

# Head of School Report

## February 2021

BE THE EXAMPLE

I hope that one day I will be writing a Head of School report where I can say, "Things at school are normal!" My faith leads me to believe that this day will come! On Monday, Todd and I visited every classroom to check on the teachers and kids. I got 4,000 steps by 10:00 a.m.

It was beautiful to see the normalcy amidst the not-so-normal week we had last week. The teachers were teaching, and the kids were learning. We heard laughter and saw joy everywhere we went. As we asked folks, "How are you?" The answer over and over was, "I'm so glad to be back with the kids."

We began our day Monday in advisory and morning meeting. The children were eager to share their stories of last week. Starting our day in our small communities allowed us to re-connect, check on everyone, and pray for those who suffered and continue to suffer from Uri's impact on Texas. There is nothing more beautiful than the prayer of children.

As you will see by reading all the reports, we continue to manage the school well in all areas:

- Annual Fund is going to make its goal
- Our applicant numbers, while down a little, remain high, and our pool is strong
- Re-enrollment is going well, including successfully migrating to a new electronic system (Smart Tuition)
- We are making progress on our Executive Council goals for this year
- We are working on the implementation of many of our strategic plan initiatives
- We are gearing up for our ISAS Self-Study year next year

Daily, I am reminded that it is a blessing to serve this community. I hope you enjoy reading about all that is happening at ROBS!

## Academics

### **Preschool:**

Our preschool scientists have discovered all about God's creation and how the world works. Discovery learned about Earth Science, including winter weather and snow. They investigated ice and water in their sensory tables. They compared warm weather with cold weather as they read stories about snowy days and had a pretend "snowball" fight in the classroom. Readiness learned about Arctic animals and bears of all kinds in their Life Science unit. They discovered that God gives each animal special features that help it survive in its habitat, including blubber, warm fur, or special flippers. Pre-K learned about Physical Science in their unit on Light. They

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noticed all the sources of light in the community and classified light sources as natural or man-made. They investigated shadows, using the sun and flashlights to create shadows. Our Pre-K scientists studied reflections, as well as the differences between transparent and translucent objects as they worked with mirrors and glowsticks in their construction centers.

**Professional Development:**

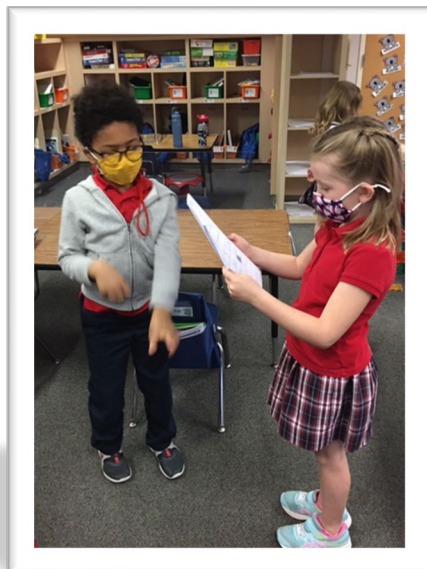
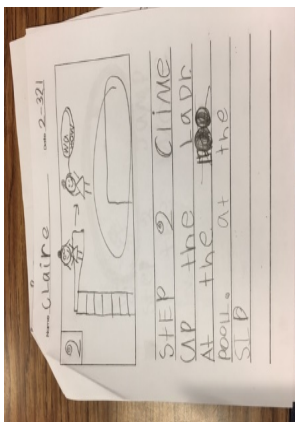
- All Preschool, Lower School, and Middle School Faculty and staff attended *Alison Park's Cultural Competency training*

**Lower School:**

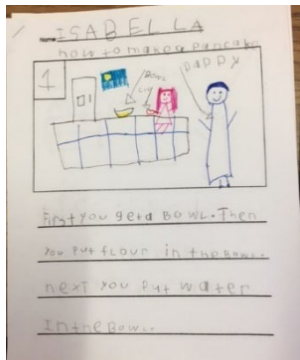
Our kindergartners are learning how to write in a new genre as part of their latest unit of study, "How-To Books: Writing to Teach Others." They can use procedural writing to share their expertise with others—like how to tie shoes, make pancakes, dive into the swimming pool, bake chocolate chip cookies, and hit a baseball. Children begin by drawing and labeling each step of their instructions in sequence. They work with partners to dramatize their procedures, adding additional instructions to clarify their meaning. Along with these new goals, we're also practicing our writing conventions, including handwriting, punctuation, and spacing, in a very authentic way.



Pasha plans his How-To book about how to make chocolate chip cookies.



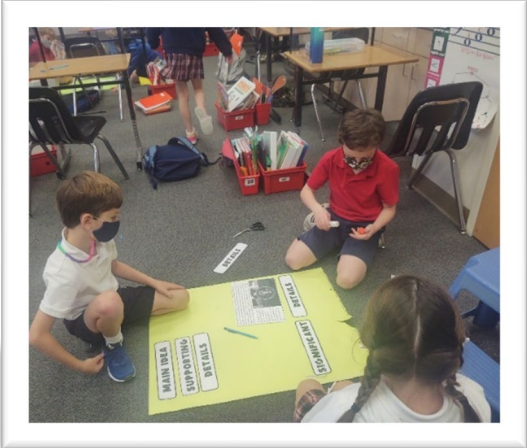
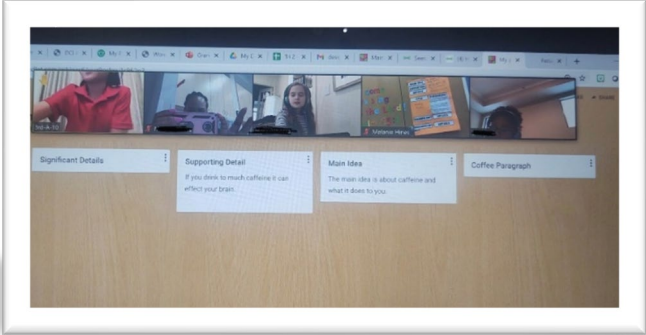
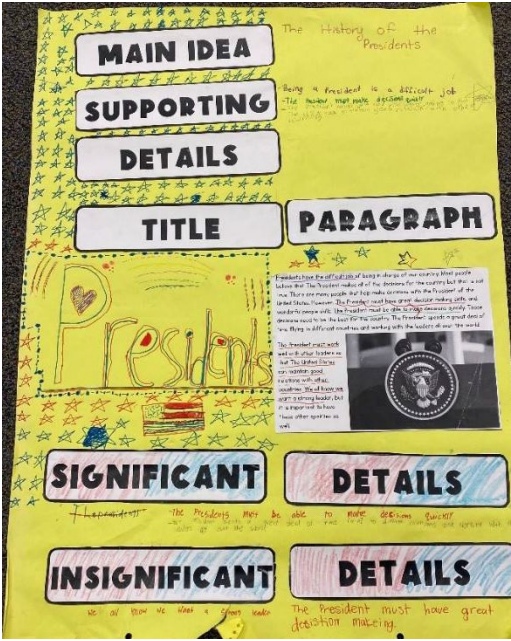
Cameron acts out Claire's instructions on how to climb the ladder to dive into the pool. This helps her see if she needs to edit or revise her writing to make her directions easier to follow.



Isabella revises her book on how to make pancakes. She makes sure to use transition words such as "first", "then" and "next". Now, she adds labels to her illustrations to turn them into diagrams to teach her audience more.

Third grade students have been focusing on finding the main idea and the details that support it. They started this unit with a fun "mystery bag" activity. In this activity, each student took a few minutes to brainstorm the main idea. The students then drew four objects that supported their main idea and placed the drawings in their mystery bags. Each student presented their mystery bag in a small group where they shared the four objects they drew. The game's objective was for the students to infer the main idea as they looked at the four items in each mystery bag.

Another component of this exciting unit was locating the main idea and the supporting details in non-fiction texts. Great conversations were happening as students worked in collaborative groups to dissect non-fiction text and find the details that support the main idea. Students learned to decipher the difference between significant and insignificant details. When the groups were finished, they shared their findings with the class. Our virtual learners participated in this fun and engaging activity with the help of a website called Padlet. Students collaborated by adding their thoughts on virtual sticky notes to the Padlet board.



### **Professional Development:**

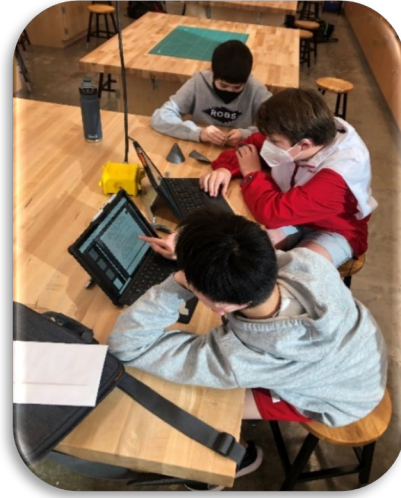
- Amy Womack, Tara Currin, and Mary Stewart Clark attended *the ISAS Series—Creating an Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist School/Classroom or Organizations: Microaggressions and Micro-affirmations*
- Amy Womack attended the *Leaders of Learning* course through Harvard
- Mary Stewart Clark attended *Determining the Impact of Power of Privilege* with Dr. Faith Wilkerson and Jevona Braxton

### **Middle School:**

Most recently, as of 2/22/21, the middle school has sustained COVID-related outages in sixth and seventh grades, but our faculty, staff, and students are thinking flexibly, collaboratively, and creatively to keep learning happening via Zoom and various other technology resources. We continue to run our Hybrid version of the seven-day rotating schedule, which has worked very effectively for us all year. Our division continues to adapt to any hardships and move forward with grace, humility, and hard work.

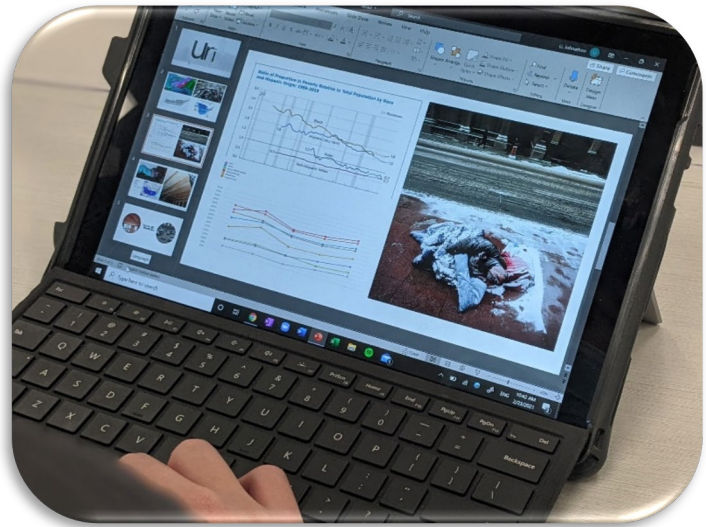
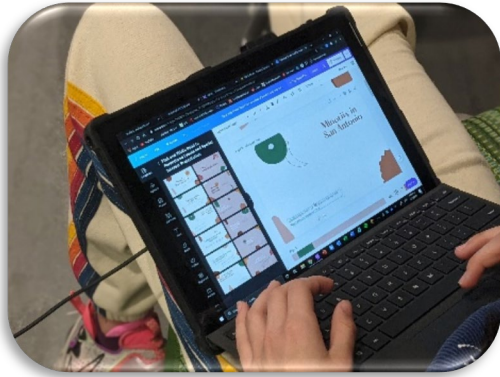
Related to their personal and professional goals for the year, many of which are mind, brain, and education (MBE) focused, middle school faculty and staff are continuing the work we began last year with our middle school book study of *Neuroteach*, but we have taken a much bigger step with professional development. Two weeks ago, ROBS's middle school officially partnered with the Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning (The CTTL) at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, Maryland for a long-term professional development program. The product of this partnership will be Level One certification of the entire middle school staff by May 2022, which makes our school a leader in mind, brain, and education science research-informed practice in our region of the country. We will be one of the only schools in our region of the country that is leading the application of MBE research into our teaching practice. For instance, teachers will be experts in many research topics, such as formative assessment, growth mindset, and even game-based teaching, all of which put student learning gains at the forefront. Currently, we are engaged in the online platform *Neuroteach Global* and the book study of *Neuroteach* while balancing the many challenges of the year--proof that our teachers are phenomenal educators.

Our Mosing Middle School Makerspace is changing and evolving as we speak! It began with new stools arriving that the students assembled (many commented that they have never actually put furniture together before). The new tables arrived in mid-January, and the students will work to adjust the stools and determine their needs as the space evolves. Mr. Honn said they could not have accomplished so much without Darrell Falier and his crew – many thanks to them!



The Trimester 2 group of Capstone students are working in various projects including: two digital art projects where students who typically create art using paint or pencil have applied their skills using iPads and Apple pencils, a video highlight reel of the 8th grade soccer season, a 3D model of the White House, a video tour of the Mosing Middle School Building, a middle school version of Family Feud, a 3D model of the pyramids at Giza, and a garden/flower growing project where students have planted various flowers from seed with plans to plant them outside when weather permits. Stay tuned for the completion of these projects!

In the wake of the recent snowstorm in Texas, students reflected on their families' personal innovations that were deployed during this unprecedented situation - ways to be secure, warm, and nourished. After reflecting, students are then challenged to think about and do research on the Texas community at large to see the disparity in access to resources for innovation for low-income communities to stay warm and fed. From there, they will present their findings to include: (i) An example of someone or a community that was drastically impacted in comparison to communities with better facilities for care, food, power, and heat, (ii) examine why the negative impact was so drastic for this community, and (iii) explore what innovations for this community can help avoid such a severe impact in the future.



### **Professional Development:**

- Activities noted above, including DEI work with Alison Park, as well as Mind, Brain, Education work with CTTL.

### **Athletics**

It has been an enormous blessing to return to many of our sports this Winter season. Unfortunately, we could not have our swimming season due to pools being unavailable all over town for school groups during the pandemic. We did have the opportunity to play our basketball and soccer seasons, and even though it was a different feel with masks on and no fans in the stands, it felt great to be back playing games!

This year, our conference could not have our regular 8<sup>th</sup> grade 8-team playoffs or championships, but instead, the conference was split into two pools, with only the winner of each pool advancing to the championship game. ROBS was drawn into the "tougher" pool with a few more schools than the other pool due to Covid shutdowns. Despite this, ROBS competed well with all of our teams being competitive.

Our girls' basketball team had an excellent year, though falling short of the championship.

In boys' soccer, our boys have had a tremendous season and finished in a three-way tie for first in our pool, but won the tie-breaker. Our boys played a fantastic championship game against a talented and undefeated John Cooper team. In a back and forth match that saw both teams have shots hit the post, amazing saves, and close calls, the game finished tied at 0-0. In the sudden-death overtime periods, both teams nearly ended the game with goals. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> sudden death period, John Cooper put a rebound away to end a hard-fought match and gave Cooper the title.

Our boys' basketball team had a solid season and won most of their games, and were competitive in the few losses they had. In a normal year, they would be poised to make a run as a dangerous 3 or 4 seed in the conference tournament. Our girls' soccer team played hard all year long and won a couple of games while showing great improvement and awesome effort and attitudes.

Go Raiders!

## **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice**

As can be expected, there is a lot going on at ROBS related to DEI. It is not only a part of the current Strategic Plan, events have unfolded over the course of the last year which have provided thought-provoking moments for us all. To that end, below are areas and endeavors we are currently working on:

### **Hiring**

- Past Parent Louma Ghandour, Rice University's Director of Faculty Development, educated the Administrative Team on Implicit Bias in the Hiring Process.
- To cast a wider net for new faculty and staff, we are posting open positions to new job boards such as Indeed, Southern Teachers, NEMNET, and DiversityIS.

### **Faculty/Staff**

We can't teach what we don't know, so administrators and faculty continue to learn about DEI issues through trainings such as:

- Ongoing work with Alison Park, our DEI consultant
- How to Be an Anti-Racist School
- ISAS Workshop on Microaggressions and Micro-affirmations
- Investing in a Culture of Well-Being for Students of Color
- Equity in the All-Virtual Admission Process
- Building an Inclusive Advancement Operation

- Creating an Inclusion Dashboard
- A ROBS Cultural Competency Working Group has been formed to guide the work of integrating DEI principles into all grades and subject matter over the next two years.
- Ad hoc committees are also being formed to advance other DEI priorities in areas such as the Biblical case for DEI and onboarding of new employees.

## Students

- An employee group is working on ways to identify and support students who feel left out.
- Black History Month activities include KROB blurbs, "windows and mirrors" books, interviews, special SAGE Dining menus, and soundtracks in carpool featuring gospel, R&B, jazz, and reggae.
- Leanne led chapel this month with a message on race and racism.

## Fine Arts



Lower school students will begin special area classes this week and students and teachers alike are thrilled to get back into the classroom. The curriculum and projects will not be quite the same due to the schedule and logistics, but teachers are planning fabulous lessons for their students. Fourth grade students will soon begin working on their spring musical. They will perform a medley of Broadway Hits which will be filmed for parents.

Middle School Fine Arts classes are running well. Students remain focused on the process of developing their voice and learning their skill set while working toward a finished product. "Our Town", performed by 7<sup>th</sup>/ 8<sup>th</sup> theatre students will be filmed for parents, just as "Wizard of Oz" was this fall. This spring we hope to have another virtual concert to share with our community featuring our choirs and orchestras. Digital Arts, Visual Arts, and Yearbook classes are all working on Elements of Design, Creativity, and exploring new mediums and programs.



## Library

The library is continuing to work on ways to effectively serve our community during COVID. Adonica, our Preschool Librarian, continues to have weekly Zoom storytimes and fulfill parent and teacher book requests. Shelia, our Lower School Librarian, is never in the library! She is bringing the library to the lower school students by having carts full of books from which they can choose. While we cannot wait to have our volunteer force back and the library up and running again, we have checked out over 20,000 books so far this year!

In lower school, we just completed our Bluebonnet Reading Program, in which ten months of reading from a list of 20 books culminated in the students voting for their favorite title. Those who participated received an individualized brownie with all the fixings for a brownie sundae (minus the ice cream) and special prizes for those who read at least ten books from the list.

## Spiritual Life

Since the beginning of the new year in our virtual chapels, we have been encouraged through word and song from our friend Wayne Kerr. Wayne Kerr, songwriter, and musician, loves visiting ROBS each year, and we were excited to welcome him through a virtual message focused on our theme, Simple Moments Change the World. Wayne has also written a book this past year that mentions our school. Check out [Braving, The Art of Pursuing What Makes You Come Alive](#).

Luke Wrobel's 6<sup>th</sup> grade Theater Arts class continues to inspire our school with their messages focused on the fruit of the spirit each month. January's chapel was on Peace and February's will be on Love.

Our Spiritual and Character Committee is busy at work developing the character theme for 2021-2022. We invite you to be a part of this process by joining us in praying for God's direction to be evident in our selection.

## Student Support

The middle school counselor, Mr. James Blackwell, has continued to collaborate with Dr. Crystal Collier to create ongoing preventative services content aimed at cyberbullying and social media usage. James has also continued to train in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy as a part of his professional development. The lower school counselor, Dr. Allison Hamff, is preparing four parent video presentations focused on fostering independence in children, developing resilience in children, helping children emotionally through the pandemic, and the importance of building

empathy in children. Allison is attending the ISAS virtual lecture titled *Loss and Grief in the New Year* and the *Parenting in Place* winter series virtual presentations.

In the area of learning support, something we have noticed over the last few years is students receiving a learning difference diagnosis called Dyscalculia. Dyscalculia is a condition that makes it hard to do math and tasks that involve math. It's not as well known or as understood as dyslexia. But some experts believe it's just as common. That means an estimated 5 to 10 percent of people might have Dyscalculia. To meet our students' needs, in conjunction with the increased demand for differentiation, Tarsy Wagner, is taking an online Dyscalculia Tutor Training to help her support our students with math learning differences.

We look forward to Tarsy working with our students across math content areas, some of which include fractions, decimals, algebraic concepts, geometry, charts, and data analysis.

The learning specialists have been busy working with students, parents, teachers, and taking virtual courses for professional development. Tarsy Wagner, the Middle School Learning Specialist, attended the virtual Texas Academic Language Therapy Association Summit on January 16, 2021. The conference was about dyslexia and dysgraphia and discussed the importance of teacher observations, early intervention, early screeners, and a growth mindset for students with learning differences.

Aside from their day-to-day support work, both learning specialists and Academic Council have been evaluating students' learning difference needs and how the accommodations we have in place are supporting them. We want to make sure that we have the right accommodations in place in both lower and middle school.

***Respectfully submitted: Leanne Reynolds, Head of School***