

# THE GAVEN STREET GAZETTE

W I N T E R 2 0 0 9

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## RAYS OF HOPE

by Steve Morris, Head of School



I knew that our school had been hit by the recession when, a few months back, one of our teachers shared with me the story of her elementary student's recent in-class drawing. The student drew a picture of a crying child. Next to the picture the child wrote that her family is now "poor" and therefore, might have to leave San Francisco because her parent had recently lost his job. That comment stung and continues to be in the forefront of my mind as The San Francisco School, and the rest of the country, moves through this severe economic recession.

As much as I was deeply impacted by this child's feelings of being frightened, I am confident that the school will respond and help this family and others. In addition, I am convinced that the school will continue to do what we do so well, educating the whole child by providing the critical building blocks for our children to succeed in the future.

In preparing students for the future, we want to make sure they can be children who learn, dance, sing, draw, laugh and play free from many of the economic concerns that we adults carry around every day. At the same time, we have an obligation to be sure that our students do not live their lives unaware of the challenges that will face them outside of our school gates. We must maintain a fine balance of exposure versus protection. No matter the age of the child, she can participate

in some level of economic learning. For example, our first graders participate in a coin drive in which they are responsible for understanding the currency, counting the coins, and deciding on where the generated funds are donated. At the other end of the school, our 8th graders investigate some of the economic truths associated with home ownership, automobiles, job searches and supermarkets in their math class. This project provokes many interesting school and family conversations as some of the true costs of our lifestyles come forth. At all grade levels, meaningful economic conversations are happening in an age appropriate way.

As a school, we are strategically anticipating the financial challenges that lie ahead. Furthermore, individual attention is being paid to families who have changing situations and financial needs. For example, our Diversity and Culture and Community Board Committees recently offered an open meeting focused on "Talking to our children about issues related to money." Overall, parents felt good about the discussion and left feeling a greater sense of community and support. One parent who attended said, "SFS is so much more than just an academic institution—the fact that we can come together to discuss challenging issues like this one as a community provides me with a tremendous amount of hope and courage." One of the suggestions that came from that evening's

## CELEBRATING WHERE WE LIVE

**30<sup>th</sup>** ANNUAL AUCTION FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE

online | April 13<sup>th</sup> - May 8<sup>th</sup>  
[www.sfschool.org/auction](http://www.sfschool.org/auction)

event | April 24<sup>th</sup>  
 7-10 pm  
 Jewish Community Center

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### Accreditation and Membership

The San Francisco School is accredited by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).



## SLOW FOOD

by Solveig Dimon, Librarian & Gardener

IF YOU TALK TO OUR COOK, PATTY CORWIN, who has been at The San Francisco School for 27 years, she will tell you that we were doing slow food way before it was cool. We've been serving healthy food using fresh vegetables and fruit on real china forever. We've had organic local milk for 3 years and this year we have gone to a local supplier, Veritable Vegetable, for all organic fruits and vegetables.

Patty, Talia Goodkin, Teaching Intern, Madeleine Day, 2nd Grade Teacher and Solveig Dimon, Librarian & Gardener spent a week at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center last summer. They learned how to bring organic gardening and sustainable living more fully into The San Francisco School culture and curriculum. Coming from that work and the ideals of stewardship that are already such a deep part of the school culture, our kids are growing and harvesting organic salad greens for the whole school. Students have been coming into the kitchen to learn about how our food is made directly from Patty as she cooks it! They have also learned about yeast and how pizza dough is made. In November they made salad dressing, learning to make a basic vinaigrette: 1/4 cup vinegar, 2/3 cup oil, taste of honey, and fresh herbs, salt & pepper.

To take the process full-circle and maximize sustainability, the 3rd grade is in charge of the compost pile. Built into their daily jobs, two students bring fresh kitchen scraps to the pile and layer them with hay or leaves every day. We measured the temperature in the fall when it was hot with bacteria and recently turned it, finding more than a dozen native California slender salamanders! You cannot get more local than that!



# LESSONS FROM 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE BIOLOGY

by Brian Donovan, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Teacher



## The Intersection of Diversity and Science

In my seventh grade biology class, one of the questions for the year is, “How does a compassionate biologist behave?” I introduce students to this question by having them research different scientists and then write down their thoughts using a thinking routine called “See, think, wonder.” After reading, students discuss in pairs what they saw their scientist do and why they think their scientist is compassionate. Finally, we discuss our wonder questions as a class.

When introducing the scientists to the class I read the scientist’s name, discipline and ethnicity. I include scientists from as many different racial and ethnic backgrounds as possible. Last year, while reading the name of Chinese-American medical researcher Flossie Wong-Staal, something unexpected happened. A student, who is Asian-American, laughed while I read Flossie’s name. My immediate feeling was embarrassment and my initial thought was that I had mispronounced her name. I looked toward him and said, “Did I mispronounce her name?” He replied “No.” “Then what’s so funny?” I asked. He simply said, “I just thought there weren’t going to be any Asian scientists; there never are.”

In that moment the importance of student identity in teaching became blatantly salient to me. It was an epiphany. As Gloria Ladsen-Billings states in her book, *New Directions in Multicultural Education: Complexities,*

*Boundaries, and Critical Race Theory*, “by claiming not to notice (race and ethnicity of students), the teacher is saying that she is dismissing one of the most salient features of the child’s identity.” For me, it felt as though I had been removed from the shelter of my own privilege to experience, if only for a moment, what it is like to never see yourself in the curriculum. As I stood there speaking with this student I felt so white.

After class, this student and I talked about other Asian scientists and he thanked me. I now have a library of biographies in our classroom of scientists of color who have changed the world but of whom we have never heard. I believe that my role as a teacher is not only to use the diversity of identity in my classroom as a conscious and skillful teaching tool, but more importantly to relate honestly to my students through an understanding of my own racial identity.

## The Power of a Banjo

Sometimes it’s the simple and silly aspects of our own identity that have the biggest impact on our approach to teaching. Such is the case when I decided to bring my banjo to class for the first time. While my students already knew of my “banjo pickin’,” the day they danced out the phases of cell division to the tune of Cripple Creek on my banjo, my perception of effective science teaching changed forever.

Cell division, or mitosis, is a microscopic process with intimidating scientific labels

like prophase, metaphase, anaphase, and telophase. Because you cannot see it with your naked eye, it can be a very intimidating and complex process to get your mind around, especially if you are in seventh grade!

After my students had read, taken notes, watched a video on mitosis, and analyzed prepared microscope slides of cells undergoing mitosis, I felt we were ready for an interpretive dance. It started slowly and clumsily with little real communication of scientific understanding. But as we worked together to figure out the spatial dimensions and kinesthetic forms, the process of cell division slowly emerged in a macroscopic way. As my fingers rolled over my banjo strings and the kids danced in unison I began to call out different phases. “Anaphase!” I would yell. Almost immediately the “chromosome” kids would begin to travel away from each other to opposite ends of the cell.

In that moment it became obvious to me that students did not need a lab report or test, or for that matter a pen or pencil, to show their understanding. The movement of their bodies communicated their understanding of the material.

As I reflected on the lesson, I began to see all of the other ways interpretive dancing could be used in a science classroom to make microscopic phenomena macroscopic. Images of water molecules dancing through state changes in matter flashed through my mind, followed by DNA replication, transcription, and translation; the chemical reactions of photosynthesis and respiration; osmosis; diffusion and active transport.

I could not have envisioned the unexpected yet inevitable consequences of bringing something I loved (my banjo) into the classroom. As a teacher, this experience taught me how to collaborate with my students in an organic and creative process. Yet this creativity would have been impossible had I not brought my identity into the classroom. In closing, my view of myself as a teacher has been most deeply changed by the moments in my classroom when I have provided the space for a dialogue about the identities of my students and myself. I love teaching science at The San Francisco School because it values identity and provides safe spaces for conversation and creativity.

*Brian Donovan has taught 7th & 8th Grade Science at The San Francisco School since 2005. Brian was recently awarded the Herbst Award for Teaching Excellence from The Herbst Foundation.*

## Rays of Hope

(continued from page 1)

discussion was for our classroom parents to gather and distribute information about more affordable summer programs for children to attend.

In speaking with past board presidents, it is clear that our school has a resilient history. Former Board Chair, Terry Gamble Boyer (2001-2004), recalls the challenges of “growing pains”. She referenced having to face financial realities and raise the tuition substantially over a number of years. This was particularly challenging for schools like SFS who put inclusiveness at the top of the list. Terry told me, “It challenged how we defined ourselves, how we met our mission, and how we worked together as a community. It did not tear us apart, but

there was a lot of pain as families digested and absorbed the financial impact of the higher numbers.” Terry remembers losing some families, and that was wrenching, but still believes that if we had not done so, we would not be the school that we are today. Former Board Chair, Brian McCaffery (1996-1998), recounts the School’s most recent capital campaign to raise funds for the Middle School Building, now named the Terry Edeli Building. At that point, he noted that we were really stepping out onto new ground, and there was a lot of uncertainty about whether we could raise the funds in our community. So it was a time of a positive challenge, and a new challenge, but the school community rose to the occasion and we did what we needed to do. Looking back on it, Brian believes that we could have been more confident of our collective ability. Brian

said to me, “Where there is a real community, such as we have at The San Francisco School, we can rise to challenges, and there will always be challenges.”

In closing, no school, public or private, can avoid the challenges brought upon them by the current economy—but we must continue to look for rays of hope. With these challenges comes the opportunity for The San Francisco School to both be a place that allows kids to be kids and at the same time prepare our students for the challenges that they will need to confront in their lives. I am confident that we will pull through this economic recession and that SFS graduates will be prepared for the world ahead.

## MURAL CELEBRATES NEIGHBORHOOD



**THIS FALL**, the school installed a stunning mural on the front gate of our school’s parking lot, which was designed and completed by the current 7th grade, Class of 2010.

The mural represents a year long service learning project that began when the students took a walking “field trip” through our local Portola neighborhood. The students were asked to ponder three questions on the field trip—“What do

you see?” “What does that make you think?” “What does that make you wonder?” After a thorough reflection about their walk, the students decided that they wanted to create something that would enhance the neighborhood as well as extend an “open hand” from our school to the community. Huey Reed ‘99, led them in the process of choosing the theme and designing and painting the mural. Richard Wong, parent of Megan (South Class), constructed the wooden frame.

Service Learning at The San Francisco School falls under the purview of the Public Purpose Committee. This committee strives to identify purposeful, reflective service that teaches, engages and connects students with local, regional, national and global levels of community. The mural concept now is part of the annual service learning in 6th grade, and we hope it will evolve into a collaborative project with one of the middle schools in the Portola neighborhood.

# SINGING PROUD AT THE INAUGURATION

by Josy Hicks-Jablons, Class of 2009



Members of the San Francisco Girls Chorus and San Francisco Boys Chorus perform at the inauguration including three students from SFS: Josy Hicks-Jablons '09, Maya Gantley '08 and 4th grader, Josh Reinier, (middle photo).

**I HAVE BEEN** a member of The San Francisco Girl's Chorus for 7 years and never dreamed we would be singing to a crowd of millions. Even more amazing is that we would be the only youth group to sing at President Obama's inauguration.

Back in November, Senator Diane Feinstein had asked The San Francisco Girls Chorus (SFGC) and The San Francisco Boys Chorus (SFBC) to send her a cd of our groups singing America the Beautiful. We had only a few days to rehearse and record. Then the shocking news arrived. We would be singing on the steps of the Capitol during the inauguration.

We had less than a month to perfect six songs with The Boys Chorus whom we do not normally sing with. On the 16th of January we boarded a plane (one that we barely found enough seats on) on our way to DC. On the plane the 43 girls who make up Chorissima (the touring group of SFGC) sang America the Beautiful. It was powerful to see so many of the passengers begin to cry. It really showed me how meaningful Barack Obama's presidency is to so many people. We had Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums on our plane and he stated that he was very moved by our performance.

We were invited to stay at a girl's boarding school in Virginia, Foxcroft School. The most memorable thing about arriving in DC and Virginia was how cold it was. I thought

I was prepared for the cold weather but I wasn't. For six days I was cold, cold, cold.

We continued our rehearsal schedule all the way up to the big day. On Tuesday the 20th we awoke at 2am, dressed in our outfits, and at 3am drove to the outskirts of DC. We had to wait there for a security check and a police escort. We waited in the bus until 6am, fortunately sleeping most of the time. At 6am police and their dogs came on the bus. After the security check we had multiple police behind and in front of the bus escorting us to DC. It was exciting to zoom pass hundreds of buses with the police sirens blaring.

We were taken to the Russell Senate Office Building where we made our final preparations. From here, we walked over to the Capitol Building.

I can't even begin to explain the next few hours of my day. We stood in the Upper West Terrace, literally right above where President Barack Obama would be standing within a short time. As the announcer began introducing the SFGC and the SFBC, everything seemed to play in slow motion. Over the podium were millions and millions of people. The crowd went on forever; tiny specs, that to us, looked like pixels. The freezing air was still whipping across my face and blowing down my tights, but I didn't seem to notice anymore. Because when we were singing our songs,

everything just felt... right. The music reminded us of why we were here and it was hard enough just to stifle back tears so that the crying wouldn't affect our voices. After the songs were sung we sat down and tried to stay warm, but the experience wasn't over. In fact, it was only beginning.

One of the best parts about singing at the inauguration was that once we were finished singing we stayed seated on the steps right next to all the governors, senators and members of congress. We were within 50 feet of President Obama. Listening to Obama's amazing speech and looking out onto the crowd that stretched to the Washington Memorial was inspiring. This experience has had a huge impact on me. I feel like I now really understand the importance of Obama's presidency. Just as music fills me with hope and peace, Obama has brought and will bring much needed hope and peace to millions of people across the world.

*Josy will be graduating from The San Francisco School this spring and will be attending Lick-Wilmerding High School next fall. Josy is a San Francisco School "lifer"—attending the school since she was 3 years old.*

*Besides Josy, one other SFS student, Josh Reinier (4th Grade) and one alum, Maya Gantley '08 sang at the inauguration. Josh is a member of The San Francisco Boys Chorus and Maya Gantley now attends Drew High School and is a member of the San Francisco Girls Chorus.*



## ALUMNI PROFILE / GINGER JACKSON-GLEICH '99

By Charlie Meade, Director of Development

ON A RECENT SUNDAY MORNING, I MET UP WITH GINGER TO DISCUSS HER ELEVEN YEARS AT THE SCHOOL AS WELL AS HER LIFE SINCE SFS. GINGER HAS HAD AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY SINCE SHE GRADUATED IN 1999 — MOVING ACROSS TOWN FOR HIGH SCHOOL AT UNIVERSITY, ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AND AROUND THE WORLD WHENEVER SHE HAS HAD A CHANCE.

**Tell me a bit about your time at The San Francisco School. Who stands out to you from your time at SFS?** My eleven years at The San Francisco School were a formative part of my life, especially for my personal and community values. I remember it being imaginative, creative and community-oriented, things that have all served as building blocks for the place I'm at today. In terms of who stands out to me, I'd have to say that my classmates were a phenomenal family of people, who I still admire abundantly. Erika Liedtke (6th grade Humanities teacher) was also a very influential teacher for me—she brought both historical figures and characters from literature to life in ways that made learning compelling and exciting.

**What SFS lessons did you take with you to University High School and how did they serve you?** I can definitely say that I carried the values I developed at The San Francisco School with me to UHS. The San Francisco School imparted to us the importance of curiosity, creative thinking, and imagination: the things that I'd venture to say make the papers, projects, and endeavors taken on by SFS alumni stand out from those of other students and of other people in general. Moreover, I think the underpinnings of my moral compass were formed there. And that compass impelled me to take on leadership roles in high school and to speak and stand up for what I believed, both there and in the future.

University High School was certainly different from SFS. It, too, has strong values as a school, but they are different from those of SFS and that can make for a significant cultural transition. But I loved my time there; it was rigorous, demanding and richly vibrant, not just academically but in the arts, sports, social activism, and extra-curriculars. In retrospect, I'd also say the

transition from SFS to UHS prepared me to later take on my transition to the University of North Carolina and led me to value a collection of diverse social experiences.

**Tell me a little bit about your time at UNC. How was it adapting to North Carolina after leaving SF?** Living in the South was an incredible experience. Without a doubt, transitioning to life in North Carolina was eye-opening and challenging. While Chapel Hill is in many respects a liberal college town, UNC students hail from all over the state and the South, and I was in the mix with a wide spectrum of political, social, and personal beliefs. It was different from San Francisco in every aspect—the social fabric, the politics, the history—but that was invaluable. Having never previously lived anywhere where my values were much questioned, I was forced to examine and evaluate my own ideas and beliefs, sometimes changing them and sometimes coming to a deeper understanding of why I held them. Perhaps most importantly, I think I graduated from UNC more skeptical and less soapboxy. That seems like a good trade.

**My understanding is that you attended UNC after receiving the competitive Morehead-Cain Scholarship. Tell me a bit about the scholarship and what it entailed.** Yes. I attended UNC, at least in part, because of receiving a Morehead-Cain Scholarship, which provides a full scholarship, living expenses, and four years of summer enrichment opportunities to students at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. During my first summer (prior to my first year), I did a 23-day backpacking and whitewater rafting trip with Outward Bound in southeastern Utah. Before my sophomore year, I spent the summer in Dar es Salaam, working for the Legal and Human Rights Center of Tanzania and

helping to put together their annual human rights report. The LHRC was the only agency in the country to produce a domestic evaluation of human rights in Tanzania and it was inspiring (and challenging) to be a part of that project. Later that summer, I spent time living and volunteering in a Red Cross refugee camp on the Congolese border.

The next year, I headed to Europe to study the history of the circus for my summer of independent study. In traveling through Finland, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Spain, I learned about different artistic influences in various fields of circus, about the histories of families who have been traveling with companies for generations, and about the way in which the circus arts so profoundly lack a documented history. For my final summer, I returned to San Francisco to work for the Juvenile Probation Department, pursuing my greater interest in juvenile justice and incarceration.

**What are you doing now? What is next in your life?** Since graduating in 2007, I've had the opportunity to do a few different jobs and fit in a little travel. Initially, I worked in Utah for Outward Bound, then headed for Central America for a surfing trip; when I returned, I worked as a speechwriter for the Mayor of Denver, before following my heart back to Utah to work again for Outward Bound. I just moved back to San Francisco and work as a bilingual legal interviewer for the Bar Association. I recently applied to graduate school to pursue a PhD in Law, though as of yet, I haven't decided where to go.

**What lessons from The San Francisco School still serve you in your adult life today?** Perhaps most importantly, The San Francisco School taught me to seek out and appreciate the distinctive excellence that exists in every person we meet and to value the way in which that diversity of attributes makes for a strong and vibrant community. More broadly, I think it instilled in me a profound sense of the importance of community, something which has informed every decision I've made about work, education, and adventure since my graduation.



## GET ON THE BUS to Support Tuition Assistance at The San Francisco School

This Spring, The San Francisco School **Celebrates Where We Live** with its **30<sup>th</sup> Annual Auction for Tuition Assistance**. The goal of this year's auction is to come together as a community to raise \$100,000 for the tuition assistance program.

### Two Ways To Be Involved:

Join us at [www.sfschool.org/auction](http://www.sfschool.org/auction) to take part in the Online Auction that will run from April 13<sup>th</sup> – May 8<sup>th</sup>! Launching on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, The San Francisco School is taking a large percentage of the auction exclusively online! Items that will be attractive to our community — restaurant gift certificates, weekends away, gym memberships, local services, etc. — will be available **online only**. We encourage you to bid often — morning, noon and night!

#### Online Categories include:

- |                          |         |             |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Services                 | Fashion | Outings     |
| For the Kids             | Sports  | Restaurants |
| Health, Beauty + Fitness | Food    | Getaways    |
| Home + Garden            |         |             |

Anyone in the SFS community can participate in our Online Auction! To register and participate, visit [www.sfschool.org/auction](http://www.sfschool.org/auction) and click on the Online Auction link. Bid early and often!

Join us at the Silent & Live Auction event on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> from 7-10 PM at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco (3200 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94118). Auction Night will be community-focused and a chance for us to socialize and support SFS! There will be a Silent Auction which will include Art by Kids, Kid & Family Sponsored Outings, Community Dinners, and Faculty Fun items. The night will wrap up with the annual Live Auction, filled with great getaways and local gatherings! Tickets are \$75 per person; to register, please contact Emily ([egarlock@sfschool.org](mailto:egarlock@sfschool.org), 415-239-1475).

We are looking forward to another successful auction this spring as we **Celebrate Where We Live!**



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## MISSION STATEMENT

The San Francisco School cultivates and celebrates the intellectual, imaginative and humanitarian promise of each student in a community that practices mutual respect, embraces diversity and inspires a passion for learning.

## OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL

Founded in 1966, The San Francisco School is a Pre-K through eighth independent, coeducational day school. The school is an established, vibrant educational community with a multicultural enrollment of 270 students, an experienced and dedicated faculty, and supportive and involved parents. The preschool program centers on the ideas of Maria Montessori. The elementary and middle school program reflects the ideals of a progressive, student-centered approach. The school also includes an extended care program, parent education opportunities, and summer recreational activities. Suitably characterized by a parent as "an urban school with a village atmosphere," the school embraces San Francisco's ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity. Our progressive approach to education encourages children to develop self-reliance, solid academic skills, integrity, and a sense of social values. The school is respected for our strong academics, our vibrant community, our personal attention to students, and our dynamic arts program. Our students graduate academically prepared, inquisitive, compassionate, and eager for the challenges ahead.

## Save the Date

ON MAY 31<sup>ST</sup> WE WILL BE CELEBRATING PAMELA MYER'S 40 YEARS OF TEACHING 1ST GRADE AND HER RETIREMENT FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL. MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW SOON.

