

Dear Parents of Kent School Students,

While I almost always prefer books to movies a few recent films have made me reflect on interdisciplinary learning in education in general and at Kent School. In *Arrival*, a linguist claims that communication is the foundation of civilization while a physicist believes that the foundation is science. They are both correct yet I believe that it is communication - in all of its varied forms - that is the key to understanding each other and to learning how to be empathetic and honorable citizens.

I recently had lunch with some of our Alumni who are currently attending St. Andrew's School. I noticed right away, and was drawn to, their self-confidence in communicating. They shared with me how well prepared they are for the rigors of secondary school. It was heartwarming to witness their fondness for Kent School and their appreciation for the School's strong emphasis on literature, language arts and writing.

The annual Kudner Leyon Creative Writing Essay Contest allows our Middle School students to express themselves creatively through both written and oral communication. Begun in 2010 as a way to broaden the impact of the Kudner Leyon Memorial Endowment, the annual essay contest is an honored tradition. Twelve finalists were selected and their essays were read anonymously by a group of judges including myself. I enJOYed reading each essay and am very proud of the following winners who read their work aloud in an assembly last week. Henry Shifrin '17 was the third place winner, Tessa Schut '18 received second place honors and Julia McClary '19 was the contest winner. Congratulations to the winners and to all of our students who participated!

The new film *Hidden Figures* depicts the true story of a team of African American female mathematicians who provide NASA with critical research and data needed to launch the first successful space missions prior to the widespread use of computers. Solving complex real world problems on teams while combining communication skills with knowledge of the humanities and the sciences should be the focus of education today. After six months at Kent School, I am deeply inspired that this is in fact the essential essence of the Kent School educational experience.

Across all disciplines, and in all Divisions of Kent School, faculty members collaborate to forge connections that deepen learning and make it more meaningful to our students. In the Lower School 4th Grade students study early Maryland Native American cultures in literature, social studies and science classes. They read *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George about a boy who lives in the Catskill Mountains and learns survival skills used by Native Americans. The students make wigwams from treasures

found on our playground and whittle canoes from bars of soap. As a culminating activity they attend a presentation about the John Smith maps and Native artifacts.

The 6th Grade's recent study of the Lewis and Clark expedition is another wonderful example of interdisciplinary learning. Teams of students with specific roles worked together to plot the expedition using longitude and latitude, map reading and measuring skills. They journalled and also learned sign language to replicate how Lewis and Clark communicated with Native American tribes along their journey. They had daily dilemmas and learned to solve the real problems Lewis and Clark faced. In addition to reading *Streams to the River, River to the Sea* told from Sacajawea's perspective, they also used Lewis and Clark's own journals as a primary source. Ask a 6th Grader about Lewis and Clark. They know everything there is to know about them!

Technology has certainly transformed the way we communicate as well as the way we teach and learn. I am pleased to share a few recent additions to technology hardware on campus. Apple TVs will be installed in both our 2nd and 4th Grade classrooms this month so that every classroom will be equipped with this interactive learning tool. In addition, a whiteboard has been ordered for 4th Grade. Five new iPads were purchased this year for the Library and they are now fully operational and seem to be in constant use.

The month of February holds many traditions at Kent School that I cannot wait to be a part of. The parent-student basketball game is the 3rd, Bingo is on the 10th, the Fabulous February Feast is on the 13th and the Sweetheart Dance is on the 24th. Kent School is such a JOYful and special place because we value the importance of family friendly events to strengthen connections and friendships within our School community. Special thanks to the PTF for giving us three fun celebrations to look forward to this month!

On February 17 we will hold a Professional Day for our Employees. The purpose will be to do a final edit and review of our AIMS Five Year Progress Report, an important part of our 10 Year Accreditation process. From the AIMS website: *Accreditation by AIMS signifies a school's compliance with the association's standards and its commitment to continuously strengthen educational programs and teaching - all for the benefit of students who are at the heart of each school's mission.* Our report is nearly completed. It is due March 1 and we will have a Visiting Team representing AIMS on our campus on April 6. More details to follow about the visit in April but I can assure you we will be ready!

In closing I leave you with this short verse by English poet, painter and printmaker William Blake: "In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enJOY."

