



13 Oakdale Place  
Charleston, SC 29407

# BEYOND THE CLASSROOMS

News from daily life at The Cooper School | FALL 2020



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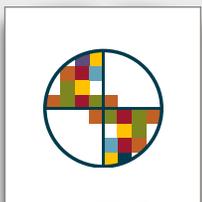
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## A LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Families:

Welcome to the first edition of *Beyond the Classrooms*. We hope you will find it to be a little peek into the magic that is The Cooper School.

At The Cooper School, we disrupt the traditional educational landscape. We value the heart and the mind. We build and maintain a community of practice for teachers. We engage, create, explore, and innovate. We take risks, fail, and try, try again. We inspire and sustain children's natural curiosity. The result is a magical learning environment for both students and teachers, in which children are seen, respected, and valued.

Through difficult times, we remain steadfast in our commitment to:

- Helping our students balance rigorous academics with health and wellbeing
- Providing space and place for conversations around democracy, equity, and justice
- Developing the skills of critical thinking and confident communication
- Fostering global citizenship, so students recognize they are part of a world community
- Creating leaders, movers and shakers, and changemakers

In these pages, you will find a quick glimpse of who we are and what we do - from the quotidian to the remarkable.

**Franci Bell**  
Head of School



## THE IMPACT OF SEL



### THE IMPACT OF SEL

by Subhadra Glassman, 2nd Grade Teacher

The past 20 years have seen a growing body of research, and a growing consensus among scientists and researchers that Social-Emotional Learning, or SEL, produces high impact positive gains for students. While the field of Social-Emotional Learning is rapidly expanding, Social-Emotional Learning has played a critical role at The Cooper School since the school's inception. Our concept of SEL is based on the idea that natural social interactions cause an emotional impact that influences learning.

As a progressive school, it comes as no surprise that we value the whole child, including their social and emotional wellbeing. By both embedding and actively teaching SEL skills and strategies, students are supported and nurtured across the day, from academics to peer interactions, and develop a toolbox that they can use as a foundation for years to come.

At TCS, we believe that resiliency and flexibility are the essential outcomes from the explicit exploration of curiosity, empathy, gratitude, optimism, perseverance, and creativity. These ideas are explicitly taught and connected to a student's self-awareness, social interactions, and academic work. Each year, students come back to these same big ideas and build on their understanding, growing in their practice of them at a developmentally appropriate level.

This year, more than ever, this SEL focus is extremely valuable. As students navigate the uncertainty of the pandemic and the changes in routines, it is imperative that we provide them with the tools they need to feel secure and successful.

**PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE**

*by Carson Stehling, Class of 2013*



*I benefited so much from The Cooper School's fantastic art and music teachers and a curriculum that valued written expression as much as our ability to add and subtract. Writing and speaking were foundational to our education, and for a shy, only child, that was transformative. At my first Publishing Party, I was so afraid of speaking in front of people that I started hiccuping, then cried and had to leave. But by the time I left TCS, I was set to go to School of the Arts as a Theatre major.*

*I went to SOA from 6th - 12th Grades. Over that time, I played Puck in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," fell in love with improv comedy and completed a senior thesis that consisted of writing, directing, and starring in a short one-act.*

*Now I go to Bard College in upstate New York. I intend to major in Art History, but right now, my favorite class is a political studies course on the nature of citizenship. I chose not to enroll in any theater classes this semester in case we have to go remote, but Bard has a revered and highly experimental theater program, so I intend to continue to do theater, but just as a hobby that brings me joy.*

*The tools with which The Cooper School gifted me have remained in my toolbox ever since. My love of words started with "vast vocabulary" in 2nd Grade; my love of art was born making fairy houses on the playground; and my love for others was deepened because I spent all day writing, talking, and singing. I remember my time at The Cooper School vividly through the creative endeavors I was pursuing.*

*Finger-knitting, ukulele, collage, writing poetry - all these things remain codified in my brain as moments when I felt myself becoming a person with passions and interests. I feel very grateful to TCS for challenging me to break out of my shell and providing me with opportunities to attempt to find my place in the world.*



**OPENING OUR DOORS**

*by Anne Wil Wingfield, Director of Admissions and Operations*

Over the past 14 years, The Cooper School has created an environment in which elementary-aged students collaborate, create, innovate, grow, and thrive! Now, we are able to make that possible for middle school-aged students. This past August, The Cooper School Middle School opened its doors.

The seed for the Middle School was planted many years ago, but it took a village of pioneering advocates to make that seed root and grow. We are indebted to the following people who made multiple and generous Capital Campaign contributions to ensure The Cooper School Middle School's birth and viability. Our deepest gratitude to: The Donnelley Berry Family, The Newman Family, The Parker Family, Starr and Phil Snead, Supporting Strategies, and the 2019-2020 Board of Trustees.

The design, construction, and creation of the Middle School was truly a team effort. Eddie Bello of Bello-Garris Architects and Jimmy Tupper of Tupper Construction, LLC were called in to begin the design process. Having worked on the addition to The Cooper School's original classroom building in 2012, they knew The Cooper School well and were enthusiastic about working on this project. Ceara Donnelley of Ceara Donnelley, LLC was engaged as our design consultant, and along with Franci Bell, the team quickly articulated the vision into reality.

*"From a functional standpoint the program for the new middle school was relatively simple: convert an existing building, a salon, into a school," Eddie Bello reflects. "That said, we wanted to try to exemplify the progressive nature of The Cooper School wherever opportunities would allow."*

(cont'd from page 5) *Eddie continues, "We knew we wanted to create a space where natural light was a priority, allowing the spaces to feel much larger and connect to the outdoors. Natural finishes are used throughout the interior, creating a sense of calm and in keeping with the ecological awareness The Cooper School represents. The elevator's exterior skin - comprised of wood slats arranged in a pattern that is both regular and random--provides a "climbing wall" for native vines to attach. Over time the wood will weather, and the vines will grow and bloom, creating an ever-changing element to the building."*

As construction on the Middle School progressed, momentum towards other campus enhancements increased. *"It was hard for me to visualize what the entire property would look like until the fence between them came down and the vegetation was cleared away. Once I could see the whole picture, I knew we could do more," remarked Franci Bell. "I wanted to create an intentionally designed outdoor space that could be multi-functional. We know children benefit from time spent outdoors, and that many children are in a nature deficit. I wanted a space that could enhance what we are doing inside the building and help us maximize the time spent in nature."* Dave and Jennifer Dawson were intrigued by the idea of this outdoor space, and their generous donation to the school turned this dream into a reality. *"I am absolutely thrilled by how it looks. I believe that learning occurs everywhere and all the time. Our job is to facilitate those opportunities, indoors and out."* - Franci Bell

At long last, it was time to welcome the students back to campus. The village that created the Middle School and Outdoor Classroom - the visionaries, the designers, the builders, the donors, and the teachers - completed the cycle by welcoming the most important facet, the students.



**WHY I GIVE**

by Ceara Donnelley, TCS Parent

*Since my two children, Rafferty (Grade 5) and Hayes (Grade 3), have been at TCS, supporting the school each year through the Annual Fund has been a natural and reflexive way to offer gratitude and support to a place that has become such a positive and essential part of my family's life. Raff and Hayes pop out of the car each morning excited to see their friends and teachers, animated about the day's activities, and eager to learn; they come home happy and bubbling over with stories that, without fail, reaffirm my deep sense of TCS as a school that fosters community, integrity, good humor, friendship, and above all, a deep and lasting love of learning.*

*My gratitude for the school has only been amplified by the unparalleled challenges posed in these last several scary months, which have required—and been met with—an extraordinary degree of nimbleness, flexibility, and rigor from the TCS faculty and staff. Whether it is in supporting the expansion of the school, the construction of an outdoor classroom, or the Annual Fund, now more than ever I am eager to give back to what has been a bright spot in a bleak time—a school that has continued unabated in its commitment to preparing our children to thrive, in so many different ways, in an increasingly uncertain world.*

**GIVING LEVELS**

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

|                                     |               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Charlotte's Web                     | \$5000+       |
| Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! | \$2500-\$4999 |
| Frog and Toad                       | \$1500-\$2499 |
| Matilda                             | \$1000-\$1499 |

*Donors in the Leadership Circle will be invited annually to a reception in their honor.*

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

|                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Bridge to Terabithia | \$500-\$999 |
| Shiloh               | \$250-\$499 |
| Amelia Bedelia       | to \$249    |

For information about ways to make your Annual Fund gift, visit our website or contact Amanda Brodbeck,

[amandabrodbeck@thecooperschool.org](mailto:amandabrodbeck@thecooperschool.org)

Please consider supporting the Annual Fund today!