effort each and every game. The players were passionate until the end and were fun to watch on the court.



Some members of the **Fitness Club** spent the winter season exploring Noanet Woods during weekly hikes (right). Others practiced yoga, learned new dances or enjoyed other fitness activities on campus (above).

Times Ten | 6th and Broadway

We're giving the spotlight to the sixth grade! There are two hallmark projects in Grade 6: Times Ten in visual arts and 6th and Broadway in performing arts. For the fan-favorite Times Ten project, students use their math skills to enlarge an item or product to scale in art class. While a popular multiplier is 10, student pairs can enlarge their item by any number they choose. One group created a giant thumb-tack that was 60 times the size of the original! During their music block, students spend weeks listening to and learning about Broadway musicals before selecting the numbers for the show-stopping assembly, 6th and Broadway. There was one incredible number after the next in this year's performance, each of them with choreography included. It always leaves audiences on their feet! 🎭

Times Ten



6th and Broadway



◀ Lily Maley, center, leads sixth-grade singers in "Seasons of Love," from *Rent*.



▶ From left, Silas Williams, Ellie Apfel, Wesley Pham, Max Murphy, and Lorraine Colas perform "I Just Can't Wait to be King," from the *Lion King*.

▶ Our sixth graders sang with so much "Heart," from *Damn Yankees*.



▶ Erin Grimm and sixth-grade singers perform "Mama Mia."

▶ Sixth graders open up 6th and Broadway with "Under the Sea."



▶ Wesley Pham (left) and Silas Williams lead "Farmer Refuted."

▶ The class closed with "Revolting Children," from *Matilda*.



Community Events

CRS knows how to come together! We have had so many wonderful community events already this year. Here are a few highlights from the fall and winter and we hope to see you in the spring!



Winter Festival

Grade 5 performed the traditional Morse folk dance, as many CRS alumni before them have done during Winter Festival.



▲ Grade 4 wrote and performed an original, catchy song about the brain and its functions.



▲ From left, Katherine Plunkett, Jack Stowers, Barrett Brody, all Class of 2024, and Cole White '23 perform one of two Grades 7 & 8 songs on the bells.

CRS Fair



From left, eighth graders Sydney Townsend, Rose McMillan, ▲ and Caroline Webb make a new friend at the Fair.



From left, Lauren McElligott '25 gives her best roll, ▲ while Livvy Paglia '27, Carter Verni '27, and Maya Engle '26 cheer her on.



◀ Wyatt Mediolli '32 has fun on in an inflatable.

This year's CRS Fair featured hayrides around the playing fields



Climb Higher Launch Party



From left, Trevor O'Reilly P'26 '29, Tessa Spillane P'28, Brooke O'Reilly P'26 '29, and Leslie Jackson Judge '91, P'24 '26



Board members Laura Kunkemuller '80 (left) and Tracy-Ann Bain P'18 '22



From left, Grades 1/2 Co-Teacher Jen Worthington, Brian and Rebecca Grimm P'23 '25



Xiaoli Niu P'32, left, and Zhongchen Shen P'30



From left, School Counselor Sammy Robertson, Associate Director of Admissions Hannah Sokol, Grades 7 & 8 Teacher Tessa Steinert Evoy, and School Nurse Carol Ahearn

The community gathered under the blue and gold tent this fall to kick off the Climb Higher capital campaign.



Lunar New Year Celebration



In celebration of the Lunar New Year, the Gund Kwok Women's Lion and Dragon Dance Troupe performed for the community. ▲



From left, Tucker O'Reilly '26, Lily Levine '28, ▲
Jaya Raghava '28, Diya Shah '27, and Libby
Dow '31 joined performers on stage.



Welcome Back Party

Every year we welcome parents and caregivers with a fun gathering sponsored by the Parent Association. The PA Event Chairs always do a fantastic job! ▲

Parents and caregivers catch up in line at the popular taco truck. ▲



Otters of CRS

In 2010, photographer Brandon Stanton created a project called “Humans of New York.” His initial goal was to capture photos of 10,000 New Yorkers and to tell their stories. Since the project began, it has become famous around the world and has expanded to more than 20 countries. In our own spin, we asked several members of the CRS community what they loved most about Charles River School.



Emmy Willard (LEFT), PREKINDERGARTEN

“My favorite thing is learning math. I like that we get to count backward and practice ‘skip counting.’ It’s fun to skip count when you count by 2s and say, ‘2, 4, 6, 8.’ When I’m older like the big kids and Buddies, I’ll be able to do harder math.”

Ellie Apfel (RIGHT), GRADE 6

“I like that we have recess more than once a day because it gives us a chance to play and be with all the other grades. I think the little kids are fun and funny; they always make me laugh. I don’t think that most other middle schools do recess like we do at CRS, so I’m grateful for it.”



Jaya Raghava, GRADE 3

“I love that everyone is so nice at CRS. It’s easy to talk to people and make friends here, and not just in your own grade. Everyone is nice.”



Max Shen, GRADE 1

“Something that’s different at Charles River School is that we have Buddies here. It’s so much fun to play games and be with our Buddy.”



Camilla Rosenfeldt, GRADE 2

"There are different ways to figure things out at CRS. Sometimes you can literally build something to figure it out but another example is fluency. I really like fluency, which is reading, graphing, and then checking your answers. It's a way to figure out and know what you're reading. That's my favorite part."



Abby Baldwin, GRADE 5

"I love that everyone knows each other at CRS. It feels good that all the teachers and students here know each other's names; it's more personal. It makes it so that you really can be your true self."



Rye McMillan

(LEFT), KINDERGARTEN

"I like PE the most. It's a way to get your energy out and you learn things, too. I'm getting to be a much better basketball player."

Graham Walsh

(RIGHT) KINDERGARTEN

"Tech class is the best! I'm learning how to use a mouse and the computer. And, what's really cool is that we get to play video games to learn it all."

From left, ▶
alumnae Mary
Cate Clayton
'20, Rachael
Pratt '19, Dana
Lowitt '19,
Chloe Pratt
'19 at this fall's
CRS Fair



Call for Class Notes

Alumni, we want to hear from you! Send us any updates you would like to share with the CRS community; your classmates and former teachers love to know what is new with you. Please email submissions and photos to alumni@charlesriversschool.org by June 1 to include them in the next issue of *The Current*.

Alumni News

Thank You for Joining Us in New York



In February, Gretchen Larkin, along with Emily Walberg and Amy Walsh from the Development Office, traveled to New York City to connect with alumni living in the area. It was wonderful to catch up and reminisce about our alumni's time at CRS. First and foremost, thank you to our gracious hosts Deb Willis Dowling '94, Jim Frantz '00, and Greg Kantrowitz '00 for a fantastic evening!

◀ From left, Taylor Hayes '08, Jim Frantz '00, Head of School Gretchen Larkin, David Masterman '04, Deb Willis Dowling '94, Shara Zaval '01, and Michelle Cleveland '08



◀ From left, Michelle Cleveland '08, Jim Frantz '00, and David Masterman '04 laugh and reminisce at dinner.

We met at Tribeca Grill for a delicious meal and lively conversation. It is amazing how much our alumni remember about their time here at CRS. From the egg drop and Farm School to each grade's theme and numerous performances over the years, it's clear that alumni's formative years at CRS were truly memorable. Of course, we had a lively debate about which color is the best: BLUE or GOLD? It depends on who you ask, but we heard loud and clear that Sports Day is one of the events that has stayed with you well past CRS!

We love connecting with our alumni. If you live in the NYC area, let us know so we can include you in our next CRS Alumni event. Email Amy Walsh at awalsh@charlesriversschool.org with your updated contact information. It is so important that we stay connected with our alumni, and we are very proud of the individual paths each of you has taken!

January Reunion

A POEM ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

by Laura Margosian, CRS Class of 1982

My poem, “January Reunion” is about embracing the interconnectedness of all living species. As humans, we see our reflection in the cycles of nature. The range of seasonal temperaments is purposely designed to balance and complete our greater ecosystem’s vitality. “January Reunion” encourages us to align with nature’s intricate rhythms, to take time for winter’s inner gaze, and recognize the profound beauty even in its most contracted and barest forms. We are reminded to trust in the order of all living things, of nature’s healing resilience and passage for transformation. And even amidst winter’s restorative pause, just as our nature family, we are in divine process of being and becoming in each moment.

*Love child
gatekeeper of years
portal to winter season
arriving from great travels around
the sun
aligning all living species
with a steady drum beat call
to set our tables and intentions
to receive you
As festivities meet midnight
an arresting hush permeates over all
some escape your descent
the clutch of your dark night
washed-out days, wrung to dry
as your raw temperament withholds
nothing*

*Others are faithful hosts
leaning into the moon
stoking the fire girth
blistering beet roots
with red stained fingers
cracking pomegranates
tending pots of humming stew
preparing for your keep
while you prepare for ours
Your newborn light is kind*

*emerging from perpetual night
illuminating a new way
a charm all your own
softly bathing dormant pastures
blanketing sleeping seeds
beckoning an invitation
You wink at the rhododendron
buds bound and erect
in the wake of your rousing storms
perched from waning bushes
like bulbs in chandeliers
standing-by for glints of springtime
to hatch their vivid pompoms
Your naked branches are proud
from months of shedding layers
revealing etched entangled arms
sheltering roosting winged-ones
in stillness, we can see
twiggy fingers offering ancient prayers
like skeletons fanning periwinkle skies
sweeping limbs from rooted frames
languid moments, before all to come
Your honesty
drowns the haste
from those that came before
as our minds settle like sandy shores
creating space for curiosity*

*and stillness, so we can see
loyal ghosts that live among us
are making peace
and stories yet to dream
like churning bolts of august waves
drools of sea between our toes
briny broth simmering in shells
the high-noon swell of sky and sea
infuse into tomorrow’s horizon
Your days are reassuring
stretching slightly longer
like our spines as we expand
within the walls that hold us
swallowing yearning seeds
germinating in dusk magenta wisps
like henna-stain across the sky
in stillness, we believe
your wind’s hallowing cry,
“New Year”
Beneath the cloak
of your nesting womb
a billion possibilities lie within
anticipation of
all you are
and all you are
becoming*

Sports Day 2008 ►

CRS Giving Day @ Sports Day SEE YOU THERE!

Our Otters are gearing up to compete in Sports Day on Friday, May 26, from 8 a.m.–12 p.m. We are excited to announce that alumni are invited to join us on campus for this year's CRS Giving Day @ SPORTS DAY to relive the fun! Alumni: Come cheer on our students alongside your CRS teachers, pass out water to the competitors, and show your Team Blue or Team Gold pride! Alumni who come to campus will get a Team Blue or Team Gold CRS Alumni shirt, and, as always, one team will walk away with bragging rights of being Sports Day Champions! Will it be Blue or Gold this year?

RSVP IS REQUIRED: We ask that you RSVP via email so we can have your shirt ready and know who will be on campus for Sports Day. Contact Amy Walsh at awalsh@charlesriverschool.org with any questions.



Share Your CRS Photos

Do you have a photo from a favorite day at Charles River School, whether it's the Fair, May Day, or Winter Festival? We'd love to see and share a copy. Scan your photos and send them electronically to alumni@charlesriverschool.org.



▲ May Day fun in the 1980s



◀ Second grade with Mrs. Page in the 1980s

Thank You, Larkin Family!

Dear Gretchen, Bill, Maisie, and Lulu,

Thank you for opening your hearts and home to the CRS community and sharing your time and talents with us all. Whether you were volunteering at the CRS Fair, coaching, or helping to make the magic of the Otter come to life, you've all done so much for Charles River School.

We wish you all the best!



Photo courtesy
of Jenny Maloney
Photography

The CURRENT Spring 2023
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**CHARLES RIVER
SCHOOL**



**CRS
Summer**

**We believe in
the joy of summer.**

**Registration for all CRS
Summer programs is now open!**

Sports & STEM

ages 9-11, Sessions from June 26 to August 4

Nature & STEM

ages 4-11, Sessions from June 26 to August 17

Charles River Creative Arts Program (CRCAP)

ages 7-14, Sessions from June 26 to August 17

Summer LaunchPad

ages 10-14, Sessions from July 10 to July 28

Leadership Program (CIT Program)

ages 15-16, Sessions from June 26 to August 17

CRS Summer Minis

ages 2-4, Weekly sessions with a parent or caregiver throughout July

Summer should be a time for children and teenagers to explore, learn, grow, and—above all else—have FUN. CRS Summer programs have something for every camper. Whether you're returning for another season of CRCAP or you're interested in trying something new (or both!), you'll find everything you need on our campus. Visit our website to learn about the 2023 camp programs.

www.charlesriverschool.org/crs-summer