

# The Voyage

Paul Cuffee School 🚢 A Maritime Charter School for Providence Children 🚢 Winter 2017 🚢 Vol. 15 Issue 1

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

**Ralston Najarro**

*PCS Class of 2016*



Ralston is a young man who sees connections. And more and more, he sees them emerging. Although performing well in his high school classes, he didn't always see their relevance; but now he does.

Currently a freshman at RIC, he looks back on his classes at Cuffee with real appreciation. Finishing his first semester, Ralston is singularly focused on closing out strong. He credits many of his high school classes with giving him an advantage in his work.

As he powers through his current courses, which consists of creative writing, business analysis, history, and sociology, he reflects back to lessons learned and skills practiced at PCS during NaNoWriMo - the National Novel Writing Month that challenges students to write a novel of 50,000 words in a month. Having taken part in that challenge, he finds that tackling assignments for his current creative writing class to be a lot less intimidating and flows much easier than it would have had he not worked under great

*continued on next page*

## Greetings from the Head of School

*Christopher J. Haskins, Head of School*

**D**EAR FRIENDS OF PAUL CUFFEE SCHOOL:

To a lifelong learner, the world is a classroom. Learning results from every encounter with others, in solving problems and celebrating accomplishments, when encountering differing points of view, in witness to justice and when facing injustices, and through engagement with the natural world. School should prepare students for learning in all of these situations, and others. At Paul Cuffee School, we value knowing each learner well as we help to develop in each a love of learning.

As you will read in this issue of the Voyage, our school provides a combination of classroom and field experiences that help students develop a love of learning. In the classroom, our youngest learners are having fun becoming fluent with connecting sounds to letters in our new multi-sensory approach to phonics and phonemic awareness. At one of our recent field trips at the Middle School, students explored local waterways, making their science units come alive. At the Upper School we have become more responsive in attending

to student needs and interests through the SEAS block, adding intervention and enrichment to the core courses and elective schedule.

Combine these initiatives, and many more, to our ever-growing academic program preparing students for college and beyond and you find that Paul Cuffee School remains one of the very best options for a public education in Providence and beyond. The destination remains important, and the voyage is, in and of itself, an education. 🚢



*PCS upperclassmen experience the classroom that nature provides as they investigate evidence of weathering, erosion, and deposition at Big River Wildlife Management area.*

# PCS Readers Have Fun with “Foundations” as They Acquire Language Skills

**I** BEFORE E EXCEPT AFTER C. Remember that? Turns out there are so many exceptions that one might throw up one’s hands and give up on spelling anything right. But not in kindergarten through second grade at Paul Cuffee School.

Children learn the foundations of the alphabet, spelling, and reading with a unique program designed by Wilson Language Training called *Foundations*. Foundations uses a multi-sensory approach to teach children their letter formations and sounds, using tiles, pictures, and special drill pads to reinforce how to form letters, how to sound them out, and how to combine them to create words. As students

progress through the curriculum, they learn that some unfamiliar words can be “tapped out” with their fingers to be read and some are “trick words” that just have to be remembered.

Literacy Intervention Specialist, Megan Madden noted, “The program is empowering our students to solve words in a whole new way. They are able to physically build words, and take on some of the very complex patterns that make up the English language. I think we are going to see more and more students who have in the past struggled, be able to successfully break the code with the tools in hand to help them become truly confident, fluent readers.” 🐟

---

“The program [Foundations] is empowering our students to solve words in a whole new way.” *Megan Madden*

---



*PCS Kindergartener Colette Yang practices her letter formation during a Foundations whiteboard exercise.*



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*(continued from front page)*

pressure to produce a huge volume of words under such tight time constraints. Now, he recognizes that strong writing skills are an advantage in all of his college courses.

At PCS, Ralston’s senior project showcased the influence of rap music on sneaker sales. His dream career - designing athletic shoes - may seem like a long shot to him at the moment, however, he is realistic in his expectations. Using knowledge gained in his Urban Sociology course, he is looking at the marketing side of the athletic shoes industry, another potential career path in the making.

Ralston is confident in his preparedness as he approaches his studies at Rhode Island College. While at PCS he took two Advanced Placement classes - AP Spanish and AP Biology. His performance on the AP tests allowed him to tuck some college credits under his belt before even stepping onto campus, thus saving him time and some tuition dollars. His advice to others still at PCS, “don’t shy away from AP courses if you qualify. They are hard, however, worth it in the long run.” Overall, what he has learned in his transition from high school to college is that “as a person, you can rely on others, but ultimately you have to forge your own way.” 🐟



The David Burnham Maritime Fund, which officially launched in November of 2014 in honor of the late David Burnham, Founding President of the Board of Trustees, awarded its first fellowships to rising juniors and seniors this past spring.

The Fund is only \$20,050 away from its ambitious goal of \$5,050.

Help us reach our goal by making a secure donation online today at <https://donations.paulcuffee.org/donate-now/> and select the David Burnham Maritime Fund.





*PCS 12th grader, Astarrian Timbo, an avid reader, ponders New York Times best-selling biography, [The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace](#).*

## SEAS Curriculum Advances Students' Learning Habits

**N**OT EVERY STUDENT COMES innately-equipped with the skills to competently and confidently maneuver the course load of a high school senior. Take Astarrian Timbo for example. A 12<sup>th</sup> grader at the Upper School, “Starr” has always enjoyed the benefits of being a self-proclaimed “pretty organized” person. But compound her academic course load with the specter of the college admissions process and she admitted she more than benefits from the SEAS program this year.

SEAS (Skills Enrichment and Academic Support) is a special class woven into the students' schedules four days a week for a 40 minute period. New to the Upper School this year, SEAS has been adapted from the Middle School's use of it to include two periods of organizational skills (OYL – Organize Your Life) and two sessions of quiet reading time (DEAR – Drop Everything and Read.)

For Starr, she flexes her organizational and time management muscle on her

college application process. Aspiring to be a pediatric cardiac surgeon, she realizes that college is just one stop on a long and arduous academic journey. But she knows that the skills that she acquires now and hones throughout her academic career will only reap benefits in the future.

“Every time I access Naviance (an on-line college application solution) I know I'll be more successful, save time, and be more efficient on my college applications

by having everything in one place and being prepared.”

Starr also is seeing her reading skills improve thanks to DEAR. “I used to read a lot in middle school, and then I got busy with other things. Now, I ‘drop everything and read’ for at least two sessions a week, document my progress, and accumulate a record of pages read per week. I'm in AP English and I'm reading at a level and pace that I never thought possible.” 📖

## PCS 6th Graders Explore What's Around the River Bend

**I**T WASN'T YOUR TYPICAL INDIAN summer day when sixty sixth graders boarded the riverboat “Explorer” to cruise down the Blackstone River. Rather, under gray skies and a gusty wind, the students took in forsaken mills, obsolete smoke stacks, and metal scrap yards where once the thriving textile industry brought preeminence to our state during the Industrial Age.

The field trip combined both science and history for the students. As part of the 6th grade curriculum, students study the rivers of Rhode Island and their link to the

*continued on back page*

## Your Gift Changes Lives



**Our 2016-2017 Annual Fund appeal is in full swing as we accept contributions to meet our \$150,000 goal.**

The Annual Fund affords Paul Cuffee School students hands-on learning experiences such as sailing and swimming lessons, field trips to cultural, natural and technological venues to enhance students' education, and curriculum-enriching programs and activities.

This is a time of promise for almost 800 Providence inner city youth. Do what you can to transform each child's promise into reality. **Give to the Annual Fund today** by using the envelope provided or by donating online at [www.paulcuffee.org](http://www.paulcuffee.org).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Russell Carey, *President*  
Alex Molina, *Vice President*  
Kimberly Noble, *Treasurer*  
Robert Kelley, *Clerk*  
Joop Nagtegaal  
Carrie Bridges Feliz

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Su Almeida    Leeds Mitchell IV  
Tom Beall    Daniel Moos  
Leslie Brackett    Martha Newcomb  
Rebecca Bueno    Jean Patiky  
Nick Figueroa    Abraham Pinales  
Crystal Gantz    Earl Smith III  
Andrea Summers



PAUL CUFFEE SCHOOL

459 Promenade Street (K–5)  
30 Barton Street (6–8)  
544 Elmwood Avenue (9–12)  
Providence, RI 📍 (401) 453-2626  
[www.paulcuffee.org](http://www.paulcuffee.org)

## Exploring the River Bend *(continued from page 2)*



*(Left) PCS 6th graders observe an exhibit representing a textile millworker weaving on his loom at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket. (Right) PCS students tested river water for salinity during their trip down the Blackstone River.*

industrialization and settlement of the state. As part of their marine studies, the students tested the river water for PH (acidity), salinity, and water flow. They saw how the mills, while contributing to the economy of the time, also contributed to the river's pollution such that in 1990 the EPA declared the Blackstone to be the most polluted river in the country.

The field trip concluded with a visit to the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket where the students saw the faces and heard the stories of early Rhode Island workers whose lives and livelihoods were inextricably bound with the textile mills. 🚣

