

# The Voyage

Paul Cuffee School \* A Maritime Charter School for Providence Children \* Fall Winter 2011 \* Vol. 9 Issue 2

## Creating School Rules

by Seventh Grader, Isaiah Pinto, with guidance from Ms. Wohl

On September 15, each of the nine middle school advisories sent one or two elected student delegates to participate in the PCS Middle School Constitutional Convention. Delegates started the meeting off by welcoming new representatives and acknowledging two returning ones, while enjoying the tastiness of pepperoni and cheese pizza. Moments later, they got right to the business of updating the Middle School Social Contract.

The Social Contract is a set of guiding principles written by students to keep the learning community safe and operating smoothly. To make decisions, students in advisories and at the Convention practiced direct democracy and consensus-building. This year's process began by reviewing 33 rules suggested by advisories. The delegates boiled them down to five.

### THE NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL CONTRACT STATES:

1. Respect yourself, the community, and our environment.
2. Cooperate and focus on what's important.
3. Provide positive support.
4. Proudly be yourself and let your voice be heard.
5. To be an eagle, you have to fly. To be the best you have to try.

"Last year the group debated more and it was harder coming to an agreement," reflected two-time delegate Nyasia Teixeira, now a seventh-grader. This year the delegates worked together exceptionally well and were able to come to consensus relatively quickly. She and the other delegates introduced the 2011-2012 Social Contract at the September 28 Community Meeting through a funny spoof on the classic game show "Family Feud."



Front row: Alexander LeGassick, Nyasia Teixeira, Kayleigh McElroy, Noah Turner, Isiah Harrison, Back row: Ms. Leslie Brackett, Chasity Padilla, Gabriella Cardenas, Fiona Carey, Linda Orellana, Ms. Ariana Wohl, Jzamillex Ramos. Not pictured: Johanny Castillo. Group Photo by Isaiah Pinto

Eighth grade delegate Gabriella Cardenas announced to the school, "We hope these rules will guide our community fairly and justly so that we all can achieve our hopes and dreams. In 1787, the framers of the U.S. Constitution held a similar set of meetings to write a social contract for the whole nation. Like the U.S. Constitution, the PCS Social Contract is special because it expresses values that are important to this community."



Left to right: Delegates Gabriella Cardenas, Noah Turner and Nyasia Teixeira

Sixth grade Integrated Sciences teacher Edna Attias commented, "It's exciting to watch students invest in the rule-making process. I find they are more committed to following the Social Contract because they wrote it themselves." Eighth grade Math teacher Ben Hall added, "It sets a wonderful tone for the school." \*

# PCHS Leading Ladies

by Kathleen O'Halloran



From left to right: Gerrell Brown, Anabel Castillo, Kyla Brazenor, Kiana Bonilla, Ormarie Colon, Giandra Rivas, Shanik Cruz, Margarita Gonzalez and Anicel Paulino

When Erika Sanzi, PCHS Spanish teacher, offered to sponsor “News and Views” this fall, she thought the club would offer a student forum for views and commentary on world, national, and community events. Instead, she now meets weekly with a spirited group of “Leading Ladies” of PCHS. The group of 10th grade Leading Ladies, genuine and insightful, shared their reasons for enjoying the club. All of the Ladies spoke articulately about the value of expressing themselves and voicing their ideas in a respectful environment. And all of the Ladies spoke of a common goal: “making our community a better place for the future.”

The Ladies’ major thrust is to organize a program to show gratitude to the benefactors of PCHS. Whether it be for financial donations or in-kind contributions such as microscopes for the Science curriculum or computers in the Technology Lab, the Ladies seek out appropriate literary quotations to use when writing personal notes of thanks to their benefactors. The Ladies excitedly discussed plans to invite the providers of their new equipment to class to demonstrate their donations in use.

The Ladies were well-acquainted with and inspired by the breadth and uniqueness of the benefits that have been donated in the past. Margarita Gonzalez spoke enthusiastically about a grant from The RI State Council for the Arts received last spring which brought Trinity Rep’s artist educators to PCHS to enhance the students’ performance of scenes from The Crucible. Shanik Cruz and Anabel Castillo related the plot-lines of the novels that they plan to produce as part of the month-long NaNoWriMo - National Novel Writing Month program beginning November 1 and ending November 30.

When asked what key contributions have directly impacted their lives, one of the Ladies related the opportunity to use books in school but, far better, “to be able to bring six books home” to read independently and share with her family. This opportunity is made possible by Reading Is Fundamental, and promotes and encourages family literacy activities during non-school hours.

As the visit wound to an end, new student Gerrell Brown quietly looked across the table and asked, “Why do you give?” PCS’s Director of Institutional Advancement, Julia Karahalís, just as quietly and earnestly responded, “Because I believe that each one of you has a special talent and each one of you can make a unique contribution to the community. I couldn’t give, or do the kind of work I do, in encouraging others to give, if I didn’t believe that what you learn and experience here at Paul Cuffee is making that possible.” \*

## Wish List



### Grade 5

24 Field Compasses  
\$12 each

### ES Library

BrainPop Subscription  
\$495

### MS/HS Libraries

Latin American Resources  
\$25 each

### Grades K-8

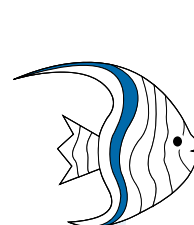
40 New Classroom Computers  
\$550 each

40 New LCD Monitors  
\$125 each

### Grades 6-7-8

30 New Laptops  
\$500 each

## ANNUAL FUND



This year's goal: **\$150,000.00**

Amount received: **\$ 14,878.27**

### THIS GIVING SEASON,

*honor someone you love with a donation to Paul Cuffee School so that our fish can earn some of his 10% of goal stripes before December 31st! Your tax deductible contributions will make it possible to continue the enrichment programs that our students eagerly anticipate every year.*

### YOU MAY DONATE ONLINE AT

*www.paulcuffeeschool.org or send your contribution to Paul Cuffee School Annual Fund, 459 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908. For stock transfer instructions, please contact: jkarahalís@paulcuffee.org. Thank YOU for your generosity!*

# College Connections

by Kathleen O'Halloran

*With the goal of 100% of Paul Cuffee High School graduates prepared to enroll in either college or a post-secondary educational institution, maintaining strong relationships with local colleges and universities is a top priority.*

## COLLEGE ON MY MIND

College visits begin early at Cuffee, with all Middle School students touring regional campuses in late October, and ninth and tenth grade students going in early November. Under the direction of Michelle Bush, PCS friends and faculty with connections to colleges throughout RI and MA help to arrange visits and tours. Recently, PCS Trustee Earl Smith, who is the Assistant Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at URI, organized a campus visit for our eighth graders. The day trip included lunch in the dining hall, during which academic advisors discussed the requirements to apply and provided information on scholarships.



*Alvin Artigas, Bryeshia Jennings and Taiwo Oladosu donning their college attire*

To continue the momentum, PCHS Principal Becky Coustan has instituted "college day" on certain Fridays throughout the year. She is seeking donations of new college t-shirts and sweatshirts from various institutions so that PCS students may wear a garment from the college of their choice. Some t-shirts have already been donated by Trustees, friends of the School, and faculty to proudly represent their Alma Maters. College pride is also evident at PCHS classroom entrances. Room signs indicate the faculty member's name and subjects taught, and also sport the logo of their college.

Developing college pride early is part of the PCHS plan. Faculty and staff emphasize that to make acceptance to college a reality, students need to make that commitment early and work hard.



*Wheaton College Senior Mark Enos with a first grader*

## A TWO WAY STREET

The Paul Cuffee community collaborates with numerous colleges and community organizations to enrich programs and enhance student learning in core academics, particularly the sciences.

Graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Rhode Island, Brown, Providence College, Johnson & Wales, Roger Williams, Rhode Island College, and Wheaton College routinely embrace internship and student teaching assignments at PCS. The benefits go both ways. For example, pre-practicum participant Max Enos, a senior at Wheaton, said of his work in Mrs. Wargo's first grade classroom, "It's been great working at PCS. I'm getting a lot out of it. At first, I was mostly observing, but now I'm working my way into classroom routines. I've been working with students on writing and sentence conventions. While a textbook can guide you on classroom management, nothing is more helpful than seeing how Mrs. Wargo manages the classroom for real."

Paul Cuffee students of all ages also reap the benefits of these varied educational partnerships. They receive individualized attention, or voyage out to campuses to study marine life and ecology. At their summer orientation, the incoming 9th grade class spent two days getting to know each other, building community, and exploring the city's harbor. Renowned marine biologist Dr. Carol Thornber, URI College of Environmental Life Sciences (CELS), joined the students off-campus at the Community Boating Center in Providence. Together they scooped marine life into their nets and examined their catch under microscopes in the outdoor classroom.

PCHS Science Teacher Nora Cullen and Dr. Stanley Cobb, Professor Emeritus in the Biological Sciences Program at URI, are launching an after-school club in the spring. The Sea Perch Program, funded by a grant from URI, will allow club members to build underwater robots designed by MIT and test the waters with them. The robots will gather plankton or water samples from Providence Harbor or the Blackstone River, and students will be able to work with the marine life in the classroom. Ms. Cullen added, smiling wryly, "I'd like to attach a camera to one and find the net we lost last summer!" \*



# A Senior Moment?

by Kathleen O'Halloran

In 2001 when PCS opened with grades K-3, the dream of graduating a PCS high school class seemed eons away. Just a bit more than a decade later, PCS now serves 632 children in grades K-10. Our 10th graders will advance to become our first graduating class of Seniors in June of 2014.

Becky Coustan, PCHS principal, enjoys recruiting and hiring teachers and staff for each new grade. She is especially cognizant of what a unique privilege it has been to select every one of the dedicated and creative individuals who staff the high school.

Recruiting widely through colleges, the media, and other educational alliances,

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*Tenth grade students work closely with their Math Teacher, Mr. Geoghegan*

Ms. Coustan sorted through hundreds of applications, inviting many to interview and teach a demonstration lesson live, with an interview team providing feedback.

When asked about her students, Becky smiled warmly. She described them as “bright, fantastic, and eager to make their voices heard.” A major goal of the high school is to give students many opportunities to grow their leadership abilities by facilitating the All School Meeting, presenting a “Thought of the Week” on a subject of their choice, participating in Student Senate and advisory projects, and joining with other student advocacy clubs and organizations such as Young Voices and Cuffee’s own Leading Ladies.

With a detailed plan to guide their progress, the high school is now taking on a life as a living institution, and staff are working closely with students to shape a program that reflects and responds to student interests and needs.

The faculty and staff seek opportunities through city affiliations, colleges, and “lunch and learn” career sessions to help the 10th graders envision grades 11 and 12 and beyond. The PCHS curriculum is designed as college preparatory, and all seniors must complete college applications as part of their graduation requirements. Ms. Coustan explained that the faculty and staff emphasize that to make acceptance to college a reality, the students need to make that commitment early in their high school education.

How does it feel to be a 10th grader in such a landmark class of the PCHS? Tenth grader



*Tenth Graders:  
Roseangie Baez and Melissa Quiroa*

Melissa Quiroa responded immediately, “It’s exciting and I’m proud.”

Melissa is used to “firsts.” She won a seat in the 2002 kindergarten class, and in 2014 she will graduate in the first senior class of PCHS. She plans to go into the medical field.

Rosangie was new to PCHS as a 9th grader. She enrolled from Sophia Academy, a private middle school for girls. Enthusiastic about her PCHS experience, she is looking forward to becoming a physical therapist.

When asked if they had any friends or family who shared the unique experience of being in a first graduating class of any school, Rosangie beamed and said, “My aunt was in the first graduating class of Chambers!” Perhaps “firsts” run in the Baez family as well. \*