

# The Voyage

Paul Cuffee School 🚢 A Maritime Charter School for Providence Children 🚢 Winter 2016 🚢 Vol. 14 Issue 1

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### Omogbolahan Oladosu PCS Class of 2014



It comes as no surprise that alumnus Omogbolahan Oladosu, an honors student of Paul Cuffee School's first graduating class, aspires to become a dentist. "I sincerely enjoy making people smile," 'Gbolahan' said. As a current sophomore at the University of Rhode Island, he is taking a heavy course load of biology, chemistry, math and philosophy and has plans to major in biological sciences. He dreams of continuing on to Tufts Dental School, which he pre-viewed on a "dental day" during his college search.

Gbolahan came to Paul Cuffee School in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Schooled in the regular Providence public school system until the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, he finished the second half of grade six and his 7<sup>th</sup> academic year at Ascension College in his native Lagos, Nigeria.

"My parents wanted to afford me a taste of my native culture," he reminisced, remembering how he loved biology at Ascension. He discovered a love for fine arts, during which he built a model house, as well as agriculture,

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## *A Time to Reflect, Recharge, and Renew* Christopher J. Haskins, Head of School

**H**APPY NEW YEAR! IN schools we have the opportunity to celebrate a new year twice. Both the school year and calendar year provide the opportunity to reflect, recharge, and renew. Upon return from an extended holiday break, our teachers, students, and families are ready to take up the challenges of the new year.

One of the features of our school that helps to make it a special place is our commitment to getting to know each child as an individual. Recently, our teachers held parent-teacher conferences for nearly 100% of our students. With their teachers and parents, students reviewed the progress they have made over the course of the first trimester and created goals for continuous improvement. "Be reflective" is one of our stated expectations at the Upper School and is a value that we share across all three campuses.

Similarly, we are reflecting on our school-wide performance on the recent Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. This state-required annual assessment, designed to measure attainment of Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics across grades three through ten, was first administered last year. As such, our scores cannot be compared to performance on NECAP (the former state-required

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*Head of School, Christopher Haskins, discusses with the Board of Trustees our school-wide performance on the recent PARCC assessments.*

## *A Time to Reflect, Recharge, and Renew* (continued from front page)

annual assessment) in past years, but can serve as a baseline for performance in future years.

We are in the midst of analyzing student performance in the PARCC in comparison to their performance on our in-house assessments and the work students complete in their classrooms. Children are much more than a score on the state test; yet, the scores are an important indicator of the proficiency students have gained on learning standards. Our principals and teachers are committed to

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**“Our principals and teachers are committed to improving student performance in their classrooms, celebrating areas of strength and focusing on areas for improvement.”**

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improving student performance in their classrooms, celebrating areas of strength and focusing on areas for improvement. It's another way we attend to our students as individuals.

In closing, on behalf of the school, we wish for you many successes this new year, in a shared commitment to our continuous success as a unique and vibrant school community. 🐟



## *Google Chromebooks Aid in Blended Learning Support for Classrooms*

*Tom Beall, Upper School Math Teacher and  
Kathleen O'Halloran, Institutional Advancement Associate*

**O**UTFITTING GRADES SIX - TWELVE with Chromebooks for mathematics classrooms was an expensive proposition but results show that we are reaping the rewards.

“All of my 11<sup>th</sup> grade students passed the first trimester. First time that has happened in my classes, and since instruction is text-based rather than teacher-provided, I am seeing more students developing proficiency at learning from text rather than from the teacher,” said Mr. Beall, the Upper School math teacher. Students are progressing at their own pace on Google Classroom exercises such as reducing

fractions, proving geometric theorems, or working with logarithms in algebra II and pre-calculus.

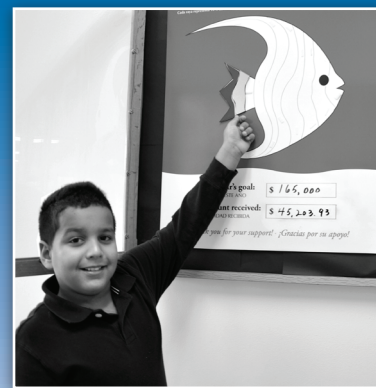
Chosen by lottery, students come to PCS with a wide range of academic abilities, requiring differentiation of instruction in the classroom. Not every student can be on the “same page” as the others. Using Chromebooks to access the internet and use applications in the cloud devoted to

## **Your Support Makes a Real Impact on Our Students’ Education**

Your gift is urgently needed to help ensure we continue to enhance teaching and learning at Paul Cuffee School. Outfitting 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade math classes with Chromebooks was made possible by generous gifts to our Annual Fund. Your tax-deductible contributions make it possible for us to continue the many hands-on enrichment programs we offer to our students.

This year, our goal is the most ambitious ever: \$165,000 by our fiscal year end in June, 2016. Please help us reach this goal by donating online at [www.paulcuffee.org](http://www.paulcuffee.org) or send a check to the Paul Cuffee School Annual Fund, 459 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908.

For more information, contact Kathleen O'Halloran at [kohalloran@paulcuffee.org](mailto:kohalloran@paulcuffee.org) or 401-453-2626.



*PCS 3<sup>rd</sup> grader Raymond Nuñez awards Stripey, the Annual Fund fish, his second stripe signifying 20% of our \$165,000 goal met.*

# New Science Curriculum Nudges Budding Scientists toward Unexpected Career Choices & Opportunities

**P**CS 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADER Corinne O'Hare isn't entirely sure yet, but she may want to become an environmental scientist. It seems she has fallen in love with science.

As part of a small focus group of students, O'Hare and three of her fellow 5<sup>th</sup> graders spoke of the new science curriculum and the surprises they have discovered in the unit they are just finishing: *Sun, Moon, and Planets*. They have found the new URI GEMS-Net program (Guiding Education in Math and Science Networking) to be more "sophisticated" than prior years' curricula, with more hands on learning activities, experiments, and more thought-provoking focus questions.

Other focus group students were intrigued by the surprises they discovered in the

unit. Magdiel Valente enjoyed reading the myth of Zeus, Callisto, and Arcas and the explanation of how the Big Bear and Little Bear came to be in the night sky, whereas budding astronomer, Beyanca Guilme, was surprised to learn that the easily recognizable Big Dipper is actually part of the Big Bear constellation and not a constellation itself. The biggest astronomical disappointment of them all, the downgrading of Pluto from planet status to dwarf planet, didn't phase young skywatcher, Vanessa Cruz, as she learned more about asteroids and other celestial bodies from the Solar System Unit.



*Channel 12 meteorologist T. J. Del Santo demonstrating the weather tracking devices on WPRI's weather van to our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders*

The 5<sup>th</sup> grade isn't alone in wonderment and discovery with their science units. Kindergarteners studying *Trees and Weather* visited Swan Point Cemetery, the largest green space in Providence, which contains over 3,500 trees. They learned how to differentiate between deciduous and coniferous trees as well as identify maples, elms, and other varieties of trees.

First graders studying *Air and Weather* made pinwheels in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) class and experimented with activating them to judge wind speed and direction on a perfectly still day in Providence, which was no small challenge.

Second graders studying *Solids and Liquids* investigated the properties of water puddles in the school yard, observing their viscosity, opaqueness, transparency, and translucency.

A visit from Channel 12 meteorologist T. J. Del Santo was the highlight of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade unit on *Water and Climate*, as the forecaster demonstrated the weather tracking devices on WPRI's weather van.

4<sup>th</sup> graders studying *Soils, Rocks, and Landforms* worked in teams to judge the effect that "slant" has on erosion and deposition of soil by pouring water down sand trays propped up on inclines.

2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, Ms. Sarah Rich said that the new science kits are, "much more hands-on than in other curricula. The students are doing much more writing and critical thinking as they consider the Focus Questions that accompany each unit." 🌩️



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*(continued from front page)*

where he grew his own tomatoes and *cwedun*, a leafy green much like spinach. Gbolahan completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade back in the United States, at the end of which he and his family applied and was accepted by lottery to Paul Cuffee School for high school.

His greatest lesson from Paul Cuffee School? School is important not only for one's family, but for oneself. "It's a growing process where you learn over the course of four years to become responsible for yourself," he said.

Gbolahan's advice to other Paul Cuffee students? "Know yourself. Don't worry about fitting in and being cool. It's more important to be polite and kind. Don't be concerned about wearing the right clothes or the right shoes. Clothes and shoes don't make you who you are. You are who you are." 🌩️

**"High School is a growing process where you learn over the course of four years to become responsible for yourself."**

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*Upper School math students use Chromebooks in pre-calculus to access trigonometry and logarithmic tables to determine a ship's latitude and longitude*

trigonometry and logarithmic tables to determine a ship's latitude and longitude, just as 18<sup>th</sup> century mariners such as Paul Cuffee did. They show their work in green journals, but send the “answer” from their Chromebooks to Mr. Beall's PC for review. Known for his extensive research into the linkage between maritime themes and mathematics, Beall has stored hundreds of “mini-lessons” in the Google Classroom, ensuring that his students never run out of problems to solve.

At the Middle School, Chromebooks are used in math classrooms, and thanks to a generous gift from a private donor, in the sixth grade humanities class as well. “It's blended learning at its best,” Ms. Thomas, the librarian and digital learning specialist said. “At the Middle School, it's happening organically where teachers are infusing their curricula with digital media to better serve the individual needs of all our students.” 📖

## Blended Learning

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mathematics instruction allows students to learn and practice their numeracy skills at their own pace. With each student having their own personalized account, there is a record of the entirety of their work. For teachers, having students work at their own pace allows them more classroom time to focus on the students that need individualized attention.

In Mr. Beall's 11<sup>th</sup> grade pre-calculus class, students work quietly during a “test.”

No paper is in evidence. Students use