

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

By **Briel Schmitz**

Earlier this spring the youngest students were busy trying on costumes for their plays—performance night was just a day away. On the day of the performance, one of our Extended Day teachers (and alumnus of Spruce Street School), Chris Taft arrived in time to see the youngest students performing *Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock* and *Anansi and the Sky God*. The next day he brought in a DVD that his dad had made for him of childhood memories. On that DVD is a video of Chris, as Anansi, in *Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock* from when he started at Spruce Street School.

A few weeks later, I stood next to Chris as we watched *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. "You know," he said, "I was also Puck in *Dream* when I was at Spruce Street School."

In the nine years that I have been at Spruce Street School I have seen a lot of changes. Teachers and students have changed, families have arrived and moved on, the size has grown by over 50% and the school moved into a different building.

Some things, however, do not change. Performance and excellent theater is a long-standing tradition at Spruce Street School. Alumni talk about their experiences on stage when they remember their time at Spruce Street School. Teachers love to tell stories about the different plays they directed.

In many ways theater is a direct reflection of the school's mission: in one performance you can witness a broad range of talent; see children supporting one another honestly and thoughtfully; and through Shakespeare, observe students undertaking something truly sophisticated, challenging and intellectually stimulating. It is the diversity within the group, and a true respect for this diversity, that makes each play funny, sweet, remarkable, powerful and, of course, memorable.

I had chills when I spoke with Chris about his theatrical memories from over 20 years ago. I am proud to be a part of a school that remembers that art, in all its forms, is a powerful medium for learning.

MISSION STATEMENT

Spruce Street School is a nurturing educational community that instills in a broad range of children the social, emotional, and intellectual skills for lifelong participation in a diverse society.

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NEW STRATEGIC PLAN LIGHTS PATH TOWARD NORTH STAR VISION

By **Jennifer Duncan, Board Chair**

Two years ago, the Board took a step back from its usual work to think carefully about the long-term future of Spruce Street School. Through an intensive year-long reflection process, the Board lined up several possible long-term goals with the school's mission, values and assets. By unanimous Board resolution at the end of that year, we set a new "North Star" goal for the school: to build an endowment that will allow Spruce Street School to admit any child, regardless of his or her family's financial capacity.

This year, the Board took a sober look at our new North Star, strategizing exactly what steps we need to take over the next three years to move the school toward a fully functioning financial aid endowment. The steps became the basis for our 2011–2014 Strategic Plan, which begins, **"By 2035, Spruce Street School will be the highest quality, most financially accessible K-5 independent school of its kind in the Seattle area ..."** The plan goes on to describe three strategic goals: (1) to develop an endowment; (2) to further strengthen the school's financial position; and (3) to support teacher excellence. The Board then took each of these strategic goals and developed a series of tactics necessary to fulfill them over the next

three years. A summary of the Plan follows on page 2. We are pleased to announce that the full strategic plan will be published and available on the school's web site in the fall.

Building an endowment is a long-term proposition, and one that we have undertaken only after serious consideration of the school's mission, identity, and financial wellbeing. It is also an exciting proposition, well-rooted in Spruce Street School's history and mission, and supported strongly by the school's teachers, administration, and parents. We intend this three-year strategic plan to bring us to an endowment launch. We recognize, however, that the strategic plan is only the first step. It is our actions as a community that will give meaning to the Plan, transforming it into a living document that will guide the path toward our long-term vision.

For the Board, creating the strategic plan made this North Star come alive for us, gave it energy and momentum that we hope will spark the imagination of our larger community as we move forward in the fall.

SPRUCE STREET SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN 2011–2014

Year 2035 Long Term Organizational Vision

By 2035, Spruce Street School will be the highest quality, most financially accessible K-5 independent school of its kind in the Seattle area – able to admit children who would thrive in our educational program and community, regardless of their families' ability to pay. In addition, we will continue to be distinguished for our unique program and excellent teachers.

Year 2014 Organizational Vision

By 2014, inspired by the passion and the energy of excellent teaching and the unique educational experience that results, Spruce Street School will have performed the necessary steps to launch a successful tuition endowment campaign and will have begun to build the endowment toward the 2035 vision.

Endowment Strategic Goal

Build an endowment to sustain and provide long-term support for financial aid at Spruce Street School.

- Establish the building blocks necessary to launch a successful endowment campaign.
- Ensure Spruce Street School is perceived as affordable and accessible.

Rationale: Our new North Star resolution recognizes in our mission that we seek to "instill in a **broad range** of children the ... skills for lifelong participation in a **diverse** society." Diversity, as evidenced by one of our core values, is understood to include economic diversity:

*"Diversity of all kinds—cultural, ethnic, racial, **economic**, family structure, learning style, interests and abilities—in an educational community enhances the richness of everyone's educational experience. We are committed to embracing a broad range of students and families. We proactively teach and model respect and appreciation for all people and the differences among us."*

From Spruce Street School's Core Values

Recognizing that a tuition endowment requires many years to build – possibly 20 years or more – this three-year strategic plan envisions Spruce Street School taking the first steps toward building such an endowment.

Financial Strategic Goal

Manage the school's resources in a way that balances the mission, core values and goals to ensure long-term financial stability.

- **Facilities:** Generate adequate reserves to ensure we can provide an optimal education facility for the long term.
- **Philanthropy:** Support efforts that foster connections and a greater culture of giving.

Rationale: In order to launch and sustain a successful endowment campaign, we need to ensure our annual financial operations and long-term facility needs are addressed. We have a quality school building leased for another 20 years and are already setting aside reserves for a replacement facility. However, to fulfill our duty of fiscal responsibility, we need to maintain focus on providing reserves for that replacement facility while building a tuition endowment. In addition, ensuring a philanthropic culture helps us achieve our endowment goal, and helps us raise operating funds.

Teacher Excellence Strategic Goal

Create an environment in which teacher excellence will thrive.

Rationale: We have excellent, well compensated teachers who are experts in their field. We rely on our teachers to deliver the highest quality program. The teachers truly deliver the mission and it is their work that not only inspires a lifelong love of learning, it also fuels our charitable giving. As we embark upon a financial aid endowment campaign, we want to ensure teaching excellence continues.

Photos from Elders' Tea 2011



MID-CENTURY MODERN SHAKESPEARE

By Neill Warfield, Teacher



Spruce Street School's tradition of Shakespeare performance is as old as the school itself. Like so many other aspects of the school's program and culture, the tradition grows and evolves each year, and this year's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* brought many new inspirations.

First, parents and volunteer costumers Kathryn Keller and Tonia Steed wondered if we could give our delightful period costumes a rest and set our production in the 1960's. What better context for a story of love, magic, teen rebellion, changing social order and a healthy dose of chaos? Next, writer, director and parent Lauren Marshall wondered

how the song and dance at the end of the play could fit our chosen time period—and within days had collaborated with parent and recording artist Chris Ballew (aka Caspar Babypants) on a song that soon had the whole cast singing along and doing the twist.

All of these inspirations and questions made for richer and more rewarding conversations with the people who really matter—a talented and thoughtful community of ten and eleven-year olds who inspired us all with their hard work and energy, from the first reading through the four magical performances in June.

ALUMNI NEWS

By Guy Fineout, Assistant Director



Spruce Street School just finished its 29th year and will be sending 14 children off to middle school in the fall. As usual, our diverse student body will be going to a wide variety of schools. The list of middle schools includes Billings School, Lake Washington Girls' Middle School, Northwest School, Seattle Academy of Arts and Sciences, Salmon Bay, University Prep, and Washington Middle School.

In early June we held our annual Alumni Dinner to meet our former students who have been gone from Spruce Street School for a few years: eighth graders who will be going to high school next year, and high school seniors who will be going to college or other programs in the near future. It was an especially big group of people at the event this year with the students and their parents, plus current and alumni faculty. True to form, the high school seniors will be attending a broad range of programs and locales in the fall: aviation mechanics in Moses Lake, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Berklee

College of Music in Boston, Occidental College in Pasadena, and Washington State University.

Many of the alumni and their parents stayed after dinner to watch our oldest level's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare. The Shakespeare production by the oldest group has been a part of Spruce Street School tradition since the beginning and all the alumni vividly remembered their own participation in years past.

The students and their parents who attended our Alumni Dinner had a wonderful time talking with current and alumni faculty, as well as their peers. It was a lively and engaging event!

If you are an alumni student please visit us on our fan page on Facebook or contact us at alumni@sprucestreetschool.org. We look forward to hearing from you.



Dustin Peterson, Lisa Greene, Evan Jayne and Katie Kemp (Class of 2004) return to visit Spruce Street School before finishing high school.



Class of 2008 finishes middle school: Back Row: Toby Perkins, Ben Gerke, Spencer Davis, Augie Ballew, Lev Klarnet, Front Row: Reyna Stevenson, Rachel Rauch, Abby Starling, Hazel Carr, Julia Moss.

SPRUCE STREET SCHOOL MOVING ON CLASS OF 2011

From their Moving On speeches:

I feel like I have really grown at this school and I realize that especially when I look back at PE. When I started PE, I hated it (not bad teaching, just me). But now it's one of my favorite subjects and I'm pretty good at it. I will look forward to PE at all my new schools.

- Isabel

I like the music program because you get to do it in a group. I enjoyed playing for my grandparents at Elders' Tea and performing at Folklife Festival. Marimba has inspired me to do piano lessons. I like marimba here at Spruce Street School and I'm going to continue it outside of school and go on from there.

- Daniel



Top row: Isabel Bennett, Kendall Titus, Ava Graham, Josie Ballew, Sadie Chaplan, Daniel Rock **Middle row:** Noah Evans, Aden Coy, Azura Tyabji, Levi Homman, Zach Tsiakalis-Brown, Zubin Abraham-Ahmed **Front:** Adlai Fong, Ema Barger

Highlights from the Year

Camp! Islandwood, Camp Kirby, and Camp Seymour • PE with John • The Viking Research Conference • Choice buddies and reading buddies • Electives! • Making tortillas with Señor Felipe • Making and flying kites • All school marimba concert at the end of Green Commute Week • All of the plays: *Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock*, *Anansi and the Sky God*, *The Saga of Freydis and the Raiders*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* • Creating a flash mob during URBAN Arts Week • Performing on marimbas and making conversation at the Elders' Tea • Creating an April fools edition of the Spruce Street Herald • The Moving On kids performing on marimbas at the Folklife Festival • Pool Day! • 18 leaders on Safety Patrol



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