



CURIOSITY | COMMUNITY | INQUIRY | VOICE

Black Pine Circle School
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blackpinecircle.org



BLACK PINE CIRCLE SCHOOL



ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021

Mission

Black Pine Circle School’s mission is to create a learning community that encourages humanity, empathy, moral depth, cultural understanding, and intellectual freedom.

Educationally, it is our goal to create vibrant, independent thinkers who will never lose their passion for learning, their delight in research, and their involvement in cultural pursuits.

Black Pine Circle School’s teaching philosophy is best described as Socratic. This student-centered method of learning is based on inquiry, questioning, exploration, and discovery: it minimizes competitiveness and makes the curriculum personally relevant, motivating students to acquire knowledge and skills for their own sake. The focus on mastery not tasks is reinforced by an interdisciplinary approach, which integrates rigorous academics with music, drama, and the visual arts.

Socially, it is our goal to instill mutual respect, compassion, and an appreciation of differences among our students. Our faculty and staff are dedicated to fostering a warm and supportive environment in which children can safely address challenges and grow in their understanding of themselves and others.



Our Pillars

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Letter from Head of School John Carlstroem



Sitting here in my office on a sunny winter day, with all of our students in school, all of our teachers teaching in person, and a world where so many of us have been double-vaccinated and boosted, it’s strange and challenging to remember the details of the 2020–2021 academic year. But school as we knew it had to be reinvented top to bottom.

All of us, from the very youngest to our wizened elders, had to relearn the concept of community—being in community and building community—differently. In the school environment, we never stop thinking and talking about community. It’s at the core of what schools are for neighborhoods, families, and for our children. In 2021 at BPC we had to consider new ways to engage and inspire our students, our teachers, and all our families and friends.

Every single traditional school event—the Art Exhibit, the Halloween Festival, Graduation, the Spring Soirée, and more—had to be reimagined, without sacrificing the essence or theme of the gathering. This same process of reinvention was happening in every class every day.

For the 2020–2021 school year the annual theme we chose was “Together We Rise.” Not because we wanted to sound like a healthcare company, or a breakfast milkshake, but because we needed to underline two non-negotiables about life in the BPC community: our interdependence as educators, students, and families, and the importance of our collective resilience.

In this Annual Report we hope you get a sense of an extraordinary success story. The story of the second school in the state of California to close due to COVID-19. The story of a school community fighting Zoom fatigue and navigating student mental health challenges. The story of a school finding creative solutions around every corner—whether it was tenting the yards to create outdoor classrooms, setting up Swivl cameras to engage learners at home, hiring more educators (classroom support teachers and distance learning facilitators), taking virtual field trips, or the complete transformation of 7th Street into a play yard. This is the story of a metaphorical meteor hitting our school, and all of us banding together, remaining positive, and never giving up. In this Annual Report, you will read about a place where working together we found ways for students, teachers, and families to stay connected to what matters in our school: our mission and our core values of Curiosity, Community, Inquiry, and Voice.

This is the story of a Board of Directors that led when it was time, of students who persevered through internet outages, orange-colored skies, endless hours working remotely at home, and eventually coming back to a campus full of joy. This is the story of families helping one another, of human beings coming together to support and elevate our wonderful, unique, and vital community.

Some schools closed permanently during the pandemic. Others, like Black Pine Circle School, found new strength in the people and ideas that rose to the surface from our essential collective resilience. The pandemic reminded us all of what truly matters: school is not an address, or merely a physical place. School is a lens we look through together. School is a vision and a shared experience in stretching and striving and mastering novel behaviors. The lessons we’ve learned together these past months will undoubtedly continue to inspire the way we move forward in the future as a school, and as a community.

This Annual Report underlines that not only did Black Pine Circle School “survive” the pandemic, we hit new highs in enrollment, new records in high school placement, achieved

new fundraising heights and, most importantly, stood strong for all of our constituents. This Annual Report is truly a document of appreciation for all that each person did to keep our school thriving during a time of extraordinary world events.

Finally, it is with great enthusiasm that we share this **short movie** about our amazing school. It really captures the spirit of this place, and reminds me of why ***our school is one of a kind***. This is who we are!



Now take a look inside to see all that we accomplished together in 2020–2021.

John Carlstroem
Head of School

Letter from Board Chair Peter Wong



The 2020–2021 school year is not one most of us would care to repeat, even if it is one we will always remember. There was so much uncertainty, pain, isolation, and loss. There was no playbook. Nothing was assured. It was bumpy and humbling, but ultimately very affirming.

As this Annual Report hopefully makes clear, the BPC community responded to our “pandemic year” with our values in force and at the fore. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students came together, adapted to a new normal, and persevered in the face of a seemingly endless series of challenges. And we did so with kindness, joy, and generosity. It was a true partnership.

The primary purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial health of the organization and to thank the many people who helped BPC philanthropically and in other ways last year. I am pleased to say that BPC, after a year of considerable challenge, is perhaps stronger than ever. We are enjoying strong admissions, fundraising, core financials, and so much more. We are not yet out of the woods with regard to the pandemic, but we have made great strides, and are poised to blossom even more when the time is right. Hopefully very soon.

Speaking of timing, as some of you may know, this will be my last year on the BPC Board. It has been an honor to serve in this capacity for the past 11 years, but the time has come to let the next generation of families assume responsibility for our wonderful school. BPC never failed to live up to the expectations of Yoona and me. The education our two sons, Jackson and Daniel, received here will serve them their entire lives.

Last year was extraordinary in every sense. And even if I wouldn’t want to repeat it, neither would I trade away the valuable lessons I learned. This is the nature of resilience. Thank you for supporting BPC and for helping make possible so many treasured memories, friendships, and accomplishments.

I hope you enjoy the report!

Peter M.O. Wong
Chair, Board of Directors
(Jackson ’17 and Daniel ’21)



Black Pine Circle Board of Directors 2020–2021

- Peter Wong, Chair**
Chief Operating Officer, TruTag Technologies, Inc.
- Marc Derewetzky**
Principal, The Derewetzky Law Group
- Nam Do**
I.T. Consultant, Department of Veterans Affairs, and National & Atmospheric Administration
- Lupita Garcia**
Administrative & Development Assistant
- Erik Harris**
Chief Commercial Officer & Executive Vice President, Ultragenyx Inc.
- Brett Hazlett**
Chief Financial Officer/Chief Administrative Officer
SFMade & PlaceMade
- Jill Hughes**
Psychologist
- Sonia Katyal**
Associate Dean for Faculty Development & Research/
Distinguished Haas Chair, UC Berkeley School of Law
- Kathleen McNamara**
Principal, Seven Hills School
- Eric Pearson**
Supervisor for Home Entertainment, Pixar Animation Studios
- Shalini Sharp**
Board Member & Advisor to Life Sciences Companies
- Mike Seel**
Vice President, Freed Associates, Healthcare Management Consulting
- Ryan Sullivan**
Founder & Director of Village to Village, Inc.
- Jase Turner**
Assistant Head of School & Interim Head of Lower School,
The Seven Hills School
- Sandra Williams-Hamp**
Executive Director of Educational Partnerships, University of
California Office of the President
- Karen Zukor**
Statistics Consultant, World Health Organization

Board Member Jill Hughes (Phoebe & Fiona ’19, Ian ’22) Thanks Departing Board Chair Peter Wong

On behalf of the entire Black Pine Circle Board of Directors, I’d like to extend sincere appreciation and gratitude to Peter Wong for his many years of service to our school.

Peter has served on the board for 11 years, six of which as Chair. BPC has grown immensely under Peter’s skilled and visionary leadership. During Peter’s tenure, BPC planned, fundraised for, and built the Q Lab, enabling an expansion of the upper school campus and more robust science programming, K–8. BPC has also had year after year of solid admissions of an increasingly diverse and talented student body; record-breaking fundraising efforts allowing the school to offer more financial awards to our families and professional development for our faculty; and conservatively managed finances leaving the school in a great position to weather the current pandemic and whatever the future may bring. Peter has spent countless hours working with BPC administrators and the board with grace and humility, never seeking the spotlight for himself. Peter, his wife Yoona, and their sons, Jackson ’17 and Daniel ’21, have left an indelible mark on BPC.

Part of Peter’s thoughtful leadership has included succession planning. Shalini Sharp (Sachin ’23, Rani ’24) will serve as Board Chair next year and will no doubt continue Peter’s legacy of excellent board leadership. BPC’s future is secure in large part due to Peter’s dedication and tireless efforts. Thank you, Peter—BPC is a better place because of you!

BPC's Strategic Planning

by Head of School John Carlstroem

Strategic planning is a process used by many organizations to identify, realize, and evaluate their goals for progress. Black Pine Circle School has been engaged in strategic planning under the leadership of the head of school and the board of directors for many years. Members from all constituents—faculty, staff, board, parents, even students—work together in planning groups to establish and prioritize areas of growth for our school.

Like so many initiatives, over the past two years, Black Pine Circle School's Strategic Plan had to be reimaged, reconfigured, and reconsidered due to the circumstances that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the expert leadership of board member and alumni parent, Eric Pearson, we were making significant headway during the first part of the 2019–2020 school year on our strategic goals. As some of you may remember, through our comprehensive outreach work, our Strategic Plan was centered around six interlocking “planks,” all essential to achieving Black Pine Circle School's 2026 Master Plan goals.

As we continued working on our outcomes relating to this Strategic Plan we came to understand that social and emotional learning and success in differentiated instruction were directly

The six planks (which are now four) were:

- A CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
- A RENOWNED REPUTATION IN SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)
- CONTINUED SUCCESS IN DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION



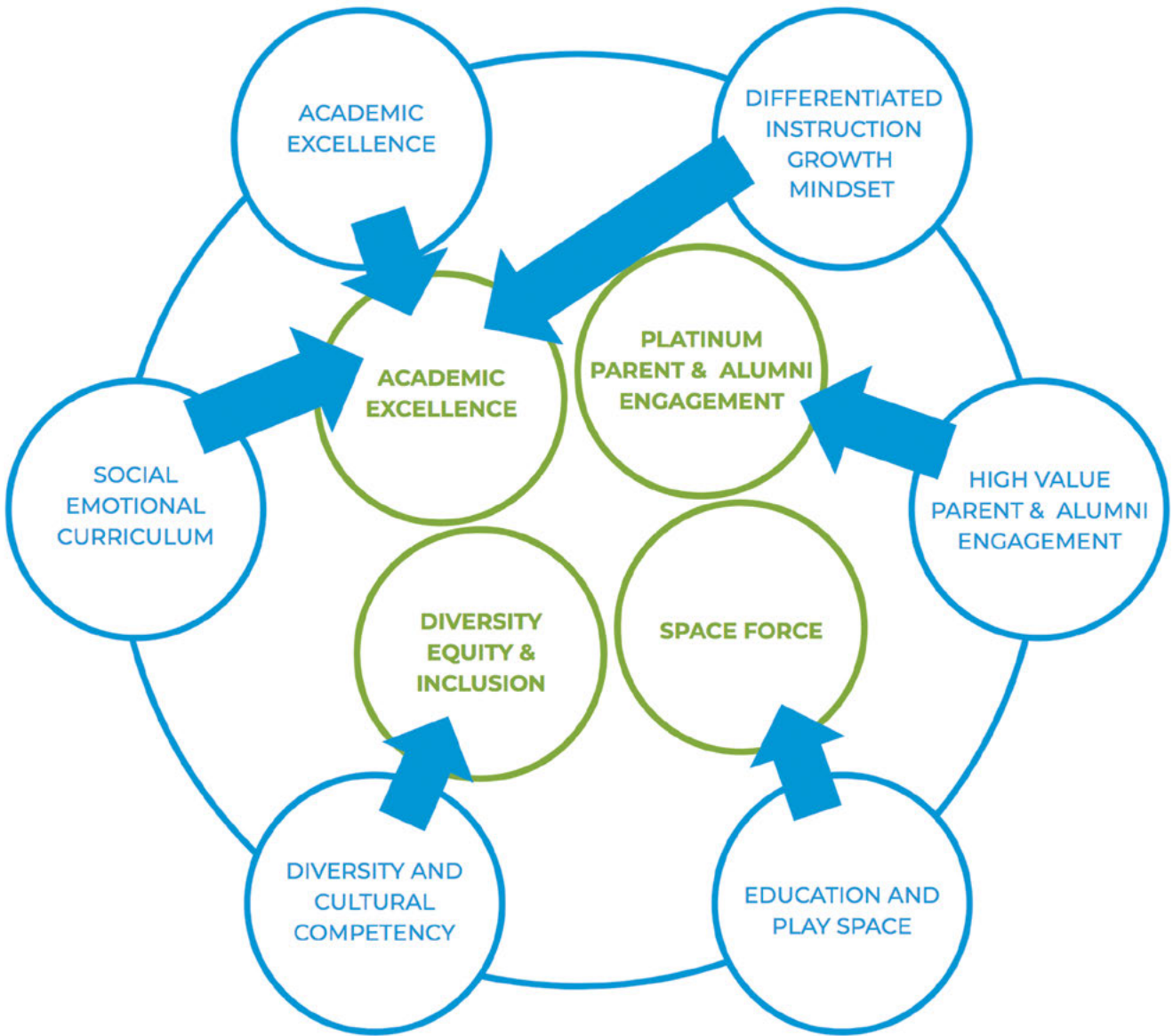
linked to our goals around academic excellence. In reality, coupling these elements of the Strategic Plan within academic excellence created a new way to think about what academic excellence means at BPC.

Even with the challenges that COVID-19 presented, we are pleased with how far we have progressed and the path we are on, moving the organization ever forward.

Being a part of our strategic efforts is both rewarding and joyful work. It is also critically important to the future health and vitality of our school. We need wonderful parent volunteers, like you, to help us attain our goals. If you would like to get more involved, please contact me at jcarlstroem@blackpinecircle.org

- AN ENHANCED CAMPUS AND STATE OF THE ART CLASSROOMS AND PLAY SPACES
- DEMONSTRATED LEADERSHIP IN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSIVITY, AND JUSTICE (DEIJ)
- HIGH QUALITY PARENT AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

BPC STRATEGIC PLAN



STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEE LEADERS

Academic Excellence (Differentiated Instruction/SEL)
Shalini Sharp & Tanveer Alibhai

Academic & Play Space
Brett Hazlett & Bill Shea

DEIJ
Sandra Williams-Hamp & DeAndre Calhoun

High Quality Parent & Alumni Engagement
Eric Pearson, Ryan Sullivan, & John Ormsby

Strategic Plan Updates:

- **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING, DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION, & CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT)**
 - Core competencies for instruction (CCFI) at BPC have been an important topic in the past few years for our administrative team. You have no doubt heard BPC teachers or leaders talk about Kimochis, Second Step, TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling), Bridges in Mathematics, Cathy Fosnet’s Context for Learning Mathematics, Lucy Calkins, and Street Data.
 - These programs are all elements of our academic and social and emotional curricula and inform student assessments in our core subjects. The list above is not exhaustive and, of course, the most critical competencies for our teachers include Socratic Practice and differentiated instruction.
 - Recently, we have been stretching resources throughout the organization to prioritize training in these areas. We are also moving forward with additional staffing as we dot the i’s and cross the t’s on our articulation of each grade’s curricular scope and sequence, kindergarten through eighth grade.
- **ENHANCED CAMPUS & STATE OF THE ART CLASSROOMS & PLAY SPACES**
 - We purchased 906 Addison Street and turned it into a Health Hub which has been essential during our management of the pandemic.
 - We worked directly with the City of Berkeley to close part of 7th Street to create a playground during the heart of the pandemic.
 - We replaced and/or installed new air circulation devices all over campus.
 - We continue to pursue opportunities for additional space in the immediate neighborhood.
 - This summer, 2022, a new lower school play structure is planned, along with a remodel of our second and third grade classrooms, and further upgrades to our 6th Street entrance. All this as we continue to look for our next dream building or space.

- **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSIVITY, & JUSTICE (DEIJ)**
 - We have been continuing the important work of creating space for our student and family affinity groups (e.g. Black Student Union, Asian Student Union, Queer Student Alliance, LatinX Club, and more).
 - Our curricula examination continues to focus on how we coordinate within this area and we have hosted some extraordinary guest speakers for our faculty, parents, and students, including: civil rights and black power movement author and teacher, Hasan Kwame Jeffries, UC higher education enrollment experts, Youlonda Copeland-Morgan and Ebony Lewis, and Warriors Vice-President, Stevie Gray.
 - Our most successful DEIJ work has been in the recruitment and retention of a more diverse faculty and student body that is far more representative of West Berkeley and the Bay Area.
 - We are re-examining Black Pine Circle School’s **Mission Statement** to determine if it is reflective of our emphasis on DEIJ.
- **HIGH QUALITY PARENT & ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT**
 - In 2018 we invited Lupita Garcia ’10 to fill our “young alumni” seat on our BPC Board of Directors. (Read more about Lupita on page 18.) Alum Ryan Sullivan (2001–2008) is fulfilling this role beginning with the 2021–2022 school year.
 - We are finding ways to facilitate more meaningful parent engagement, despite the challenges of the past two years.
 - We are using social media as a tool to encourage alum students and families to connect with BPC.
 - We have invited alum students, such as **Itamar Moses** ’91, and **Aisha Tyler** ’81 to visit BPC and talk with students about how their years at BPC influenced their career path.
 - As we grow this effort our Parent & Alumni Engagement Committee has recommended we increase our staffing in this area too.

Our Parent Community

Black Pine Circle School is teeming with multi-talented, creative, and engaged parents who are committed to building a strong sense of community through leadership and participation in school committees, events, and activities. The hard work of our dedicated parent volunteers provides invaluable support for our thriving school community.

Parent Circle Committee 2020–2021

Parent Circle, BPC’s parent association, facilitates parent involvement in the life of the school and acts as a bridge between parents and staff. Parent Circle is comprised of volunteer class representatives from each grade who meet regularly to plan school events, coordinate volunteer opportunities, and discuss relevant issues pertaining to the school.

Parent Circle Co-Chairs

Katy Hakimian, Myriah Rose, & Trina Mastro



Class Representatives

Kindergarten

Shanta S. Cherla
Joe Shapiro

1st grade

Trina & Joe Mastro
Steve & Becky Román

2nd grade

Jacqueline Emerson
Sarah Holzman
Simon Morfit

3rd grade

Erin Hansen Reding
Rae Brune
Christina Meyer

4th grade

Wendy Symon
Robin Sease
Darien Meyer

5th grade

Elena Kaloyanova
Heather Smalley
Markley Bavinger

6th grade

Austin Sharp
Eddie O’Sullivan
Heather Marshall
Sarah Galender Meyer
Shabnam Merchant

7th grade

Camille Stroughter
Signy Judd

8th grade

Maryann Amado
Corey Keller



Community Matters Committee 2020–2021

The Community Matters Committee develops and sustains partnerships with local community organizations such as Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (Harrison House), the Multicultural Institute, and Shorebird Park Nature Center (Annual Coastal Cleanup). The committee focuses on identifying meaningful volunteer opportunities for our families.

Community Matters Co-Chairs

Eric Westervelt, Camille Stroughter,
& Judy Shih



Spring Soirée & Fundraiser 2021

ARTseen: A Community Event to Elevate Our School



Our most important fundraiser, bringing in \$100,000 annually, the Spring Soirée is the party of the year where parents, in non-COVID years get to eat, drink, laugh, bid, and dance.

This year we re-imagined the Soirée as a hybrid event. Eager for connection, families came to campus

to enjoy one another’s company, listen to the BPC Band play, sip the delicious bubbly from Donkey and Goat Winery, pick up their food & drink party packages, provided by local restaurants, before joining with other BPC families in backyards to watch the recorded event, **ARTseen: A Community Event to Elevate Our School**

Event Organizers – Lesley Jones & John Ormsby

Thank You to Our Event Supporters:

- Agrodolce
- Gather
- Graze + Gather
- La Marcha Tapas Bar
- Minnie Bell’s
- Acme Bread
- Tracey & Jared Brandt,
- Donkey & Goat Winery
- Val Cipollone, Beaune Imports



Our Financial Picture: 2020–2021

The 2020–2021 school year was unusual, to say the least. BPC’s finances in 2021–2022, were also atypical. We began the year facing a myriad of unknowns and any number of ever-shifting challenges. Would our attendance numbers be stable? How much faculty turnover would we see? What extraordinary expenses (e.g. testing, tents, technology, teachers, tuition assistance) would we incur in order to begin the year remotely, and later pivot to in-person school? Would government funds be a part of our solution? Would we need to incur more debt? How would our community work to sustain its philanthropic support for the school?

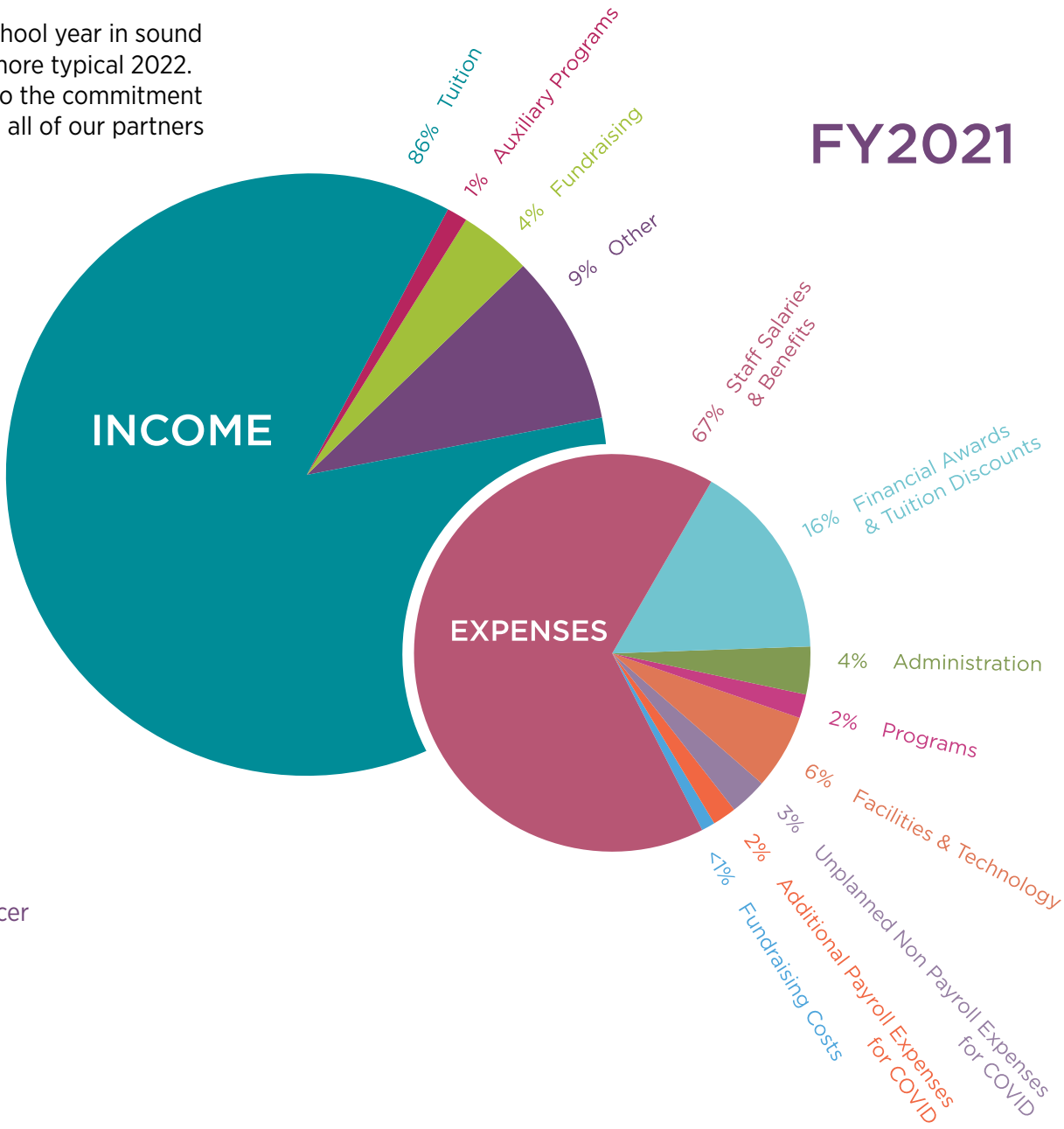
Thankfully, for the most part, the answers to these questions came back strongly in our favor. We, unfortunately, did lose a few families and faculty members. Still, our classrooms were full and we found wonderful new educators to help us keep BPC going strong. The 2020–2021 year did come with significant unbudgeted expenses, however, nearly all of these were offset by stimulus funds, and our community fundraised dollars. The City of Berkeley was highly responsive to our needs from day one. We were creative and only spent money where necessary. (Remember that “playground” in the middle of 7th Street?) As we look in the rear-view mirror we are so grateful that when we asked our community to respond, everyone came through for BPC, and did so ... emphatically.

BPC had an operating budget of just over \$11 million in 2021–2022. The charts below reflect last year’s operating income and expenses in percentage terms. There are a couple of notable variations from a normal year. For example, in a typical year, staff salaries and benefits would be closer to 80 percent of our expenses. This number is a little different in this exhibit, owing to unbudgeted but essential pandemic costs and investments. Similarly, in a more typical year (please, more of those!), tuition and fundraising would be reflected as a higher percentage of income, but one-time additional revenue sources caused these percentages to dip slightly.

Overall, BPC weathered the 2020–2021 school year in sound financial shape and is well on track for a more typical 2022. Our financial outlook is excellent, thanks to the commitment of our families, our faculty, our board, and all of our partners in West Berkeley and beyond.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Eric Sullivan, Chair
- Peter Wong, Board Chair
- Brett Hazlett, Board Member
- Alexis Kleinhans, Alum Parent
- Shalini Sharp, Board Member
- Jase Turner, Board Member
- Bill Shea, Chief Financial & Operating Officer
- John Carlstroem, Head of School



The Resilience Fund Campaign 2020–2021



The Annual Fund Campaign (AFC) is BPC’s most important philanthropic priority. A robust AFC allows for critical investments in financial awards for families, teacher professional development, and other year-to-year priorities. For the 2020–2021 school year, BPC rebranded the Annual Fund to the Resilience Fund to better reflect the unique challenges and urgency prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The BPC community responded to this call with great generosity, raising a combined \$430,000 for the RFC in 2020–2021.

The following alphabetical list includes everyone who made a gift between the dates of July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. As the inset “Donor Circles” box indicates, we received 98 gifts at the Major Donor level (\$1,000 and above). Of these, 25 were at the Leadership Donor level (\$5,000 and above).

Thank you for loving and supporting our school.

2020–2021 Donor List

Mandeep Ahluwalia & Inder Singh°
Kristin & Matthew Aldrich
Chaylee Priete & Peter Allen°
Hilary Altman & Kevin Schwartz°
Maryann & Alex Amado°
Judd & Tamar Antin°
Lauren Arnault & David Fleck
Max Factor & Jane Arnault
Alexander & Rebecca Ashton
Nilgun & Alper Atamturk°
Catherine Atcheson & Christian Fritze°
Bill Press & Elana Auerbach°
Anthony Tassinello & Frances Baca
Caitlin & Jamie Bacher
Vera & Felice Balarin°
Seth Fleisher & Emily Baldwin°
Barbara Bañez & Hector Banez
Francoise Bason°
Markley Bavinger & Dylan Charles°
Shirin & Kiran Belur
Michaela Bevallard
Yalew Bezuwork & Hana Abraha
Heather Birks & Jonathan Beamer
Chetana & Nirav Bisarya
Paula Black & Ryan Anderson

Ellen Robertson & Joel Bolonick
Morgan Bonanno Development°
Torrie Lloyd-Masters & Jordan Brand
Daniel Emerling & Halle Brown°
James Brown°
Ryan Carver & Rae Brune
Wendy Buffett & Joel Kreisberg
DeAndre Calhoun°
Héctor & Brook Cardenas
Megan Carlos & Cruz Carlos Jr°
Natasha Stillman & John Carlstroem
Gabrielle & Peter Cavagnaro
Adam Safir & Anna Cederstav°
Yoon Chang & Simon Mui
Lin Zuo & Penny Chen
Shanta Cherla & Kumar Upadhyay°
Jean Chu°
Chris Chun°
Alycia Lai-Clemens & Charlie Clemens
Tom Clyde°
Alex & Ben Cole°
Norma Cortez
Kathy & Coleman Cosby°
Gigi & Can Cui
Lev Mazin & Sasha Demina°
Marc Derewetzky
Marc Countryman & Nam Do°

Diego Carretero-Frades &
Irenka Dominguez-Pareto°
Tracy Dooley
Laura Sterponi & Gaspard Duchene
Sally & Terry Eagle°
Jennifer & Aaron Edlin°
Negar & Matthew Eghtessadi-Reed
Jacqueline & Greg Emerson°
Mark & Ivana Fedor
Sheridan Hitchens & Catherine Firpo°
Kellie Whittaker & Bill Fisher
LaTrina & Peter Franklin
Janice Frieder
Matti Fromson & Tom Mayhew°
Jacob & Freya Fuchs
Lori & Bill Gallagher
Lupita Garcia
Caroline & Daniel Gershwin
Patrizia Meunier & Azriel Goldschmidt°
Jack Joseph & Gail Gordon°
Miguel Helft & Samantha Graff°
Ann Sullivan & Tony Greenberg°
Isadora & Arnie Gullov-Singh
Cecilia & Ethan Gunning
Art Pulaski & Jessica Guynn
Katy & Tony Hakimian°
James & Sita Hanlon

DONOR CIRCLES

LEADERSHIP DONORS:

SOCRATES — 4 Donors

Gifts of \$25,000 & above

ATHENA — 6 Donors

Gifts between \$10,000 & \$25,000

PLATO — 15 Donors

Gifts between \$5,000 & \$10,000



MAJOR DONORS:

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. — 20 Donors

Gifts between \$2,500 & \$5,000

LAO TZU — 53 Donors

Gifts between \$1,000 & \$2,500



SOJOURNER TRUTH — 40 Donors

Gifts between \$500 & \$1,000

ARISTOTLE — 110 Donors

Gifts up to \$500

Erik & Gillian Harris
Matt & Chering Heffelfinger
Carolyn Henel & Edward Kerley°
April Higashi°
Erica & Ben Hockett°
David Halligan & Simone Hoelck°
Loren Passmore & Kusia Hreshchyshyn°
Sherry Hsi & Per Peterson°
Peter Seibel & Lily Huang°
Nina & Jim Hufford°
Jill & Bill Hughes°
Janice Hui & Dan Rohn
Cheryl Ikeda & Ron Rasing°
Victoria Mancuso & Rebecca Jackson
Andy Seplow & Margie Jacobs°
Jacek Skarbinski & Seema Jain
Lisa Jensen & Alden Blair
Elizabeth Joh & Charles Reichmann
Jane Wellenkamp & Mark Johnson
Lisa & Dexter Jones°
Nas & Isha Kahn°
Jenny Kaneshiro & Derek Wong
Barbara Kantrovitz°
Lauren & Brian Kaplan
Tanveer Alibhai & Zahoor Kareem
Alexander & Julia Katz
Corey Keller & Craig Kolb°
Erica Klempner & Mat Kessler
Salomeh Keyhani°
Yumiko Hayakawa & Michael Kharitonov
Neil Minihane & Eileen Kim°
Sally & George Kiskaddon°
Tony Kay & Amy Kittiver-Kay
Erica Kochi & Gabor Cselle
Bridget & Bruce Koontz°
Rebecca & Peter Krawiec
Elaine Kreston & Eric Enderton
Neal Jacunski & Michele Lau
Jenny Lederer
Randi & Mike Lee
Hannah Lesser
Tamsin Levy
Cheryl Young & Paul Liu°
Diva Chan & Ian Lo°
Polly Lockman

Maya Lodish & Jay Zimmerman°
Belinda Luu & Kenneth Chen
Jeremy Reiter & Christine Ma°
Emily Mackil & Max Christoff
Marcin Majda
Lesley & Steve Mandros Bell
Tomi Margolin
Heather Marshall & Rodolfo Erqueta
Petronella Van Berry & Chris Martin°
Trina & Joseph Mastro
Amanda Mata
Jane Mauldon
Inna Belogolovsky & Boris Mazniker°
R.B. Morris & Kayla McCutchan°
Michelle McGuinness & Ian Agol°
Marta McLeod
Kathleen McNamara°
Kathleen McNulty & John Bissell°
Daniel Goldstein & Shabnam Merchant
Darien & Sarah Meyer°
Chris Meyer & Gabriel Sanchez
Carol Sue Mimura & Jeremy Thorner°
Allison Torres & Joshua Minor°
Troy Mittone°
Elena Kaloyanova & Stan Momtchev
Apollonia Morrill & John Lightfoot
Melinda Morris
Amy Ng & Elliott Chin
Kellie Hodge & Michael Nguyen°
Thao Nguyen-Horowitz & Evan Horowitz
Sabine & Eddie O’Sullivan°
Deborah & Tim Ogburn
Jana & Chris Oliver°
Lissa Franklin & John Ormsby°
Jessica Osuna
Lior Pachter & Inga Hallgrimsdottir
Liz Pagano & Ken Robinson
Maria Palmer°
Caitlin Patterson & Rich Price°
Erin Bowes & John Pawek°
Michelle Pearl & Brett Mendel°
Aaron Pearlman
Jennifer Pett-Ridge & Logan Hennessy
Carl Goldberg & Sarah Postyn°
Eric Powell

Mary & Rick Price
Liz Pulido
Elkhanah Pulitzer & Chad Owens°
Ajay Krishnan & Annie Reding
Katie Rendahl & Don Rio
Lydia Kim & Yun Rhie
Amy Gordon Risz & Yann Risz°
Nancy Roberts
Erica Roman
Vahan Galachyan & Lilit Safaryan
Leigh & Vittorio Salvo
Suzanne & Robert Samuels
Dave Baggeroer & Lynn Santopietro
Lucia & Mark Savage°
Wendy Owen & Nadav Savio°
Shoshana Berger & Anthony Saxe
Cullen Gerst & Elizabeth Scarboro
Ron & Jill Scheele
David Johnson & Victoria Schlesinger
Tess Taylor & Taylor Schreiner
Robin Sease
Anne O’Neill & Mike Seel°
Amanda Brewster & Joe Shapiro°
Shalini & Austin Sharp°
Bill Shea & Dee Lopez°
Laura & Robert Shear°
Judy Shih & Edward Hill
Sanjog Sikand
Hannah Sims
Sheetal Singh & Jonathan Larson
Chadrick & Heather Smalley
Abby Smith & Dave Hoverman
Gabe Schnitzler & Sarah Song°
Marjan Mashhadi & Matthew Specter
Camille & Robert Stroughter
Ryan Sullivan
Kathleen Summerland & Frank Heuser
Karen Sumner°
Claire SunSpiral
Mason Koelewyn & Wendy Symon°
Debbie & David Taylor°
Jenny Teaford & Greg Jung
Leslie Teicholz & Leif Haase
Jessica Teisch & Michael Rosenberg°
Charlie Koven & Samantha Teplitzky°

Steve Rothman & Kathleen Tierney°
Leonardo & Monique Torio
Bob Meade & Clare Trimbur
Bette Tsai & Tom Silverstrim
Mimi Tsang & Fred Norton
Annie Tsong & Jeffrey Kim
Jean Rhow & Joel Ullmann
Declan Kenna & Jennifer Vella
Ellen Veomett & Aaron Rappaport
Larry Stone & Danielle Vidal°
Carolyn & Rob von Behren°
Signy Judd & Jonathan Wade
Haiyan Huang & Weigang Wang
Mark Day & Esther Watt
Victor Xiong & Yan Wei°
Lisa Woo & Eric Westervelt°
Matthew White & Sarah Holzman°
Ke Williams°
Amanda Williams°
Sandra Williams-Hamp & Tim Hamp°
Diane & Joshua Wirtschafter°
Micah Brenner & Stacey Wisnia
Irina Wolf Carriere & Antoine Carriere°
Vicki Wong & Lee Byrd°
Yoon & Peter Wong°
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The preceding gifts were received between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Every effort has been made to ensure that the list is complete and accurate. To report any errors or omissions, please contact Director of Development John Ormsby at jormsby@blackpinecircle.org

The Annual Fund Campaign 2021 – Jan 31, 2022

For the 2021–2022 school year, BPC reinstituted the Annual Fund Campaign. The Resilience Fund Campaign served a valuable, yet temporary, purpose in 2020–2021 by shining a light on the specific challenges the school faced as a result of the pandemic. But we determined the time was right this year to return to a strongly optimistic fundraising message that focused not on what we needed or lacked in the moment, but on the future and what was possible. And our community clearly agreed.

As of the writing of this report, the Annual Fund Campaign has raised \$400,000, a record for this time of year. Especially helpful have been new families, who have been extraordinarily generous as a group and, of course, our Major and Leadership Donors who make such a difference. For details, please refer to the inset box detailing our “Donor Circles.”

Thank you for loving and supporting our school.

If you would like to make an online gift now, visit:

blackpinecircle.org/donate



Fundraising efforts are aided by the BPC Board of Directors and the Development Committee, whose members are:

- Peter Wong, Board Chair
- Shalini Sharp, Board Vice-Chair
- Jill Hughes, Board Member
- Katy Hakimian, Parent Circle Co-Chair
- John Ormsby, Director of Development

DONOR CIRCLES

LEADERSHIP DONORS:

SOCRATES — 4 Donors
Gifts of \$25,000 & above

ATHENA — 3 Donors
Gifts between \$10,000 & \$25,000

PLATO — 22 Donors
Gifts between \$5,000 & \$10,000



MAJOR DONORS:

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. — 19 Donors
Gifts between \$2,500 & \$5,000

LAO TZU — 62 Donors
Gifts between \$1,000 & \$2,500



SOJOURNER TRUTH — 29 Donors
Gifts between \$500 & \$1,000

ARISTOTLE — 64 Donors
Gifts up to \$500

The following alphabetical list includes everyone who made an Annual Fund gift between the dates of July 1, 2021 and January 31, 2022. Families who have yet to give, or who may wish to support BPC further, will have a wonderful opportunity to do so at the Spring Soirée in May.

July 1, 2021 – Jan 31, 2022 Donor List

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Introducing New Head of Lower School Tanveer Alibhai

For the 2020–2021 school year, Tanveer Alibhai joined the BPC community as the interim head of lower school, when BPC was in the midst of managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Tanveer rose to the occasion on every level, supporting her faculty as they embraced distance and hybrid learning, pivoting daily as new guidance for schools rained down, and working thoughtfully and safely with the administration toward getting all of our young students back on campus step by step. Surviving this most challenging of years, during which we reimagined school as we knew it, Tanveer took on the role of head of lower school in 2021-2022.

As an educator for over 20 years, Tanveer's passion and commitment to education and children is unwavering. Always putting children at the forefront of decision making, Tanveer is also a lifelong learner and innovator. She spends time questioning practices, ensuring they are aligned with the mission of schools and institutions, and framing questions to help better understand the 'why' of education.

Tanveer came to us with over 10 years of prior experience as a division head at both St. Paul's Episcopal School, Oakland and at The Seven Hills School, Walnut Creek, as well as 13 years of experience teaching in elementary schools in Canada. In addition, as a consultant with both independent and international schools, she brought with her the ability to share best practices and to guide schools toward their desired goals. As a school leader, Tanveer's fundamental beliefs include: children should be at the forefront of all decision making for schools; human kindness is central to how/what we model to children; a child's curiosity, social, emotional, and cognitive learning are key to raising great human beings; the triad of parents, children, and teachers working together helps create great villages of learning; innovation/iterating and a growth mindset are necessary for us

to progress; diversity moves us forward and keeps the conversations relevant to all stakeholders; and that shared leadership is essential because leaders cannot lead on their own. Tanveer also brings with her a practice of parent coaching and a passion for social justice.



Tanveer joining the BPC family meant that she was happily able to reconnect with DeAndre Calhoun (head of upper school) and Kanoe Connor Joseph (first grade head teacher), two educators that she admired tremendously from her time working with them at St. Paul's.

Tanveer was attracted to BPC's commitment to student curiosity, community, inquiry, and voice. As a parent of two children (Nahla, 10 and Julian, 3) the school's values align with how she and her husband, Zahoor, intentionally try to parent their children. Joining BPC at this critical time, Tanveer hoped to bring her experience as an educator, administrator, and recent world-traveler to the school to provide insight, perspective, and possibilities for the future. The community approach, reciprocal listening, and a Socratic foundation have been critically important to Tanveer in her new role and as BPC has been successfully working through this pandemic.

Tanveer loves spending time with her family, hiking, biking, and days at the beach. She's a voracious reader who also enjoys gardening, painting, drawing, and cooking.

BPC’s Black Student Union

by DeAndre Calhoun, Head of Upper School & Assistant Head of School

Through the foundational work of the Hamp family, Sandra, Tim, and Timothy (8th grade), the Black Student Union (BSU) has continued to grow over the years at Black Pine Circle School. Activities have included our Black Excellence guest speakers for lunchtime BSU student meetings, such as Warriors Vice-President Stevie Gray, Micheal and Sanae Smith, owners and operators of five McDonald’s franchises; an outing to the de Young Museum to see the *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power 1963–1983* exhibit; bowling in Albany; and special graduation ceremonies for 8th graders. In 2019, Sandra Hamp brought the acclaimed Black Girls Code programming workshops to our school community. The bi-annual social events hosted by the Hamp family draw us together and enrich our school. The sense of community fostered by the BSU is strong and an important part of recruiting and keeping Black families at Black Pine Circle.

I have been asked before, why is the BSU important? Independent schools were not created to be beacons of diversity. Representation of a town or city’s diversity is typically lacking in independent schools. To be able to see, connect with, and get to know folks with similarities in experience because of race are essential for some students and families. When you are in the majority, it is difficult to have the perspective or understanding of what it is like to not feel represented at your school or workplace.

In addition to the focus on community and fun, BSU also provides a comforting, supportive place for young people growing and learning more about their identity. Racial identity development can be intense for a middle schooler of color. Sophia A, Black Pine



Circle ’21 and Lick-Wilmerding HS ’25 stated, “BSU was a safe space where I could be myself and I could share my experiences and struggles with other people with my background.”

Sandra Hamp reflects, “The BSU has been a catalyst for my son in terms of him being able to identify with other students that look like him. It has also been essential in terms of having the feeling of being able to be authentic without apology.”

The BSU is a vital part of BPC’s commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice by providing ongoing opportunities for students and families to deepen connections. Black Pine Circle School is a place of belonging and the BSU helps to strengthen that experience for all.

Introducing Climate Positive Student Network (CPSN)

by Maria Palmer, Sixth Grade English Teacher

Climate Positive Student Network is a Bay Area, intra-school, student-led program designed to provide students with a scaffolded opportunity to educate and become educators themselves about the climate change crisis, its origins, perpetrators, solutions, and positive innovations.

CPSN, originally conceived in fall of 2021 as Climate Positive Schools Initiative (CPSI), is in its infant stages. As it grows, CPSN has morphed to include an eight-person steering committee from four Bay Area schools, a student-designed website and newsletter, a library committee, and an interested population that includes members from BPC, Maybeck, Escuela Bilingue Internacional, Head Royce, Athenian, St. Paul’s, and Marin Country Day.

At CPSN, we have weekly steering committee meetings, monthly all-schools online meetings, weekly student lunch meetings at BPC, and intra-school student-led meetings on Zoom. Students at BPC, Maybeck, and EBI are currently working on projects to share in April 2022. It is our goal to have students at as many schools as possible present their projects to their schools at that time.

How did CPSN come to be? I came up with the idea of CPSI, now appropriately called Climate Positive Student Network, in September 2021 after a summer of disastrous California wildfires that made me anxious about the world we educators and parents are leaving for our students, children, and grandchildren. The idea came to me that a positive key I could offer students would be to facilitate their self-education about both the crisis and its possible solutions and a connection with each other which would lead to deeper understanding, a feeling of camaraderie, and newly gained power.

Black Pine Circle School, under the leadership of John Carlstroem, has always been a place of open inquiry: a school that values questions over answers. I have taught here for almost 30 years and constantly learn from my colleagues, administrators, and especially my students. Recently, I have come to value flipping the top down triangle model of education with the teacher at the top, to more of a student-initiated and led education model. As I watch BPC students gather once a week at CPSN meetings, and listen to the student members of our steering committee, I am super excited to see them think deeply, create, and direct self-initiated projects with tremendous enthusiasm and both a breadth and depth I could not have foreseen. John Carlstroem has been an inspired and tireless supporter of CPSN, using his connections and insights to help us spring from an idea on paper to the organism it is now. We could not have done this without him.



Once an idea in my head, CPSN is now an ever-growing multi-school team of educators and students shaping this infant idea to realize itself as an effective tool for climate education and activism. Our hope is that there will be stimulating presentations at participating schools this April, and that an ongoing robust dialogue and an ever growing organization will help enable all of our students to be effective learners, educators, and empowered citizens in the world in which they live.

Alum Spotlights – The BPC Pillars

CURIOSITY

Josh Soltz '15 is a junior at Case Western Reserve University studying electrical engineering.



Since middle school I have always been curious about start-ups and technology. 3D printers and making were such an integral part of Ms. Mytko’s classroom that I think almost everyone who was taught by her, including me, was infected by her enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and inventing! One of the reasons I chose Case Western for college was the building they have dedicated to entrepreneurship and inventing. My work with OneLock (allowing teachers and staff to instantly open or lock any classroom door on a school campus) during my high school years at Head Royce ignited my interest in electronics. I find bread boards, wires, capacitors, resistors, and transistors incredibly interesting—how only a few transistors can make up the logic gate that, when multiplied, then produce everything on your computer, smartphone, or tablet.

Ms. Palmer and Mr. G were the two most influential teachers, besides Ms. Mytko, during my time at BPC. Mr. G helped me accelerate in math which put me on an advanced track through high school and into college. Ms. Palmer was able to motivate me to do more than “just enough to get by” and slide under my parents’ radar. I’m no longer “the master of the minimum.”

I miss my time at BPC but I stay in touch with many of my friends, which always reminds me of what a special place it is. I feel like these are relationships that I will carry into my adulthood.

COMMUNITY

Lupita Garcia '10 is the Manager of Donor Relations & Executive Affairs at Root & Rebound, a non-profit legal reentry advocacy center devoted to having the law serve, rather than harm, low-income, and communities of color.



BPC’s teachers influenced all aspects of my learning and growing during middle school and beyond. When I see numbers, I think of Mr. G. When I see a sign in Spanish, I flash to Señora Lacy. When I bump into Socrates (it happens), I remember being in Mr. Carlstroem’s 8th grade philosophy class. And, whenever I encounter something new in tech, it always reminds me of Ms. Mytko.

BPC also taught me about service. I vividly remember 8th grade visits to **Via Center**, a local school for profoundly differently-abled children, as sparking my desire to give back to the community. While at St. Mary’s College High School, I volunteered with the Multicultural Institute’s after-school tutoring program on the BPC campus that served the children of local day laborers. I then went on to pursue a service learning component as part of my BA in sociology. While at USF, I worked in the president’s office and saw first-hand the impact board members had on an organization. Because of my time as a student at BPC, I had the confidence to know that my voice mattered and had an impact. This is why, when asked to become a member of the BPC Board of Directors, a role I held from 2018 to 2021, I did not hesitate to give back to the place that had given me so much. As a recipient of financial assistance during my years in school, I understand the impact this support had on both my education and career path and, by working in development now at Root and Rebound, I’m able to continue to give back to my community.

INQUIRY

Professor Aaron Edlin '79, holds the Richard Jennings Chair and professorships in both the Economics Department and Law School at UC Berkeley. He is also the co-founder of the Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).



BPC helped nurture a love of learning, a joy in discovery, and a doubt of what others declare to be known fact. The BPC of 2021 has much in common with the BPC of the 1970s. Both are strong in math and music. Back then, we were all taught to sing folk songs and to do folk dances in the courtyard—the boys hated the dancing but it was good for us—and many or all of us played violin or cello, learning Mozart and other classical composers.

BPC has always been Socratic. I remember learning about the Greek origins of democracy, Aztec sacrifices, Incan knots, and Mohammed’s conquests. BPC was pretty avant garde in its early years: we had Commodore PETS when they were first released in 1977 and learned basic computer programming.

I have always challenged the way things are done and asked how they could be better. That was the foundation of bepress as it is of many innovative companies. In year five of bepress, I partnered with my lifelong friend, Jean-Gabriel Bankier, who I knew from our childhood together at BPC. JG also challenges authority and asks many questions, so the business was a true BPC experience.

My son, Adam, chose BPC for middle school: he wanted a place where kids were serious about learning, and he wanted a school that was strong in math. I had feelings of nostalgia from my time at BPC so this was a happy decision for our family.

VOICE

Maeve Steele '12 graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2020 with a degree in English. She is currently a singer songwriter in Los Angeles, and you can listen to her music on all streaming platforms.

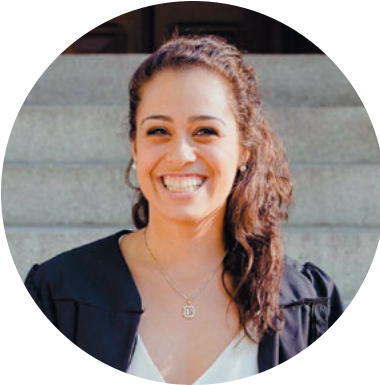


The first time I ever recorded music was for my 8th grade MasterWorks project (it was terrible!) but it gave me the confidence to keep trying. Songwriting was always something that was important to me on a personal level, but the idea of sharing it definitely terrified me. I think if musical expression wasn’t so celebrated at BPC I wouldn’t have kept trying. It was okay to fail, it was okay to not be great, because music was just part of the curriculum. That mentality definitely shaped my trial and error process in finding my voice.

The BPC music program absolutely influenced what I’m doing now. Every teacher involved with the music curriculum at BPC seemed to genuinely care so much about music. It was treated as an academic endeavor that was just as important as math or science. It instilled in me the idea that the arts can be just as intellectual and impactful as any other subject. I got such a great foundation of music knowledge at BPC that it felt like I had the ability to do anything with music in the coming years and really explore how it would play a role in my life.

Ms. Palmer’s humanities class also had a important impact on me as a student, where debates and differing opinions were encouraged. Literature and history were a jumping off point for us to develop ideas and learn how to defend them to a room full of people. And my drama teacher, Ms. Marziano, played a significant role in giving me confidence on stage, which is now proving invaluable to my musical career.

Alum Spotlights – Life Beyond BPC



Farah OteroAmad '10 is a producer for *The Problem with Jon Stewart*.

Farah stepped foot on Black Pine Circle’s campus as a kindergartener, and nine years later she graduated. Raised in Berkeley, Farah had a natural curiosity for storytelling. Her sixth grade English course pushed her to hone her writing skills through a daily free-write assignment. Ms. Palmer’s class inspired Farah to pursue a career in journalism. She went on to write for the renowned Berkeley High Jacket Newspaper and eventually earned a master’s degree from Columbia’s Journalism School, which was followed by landing a job at NBC News in New York City. She currently works as a producer for *The Problem with Jon Stewart*, a current affairs series for Apple TV.

Farah’s travels and work experience around the world started with a language exchange program to Mexico. BPC’s Señora Lacy arranged for a group of students to study Spanish in Cuernavaca while living with a host family. The eye-opening experience of living abroad at 12-years-old and becoming acclimated to different cultures and customs motivated Farah to join the International Baccalaureate program at Berkeley High and to study international relations at the University of Pennsylvania. During her time at UPenn, Farah interned in the Press Section at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, taught English to Japanese high school students in Tokyo, and studied politics abroad in Dublin. Most recently, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for Young Professional Journalists in Berlin.

Growing up, BPC pushed Farah to step outside of her comfort zone and practice public speaking. Through Ms. Marziano’s drama class, Farah learned to communicate effectively and perform in front of large crowds that culminated with the eighth grade musical *Bye Bye Birdie*. She transferred these skills in college when she worked for Penn Athletics as a sports reporter, interviewing Olympic athletes on camera at the Penn Relays. She also used these skills when conducting interviews for her dozens of breaking news and enterprise stories for NBCNews.com.

Farah also developed her love of sports at BPC. She played on the soccer, basketball, and volleyball teams, and was always encouraged by Coach Michael. Farah went on to become a four-year letter winner in soccer at Berkeley High School and continued to play Division I soccer for the University of Pennsylvania’s Varsity team. She currently plays for a competitive adult league in Manhattan.

Connor Whitehill '16 is a freshman at Stanford University, and a baseball sabermetrics aficionado.



Both my academic pursuits and personal interests have been strongly influenced by my experiences as a student at BPC and, in particular, my 8th grade MasterWorks project. For my MasterWorks, I combined an interest in statistics with a passion for baseball to create an algorithm that predicted the outcomes of MLB seasons. With the help of math teacher Carwei Seto, I put the finishing touches on what I called the “Connor Curve.” My prediction that the Chicago Cubs would be victorious over Cleveland in the World Series became a reality. In the media frenzy that surrounded the end of their 108-year championship

drought, my metric received attention from NBC Bay Area, WGN Chicago, and most notably ESPN’s SportsCenter. Emboldened by these TV appearances and equipped with a solid understanding of baseball sabermetrics, I became a much bigger fan of the game. In fact, I can see myself continuing to try and solve this ever-evolving puzzle as part of an MLB team’s front office.

BPC’s emphasis on independent thought and the importance of effectively articulating individual views, is a key element of what makes the school’s approach to learning so impactful. Through exercises like Socratic Seminars, I was able to develop my voice, both literally and metaphorically, while learning how to listen to the opinions of my peers. These skills directly translated into success in high school debate and a confidence that made my arguments more sound and rhetorically effective. In my 2020–2021 gap year before heading to Stanford, I was fortunate enough to return to BPC and share what I had learned through teaching a series of debate classes to middle schoolers. This experience solidified my belief that the emphasis on discussion-based learning and the Socratic Method at BPC creates a strong foundation for both debate and other academic pursuits.

In the spring of 2021, I was able to synthesize my love of baseball and oratory experience by doing play-by-play broadcasting for Stanford baseball on the KZSU network. It was an incredibly rewarding experience that saw me traveling to Lubbock and Omaha to call games in the College World Series. I am grateful for opportunities that BPC set in motion for me, and I have faith that the school will continue to empower the voices of future students for years to come.



Evan Kleinhans '18 is a senior at St. Mary’s College High School recruited to play baseball at Columbia University.

Black Pine Circle School introduced me to a rigorous education that prepared me well for both my high school education and beyond. The encouragement to engage in conversations and talk about the hard things is the most crucial lesson BPC taught me. The academic rigor I encountered in middle school also permeated other aspects of my life, particularly baseball. Whether it was pitching, coaching, or everyday problems, the lesson learned was always to be present.

The saying, “Be the change you want to see in the world,” was a statement the school made a priority. At Columbia, where I was recruited to play baseball right before senior year of high school, I will be studying political economy, with an emphasis on human rights. BPC really encourages students to interact and engage with the world in ways that have an impact.

The athletic component at BPC, not as well-known as its academic strengths, is both a perfectly competitive and inclusive environment for middle schoolers, especially those with dreams of playing sports at the collegiate and professional levels, like me. I doubt I would be in the position I am today without having learned the best educational habits at BPC. Prioritizing academics early on helped me with my training and workout sessions. I developed the stamina and endurance to survive multiple workouts a day for 52 weeks a year!

College athletic recruitment, especially at the Ivy League level, is stressful for both students and parents. Focusing on good grades and personal development is key. BPC helped set me up for success and I learned to be patient in the process.

Meet the BPC Alums – Back at BPC!

We are so fortunate to have BPC alums return to join our faculty, giving back to the school that was such an integral and important part of their educational path.

● Gwen Hornig, Eighth Grade English Teacher

Gwen Hornig '09 completed her undergraduate degree at NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study with a concentration in theatre, empathy, and education. She joined the BPC faculty three years ago as an apprentice in upper school drama classes. Gwen loves to garden, bake, hike in the rain, and hang out with all the zany animals at her house!

What was special to you about BPC while you were a student?

When I arrived at BPC as a sixth grader, I was a shy, introverted, overachieving student who had been taught throughout my public elementary school experience that there was always *one* right answer, *one* right way to do things, and more was always better. I vividly remember seminars in Mr. Sloper's sixth grade history class; I was overwhelmed by my classmates' confidence and willingness to take the risk of sharing their ideas and questioning the texts we were reading. In Ms. Palmer's English class, I received my first "imperfect" grade on a writing assignment because I had written far more than was asked and was urged to focus on quality, not quantity. I cowered at the back of drama class while my peers eagerly rushed onstage to play improv games, and wished I were invisible ... but we all know Ms. Marziano would never let me hide for long. I learned through observation and gentle encouragement from my teachers that BPC was a place where my voice was heard, where my ideas were valued, and where I could find my way through the awkwardness and discomfort of young adolescence surrounded by acceptance, love, and celebration. BPC was an incredible gift to 11-year-old Gwen, for it was here that I found the courage to be myself.



What made you want to return and work here?

To be perfectly honest, finding my way back to BPC as an adult was a happy accident that came out of a tumultuous time while I was in college. I took a break after my third year at NYU to come home, heal, and tend to my mental health. In my first month back in the Bay, I realized that I needed something to do. I'd visited BPC a few times to teach a couple of Shakespeare workshops, so I reached out to Andra Marziano to see if she needed help in drama classes. What started as a 1–2 day a week volunteer opportunity that gave me an inkling of purpose in my life back at home, turned into a full-time internship. I was on campus every weekday working with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students on Shakespeare, monologues, original plays, and learning the art of theatre education. I returned to NYC in the fall to finish my degree with the promise from John Carlstroem that there would be a job for me after graduation. So I graduated, moved back across the country, and started working as an apprentice in the drama classroom. This school was a safe place for me when I was a child, so it only makes sense that I saw it as a safe place to return to during a challenging time in my adult life, and I am so grateful that BPC welcomed me back with such open and loving arms.

What are the highlights of being back here as an employee?

BPC has granted me countless opportunities in the last three years to try on myriad hats and build countless new skills as I've juggled teaching drama classes while rekindling the K–8 Houses, designed, developed, and taught a brand new sixth grade Socratic Seminar course, and stepped in to fill the daunting, yet invigorating, role of 8th grade English teacher. These are opportunities that I know would not have presented themselves anywhere else, at least not with the encouragement, mentorship, and endless support from my supervisors and colleagues at BPC. What is more, I have the opportunity to work alongside so many people who I know to be brilliant educators and beautiful human beings because of the gifts they gave to me when I was just a middle schooler. All I hope is that as a teacher, I am able to give the current BPC students all that was given to me.

● Isabelle Tanov, Second Grade Assistant Teacher

After graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she studied art education and student-taught at elementary and high schools, Isabelle Tanov '10 moved back to Berkeley. Now enrolled in the Bay Area Teacher Training Institute (BATTI), she is pursuing a master's in education and a California teaching credential. She was the assistant teacher in fourth grade during the 2021–2021 school year and now assists in the second grade classroom. Isabelle loves taking walks in Tilden park and visiting the animals at The Little Farm.

What was special to you about BPC while you were a student?

All the singing was so special to me! I love how many special songs BPC has, like the BPC birthday song and the House songs, and that we would get together as a whole-school community and sing every Friday. It is so wonderful that this tradition has continued. I also really loved the celebration of the arts in other ways too, like the Spring and Winter Concerts and the student artwork being showcased both informally in the hallways and in an official capacity such as the 8th Grade MasterWorks projects

and the Annual K–8 Art Exhibit, which the whole community is invited to view. The fact that a school with a reputation for advanced academics and award-winning math teams placed such an importance on the arts allowed me to still feel I was a thriving student even when I struggled with math.

What made you want to return and work here?

I was managing the summer youth programs at Brushstrokes when I received an email from Mr. B, the Extended Daycare Director at the time, asking if I wanted to assist in BPC's after-school program or teach any after-school clubs, and I said yes to both! My passion for teaching art inspired me to design clubs that reflected some of the most fun classes I had taken in art school, such as puppet making and hand building with clay. Of course I made some *minor* adjustments to make these semester-long college courses into 10-week sessions for elementary school children, but I had so much fun being back at BPC and interacting with the fantastic students and faculty that, when I decided to go back to school to get a master's in teaching (MAT), I knew BPC was where I wanted to do my student teaching.

What are the highlights of being back here as an employee?

I love that we still gather as a community every week and get to sing together. I love seeing students' art lining the hallways and classroom walls. It is so special to be part of a community that values the arts so much. It has also been really special to get to see so many familiar faces still at BPC. You know it is a special school if such wonderful people have chosen to call this community home for 20 years or more.

● Annie Bissell, Extended Day Program Teacher

Annie Bissell '08 kept strong ties with the Black Pine Circle community after graduating. In 2016, she returned as the third grade assistant teacher and continued on as an aftercare assistant the following year. Annie was involved in a variety of community-building volunteer positions while attending UC

Annie Bissell (continued)

Santa Cruz. This year, she is taking classes at a local community college in addition to being an Extended Day Program teacher. Annie values her time in the outdoors: swimming in the cold Pacific, jogging and hiking with her dogs, and riding around town on her old red bicycle.

What was special to you about BPC while you were a student?

While I attended middle school at BPC, I found it to be a very accepting and caring environment. I believe this school helped cultivate a strong curiosity in me about the world around me. BPC is most certainly a question-friendly place!

What made you want to return and work here?

I knew I wanted to work with children and so when I found out about an assistant teacher position opening up in the Lower School, I applied! I believed I could learn a lot from the teachers and leaders at BPC.

What are the highlights of being back here as an employee?

The connections I've made with co-workers and the students are definitely the highlights, and they are countless. I love looking through photos from the last five years, reminding me of some great moments. I try to write down memorable experiences at the end of each work day so that I won't forget them!

Black Pine Circle School Annual Report 2020-2021
Produced by Lesley Jones, John Ormsby, and John Carlstroem
Designed by Lisa Dahl

Where Do BPC Students Continue Their Education After Graduation?

Bay Area High Schools:

Acalanes High, Albany High, Bentley School, Berkeley High, Bishop O'Dowd, De La Salle, Drew School, El Cerrito High, Heads-Royce School, Lick-Wilmerding, Marin Academy, Maybeck, Miramonte High, Oakland School of the Arts, Oakland Tech, St. Mary's College High School, Salesian College Preparatory, The Athenian School, The Bay School, The Branson School, The College Preparatory School, and Urban School of San Francisco

Universities:

American University
Brandeis
Brown
Cal Poly Pomona
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
California State University, Monterey Bay
Case Western Reserve University
Chapman
Chico State University
Colby College
Colgate University
Colorado College
Columbia University
Cornell University
Cuesta College
DePaul University
Drexel University
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Georgetown
Gonzaga
Grinnell College
King's College, London
Lehigh University
Lewis and Clark
Loyola Marymount University
Macalester College
Montana State
New York University
Seattle University

Skidmore College
Sonoma State University
Southern Methodist University
St. Andrews (Scotland)
St. Mary's College of California
Stanford
Trinity University, San Antonio
Tufts University
Tulane
University of Vermont
University of British Columbia
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, Merced
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Barbara
University of California, Santa Cruz
University of Chicago
University of Colorado, Boulder
University of Denver
University of Illinois
University of Montana
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Richmond
University of Southern California
University of Washington
Vanderbilt University
Vassar College
Villanova University
Washington University (St. Louis)
Wellesley
Wesleyan University
Wheaton College (MA)
Willamette University
Northeastern
Oregon Institute of Technology
Pitzer College
Puget Sound University
Reed College
San Diego State University
San Francisco State University
San Jose State University
Scripps College

