

# The Voyage

Paul Cuffee School ▾ A Maritime Charter School for Providence Children ▾ Winter 2015 ▾ Vol. 13 Issue 1

## PCS 5-Year Strategic Plan Coming This Spring

Christopher J. Haskins,  
Head of School

**T**HIS SPRING WE WILL UNVEIL the Paul Cuffee School Strategic Plan 2015–2020, outlining the school's goals, objectives, targets, and milestones we expect to achieve over the next five years.

Our primary goal, of course, is to help students attain the highest possible levels of academic achievement. Closely related is the need to support students' social and emotional learning, which affects academic growth.

Achieving this goal requires a commitment to our core instructional programming, aligned to Common Core State Standards. It also means continuing to develop effective,

data-driven systems to assist teachers in responding to student needs. In order to maximize our ability to serve students in the long run, we have also developed strategies around financial sustainability.

The strategic plan outlines four major goals, each with specific actions, timelines, and outcomes:

- Enhance students' academic growth and achievement

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Head of School Chris Haskins stresses the importance of literacy by taking time to read to first graders Jaida Cruz and Evelyn Tillman.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### Anabel Castillo: PCS Provides Gateway to Success in College



Anabel Castillo, class of 2014, receives hugs from her students while serving as "teacher for a day."

"Growing up as an only child, I knew I wanted to have a career that involved kids," Anabel Castillo says in explanation of why she has chosen early childhood education and human development as her double major at the University of Rhode Island (URI).

A member of Paul Cuffee School's first graduating class in 2014, Castillo has successfully made the transition from "high school kid" to independent college student. She pinpoints one seemingly innocuous tool as the gateway to her success in college life:

"Ms. Thoma presented her English class with a syllabus for the trimester. You always knew how to plan ahead and what you were responsible for delivering in class. It was the best practice for what college would be like."

Castillo feels that her seven years at PCS prepared her for taking on more responsibility and finding independence as a young adult.

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## PCS 5-Year Strategic Plan *(continued from front page)*

- Build and strengthen systems to support faculty and staff
- Ensure long-term financial sustainability
- Establish strategic partnerships to promote peer learning

The process for creating the strategic plan was highly collaborative, involving school faculty, staff, families, and trustees, as well as community members. This group came together to develop the plan as a resource for

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**“Embedded in this plan is our commitment to supporting best practices, while also attending to classroom innovations that represent *next* practices.”**

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the school in supporting high-quality educational programming that will help our students continue to succeed—and to achieve at higher levels than ever before.

Our vision for the outcomes outlined in this plan is both ambitious and attainable. We have worked hard to prioritize practical efforts that will have the greatest impact on our students. At the same time, the plan is intended to be a fluid and living document that will continue to evolve in response to emerging needs. Embedded in this plan is our commitment to supporting best practices, while also attending to classroom innovations that represent *next* practices.

This is an exciting time for Paul Cuffee School. We have in place a strong, supportive culture and a dedicated, committed community. We are excited about the possibilities for our future. 🌊

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*(continued from front page)*

“It was the right balance: While the teachers encouraged growth and self-confidence, you knew they wouldn’t let go of your hand and were still there for you,” she says.

At URI, Castillo is opening more doors for herself. She is studying Portuguese along with her education courses and has chosen Spanish as a minor. She’s also taken a stab at acting, appearing in the university’s production of *Check, Please!* in her first semester.

Her most memorable PCS experience? “My senior year, I did ‘Teach for a Day.’ It changed my life. It was then that I knew what I wanted not just for my major, but for my career.” 🌊



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## Your Gift to the Annual Fund Helps Our Students Grow

The PCS Annual Fund has achieved 30% of its \$150,000 goal for the year.

Your donation helps pay for field trips that enhance academic learning, as well as music, drama, technology, sports, library resources, and the maritime experiences that make Cuffee such a special place for students.

Please visit [www.paulcuffee.org/support](http://www.paulcuffee.org/support) and donate generously today!

To earmark funds for maritime leadership experiences, please see the David Burnham Fund on the next page.



PCS 5th grader Daniel Quiroa awards the Annual Fund Fish its third stripe, indicating a new milestone in funds raised to enhance education at PCS.

One experience that Daniel loved was a December trip to the RI State House to perform a musical concert.

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:

### *Sarah Rich Selected as Fuse RI Fellow to Share Expertise*

**S**ARAH RICH LOVES TECHNOLOGY, and her second graders love it too. They use iPads to solve math problems and create videos based on academic units. In the computer lab, they're able to work on Common Core math and English language arts lessons at their own pace.

"Getting my first iPad five years ago changed everything for me," says Rich, one of three second grade teachers at PCS. "I saw limitless possibilities for its use in my classroom." Being adept at blended learning—which combines traditional with technology-driven techniques—Rich was determined not only to find more innovative uses of technology in her own classroom but also to spread the wealth around the state.

After three years of sharing best technology practices informally in a group called EdUnderground, Rich has been selected as one of the inaugural group of Fuse RI Fellows through a Highlander Institute initiative designed to spread the capacity for blended

learning throughout Rhode Island. Rich notes that blended learning allows students to individualize their instruction by setting their own pace and using learning tools that best suit them.

Through the two-year fellowship, Rich and her team will be assigned to the Warwick school district, spending 10 days a year working with peers there to collect data, share methods, and promote innovative uses of blended learning in the classroom. Having been selected as a sample school, PCS will enjoy the reciprocity of hosting a different Fuse RI team for the same purpose.

"For me, being a Fuse RI Fellow is the kind of professional development



*Sarah Rich helps 2nd grader Karla Garcia with an online English language arts program.*

that is most meaningful," says Rich. "Being a lifelong learner, Fuse RI has really ignited a spark for me. With Paul Cuffee's strategic plan emphasizing the role that STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math] should play in the curriculum, it's a win all round." 🌊

## *Upper School Students Gear Up for College*

*Trey Goncalves*

**A**S SOON AS THEY STEP across the threshold at 544 Elmwood Ave., Paul Cuffee Upper School students have college on their minds.

With the goal of making a college degree an option for every student, PCS staff offer information and encouragement as well as academic support throughout students' four years at the Upper School. For example, every year the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes take trips to visit local colleges and universities to see what they have to offer.

These trips are organized by Micah Thompson, a PCS teaching partner who specializes in postsecondary success. In contrast to most high school guidance departments—which spend an average of just 38 minutes helping each student prepare for college, according to a recent U.S. Department of Education survey—Thompson and others at PCS work with students on a sustained basis. In addition to providing hands-on guidance, they strive to help students find something that calls to them and will inspire them to apply for a four-year degree.

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PCS recently established the David Burnham Maritime Fund in honor of inaugural Board president and longtime Cuffee supporter David Burnham. This fund will provide fellowships for juniors and seniors to pursue maritime-related leadership development opportunities at community-based sites.

For a limited time, you can double your contribution to the Burnham Fund! John and Letitia Carter have generously offered a matching grant of \$25,000.

To donate, go to <https://donations.paulcuffee.org/donate-now/> and select "David Burnham Maritime Fund."

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## Students Gear Up for College *(continued from previous page)*

In their junior year, the students all meet with Thompson at least twice individually. During these meetings they develop a list of college options, learn the requirements for attending their school of choice, get information about financial planning, and even explore future career options. By the end of their junior year they have a specific plan for proceeding, based on their individual interests and strengths.

Senior year is spent under the guidance of Genevieve Schultz, who meets with students every two to three weeks to work with them on everything from the application process to staying on top of current coursework. The school also offers support programs like weekly college meetings where students can get information and support in navigating college systems.

To involve parents in the process, PCS offers four senior parent nights, including FAFSA workshops, to make



*2014 welcomed the first graduates of Paul Cuffee School, 88% of whom were accepted into college. PCS has numerous measures in place to help students with the college application process.*

sure they have all the financial aid and other information they need to help their children. For additional help, staff are available after school twice a week to meet with students individually. These efforts are all part of Cuffee's goal of helping students succeed in school and beyond. 📞