

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Good News About Neighborhood Schools, Inc. Vol. 22, Issue 2 * Spring 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

A Match Made in Heaven
Learning in Bloom
Rooted in Gratitude
Sustainers Circle
Common Cents



UPCOMING EVENTS

Grad Project Night
Thursday, May 23rd
6:30pm
Forest Hills Covenant Church

Graduation
Friday, June 7th
6:30pm
Forest Hills Covenant Church

**Last Day of School
Boolie Day Celebration**
Friday, June 14th
Forest Hills Covenant Church



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A Match Made in Heaven



Ten years ago, Tracy Chan (soon to become Tracy Pimentel) arrived at NS on a Saturday morning to interview with Tricia for the Level One teaching position. "I've been here before," she said in a déjà vu moment. Indeed, Tracy completed a pre-practicum in Level Two with Donna DeVaughn in 2005 during her undergraduate studies at Lesley University. Fast forward to 2015 and Tracy began teaching Level One with Kaye Scherer as mentor and stepped into coordination of Admissions and Outreach in 2018. For the past several years she has been instrumental to the shared leadership team with Tricia and Drew in supporting the operations of the school outside of classroom teaching. Now, starting in school year 2024-2025, Tracy is ready to begin the process of co-directing Neighborhood School with Tricia, during a transition year before Tricia retires in the summer of 2025. Tracy completed the multi-step interview process and has the unanimous support of the NS teachers and staff and the Board of Directors, chaired by Aba Taylor, NS parent and alum.

From Aba: *On behalf of the Board of Directors I can confidently say we are thrilled to have Tracy step up and into the Director role. The Board and staff met some great and compelling candidates through the search process and Tracy was by far the standout. As someone who has known Tracy as an incredible educator to my child, and also having worked with Tracy on additional school leadership functions, I look forward to working closely with her and the rest of the Board on stewarding the new leadership at NS, in collaboration with the collective leadership of all the staff and hopefully parents, as we move into this next chapter of Neighborhood School's journey. We couldn't imagine a better scenario for this exciting time of transition.*

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A Match Made in Heaven

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From Tricia: *The process we went through to find the next Director was a journey grounded in love and marked by dedication. NS teachers (including Tracy) worked hard through the fall, defining NS in this moment and developing the Director Profile.*

Teachers and members of the Leadership Committee began meeting candidates in winter. In spring, we hit a watershed moment when Tracy realized she was ready to declare herself a candidate, with the support of her colleagues. It felt as though the heavens opened and our path was illumined. The one we had been searching for was in our midst. I know Tracy and I work effectively together. We trust one another and I'm confident we can make this transition good for the NS community.

From Tracy: *This moment feels so surreal, and yet so right. When I began teaching Level 1 ten years ago, I never could have imagined the community and relationships I would help nurture throughout the years - and how those relationships would nurture me. NS has been my haven, my home away from home. It will be my honor and great joy to hold dear and grow the mission of NS as our founders retire.*

I am incredibly excited to work alongside Tricia for the school year 2024-2025, which in many ways will be a continuation of my work on the Admissions and Outreach team.

Fostering relationships and building community are both my strengths, and I am enthusiastic about bringing those talents and commitment to the challenges ahead. School was not always a loving or kind place for me when I was growing up, and stepping into leadership at a school that embodies love and justice gives me immense pride. I didn't imagine myself in this position ten years ago, and I'm grateful for the colleagues and mentors who saw my hard work, skill, and leadership abilities, and who know, as I do, how meaningful and important it is to see women of color in leadership positions.

My love for Tricia and for NS knows no bounds, and I am feeling committed and energized as we move toward this moment of transition.

Current and former families and students will have an opportunity to share the joy of this leadership transition at various times during the next year. It is time to celebrate and support! ✨

Learning in Bloom

LEVEL ONE

by Tracy Pimentel

With warmer temperatures on the horizon, the children of Level One will be heading outdoors! Learning more about animals and birds native to our area while pausing to appreciate new growth in nature is the goal! Following our Fall/Winter studies of tropical rainforests of South America and parts of Africa, we are excited to reap the benefits of tangibly smelling, feeling, and hearing ways nature works together in an unspoken partnership. Inspired by our school play, *"The Roots We Follow,"* we are excited to experience firsthand how trees communicate with one another, too. We will continue to learn more about the work of local organizations who are dedicated to protecting the air, land, and water by voicing citizens' concerns, educating the public, and advocating for strong environmental laws. Mini planting projects and nature collages are also on the horizon for our little learners. Happy Spring!



Level One friends have some of their questions answered by a zoo volunteer!

Learning in Bloom

(continued)



Level 2 students enjoyed an untitled sculpture they called "Banana Bike" by Subodh Gupta during their recent visit to the Museum of Fine Arts.

LEVEL TWO

by Laurie Bozzi

This spring, Level Two students are using their great creativity and community-building skills to make exciting individual and collaborative projects! In social studies, we have been exploring aspects of personal identity and cultural heritage. Inspired by the book *Milo's Museum* by Zetta Elliot (illustrated by Purple Wong), students will be learning about heritage languages, family traditions, and personal identities, and they will develop museums of their own. In these, they will share important aspects of themselves and their communities. In math, Level Two has been enjoying learning about measurement. Working collaboratively, they have been exploring ways to use mathematical knowledge and operations (such as fractions, addition, skip counting, and multiplication) to make measuring more efficient and accurate. In science, NS alumni and weather-expert, Nolan Gilman visited and taught students some of the concepts underlying what affects the weather and how meteorologists predict it. We are looking forward to enjoying more time outside in sunny spring weather!



Level Three students taking notes during research

LEVEL THREE

by Malena Castilla

Level Three has been excited to embark on our individual research projects. Students participated in choosing either a nature focus or a culture focus for their location. They're piecing together a proposal for why Level Three should travel there and what we would learn. We've completed two of our overlay maps and are about to begin the third. The second included a lot of talk about rivers, which they have continued in science with Drew. We're looking forward to visiting a local pond or stream to take a closer look at the physical features, the wildlife that calls these habitats home, and specifically the beaver as a keystone species.



Level Four meets with a kite maker in preparation for making kites of their own.

LEVEL FOUR

by Lisa Nam and Haeli Warren

Following our fall and winter curriculum, this spring Level Four is continuing to learn about climate justice, expanding our learning to include global communities and water restoration projects. Guided by the texts *Pax and Pax*, *Journey Home* by Sarah Pennypacker, students are exploring the connections between climate justice and global peace-building. Key literacy skills this spring include symbol analysis and foreshadowing. We are excited to culminate this theme work through a poetry and kite (one of the main symbols in the texts) project that we will share at the Franklin Park Kite and Bike Festival in May!

Rooted in Gratitude

"The Roots We Follow" stirred a range of emotions among the parents in the audience. Some were deeply touched by its commentary on climate, reciprocity, and community, while others appreciated its incorporation of nature-based, project learning. A handful of parents expressed gratitude for the play's capacity to enlighten their children about our connection with nature.

Erin & Adam White (Parents of Level 2 Student)

"The brilliant students in Level 4 who wrote the play *The Roots We Follow* based on *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer spoke to climate grief, activism, reciprocity, and community in ways that offered hope, humor, and connection to its viewers — which was such a gift, especially amid the political noise that seems to dominate these discussions in our own generation. It reminded our family of the transformative value of collaborative, project-led and arts-based education, and the reason we send our kid (Level 2) to the Neighborhood School. Having an integrated social-emotional educator (Johnny Blazes) on staff is another treasure...not to mention that the sets, costumes, blocking, original music and choreography in *The Roots* were all top tier. It was very cool to see this play performed onstage at the Museum of Science. Our son was so proud to be a part of it, and we feel proud to be a part of the NS community and this conversation!"

Lesley Strang (Parent of Level 3 Student)

"I had the pleasure of attending both performances of *The Roots We Follow*. I sat in the theater and wept. I wept as I was filled with happy thoughts of my time on the stage. I wept at the pure beauty of the production.

I wept to think about how much can change in a year. I wept watching my kiddo (and all the NS students) happily immersed in the arts, a deep love of learning, and embodied by community.

This is our family's first year at NS. I quickly began to realize that a "Play Year" is a big deal. My kiddo doesn't share much about his school life so I really didn't know what to expect. When the curtain opened I had no idea that I was about to be deeply immersed in a beautiful, powerful, and important story that was filled with art work, videos, poetry, dance, song, and so much learning! As a teacher, I truly couldn't believe that amount of work that I know went into the production. I sat in awe by the skill of Johnny, the Level 4 teachers, and students. It was not lost on me that everyone at NS had a hand in making this production happen. Standing Ovation to NS! Needless to say, I can't wait until the next Play Year."

Jacob Bor (Parent of Level 4 Student)

"*The Roots We Follow* was an exemplar of radical pedagogy; a necessary intervention in our community; a love letter to mother earth, our ancestors, our children; a gift to all who participated and witnessed it; a prayer; a praxis.

As a parent, nothing has been more daunting, vexing, anxiety- and guilt-producing than raising a child on a warming planet. It is not just my concern about what the future will look like for our children (and theirs). It is the impossibility of transmitting to my child the message that "it is going to be ok". The pain that comes from wanting my child to fall in love with nature / mother earth / all their relations, while knowing that their heart will be broken. And conversely, the fear that confronting the truth directly, engaging with such loss, could spur detachment (or fury). And so, as a parent, I have felt it incredibly challenging (and at times felt it impossible) to meet this moment, to find the path through.

I have read / encountered no better treatment of the answers to these questions than *The Roots We Follow*. We each bring our strengths (and the strengths we are building and learning); we will do it together; with mind, body, and spirit; and we will be guided by values and practices rooted in the teachings of our ancestors, relations, and the land itself. I am astounded by the depths of the play (and the curriculum) and find that I have been learning alongside Caleb all this time. How frequently I have returned to the themes from the play for guidance in just the last week! It will be with me for a long time.

The Roots We Follow is a gift. I hope it will be shared widely and would be happy to find ways to support its dissemination. For Johnny's script and direction; the incredible experiential, nature-based, and project based learning - and deep processing discussions - the kids have had this year with Lisa and Haeli; the essential work Malena did last year for the first years in giving them a secure base from which to take on such challenging material. Tricia for your leadership and vision. And to all staff and volunteers." ✨



The Roots We Follow



Sustainers Circle

An energizing gathering of 25 NS Sustainers convened in mid April on Peter Parley Road to build community and share the work ahead of us at a critical time! Homecoming was in the air as a mix of parents and adult alums representing all NS eras formed a circle in Level Two's classroom (small chairs!), sharing introductions and some refreshments provided by co-hosts Yvette Cozier (Seb and Alex) and Gloria Valentin (Alliyah, Kharimah, and Ibi). NS Board member Jocelyn Heywood brought scrumptious sweets baked by alum Renee (pastry chef at the Langham Hotel, Boston).

Board member and Leadership Committee head, Jeremy Phillips (Jamie and Julian), confirmed that we are thrilled that the Director search led us to Tracy Pimentel. **Now that we know that Tricia's final year will be as Co-Director with Tracy, it's time for Sustainers to enable this dual-leadership mentoring for the school year 2024-2025.**

Here's a Leadership funding update:

- \$10,000 of the additional \$100,000 needed for next year is already pledged to arrive from a group of Sustainers. (Thank you!) \$90,000 is what we need from the wider Sustainer community. (Together we can!)
- You can help by emailing your giving plan to NeighborhoodSchoolOffice@gmail.com

If you have the capacity to give \$5,000 or more to Neighborhood School in June, now is the time! If a large amount is unrealistic, you can increase your recurring gift starting in June - or give a second "annual" gift in addition to your regular year-end giving.

Before we adjourned, a committee formed to plan a celebration next year (likely March 2025) in honor of founding and longtime NS teacher/leaders. It will be a joyous event! If you have a venue or other resources to offer, please contact committee chairs Keeran Hariprasad (Naveen and Nived), Lynn Girton (Molly and Jenny), and Gloria Valentin via keeran.hariprasad@gmail.com



Image Above: The Sustainers Circle was back in the house on April 14 to reconnect and show continued support of NS!

Common Cents

Good news! Giving for the school year 2023-2024 is poised for a strong finish by May 31, when our fiscal year closes. If you missed responding to our Annual Appeal in the winter, **now is the time to send a gift and build a foundation for a new era in NS's history.** Last year (2022-2023), giving levels dipped and we're encouraged to see how NS supporters have rallied so far this year. As we shared in our Sustainers report, giving for our next fiscal year, 2024-2025, needs to reflect this special moment of new leadership and retiring founders working together. Let's break all previous records and raise an additional \$100,000 this summer! Gratitude and reciprocity are our currency; we give because we receive, and the circle continues. Thank you!

