

# Monthly Report to Parents

## December 2017



December 2017, Volume 22

### Christmas and Hanukkah at Lowcountry Preparatory School



The campus has come alive with the decorations of Christmas and Hanukkah, consisted with our mission statement citing our Judeo-Christian heritage. Students and members of the faculty and staff have transitioned to the holiday spirit with wreaths decorating the exterior of our halls and Christmas trees on the interior.

Mrs. Lanelle Yates led our Lower School students in our annual Christmas Program on December 13, 2017. In addition to several group performances, piano solos were provided by Luisa Lee,

Maddie Davis, Jack Davis, Emma Rusnak, and Mary Thurlow.

Mrs. Rhoades put the kindergartners in the spirit with an airing of Polar Express on December 19, 2017. With their parents, the students constructed sleighs and box cars the night before. Competition was keen for the most elaborate platform. The one with wheels, lights, and teak wood was hard to beat!

Earlier in the month, Mrs. Jennifer Wallace and Mrs. Wallis Taylor escorted the pre-K and first grade students on the Cabana Christmas Tree Tour. The tour is hosted each

year by Ms. Tammy Sehorn, a former parent and a good friend of the school.

Glee was apparent on the faces of students and teachers alike on the last day before the Christmas break. School resumes on January 3, 2018. Happy New Year!

## Enrollment Hits 182

Since the publication of our newsletter in November, 2017, enrollment has grown by another seven students. Our enrollment now stands at 182. The enrollment of additional, prospective students who have indicated interest in joining us next semester would put us up even higher. The strongest common interest among new families has been academics. Resonating with those families have been our Stanford scores in grades first through eighth and our International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

Since August 2017, our enrollment has grown by 22 students. Our largest classes in the Lower School include Kindergarten and fourth grade. In the Middle School, eighth grade is the largest class, while ninth and eleventh both exceed 16 in the Upper School. Concern exists about the need to cap some classes for next academic year. With the advantages of small class sizes clear, maintenance of those small sizes remains a priority.

“We find this continued growth encouraging,” said Head of School Gibson. “It reflects the high quality of our teachers and continuous improvement of our program over the years. Our vision is a waiting list for every class.”

## All Sophomores Deemed “College Ready”

Among the data included in the PSAT scores recently provided to the school is a list specifying which students are ready for college now in terms of reading, writing, and mathematics. All members of the sophomore class are deemed so. Additionally, PSAT scores are up an average of five points overall.

Middle and Upper School Director David Suber likes the results. “I’m proud of the upward direction in which our students’ scores are heading. The teachers in the Middle and Upper School and I are continuously improving our curriculum—nice to see that we are apparently doing so effectively.”

But is this latest news all good? Suber sees a problem. “What happens when the sophomores learn they are already college ready? They still have two years to go. Maybe we shouldn’t tell them,” he joked.



## Tate Named “Junior Scholar”

Eighth-grader Molly Tate earned the title “Junior Scholar” as a result of her performance on the Preliminary SAT, or “PSAT,” which she completed in October 2017. Tate managed an impressive 1160, the sum of 620 in reading and 540 in mathematics. Unlike the SAT, the highest possible score on the PSAT is a 1520, which makes her results all the more impressive. While still a few years away, a high score earned on the PSAT in Molly’s junior year would qualify her for the National Merit Scholarship.

Molly’s talent does not end in the classroom. She also distinguished herself as a competitive swimmer earlier this academic year. Should she depart campus with an IB Diploma in her hand a few years from now, her future will be unusually bright—nice, work, Molly!



## Basketball Update

Our four basketball teams are now well into the winter season. Playoff pictures are now crystalizing for the varsity teams.

Coach Nelson has led our varsity boys to a 4-1 record. Spectators have noticed impressive discipline and clearly defined offensive plays and defensive strategies. Brilliant new talent has meshed nicely with that of sharp veterans.

Coach Single, meanwhile, continues to stress the fundamentals with our varsity girls whose record is 0-3. Competition has proven tough. However, our girls are learning and much young talent exists both on the varsity and the B team.

Coach Swift discovered early in the season that he has a lot of young talent on the boys B team. Its record is 1-3. Spectators are already envisioning how good these young men will be when they become members of the varsity squad one day.

Coach Single is also leading the girls B team. Like the boys B team, it is brimming with talent. Its record going into the new year is 3-1.

Prior to the hiring of AD Single, a common and justified complaint was the absence of organized competition for our younger students. With the B teams, she is providing a compelling response.



## Alumni Gather for Polar Plunge

The outdoor temperature was not quite 50 degrees, and the ocean temperature was well short of inviting. Nonetheless, alumni, including both those now in college and those who have already graduated, were among those who doffed their outer garments and sprinted into the ocean in the early afternoon of Christmas Day at a local beach. Their exit from the ocean was even more rapid.

Included among the alumni were Coleman Lucas, Emerson Pate, Emory McClary, Marguerite McClary, Myles Starnes, Ben Cameransi, Emmy Ragsdale, Leldon McClary, Alston Pate, Lydon Manning, and Reese Starnes.

The Starnes brothers presented quite a contrast. While Reese is enjoying life as a civilian, a junior, and a fraternity brother at the University of South Carolina, Myles is leading the Spartan life of a fourthclassman at The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. Both are doing just fine.

## Dunlap, Van Hoewyk to Present at Language Conference

Ms. Maggie Dunlap, Spanish teacher, and Ms. Abby Van Hoewyk, French teacher, have been invited to make a presentation at the South Carolina Foreign Language Teachers' Association (SCFLTA). Their presentation is scheduled for February 3, 2018 at the SCFLTA's Annual Conference at Lexington High School in Lexington, South Carolina.

The title of their joint presentation is, "Stop, Drop, and Listen." It describes teaching methods they have found to be effective with their students in French and English. Through sharing those methods, the two hope to assist fellow teachers in teaching students to be conversant in other languages.



## Rhoades Introduces Blood Drive

Mrs. Kristi Rhoades, our kindergarten teacher, organized with the Red Cross a blood drive on campus of December 6, 2017. Students, parents, and teachers participated. The Red Cross provided a blanket to each donor and a blanket to each person who recruited a donor. Thank you, Mrs. Rhoades, for your leadership and donors for your lifesaving gift!



## Holiday Reception for Faculty and Staff

Members of the faculty and staff gathered at the residence of the Head of School and his wife, Kathy, on December 17, 2017 for a celebration of Christmas and Hanukkah. Board Chair Harry Oxner asked the Head of School to relay best wishes from the Board of Trustees and thanked the teachers for their excellent work in the classroom.

Guests dined on grilled beef tenderloin, shrimp, and items from several charcuterie boards. In support of local vendors, the craft beer selection included several from Charleston, while the wine was mostly Californian. Dessert included cupcakes from Trustee Danelle Greer, owner of Frost This.



## SCISA Names New Executive Director

The South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA) has named Dr. Spencer Jordan as SCISA's next Executive Director. Dr. Jordan is currently serving as Headmaster, Laurence Manning Academy. He also serves with Head of School Gibson III on the SCISA Accreditation Committee.

SCISA Executive Director Larry Watt will complete his thirty-first year at SCISA in June. Prior to that, he served 15 years as a SCISA head of school. His last school was Orangeburg Preparatory School. Over the course of his time as SCISA Executive Director, he more than doubled the number of member schools. His will be some large shoes to fill. Dr. Jordan, however, appears to have some big feet of his own! We wish them both the very best!



## IT Update

At the recent meeting of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Steve Sexton of the Baltimore Technology Group presented a schedule for the improvement of our IT. The schedule covers the remainder of this academic year plus next academic year.

For the remainder of this academic year, plans call for 1) migrating e-mail to Office 365, 2) migrating domains to the same account as hosting, 3) segmenting network traffic among Internet, phone, and security cameras, 4) segmenting wireless traffic among faculty and staff, students, and guests, and 5) fully deploying antivirus to the computers of faculty and staff.

For Academic Year 2018-2019, four main steps are envisioned. They include implementing SharePoint for both sharing files and storing them, 2) finalizing the IT setup in the Resource Center, 3) refreshing computers used by faculty and staff, and 4) refreshing computers used by students.

Meanwhile, HTC continues its efforts to introduce fiber to the school. The fiber features both greater speed and greater capacity. That combination may resolve the most common complaint among users, namely slow, unreliable access to the Internet.

Look for updates along the way.

## Greater Emphasis upon Researching and Writing

Over the past five years, two major developments in the English Department have improved the education we provide our students. First, we designed and implemented a two-semester course, Writing Mechanics. It covers basic grammar, punctuation, and usage. Mastering these simple skills puts our students well ahead of the pack.

Next, our certification as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School with the Diploma Programme brought us the Extended Essay. Students are required to formulate a research question, conduct research, articulate ideas, and develop an argument. The process nicely prepares students for research at the undergraduate level and beyond.

For next academic year, we envision focusing in between, namely upon grades seven through ten. We foresee instruction in basic research in grades seven and eight. For grades nine and ten, we foresee greater emphasis upon writing.

The combination of Writing Mechanics for sixth-graders, increased researching and writing for students in grades seven through ten, and the Extended Essay for our juniors and seniors will nicely serve our students and better prepare them for college.

## Board Okays Completion of Strategic Plan Goal

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees on December 13, 2017, trustees approved the school’s proposal that Goal III, G be considered completed. The goal specifies the following: “Design formal and recurring grade-level field trips to complement classroom instruction.”

The Head of School presented the list to trustees prior to the meeting at which they voted. Trustee Ray improved the list through her recommendation of including the trip to the Georgetown County Landfill for students in the Middle and Upper School, as opposed to limiting the trip to Lower School students. The improved list will be forwarded to all parents.

With 50 percent of our five-year timeline now elapsed, 49 percent of our plan has been implemented. Plans call for the completion of 60 percent of the plan by June 2018, at which time 60 percent of our timeline will have elapsed.



## Marketing Committee on the Move

Members of the Marketing Committee are busy. They are currently working on five initiatives. First, Trustee Danelle Greer is conducting focus groups through which she hopes to learn from both students and parents what makes Lowcountry Preparatory School their school of choice. Second, Trustees Lenhart and Greer are revising the Style Guide, which is key to consistent branding. An extensive, well-written guide presently exists but has not be updated in several years. Third, Trustee Gibson had an analysis of our website completed. The analysis included a prioritized list of items designed to improve it. We are working on the list now. The ongoing focus groups are related, inasmuch as we want to ensure that our website actually reflects what our families value most. Fourth, we are linking Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn to our website. Finally, plans are underway for an Open House on January 24, 2018.

The Open House is scheduled to take place in the gym. Timing is such that it will allow families enrolled elsewhere to have a good look at our school prior to re-enrolling. Our last Open House took place years ago when PICA families needed a new school. Several of those good families are with us today.

## Board Updates Finance Policies

Our Board of Trustees has directed the implementation of three new policies concerning finance. Implementation is set for January 3, 2018.

First, we are transitioning to a cashless environment, with the exception of concessions and admissions to athletic events. The rationale for the transition is to reduce hours spent by our bookkeeper accounting for small amounts of cash that are left without explanation, thereby allowing her to focus upon more important responsibilities.

Second, we are requiring aftercare payments to be made in advance. The rationale for this change is to eliminate occasional non-payment and late payments.

Third, we are eliminating Marlinopoly. The rationale for this change is to remove the confusion that has existed between Marlinopoly and the Annual Fund. Also, the change eliminates what some perceive as yet another fundraiser.

As with any change, unforeseen effects are possible. You can count on us to smooth out the bumps with patience and flexibility.