Black Pine Circle School’s mission is to create a learning community that encourages humanity, empathy, personal growth, 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 of skills 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 learn how to integrate respect, integrity, and purpose into their daily lives.

Our Pillars

Mission

Curiosity | Community | Inquiry | Voice

Letter from Head of School John Carlstrom

The year was 2005, and the movie version of the 90’s-based musical RENT had recently come out.

On a rainy Bay Area June day, I was heading out of San Francisco, driving my gray, compressed natural gas Ford Crown Victoria. My car was full of tchotchkes, boxes and my old office at the Hamlin School. I can vividly remember driving down Sansome Street, distracted, because I was hurrying to get to graduation at the school where I’d been hired to be the new head, Black Pine Circle School.

My heart and head were full. I was jolted from my daydreaming by a yellow cab rear-ending me. I should have known that day, that BPC would be a place where I would feel at home.

When I arrived at the Black Pine Circle campus, I dipped into the back of the FAD theater and sat down next to Laura Wolff, whom I had never really met through the interview process. I was immediately blown away by eighth-grade grad speeches, and of course songs. The eighth-graders, led by Cheryl Sunsam and Andrea Mariano, performed a pitch-perfect version of “Sawers of Love” from RENT. Most of us know the catchy chorus, “525,600 minutes, how do you measure, measure a year?” and the code in the songs asks, “How about love?”

I had never really met any of these students or their families but in that moment, I teared up. The sincerity, the talent, and the passion these students exuded was extraordinary. I knew I had found my new head, Black Pine Circle School. My heart and head were full. I was jolted from my daydreaming by a yellow cab rear-ending me. I should have known that day, that BPC would be a place where I would feel that extraordinary jolting – in a wonderful way – nearly every day!

It’s been an amazing journey and, more than anything, it’s been about love and learning. That same combination of “Goodness and Knowledge” that makes BPC so unique. In my time we’ve had so many constants: math victories, remarkable teachers, clever kids, paths of inquiry, and this remarkable feeling that at BPC you can be your authentic self. You can wear a pirate hat every day, and/or love to play basketball, and/or love pickles, and/or play the bass, or even be a middle-aged man who writes cheesy songs about annual themes and get the whole community to sing them with you.

BPC is on the precipice of an amazing new era! Fifty years in, new buildings coming on line, and the opportunity to take our school to yet another level of success.

Our fine school has grown in extraordinary ways, and we have seen many remarkable people. I want to heartily thank my caring and talented faculty, and perhaps, most importantly, the students who have always been the best part of all my time at Black Pine Circle School.

Finally, like all leaders, I know that I stand on the shoulders of so many remarkable people. I want to heartily thank my caring and diligent partners on the administrative team, all of the board members of the past two decades, the inspiring, life-changing teachers, and perhaps, most importantly, the students who have always been the best part of all my time at Black Pine Circle School.

I’m filled with gratitude for this extraordinary experience. Indeed, how do you measure a year (or 19 years)?

Head of School
Letter from Board Chair Shalini Sharp

This 2023-2024 annual report is the last one that we will have under our fearless leader, John Carlstroem. I would like to thank John on behalf of all of us for dedicating the past two decades of his life to our school and our children. During his tenure, the school has grown, offering its unique blend of academics, arts, and athletics to more students from our community. Thanks to John, we are in a strong financial position than we were 15 years ago. We are also poised to grow our footprint further, to create more space for community and voice for our faculty and students. We have a group of committed and exceptional teachers, and students who are engaged, curious, and kind.

Having been your Board Chair, I have had a unique vantage point on the magic of BPC. I have seen the magic of BPC happen in the classrooms and hallways, with the faculty and students. To make that magic possible though, there is a whole team of other people who manage the school’s finances, facilities, personnel matters, fundraising, admissions, communications, events, legal matters, yard duties, aftercare, and everything else. For the past two decades, John has led all of these efforts. He is the one who steps in. The buck truly stops with him. John is the one who puts in over 4000 hours per year to keep the school running. He only wants what is best for our children and our families. I have never seen John falter in his commitment and dedication to BPC through financial crises, geopolitical crises, fire seasons, weekends and going above and beyond for everyone at BPC who is not on the Board.

John has always gone to great lengths to keep these traditions of our school and the importance of community events, faculty and students. To make that magic possible though, there is a whole team of other people who manage the school’s finances, facilities, personnel matters, fundraising, admissions, communications, events, legal matters, yard duties, aftercare, and everything else. For the past two decades, John has led all of these efforts. He is the one who steps in. The buck truly stops with him. John is the one who puts in over 4000 hours per year to keep the school running. He only wants what is best for our children and our families. I have never seen John falter in his commitment and dedication to BPC through financial crises, geopolitical crises, fire seasons, weekends and going above and beyond for everyone at BPC who is not on the Board.

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Heading into the next year, the Board’s top priority is the impossible task of replacing John Carlstroem. Our Vice Chair, Lukasz Strozek, is leading the effort, with the support of parents, faculty, and administrators and selected a nationally renowned search firm. You will all be invited to contribute to this process. Meanwhile, we are so lucky to have seasoned professionals like Darielle Calhoun and Andrea Maran a to step in on an interim basis as head of school and head of upper school. After committed and John and I move to Maui to run a school there. John has a deep love for nature, the ocean, and whales, and I cannot imagine a more wonderful place for his new chapter. We wish him and his family all the very best. His contributions to BPC will last for many lifetimes.

Shalini Sharp
Chair, Board of Directors
(Sachin ‘23 and Rani ‘24)
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 students and families.

Community Matters Committee

2022 – 2023
Parent Circle Co-Chairs
Amy Ng, Chaylee Priete, and Robin Sease

2023 – 2024
Parent Circle Co-Chairs
Vivian Li, Chris Lillevand Hendricks, and David Beiser

Kindergarten
Lauren Arnault, Niki Cheng, Kate Keleman

1st grade
Catherine Crump, Manuel Juarez, April Metzger

2nd grade
Chris Lillevand Hendricks, Joanna Phoenix

3rd grade
Haiyan Huang, Dana Sandu

4th grade
Erin Lenhart, Thao Nguyen-Horowitz

5th grade
Glenn Chen, Mary Chen, Erika Chang Shuch, Amy Zheng

6th grade
Jennifer Bard, Julie Beck, Myriah Rose

7th grade
Sonal Bhujwala, Melissa Garcia, Elena Kolyanova

8th grade
Frances Baca, Diva Chan, Amy P. Zheng

Parent Circle Committee

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.

Class Representatives
Kindergarten
Alex Hart, April Metzger

1st grade
Lauren Arnault

2nd grade
Inna Belogolovsky

3rd grade
Alex Hart

4th grade
April Metzger

5th grade
Myriah Rose

6th grade
Briana Patel

7th grade
Sonia Bhosale

8th grade
Barbara Denianke

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Sonia Bhosale

8th grade
Barbara Denianke
Thanks to years of strong admissions and careful management, Black Pine Circle’s finances are on sound footing. The school budgets conservatively and has comparatively low debt. Being opportunistic, agile, and doing a lot with a little is a foundation that will serve BPC well as it enters a period of growth and expansion.

BPC’s budget is roughly $12 million annually. The vast majority of expenses (71 percent) are related to staff salaries and benefits, which we are happy to report are now comparable or greater than the average for our peer schools. The school also invests generously in tuition assistance in order to attract and retain a range of families. It is typical for approximately 30 percent of families to receive assistance. Tuition is by far the largest revenue generator. Philanthropy plays a smaller, but essential role. Additional revenue results from a variety of other sources including our Extended Day Program (EDP), interest income, and fees.

Our Financial Picture

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS FY23 & FY24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eric Sullivan</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeAndre Calhoun</td>
<td>Head of Upper School &amp; Assistant Head of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carlstroem</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett Hazlett</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Hoverman</td>
<td>BPC Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Kleinhans</td>
<td>Alum Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalini Sharp</td>
<td>Board Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Shea</td>
<td>Chief Financial &amp; Operating Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jase Turner</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Wicks</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INCOME

- 5% Fundraising
- <1% Auxiliary Programs
- 4% Auxiliary Income

EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Assistance &amp; Discounts</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Salaries &amp; Benefits</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program &amp; Technology</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilites</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Realizing BPC’s Future

In the summer of 2023, Black Pine Circle purchased two buildings immediately to the north of the Upper School campus on 7th Street and University. 2010 7th is a large brick warehouse that used to be known as “Big Hydro.” 844 University was formerly a garden store. These acquisitions fit squarely within BPC’s Master Plan and strategic objectives. They represent a unique, generational opportunity for a school with big ambitions but a small footprint. Combined, the structures currently comprise 6,400 square feet.

The spaces are currently being used for offices, a faculty lounge, meeting space, and storage. Visioning and planning are underway to determine what is needed to convert these spaces for the direct benefit of students. These are early stages and there are many moving pieces. As things come into greater focus, the school leadership will reveal more of its thinking, invite community input, and embark on an effort to turn ambition into reality. Stay tuned!
Loving and Supporting Our School: The Annual Fund Campaign

July 1, 2022 – February 15, 2024

The Role of Major Giving at BPC

Critically important for the success of the AFC each year are Major and Leadership Donors. Major Donors are those giving $1,000 or more per year. Leadership Donors contribute $5,000 or more. We recognize our biggest donors every fall with the “Major Donor and Leadership Party” and in other ways. It is typical for BPC to have 30 or more families at the Leadership level every year.

The Soirée is another way to support our school. Though auction purchases are not counted toward our AFC goals or recognition, they are a valuable source of revenue. That said, “Raising the Paddle” at the Soirée does count toward AFC goals. This year’s Soirée is on Saturday, May 11 on campus. The theme is “All that Jazz.”

The following alphabetical list includes everyone who made an Annual Fund gift between the dates of July 1, 2022 and February 15, 2024. Families who have yet to give, or who may wish to support BPC further, will have wonderful opportunities to do so, including at the Spring Soirée in May.

You would like to make an online gift now, visit:

\[\text{backpincircle.org/donate} \]

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The following alphabetical list includes everyone who made a gift to the Annual Fund Campaign (AFC) during this period. In current parents, board members, former board members, alumni parents, grandparents, faculty and staff, business partners, and extended family members and friends. Donors who have given three years running are so noted, among are our wonderful faculty.

The AFC is BPC’s highest philanthropic priority, making up four to five percent of our school’s overall budget. Among other things, it makes possible our robust tuition assistance and professional development programs – helping to keep our community diverse and intact, and our teachers challenged and renewed. The AFC benefits every child in every classroom, which is why we ask every family to make BPC their “charity of choice” and make a meaningful gift every year.

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS FY23 & FY24

Katy Isa (Hakimian), Chair
Nirav Bisarya, Board Member
Max Christoff, Board Member
David Fleck, BPC Parent
Liz Maw, BPC Parent
John Ormsby, Director of Development
Shalini Sharp, Board Chair

The following alphabetical list includes everyone who made a donation to the Annual Fund Campaign (AFC) this year. The list includes names in the following order:

- Donors receiving recognition for their gifts
- Donors receiving recognition for their leadership gifts
- Donors who have given three years running
- Donors with leadership gifts of $10,000 or more

MAKE A MEANINGFUL GIFT EVERY YEAR.

DONOR CIRCLES

| Gifts up to $500 | ARISTOTLE – 124 Donors |
| Gifts between $500 & $1,000 | SOJOURNER |
| Gifts between $1,000 & $2,500 | MAJOR DONORS: NERO |
| Gifts between $2,500 & $5,000 | DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. |
| Gifts between $5,000 & $10,000 | LEADERSHIP DONORS: |
| Gifts between $10,000 & $25,000 | Gifts of $25,000 & above |
| Gifts between $25,000 & $50,000 |
| Gifts of $50,000 & above |

MAJOR DONORS:

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Gifts between $1,000 & $2,500
- Gifts between $2,500 & $5,000
- Gifts between $5,000 & $10,000
- Gifts between $10,000 & $25,000
- Gifts of $25,000 & above
- Gifts of $50,000 & above

The Role of Major Giving at BPC

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Lauding and Supporting Our School: The Annual Fund Campaign

July 1, 2022 – February 15, 2024

The Role of Major Giving at BPC

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MATCHING GIFTS & VENDORS

Adobe Corporation
Apple Matching Gifts Program
Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation
Chaser
CrowdFunding Group Foundation
Global Giving
Indeed Corporation
Jenx Konuto
JPMorgan Chase
J.P. Morgan Chase
Kantar Matching Gifts
Marketplace
Matcha
Otsuka US
Raytheon Technologies
Salesforce.com
Samsung
Spectrum
TeamUp
Toast
Vanguard
Walt Disney Company
Wells Fargo
Xerox

Foundation
Walt Disney Company
Troy Mittone
Straus Carpets
Sports Basement
Streus Cerpet
Troy Minton
Voya Financial
Waiters Company Foundation

Mary Catherine Plunkett & Matt Johnson
Carl Molby & Sarah Poplin
Tim Lipinski
Elhanan Pulizer & Ched Owens
Amy Reding & Arif Khan
Katie Randahl & Dion Ros
Elizabeth Rivester & Guma
Owen Robberts & Ramona Piagentini
Carla Rodse
Tracy Rosengren & Mark Peikarn
Sarah Riggsger
Ron Schickedanz & Malisa Roth
Joanna Rudnick & Jordan Gimbel
Evan Schickler
Leah Sutton & Jeff Schneid
Shane Safir & Emmanuel Medina
Sara Shnider & Justin Dawe
Shalini & Austin Sharp
Amanda Brewster & Joe Shapiro
Jenny & Austin Sharp
Mark Dyer & Lopez
Sara Shnider & Justin Dawe
Sang Yong Shin
Melissa Roth & Scott Bornheimer
Mary-Ann & Eric Pearson
Mindy Lauck & Erik Waterman
Neal Jacunski & Michele Lau
Liz Pulito
Michele McGuire & Ian Agul
Mariah Marchado-Penever & Robin Pere
Dina Chen & Ian Lu
Nicole Lockenroth
Maya Lodish & Jay Zimmerman
Leslie Fink & Ingrid Helmutsmark
Erica Kooshi & Gabor Csilla
Olivia Martinez & Sheri Kiras
Neel Jain & Marci Lauer
Michael Nakagawa & Erik Waterman
Jenny Lederer
Louisa Martyn & Seth Kim
Hee Jung & Lee David Hodgson
Rendi & Mike Lee
Sarah Lehn & Bill Selig
Dina & Reena Leiler
Eren & Josh Letherat
Sahra Levine*
Jen Levy & Dave Strick*
Vivian Li
Barbara Liston & Robert Bailey
Chelsi Young & Paul Liu
Nerissa Crespi-Liu & Johnny Liu
Kim & Brian Livingston*
Cassia S "Sasha" Levine*
Susan Marlow & Emily Droni
The preceding gifts were received between July 1, 2022 and February 15, 2024. 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 john.ormsby@stanford.edu

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BPC students are very well-prepared for high school, and are reported to be highly engaged in their learning. About 40% of our graduates attend East Bay public schools and the other 60% attend local independent and parochial schools. Head of Upper School DeAndre Calhoun, who has many years of experience in high school counseling, offers to meet with every eighth-grade family at the beginning of their eighth-grade year to support each student’s journey in finding the high school that is the best fit for them.

### Bay Area High Schools
- Albany High
- Bentley School
- Berkeley High
- Bishop O’Dowd
- Drew School
- El Cerrito High
- Head-Royce
- Lilli-Wilmerding
- Marin Academy
- Mayborn High
- Mission Montebello
- Oakland School of the Arts
- Oakland Tech
- Piedmont High
- Salesian College Preparatory
- St. Mary’s College High School
- The Aspinwall School
- The Bramson School
- The College Preparatory School
- Urban School of San Francisco

### Universities
- American University
- Amherst College
- Antioch College
- Art Institute of Chicago
- Berea College
- Brandeis
- Brown
- Cal Poly Pomona
- Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
- California State University, Monterey Bay
- Carea Western Reserve University
- Chapman
- Chico State University
- Colby College
- Colgate University
- Colorado College
- Cornell University
- Cuesta College
- DAFul University
- Drew University
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Georgetown
- Gonzaga
- Grinnell College
- King’s College, London
- Lehigh University
- Lewis and Clark
- Loyola Marymount University
- Macalester College
- Middletown
- Montana State
- New York University
- Northwestern University
- Northeastern
- Oberlin
- 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
- Seattle University
- Skidmore College
- Sonoma State University
- Southern Methodist University
- St. Andrews (Scotland)
- St. Mary’s College of California
- Stanford
- Trinity University, San Antonio

### Where Do BPC Students Continue Their Education After Graduation?
- Tufts University
- Tulane
- University of British Columbia
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, Merced
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of California, Santa Cruz
- University of Chicago
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Connecticut
- University of Illinois
- University of Michigan
- University of Oregon
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Richmond
- University of Southern California
- University of Vermont
- University of Washington
- Vassar College
- Villanova University
- Washington University (St. Louis)
- Wellesley
- Westfield State University
- Wheaton College (MA)
- Willamette University
Voices of Appreciation for John Carlstroem from Members of the BPC Community

Tanveer Alibhai
Head of Lower School
2020 – current

From singing at the Addison gate with his guitar and his amusing children and families on Friday mornings, to the fist bumps and jokes, John’s presence at Black Pine Circle School will be sorely missed. The energy, warmth, and connections he makes, with students, teachers, and faculty are part of the ‘magic’ that is behind who we are at BPC.

In my time in independent schools, John is the Head of the School who continually pushes faculty to reflect and innovate, sharing ideas and always researching the latest and greatest educational trends. He has been integral to defining who we are and what the latest and greatest educational trends. He has also been a wonderful leader of faculty, teachers while staying ahead of the curve in curriculum development and thinking creatively.

Even throughout the pandemic, Mr. C always had the brightest smile for everyone. His smile shone so brightly even through the masks. We couldn’t have made it without the high-fives and loads of encouragement and humor have made BPC one of the best K–8 schools in the Bay Area. John’s genuine concern for every member of our community has earned him the reputation of a “pastoral” leader who is always willy nilly, and faculty meetings often went on well into the night. When John Carlstroem came to BPC, it was like turning BPC’s ship around. Keeping the best parts of a school devoted to music, math, and academic excellence, John has brought our school into the daylight, instituting a robust H.R. department and business office, a salary scale, and regular meetings for divisions and the whole faculty (that ended before 5pm)!

As a scientist, John has always been interested in our environment and was a big supporter when I began an intra-school climate network (Climate Positive Student Network) two and a half years ago. As a scientist, John has always been interested in our environment and was a big supporter when I began an intra-school climate network (Climate Positive Student Network) two and a half years ago.

John is a visionary leader with big ideas, an out-of-the-box thinker with an uncanny ability to bring others along. His leadership style models to the faculty and staff the value of risk-taking, learning from mistakes (which John likes to say is “always an option”), and dreaming big! This echoes in the ethos of the school. John is leaving behind a wonderful legacy of fostering teachers while staying ahead of the curve in curriculum development and thinking creatively.

“Mr. Carlstroem was an oasis and at the forefront of community, joy, and light. We take that joy with us. BPC won’t be the same without you. May you never doubt your impact on the community you leave behind.”

— The Panellists: Miream, Philipp, Silena ‘2022, & Evan

John will always be held in high esteem, and his legacy of excellence will continue to resonate, enriching the lives of countless students and staff in his future endeavors. John will always be held in high esteem, and his legacy of excellence will serve as an enduring source of inspiration for us all.

Maria Palmer
6th Grade English Teacher
1993 – current

When I first came to BPC in 1993, things were a bit different: school was like a small business without standardized norms. My contract was written in felt tip pen on computer paper; salaries were determined willy nilly, and faculty meetings often went on well into the night. When John Carlstroem came to BPC, it was like turning BPC’s ship around. Keeping the best parts of a school devoted to music, math, and academic excellence, John brought our school into the daylight, instituting a robust H.R. department and business office, a salary scale, and regular meetings for divisions and the whole faculty (that ended before 5pm)!

Even throughout the pandemic, Mr. C always had the brightest smile for everyone. His smile shone so brightly even through the masks. We couldn’t have made it without the high-fives and loads of encouragement and humor have made BPC one of the best K–8 schools in the Bay Area. John’s genuine concern for every member of our community has earned him the reputation of a “pastoral” leader who is always willy nilly, and faculty meetings often went on well into the night. When John Carlstroem came to BPC, it was like turning BPC’s ship around. Keeping the best parts of a school devoted to music, math, and academic excellence, John brought our school into the daylight, instituting a robust H.R. department and business office, a salary scale, and regular meetings for divisions and the whole faculty (that ended before 5pm)!

Martha Palmer
6th Grade English Teacher
1993 – current

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As a scientist, John has always been interested in our environment and was a big supporter when I began an intra-school climate network (Climate Positive Student Network) two and a half years ago.

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Hey Mr. Carlstroem! It was always so much fun having you sing or rally the crowd at our school performances. Although it’s been a long time, my time with BPC is a testament to his unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. His willingness to take risks and recruit talented individuals who might not otherwise have had opportunities elsewhere has further enriched our institution.

His steadfast dedication to prioritizing the student experience, fostering innovation, and infusing joy into our rigorous academic environment is admirable. While John’s departure marks the end of an era, we are confident that his profound impact will continue to resonate, enriching the lives of countless students and staff in his future endeavors. John will always be held in high esteem, and his legacy of excellence will serve as an enduring source of inspiration for us all.

– Jonathan Keung ’17

DeAndre Calhoun
Assistant Head of Upper School
2018 – current

With great admiration and celebration, we honor the remarkable legacy of our esteemed Head of School, John Carlstroem, as he embarks on a new chapter in his illustrious career. John’s 19-year tenure at BPC has been an exceptional one, during which he has played a pivotal role in working with this visionary leader for six years.

Throughout his tenure, John has demonstrated extraordinary stewardship, particularly evident during the daunting challenges of the pandemic. Under his guidance, our school has achieved significant growth, nurturing a vibrant community where authenticity thrives – a testament to his unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. John’s genuine concern for every member of our community is one of the many aspects of his leadership style that earned him the reputation of a “pastoral” leader who is always willy nilly, and faculty meetings often went on well into the night. When John Carlstroem came to BPC, it was like turning BPC’s ship around. Keeping the best parts of a school devoted to music, math, and academic excellence, John brought our school into the daylight, instituting a robust H.R. department and business office, a salary scale, and regular meetings for divisions and the whole faculty (that ended before 5pm)!

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– Jonathan Keung ’17
If you think about the pedagogic ingredients in BPC’s secret sauce several things come to mind: the school’s thoughtful, iterative approach to curriculum development and its unique, Socratic method of teaching and learning. Along with its investment, giving teachers time to collaborate and learn new skills. And, of course, the development and care of its teachers and administrators.

But underlying all that for nearly two decades has been the unique mix of empathy and inquiry exhibited by John Carlstroem. Whether it’s greeting kids while playing his guitar or leading a robust and engaging discussion with knowledge and exploration. To me, John’s openness and sense of fun while getting students or adults to probe ideas and learn are the key ingredients in BPC’s secret Socratic sauce.

Mr. C. example and legacy, I’m sure, will live on at BPC as he gets ready to bring his formidable talents to the good people of Maui. But we’ll miss you, John!

– Eric Westervelt, Olivia ’23
Appreciation from BPC’s Former Teachers & Staff

Madeline King
K – 3rd Music Teacher
1997 – 2020

John Carlstroem. Where do I even begin? I have known John, or JC, as he is fondly called, for many, many years. As a music teacher at BPC for 25 years, and head of the music department for much of that time, I was in my eighth year of teaching when John came on board. I was actually on the board of directors at that time, and was one of those who “voted” for him to be our next head of school. John was, from day one, a charismatic, kind, and intelligent leader. And he has always had a clear and firm commitment to the arts.

His dedication to the music department impressed me. He held onto some of the precious traditions that were passed down to him, such as music being taught K-8, while forging ahead to make improvements for the better in the music program. Under John’s direction, when we sadly unexpectedly lost our band teacher, Ken Durling, we were so fortunate to find Mr. Kennedy to lead the band program, and John has been instrumental in always supporting and shaping the band program into the hugely popular and successful program that it is today. The music department further blossomed under John’s leadership with the introduction of the lower school Orff program, leadership with the introduction of the lower school Orff program, that it is today. The music department further blossomed under John’s leadership with the introduction of the lower school Orff program, and the later addition of the chicken coop, also provided a new and open space for the students. Green space was an important part of our school curriculum, and the community of great teachers and the staff did their very best to adapt their teaching practices but the person who successfully kept the BPC boat afloat during one of those trying years was John Carlstroem.

A constant advocate and champion. Thank you for making every student feel special and valued.

— Madeline King
K – 3rd Music Teacher
1997 – 2020

Laura Wolff
Head of Lower School
1996 – 2016

When John came to BPC to meet the staff and be interviewed, as Head of Lower School, I had the opportunity to meet with him one-on-one. He asked me if I could have one wish for something BPC should invest in, what would that be? I was very proud of the BPC staff, curriculum, and the community of great families but one thing we were lacking was a more creative approach to developing open space for the students. Green space was challenging to find even with our great gardening program!

Within a few years, in response to our outdoor space constraints, John had the brilliant idea of creating “vertical space” by having a climbing wall erected on the upper school campus which continues to this day to be enjoyed by all students, kindergarten through eighth grade. Following that, John encouraged the Board to acquire the large backyard of our neighbor on 7th Street at Addison and fence it in to create a safe, fun play area for all the students during P. E. and recess. The upper school’s garden and eating area, with the later addition of the chicken coop, also provided a new and improved use of the space.

We are grateful for John’s tireless commitment and dedication to Black Pine Circle. He was a servant leader who truly loved the school and students. He was a constant advocate and champion. Thank you for making every student feel special and valued.

— Laura Wolff
Head of Lower School
1996 – 2016

Catalina Lacy
Upper School Spanish Teacher
1991 – 2022

When I think of John Carlstroem, many commendatory adjectives come to mind. One of the adjectives that stand out is “innovative.” John’s relentless pursuit of innovation to meet the continuous, evolving needs of the students and his commitment to transform planned and unexpected events into learning experiences stands out as one of his most notable contributions to the Black Pine Circle School community.

John’s strong support of teachers’ professional growth has impacted faculty and students alike. I had the invaluable opportunity to study during one of my Spanish language trips I led to Costa Rica and Mexico for our eighth-graders, opened a cultural door for me that allowed me to learn even more cultural awareness. This, in turn, transformed the educational language experiences for the students.

As I reflect on the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that John’s visionary leadership and his determination to embrace the challenges that it presented him, were the determining factors of BPC successfully navigating the path through the pandemic. During those years, the teachers and the staff did their very best to adapt their teaching practices but the person who successfully kept the BPC boat afloat was John Carlstroem.

John, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for all the support and encouragement that you extended to me during my time of need. Your legacy of innovation will continue to inspire the BPC community for years to come. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

— Catalina Lacy
Upper School Spanish Teacher
1991 – 2022

We are grateful for John’s tireless commitment and dedication to Black Pine Circle. He was a servant leader who truly loved the school and students. He was a constant advocate and champion. Thank you for making every student feel special and valued.

— The Hamps: Sandra, Tim, & Timothy ‘22

John would always make time, listen intently, and offer up answers or suggestions when I went to him with questions. I was always so grateful for that. Thank you, John. You are a true gift.

— Laura Wolff
Head of Lower School
1996 – 2016
Appreciation from BPC’s Former Board Members

Randi Lee
Board Member 2008 – 2014
(Olivia ’12 and Connor ’14)

During my time as a BPC parent and board member, John and I worked on several significant initiatives that helped to shape BPC as it is today. These results you can see, like the Q Lab, athletic field, expanded middle school, and tech infrastructure. However, the most treasured memories lie in the subtle, often unseen facets of John’s leadership: the meetings (many over coffee at Tomate Cafe) with faculty, staff, students, board members, neighbors, and alumni families, as John worked tirelessly to include every voice in the vision for the school; the financial sustainability that’s been achieved through hard conversations, planning, sacrifice, and discipline from the entire community; the vibrant community itself, built of comfort around him. I also remember watching The Matrix in his philosophy class.

When I think of Mr. Carlstroem, the first memory that comes to mind is when he was teaching my class how to say his name. He was on the stage in the theater with his guitar and he told us to remember his name by saying, “car” like driving your car, the letter “L” to talk to and I always felt a sense of comfort around him. I also remember watching The Matrix in his philosophy class. Fun times.

– Alexandra Jones ’17

Paci Seeds of Change Day

Black Pine Circle School alumni grandparent, Mary Paci, came into our school and changed it for good. For many years, Ms. Paci, a valued member of the BPC Board of Directors, provided our school with several significant matching gifts to encourage families to support the Annual Fund Campaign and later the Campaign for the Q Lab. Ms. Paci was particularly motivated to support BPC’s hallmark assistance efforts to benefit historically oppressed and economically challenged families. Her most generous donations signaled a new and essential era of BPC philanthropy that has allowed our school to say “YES” to families who are looking here, but may be facing the hurdles of adversity.

In 2017 the board and administrative team dedicated our annual “Service to the Community Day” to Mary and named it “Paci Seeds of Change Day” after her passing. Ms. Paci believes that we can plant potent “seeds of positive change” together and tend these new growth areas, while they bear wonderful fruit in perpetuity. BPC remains forever grateful for all the wisdom, grace, and role modeling that she gave to our community.

– John Carlstroem, Head of School

Mary Paci
Board Member 2013 – 2017 & BPC Alumni Grandparent
(Adriana ’13 and Nora ’17)

It is a privilege for me to write about John Carlstroem. My granddaughters, Adriana, Olivia and Nora, and my husband, John, during his tenure as Head of Black Pine Circle during John’s tenure as Head of School. It was an honor when I was asked to become a member of the Board of Directors. I took my position seriously, and appreciated being able to serve during Eric Sullivan’s time as Chair, and later under Peter Wong.

The Q Lab was beginning to see the light of day during this time and came to fruition in 2017. It was my privilege to propose a matching gift that would encourage BPC families to contribute and to accept the challenge of creating something new.

John’s vision, energy, creativity, dedication, magnetism, ability to listen, infectious smile and laugh combined with his kindness and generosity of soul, were always very evident to me. The students are first and foremost the great beneficiaries of these qualities in John, and of course the parents and grandparents of those students—as are the faculty and the staff. All the times I visited the school, either to drop off my granddaughters in the morning or pick them up after school, or to attend an event or a board meeting, I could feel the influence of John’s impact on the school. We have all been enriched by this great man, and will miss him dearly as he moves on to his next adventure in Maui. But I know that the students and the entire community of the school will be richer for having had John Carlstroem among them.
Head of School
John Carlstroem’s Legacy

John Carlstroem was captain of the ship, BPC, from 2005 – 2024. He will be remembered for his steadfast commitment to our school’s mission, and for truly embodying our core values of Curiosity, Community, Inquiry, and Voice. A heartfelt thank you to Mr. C for all that he did to help BPC mature into the wonderful school it is today. We wish him all the best for his next adventure!

Finding only one memory to encompass how much joy Mr. C brought to my time at BPC is extremely difficult. I have an image in my head of Mr. C always being super charismatic and encouraging whenever I saw him around the school. I’m wishing him good luck at his new school, but he will be missed here in the Bay!

– Matt Garrison ’15
Mergers and Acquisitions Research Analyst

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