

# The Pacific Primary Sun

Reflections—  
Teachers, Parents  
and Community



WWW.PACIFICPRIMARY.ORG

SUMMER 2015

## 40 Years in the Making – A Transformation Story

By Peter Lemieux



focused on the pictogram of the female image. Others took issue with the injustice of separation of boys and girls.

Over the next several months, explains Rainbow Dolphin Lead Teacher Jamie Solomon, “We followed the thread. We asked them questions, and great things came from those conversations. As much as the children could seem rigid about things in one moment, a posed question challenged their thinking.”

**Q: What would make this more fair?**

**Aiden:** “Maybe it can be a family bathroom.”

**Clea:** “How ‘bout it’s a bathroom for girls AND boys.”

**Q: Who needs to know about this problem?**

**Dusty:** “We need to tell someone who knows about potties.”

**Robby:** “We can skype President Obama.”

**Jack:** “The boss, just the boss.”

And **Kaleb** worried, “Because the boss doesn’t want to change anything.”

**Q: What should we tell the ‘boss’?**

**Clea:** “We should tell them these rules are not fair.”

**Warren:** “Everybody should tell the boss that’s not fair, even strangers, even the kids next door [at the Orange Sun School]. We should go on a field trip there. We could yell so loud so they can hear us.”

All this talk soon led to action. The children designed more inclusive signs. The teachers introduced them to the word ‘stereotype’ as an antonym to ‘fair’ or ‘true’ and connected their work for fairness to the lives of fellow changemakers Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. They studied a variety of public restroom signs from different parts of the world, looking for more thoughtful examples. And when they were ready to mobilize full-scale social activism, they took a field trip to talk to those in

*Cont. on p. 2*

This  
Newsletter is Dedicated  
to the Memory of:

**Jennifer Entine Matz**, Mother of alums Madeleine and Tobias and a former Board member.

**René Garcia Jr.**, Father of alums Cito and Della and former Sun Newsletter author.

The Pacific Primary community mourns the loss of Jennifer and René. Both Jennifer and René gave so much to their families and our community. We are heartbroken. We send our love and deepest sympathy to their families and we will continue to hold them very close in our hearts.

In tribute, we are reprinting the article René wrote for the 2013-2014 Newsletter on the topic of community. He hit the nail on the head, and we are heartened to know that Pacific Primary helped foster such strong friendships for René and his family.

## Reflective Community

By René Garcia Jr.

The dam was started by someone else before we even got there. The children all set out by water; six of us in three inner tubes, floating out from the dock of the rental house (an auction item, naturally) and across the river, to where the public beach area was located.

Someone who had been there before us had piled together some of the river rocks, creating a small break in the water along the river’s edge. A few of us sat there and watched the water push its way around. Instinctively, we gathered a few more rocks and set them in place at the end of the dam. The task became immediately clear. The wider the dam, the further out the water would have to flow to work its way around.

*Cont. on p. 4*

The moment could have passed without a second thought. While at a restaurant, Leelah, a 5-year-old Rainbow Dolphin in the Yellow Sun School, paused in front of a public restroom and studied the signage, one we have all seen before—the stick figure with the narrow waist and triangular skirt, legs pinned together, heels pressed tight, shoulders slender. It is the Western world’s sign language for the woman figure that has been around at least as long as Pacific Primary’s forty years.

But Leelah clearly is not growing up in the times of *Mad Men*, and she raised an eyebrow.

“That’s not fair,” she declared to her mom Nadia, Coyote Lead Teacher in the Yellow Sun School. “You don’t wear dresses.”

Shortly thereafter, at a Rainbow Dolphin circle time, Leelah’s teacher helped her broach the subject with her classmates, which sparked a wonderfully charged conversation about inclusion, fairness, and gender divisions. The class discussed where they had seen such signs and why they might be problematic. Some children

## Way to Go!

By Amy Cebrian

**We are delighted to announce that Nadia Jaboneta, Coyote Lead Teacher, has received the promising award “Emerging Leader in Early Childhood” by the Exchange Leadership Initiative.** She will be featured in the May/June issue of the *Exchange Magazine*. Nadia will also appear in the National Association magazine *Teaching Young Children*, in an article she wrote with Deb Curtis, ECE author and trainer, entitled “Look, Listen and Learn” about reflective teaching practices. Congratulations to Nadia!

**Brian Silveira, Polar Bear Lead and Senior Lead Teacher and Nadia were recently added to the Harvest Resources Associates for ECE Professional Development.** Harvest Resources was created by Deb Curtis and Margie Carter, ECE experts, to inspire educators to engage fully in their own learning. Brian and Nadia are part of a group of only 20 teachers in North America, and Brian is the only male teacher on the list! Nadia and Brian will be invited to facilitate workshops on reflective teaching as well as receive ongoing training.

**Deb and Margie’s latest work, *Designs for Living and Learning*, is a gorgeous book about engaging, natural environments for young children, and features photos of Pacific Primary.** Nadia, Brian, Belann and Pacific Primary are also listed in the acknowledgments.

## 40 Years in the Making

*Cont. from p. 1*

charge at City Hall to discuss bathroom signage and an upcoming renovation at the Alamo Square public restrooms. They also met the directors of the Yellow and Orange Sun Schools to propose changes within the school.

“All day long, every day, there are a million things that happen in the classroom that could provoke or initiate a project,” says Jamie, when asked how Pacific Primary’s emergent teaching philosophy helped make this project possible. “I chose to take up Leelah’s idea based on the cross-gender interactions I had been observing in the classroom. The whole thing with emergent curriculum is you’re observing the children’s play. You’re listening to their conversations and then you’re taking a reciprocal stance. Leelah brought this to me, and then I threw it back to her and her peers to see if they were interested in moving forward. And they were.”

And why wouldn’t they be?

Jamie pauses, before recalling the words of teacher educator and author Ann Pelo: “Children want to change the world. Let them.”

As Pacific Primary turns 40 this year, its belief in the transformative power of early childhood education has never burned so bright.

“Our job is to listen to the children, support their growth, and foster a disposition for curiosity and a love of learning that knows no barriers,” explains Belann Giarretto, Executive Director of Pacific Primary. “We want to start that now and instill in them this lifelong gift of seeing a world full of possibilities.”



Pacific Primary’s core mission has always been to put the children first. For this, Pacific Primary’s nine founding families deserve much of the credit. Needing full-day care for their young children, they dreamed of a play-based, arts-centered school that emphasized the values of diversity and inclusion. With this vision, they attracted an experienced preschool director, Mary Bodo, who Owen O’Donnell, one of the founders, describes as “the central post around which the whole school was constructed.” Together, they identified a building in a multi-cultural neighborhood to call home—a cost-effective measure for sure but also an intentional statement that this was not solely, as Owen puts it, “a white, middle-class enterprise.”

Owen’s wife Kris, also a founder, is still involved with the school. She volunteers every week in the Penguin classroom, the youngest class at the Orange Sun School, and substitute teaches at both schools.

“We wanted the school to reflect the urban population of San Francisco,” Kris chimes in. “We offered scholarships from the get-go. But we had trouble the first ten years getting diversity.”

But over that first decade, Pacific Primary cemented its educational reputation as well as its future longevity. When the owner of the building needed to sell the property, the core founders raised money for the down payment on a loan and signed as guarantors to save the school. This meant, says Owen, “that if something happened, we were all on the hook.” Years later, the school would confront this hurdle once again when the opportunity for expansion presented itself in 1996.

On firm footing, Pacific Primary continued its pioneering ways. In 1997, it began a campaign to create an endowment for tuition assistance—a concept practically unheard of for a preschool. It redefined the meaning of *diversity*. In 2006, seeing increased demand for enrollment and an opportunity to expand its size, the board of directors, as it had a few decades earlier, took a deep breath, dove in, and bought the building across the street, the future home of the Orange Sun School. And its teaching philosophy, as evidenced by its current focus on emergent curriculum, has consistently ridden on the leading edge of early childhood education.

“Transformation is never easy,” admits Belann. “It takes self-awareness, intentionality and reflection...and a full supply of moxie.”

*Cont. on p. 11*

# A Message from the Directors

By Belann Giarretto & Lynn Turner



wards. They argued and argued, which lead to an alternating screaming match. Both parents told their children that if they did not stop, they would need to go home.

Olivia was on the swings when she heard the crying and screaming. She came over and asked what the problem was. When the mom explained, I asked her what she thought would be a good solution to the problem, and this is what my five-year-old came up with: "The one who wants to perform now, performs now, and the one who wants to practice for five minutes practices while the other one is doing the show. Then by the time her part is over, five minutes will be over and you can go next!" She walked away and whispered in my ear, "They need to learn to be more flexible!"

Every year we hear many incredible stories about how our children and our graduates carry the values of Pacific Primary to their home, new schools, and communities. Learning how our children incorporate the values of the school that is both thrilling and inspiring. We know the parents are the most important people to teach their children values, but we are also delighted to know that Pacific Primary plays a part in how children transform and develop compassion, creativity, and confidence. In addition, our children see problems as something that can be solved.

Here is a beautiful letter from parent Jackie Tom. Her daughter, Olivia, graduated in August from the Polar Bear classroom and is off to Kindergarten in the fall.

*"You all already know this, but... Pacific Primary is an AMAZING place. Many of my friends think that preschools are just like daycare, but we have a different view. Our experience here at Pacific Primary has been an extraordinary one, and I want to share something that happened a few weeks ago.*

*We met with some of her soon-to-be kindergarten friends. Three of us met at the playground, and at one point the other two kids got into an argument. They were preparing for a play, and one wanted to do it now, and the other wanted to practice for five minutes and then do the play after-*

*Pacific Primary mission accomplished! You teach our children the meaning of being mindful and how to be flexible. Here they learn how to resolve conflict and find solutions on their own.*

*Not only do you teach the children, you teach us how to be better parents and a style which enhances parent-child relationships. It's not about ultimatums, but about teaching our kids and guiding them how to make the right decisions for themselves independently.*

*I thank the teachers for teaching Olivia to make good choices and get help from her inside helper, teaching her mindfulness and to assert her power voice when appropriate. Thank you for helping her to grow amazingly independent and to become a confident thinker.*

*As we enter this new chapter in our life, we are very grateful for everything that this school has provided to our family, but most importantly, for giving Olivia a solid foundation."*

Thank you, Jackie, for helping to reaffirm our belief that young children can help change the world for the better!

## Pacific Primary Staff

2014-2015

Executive Director

**Belann Giarretto**

Director - Yellow Sun School

**Lynn Turner**

Finance Director

**Amie Haiz**

Business and Development Manager

**Shannon Rice**

## Yellow Sun School

*Sandpipers*

**Eric Wilson**

**Hanna Alemayehu**

**Shante Jones**

Lead Teacher

Teacher

Teacher

*Gray Whales*

**Mahroushka Papazian**

**Anna Vongvixay**

**Keiko Shimozaki**

**Haruka Yamaguchi**

Lead Teacher

Teacher

Teacher

Teacher

*Rainbow Dolphins*

**Jamie Solomon**

**Bianca DiPalma**

**Randy Johnson**

Lead Teacher

Teacher

Teacher

*Coyotes*

**Nadia Jaboneta**

**Paul Knight**

**Darby Hillyard**

Lead Teacher

Teacher

Teacher

*Specialist: Music and Movement*

**Melodi Dalton**

*Specialist: Expressive Arts*

**Connie Huang**

*Support Teachers*

**Ben Tursi**

*Morning Sunroom Teacher*

**Kate Long**

*Afternoon Sunroom Teacher*

**Nancy Anderman**

*Afternoon Supervisor*

**Lisa Fox**

*Chef*

**Travis Wright**

*Parking Coordinator*

**Doug Diboll**



## Reflective Community

Cont. from p. 1

Immediately, and without instruction, the boys all sprang into action.

Building the dam became the day's mission, and each of us set out for the biggest rocks we could carry. The boys teamed up to gather heavier rocks, boys with their fathers lugged over even bigger rocks.

And fathers hauled the very biggest rocks. The dam grew quickly, and I delighted in assembling the collected stones into position. The younger boys eventually lost interest, abandoning the project for unexplored terrain across the river. Occasionally, they would return, sometimes bringing back a big rock that seemed right for the cause, but the dam was now their fathers' domain. If there was a call to lunch, we missed it. By the time the sun started to fall behind the trees, our dam stretched a good five or six yards. While it never disrupted the actual river, it artfully hugged the coastline and inadvertently created a fine wading pool that the younger siblings and dogs enjoyed.

I will never forget what Belann said at our first big parent orientation, "Look around... you're going to be friends with some of these people for the rest of your life." That proclamation seemed like it was meant for our kids, but I don't remember if kids were even at that event. Up until that point, I had never considered the effect that preschool would have on my own friendships.

I had never been part of a parent community before. Suddenly I was presented with dozens of new friends, all of whom were parents, so we had that in common.

It has been six years since our first child entered Pacific Primary. And while it has been a real delight watching both of our kids make new friends and start having their own plans and parties to go to, it has been even nicer playing alongside them. And now I get why all the "maintenance days" are mandatory. It is not because our tuition will not cover a few repairs and some cleaning. It is because every now and then parents have to play along too. And if you cannot make it on enough field trips, or the poker party is not your thing, maybe there is a dam to be built.

## Pacific Primary Helps its Teachers Stay in San Francisco

By Lily Tung Crystal

With the cost of living steadily on the rise in San Francisco, it has become increasingly challenging for schools across the city to retain its teachers. Pacific Primary has made it a priority to address this growing issue.

"I was aware of how rents were going up," says Pacific Primary Executive Director Belann Giarretto, "and I was worried about how we were going to deal with the crisis. All it takes is a perfect storm of a couple of teachers getting evicted and leaving school."

Belann approached the board with her concerns, and together they created a special committee. Sure enough, soon after four Pacific Primary teachers lost their housing.

### Know Your Rights

The committee took several steps to help those teachers and others who were at risk. First, it strategized and organized a meeting where Penguin parent and tenant rights attorney Dean Preston informed teachers of their rights as renters. For instance, "we learned that the number one mistake people make is not seeking legal counsel when asked to leave their home," says Belann. "They just go."

Polar Bear Teacher Kelly Fox has been in her home for five years, but with recent changes in her landlady's situation, she is now worried she might be evicted if the property changes hands. "It felt good to be heard," says Kelly. "The meeting showed us that Pacific Primary understands that there is a problem, and it's working hard to come up with different ways of helping the staff. Dean listened to each person's questions and concerns. He looked at all of our cases and gave us specific ideas based on our needs."

### Financial Support

Through a paddle raise at this year's Pacific Primary Auction the committee also raised \$20,000 for an emergency housing fund. That pool of money will go to teachers who might need legal assistance or help making a deposit on a new lease.

Yet the school knows that nothing helps teachers more than concrete financial support. "The school always raises tuition moderately, but this year what we did was astounding," says Belann. "We raised tuition five percent, which is within our typical range of a three to five percent increase, but raised teacher salaries eight percent, which is unheard of. We wanted to send a message to the staff that we care about them and want to support and invest in them."

"An eight percent raise is noticeable," adds Kelly. "Recently, we've gotten a three to four percent increase with a one and a half to two percent bonus distributed twice a year, but eight percent equates to several thousand dollars more than last year's annual salary."

### Community Assets

In addition to the efforts Pacific Primary is making, the school is grateful for any help the larger community is able to offer. "If any current and alumni families have a place to rent," urges Belann, "I hope they would consider housing a Pacific Primary teacher and making an in-kind donation of discounted rent."

***"We want to keep teachers in the city. Without great teachers we're lost," reminds Belann. "They're our greatest asset."***

# A Walk Down Expressive Arts Lane

By Elyse Jacobs (30 years teaching at Pacific Primary)



Elyse with daughter Ariana and grandson Jack

I am walking down Grove Street hand in hand with my then two-year-old daughter. She is practicing her skipping as we approach the little school where she would spend her next four years and I my next 29. The image pops and her most recent photograph appears in my mind. My daughter is holding her beautiful son, my first grandchild, born on March 3, 2015.

Receiving that phone call three decades ago from Pacific Primary was thrilling. Entering my neighborhood preschool to discuss the possibility of using puppets to resolve conflict was an exciting idea. It had first blossomed in the mind of Charlotte Burchard, the second Executive Director of Pacific Primary.

I had been a practicing puppeteer for many years. Grants for artist residencies from Ruth Asawa and the California Arts Council led to my working with elementary school children but, other than being my daughter's first teacher, I had no experience working with preschoolers. As Charlotte and the parent team interviewed me, I began to sense the scope of combining puppets and peace with preschoolers.

Hired for the exciting challenge in September 1986, I began developing what was then called The Peaceful Puppet Program in what is now called the Yellow Sun School. I would drop my daughter in her Sandpiper class and be at work. Reenacting, with my small troupe of puppets, the teacher-suggested scenarios from their observations of the children's behavior was the start of the "Turtle Circles".

The children, sitting back in circle and watching, were encouraged to help find solutions for the puppets problems. The puppets themselves formed an emotional layer between the children and the origin of the stories, the children themselves. They are safe from fear of criticism, blame, and self-consciousness, for the problem belongs to the puppets.

Solutions discovered by the children within puppet circles were often brilliant and always creative. However, outside the circle, children were still challenged by erupting conflicts. The need to negotiate conflict non-aggressively and to express feelings appropriately remained. Something else besides the twice weekly puppet circles was needed.

Remembering favorite times with my own mother, sitting side by side while we painted, I pondered that model. What if a small group of children made art together from open-ended materials. Teachable moments would always occur with an opportunity to coach the children in finding solutions to their real-time problems.

With an adult 'coach' available to facilitate solutions, as we did with the puppets, the children could learn to claim the tools of peace as their own. There would also be opportunities to call attention to the children's behavior that created peace, connection, and feelings of love through acts of kindness, inclusion, cooperation, and collaboration.

With the addition of art-making to the puppet circles, what was first named Puppetry and renamed Elyse-Time by the children became the Expressive Arts Program. It continues to thrive.

When construction began on the OSS, it was time for deep reflecting on Expressive Arts. What had become intuitive would need to be translated or it would remain Elyse-Time. How would I mentor another artist in core concepts while encouraging them to add their own strengths and talents in order to claim and evolve the program.

## My reflections revealed:

- The program is child-centered. Each project originates from the child's creativity, ideas, feelings, and imagination. If we observe them, we will learn their individual language and be in awe of their inner worlds and capacities.

Cont. on p. 7

## Pacific Primary Staff

2014-2015

### Orange Sun School

#### *Penguins*

<b>Saeda Fuller</b>	Lead Teacher
<b>Daniel Gill</b>	Teacher
<b>Dylan Turner</b>	Teacher

#### *Prairie Dogs*

<b>Leanne Foley</b>	Lead Teacher
<b>Jane Kolb</b>	Teacher
<b>Lisa Koester</b>	Teacher
<b>Hector Rivera</b>	Aft. Teacher

#### *Pandas*

<b>Kelly Fox</b>	Lead Teacher
<b>Alyssa Chazen-Richards</b>	Teacher
<b>Marcia Kondo</b>	Teacher

#### *Polar Bears*

<b>Brian Silveira</b>	Lead Teacher
<b>Rachel Altman</b>	Teacher
<b>Sabine Scherer</b>	Teacher

#### *Specialist: Music and Movement*

**Kevin Gerzevitz**

#### *Specialist: Expressive Arts*

**Elyse Jacobs**

#### *Sunroom Teacher*

**Sabrina Brewer**

#### *Sunroom Afternoon Teacher*

*Support Teacher*

**Sean O'Connor**

#### *Afternoon Supervisor*

**Rebecca Walsh**

#### *Chef*

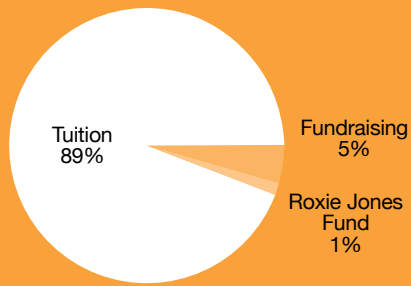
**Amy Fernandez**

#### *Full-Time Substitute (YSS/OSS)*

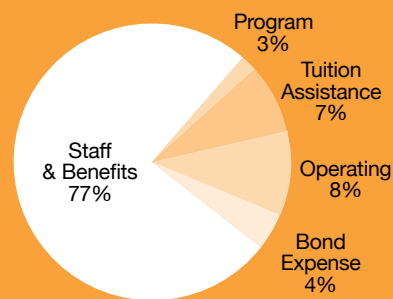
**Sarah Watkins**

# Financial Snapshot

2014/15



Operating Income



Operating Expenses

## Alumni Reflections + News

By Colby Dailey & Michael McAlister

As the school celebrates its over 40 years of service, more and more alumni are coming of age and sending their children to the school. Right now 10 alumni families are attending Pacific Primary. This year's Gray Whale class alone has seven! And an amazing number of parents remember each other—some are still friends—from when they were at Pacific Primary over 30 years ago.

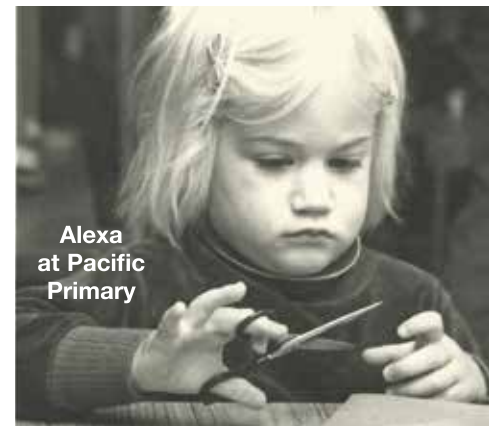
We asked a number of alumni parents to reflect on having their children at the school.

### Continuing a Legacy

Paulette Jones-Wickliff is no stranger to Pacific Primary. The daughter of Pacific Primary cofounder Roxie and Walter Jones, she has a long memory of growing up with the school. Her mother was a teacher for over 30 years at Pacific Primary, and Paulette was part of the second Pacific Primary graduating class. Though Paulette moved away from San Francisco for a while, she reconnected with the school when she moved back about three years ago. Now her daughter, Kendall, is a Gray Whale. "The School has remained true to the development and creativity of the children," says Paulette. "It's so nice to see my daughter participate and do things that I did as a kid." Among the remarkable qualities that make the school unique and true to its 40 year old philosophy, Paulette says, is "the ability for children to learn by play, create their own things, have music and art at such an early age, understand community and helping others, and participate in a community style home cooked meal every day provided by the school—that's what truly makes it a special place."

### Fond Memories

Alexa Poeter attended Pacific Primary in the early 80's and has so many fond memories—her hair being braided by one of the teachers, the family-style lunches, deep friendships. She also has a green felt book she created during her time as a student—an illustrated story she wrote about barbecuing marshmallows with her brother. And now she keeps that book in her sons' room to share that window into her own mind at their age. Her son, Tony-Milo, is a Gray Whale, and her other son, Xander, will be a Gray Whale next year. She had not expected to send her kids to Pacific Primary. "I'm in graduate school and I didn't think Pacific Primary would be an option." She looked into the tuition assistance and still was not sure. "But the minute I walked into the school I got all shivery and giddy. It was all so familiar. It all came flooding back. I thought to myself, 'I have to make this work!'" And she's thrilled that she did. Alexa will finish her MS in speech pathology from Cal State East Bay in Hayward in December.



Alexa at Pacific Primary

### Pacific Primary Alum Announced as 2015 MacArthur Fellow

Basil Twist, puppeteer and theater artist, and son of Pacific Primary cofounding family Lynn and Bill Twist, is the recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant 2015. A designer and performer, Basil experiments with materials and techniques to create compelling, poetic puppetry worlds. His visionary productions are informed by puppetry traditions from around the world. Congratulations, Basil!



Paulette and her daughter Kendall

If you would like to support Pacific Primary, please visit our website for more information:

[www.pacificprimary.org](http://www.pacificprimary.org)



## Alumni Reflections + News

By Colby Dailey & Michael McAlister

### An Enduring Community

**Colin Turner** attended the school from 1981 to 1984, but the Pacific Primary community has continued to be part of his life. Not only does he still remain close friends with some of the same people that were part of his class, he also enjoyed the benefits of being an older sibling while his sister attended nearly 10 years after he did. Colin grew up in the Bay Area and stayed. When it was time to look at different preschools for his daughter, he knew that Pacific Primary was the one. “When we were visiting different schools, a lot of them were saying they had a strict schedule and curriculum and didn’t want parents to hang around or disrupt the classrooms. Pacific Primary was completely the opposite—parents are welcome and encouraged to participate and be present. That was music to my ears and exactly what we were looking for!” Colin’s daughter Charlotte is a Gray Whale, and he hopes his twin girls will start in 2016. “The feeling of connection to the families and the class is very important to me, and I’m very happy with that. The community is so important, and parent connection is key to continued relationships.”

### Passing Down Values

**Scott Campra-Brantley** attended Pacific Primary from 1979 to 1982. His memories of the school are full of fun, creativity, and freedom of expression, and he still has old classmates from Pacific Primary whom he talks to every day. He always knew that when he had his own kids, he wanted them to attend Pacific Primary. Now when he watches his daughter, Winter, a Sandpiper, play on the same tree he did, he knows she is also learning the same values he did there. “The thing that sticks out in my mind the most—if I look back from then to now—is that the school prepared me to not be afraid to express myself. It gave me the tools to not be afraid of being myself.” Equally valuable is the school’s diversity. “That is so important for learning about people. What we are as humans.” Scott hopes his son, Hunter, will also join the school in 2016. “It’s a special place. The school is a reflection of the city that we live in.”

### Pacific Primary Alum Gets World Series Ring!

Alumnus Jackson Smith had a good first season with the San Francisco Giants. Joining the team in 2013 as a batboy, he supported the players through their winning year and the 2014 World Series victory. As a critical team member, he received the 2014 World Series Ring engraved with his name. A well-earned honor! Jackson lives in San Francisco and will be attending Santa Clara University in the fall. He hopes to pursue a career working for a major league franchise. Jackson attended the “old school” (now the Yellow Sun School) from 1998 to 2002.



Jackson Smith celebrates with Buster Posey

## A Walk Down Expressive Arts Lane

Cont. from p. 5

- We support them, encourage them, see through their eyes, observe and reflect. We encourage children to be expressive, independent thinkers, the authority on their project.
- Developing social and emotional intelligence are core elements of the Expressive Arts program. As preschool may be the first point of social interaction for many of the children, learning how to get their needs met appropriately while recognizing the needs of others is essential.
- Building emotional literacy, including naming emotions, is a key ingredient. To have the choice of transforming a strong emotion into words, art, or playing it out through puppetry is of great benefit to the children. Learning to self-soothe and manage emotions is a life skill that they can carry in their emotional toolbox long beyond their preschool days.

In 2008, the OSS opened its doors. The children had watched its construction from the window of the YSS. With paper taped to the windows of the music and art room, they drew the actualization of our dream of expansion. We moved forward with strength of conviction that the program could stand on its own. Each of the artists since hired provided evidence of this before moving on to other endeavors.

Three Expressive Arts Specialists later, in 2012, Connie Huang was hired. Her astute questions, shared insights, ability to be present for the children and collaborate with the classroom teachers have earned our deep respect. Her understanding of the program’s essence while evolving the experience with her intelligence and creativity is a cause for celebration.

In 2015, as I walk down Grove Street to my home five blocks away, I continue to reflect and smile. ‘My baby,’ the Expressive Arts Program, has become an *adult child* thriving on its own.

You can read more of Elyse Teaches Peace on her blog: <http://www.blog.discountschoolsupply.com/elyse-jacobs/>

## THESE ANGELS

These angels

Know cartwheels

& cubbies

Hold stuffies

& Toilet paper roll castles

With purple tape on little fingers

Swing from structures

Made holy

Baptized in laughter play

Song circle dance bring

Orange and Yellow

“Mommeeee” runs

Jump hugs into tiny arms until

As day ends/begins

In the warmth

Of this child space -

Terrific Primary

—**Mohammed Bilal**



## OWLS & HONEY LEAVES & STICKY: A PACIFIC PRIMARY ATLAS\*

I

we are walking | we are walking |  
this sweet & wide way |  
in the light tripping |  
we are fields | tippy & |  
toes | this sweet wide way |

we are dragons together |  
(come dragon come) |  
we are dragons apart |  
we are fists bumping |  
& exploding & sticky |

we are hands like wings |  
& walking | bluenosed |  
we are walking | climbing |  
stars & yellow | applehungry |

we are sharing | we are sharing |  
we care | this sweet & wide way |  
we are walking with each other |  
this sweetly wide | this way |

we are bugs | what bugs do |  
every day | logs & roly polys |  
there are stars in there too |  
(stars are the animals' fruit) |  
we are hard to catch | poppies |  
we fly | we are a fly |  
(a fly is hard to catch) |

we are trees | we are |  
trees & circles | round & tinder |  
& nasturtiums | & tender |

II

kaden's wing span is four feet  
cyrus' wing span is four feet

III

once there was an octopus | once there was a shark | the shark swam away |  
a fish came to see the octopus | the shark ate up the fish | the shark swam away again |  
a second octopus came | a crab came | a crab came | the crab pinched the octopus |  
the shark came back again | the shark went into | where other fish went | the shark went into |  
the coral reef |

IV

i want to be a snow owl  
big eyes wings  
i want to fly with my wings  
i want to eat a mouse  
not a rat

but wait a minute:

owls don't have long legs like a tyrannosaurus  
owls don't have long necks like a giraffe  
owls don't have money  
owls don't count

i want to be a snow owl  
big eyes wings  
i want to fly with my wings  
i want to eat a mouse  
not a rat

V

we are walking | we are plums |  
we are all these shades of orange |  
we are round & song | & wiggle |  
we are walking sweet widely ways |  
we are pebbles | unicorn & sound |  
we are walking | swinging |  
we are sewing & spooling & mostly green |  
(the needle goes through an ocean with waves) |

we are honey leaves & lava spit & shimmer  
we are honey leaves & lava spit & shimmer

—**Nathalie Khankan**

*\* This atlas is inspired by the words and stories of our children in YSS and OSS as carefully documented by their teachers on drawings, notes, journals, lists, and classroom newsletters. Thank you for this precious material, teachers! Atlas items II, III, and IV are complete found poem fragments. NK*





# Spotlight: A Teacher's Journey

By Rebecca Wieder

If you have walked in the Panda room, you have likely been struck by the depth of the projects that develop over the course of the year—projects that are born from the teachers' careful observation of the children's play. But when Panda Lead Teacher Kelly Fox began her 23 year-long journey as an early childhood educator, she did not take the same approach to curriculum development.

As is true in many preschool settings, Kelly's early teaching experiences followed a more traditional model of moving through teacher-directed units, and Kelly often felt the pressure to "get on to the next theme." Still, Kelly was instinctively interested in the ways in which a more experiential approach could affect students' learning. She recalls a field trip to a goat farm where children milked the goats themselves, then came back to the classroom and mimicked milking using a cleverly rigged plastic glove. She found that authentic experiences—even a trip to the grocery store—stimulated the children's creativity and allowed them to come back to the classroom and recreate and process their experience in a safe environment.

Kelly's approach continued to evolve when she joined the Orange Sun School eight years ago. She was excited about the prospect of moving to an emergent curriculum model in which teachers develop curriculum in response to the children's curiosities rather than dictating the curriculum themselves. However, she also acknowledges that being familiar with a philosophy and implementing it yourself are two different things. She knew she and her co-teachers would try to embark on at least two emergent curriculum projects each year, but having come from a model of unit-after-unit teaching, she wondered how she would fill the time.

Thinking about this now elicits laughter; if anything, Kelly says she finds that one project can last 10 months as the initial interest morphs, builds, and evolves into something new. To illustrate, her first project as the Panda Lead began when a parent brought a spindle in to show the children; this, along with a Circle Time reading of *Charlie Needs a Cloak*, sparked a project that first

explored how cloth is made, and eventually evolved into a look at "natural spinners," like spiders. "We could really take our time," Kelly remembers, noting that the class ultimately created a quilt—a culminating product that doubled as an auction item. "After that first year, I really understood how you can make projects that last as long as you're invested in them."

Shifting to an emergent curriculum not only impacted Kelly's approach to teaching, but also affected her parenting. In an emergent curriculum approach, "you really have to be open to where the project takes you," and observing the children and where their interest lies is at the center. Similarly, as a parent, Kelly has found that her son Kaden's interests have become central to family life. Not a sports fan originally, Kelly says that Kaden's seemingly innate passion for sports and sports fandom has been infectious. Now an avid Giants and Warriors fan, Kelly finds that sports are a special way for her and Kaden to connect. And of course, opportunities for learning abound — from scoreboard math to lessons about practice and hard work.

Becoming a parent has been its own transformation for Kelly, as it is for all of us. "My philosophy about child development hasn't changed since becoming a parent," Kelly says, "but my compassion for parents and the way I communicate with them has changed." Having an intimate understanding of the parents' worries—"Is their child developing normally? Is their child happy, kind, well-adjusted?"—helps Kelly talk with parents about their child's needs. Still, when it comes to the stressful moments of parenting, it can be hard to practice what you preach. A wealth of knowledge about child development can also be a mixed blessing. Kelly laughs, "Sometimes I think I know too much."

***"My philosophy about child development hasn't changed since becoming a parent," Kelly says, "but my compassion for parents and the way I communicate with them has changed."***



This newsletter is written and produced annually by current parents and board members of Pacific Primary under the guidance of the school's directors. We are deeply grateful to the following parents and staff for their hard work and contribution to the newsletter:

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2014-2015

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## Board President's Letter

By Mare Manangan (Co-President)

Pacific Primary celebrates 40 years of impacting lives of families in San Francisco. Generations of children and parents recognize the significant role that Pacific Primary plays in their lives. As a parent and teacher I have seen this impact first-hand. I have seen my children develop life-long friends. Their Pacific Primary teachers helped them learn how to celebrate these relationships while negotiating conflicts and differences. My children found their voices and began to foster their passions. My husband and I found many life-long friends ourselves.

In late April, we celebrated 40 years of Pacific Primary by bringing together board leaderships from 1974 to the present. Everyone shared fond memories and such genuine affection for this intentionally diverse, mission-minded school that commits itself to working families in San Francisco. Parents shared stories of their children, now in their 20s and 30s, who still remain close to their Pacific Primary friends!

I dream of the time when my children will bike down Grove and Baker and stop as their minds flood with rich memories of their friends and teachers; when they will stop on that corner and reflect on this wonderful school that taught them to take risks, create, embrace difference, speak their minds, and take care of others. I dream of the time when they imagine sending their children, my grandchildren, to Pacific Primary.

This year we launch into the next 40 years of this incredible school. The Fund for the Future, which grows our current endowment, is an important way to ensure that Pacific Primary continues to thrive, celebrate children, and support families in San Francisco. At the Anniversary Board event, I was reminded that it is our time to step up and have the vision to keep the legacy of Pacific Primary alive and well for our grandchildren.

We are so blessed to be a part of the Pacific Primary family. I thank the founders who had the vision to create a school that would have such a profound impact on my family.



Michael Dunn &  
Mare Manangan,  
Co-Presidents



## 40 Years in the Making

Cont. from p. 2

It also takes strong leadership, an empowered teaching staff, and an involved parent community with shared values all working in unison—the holy trinity of Pacific Primary’s sustained success.

In its first four decades, the school has had only three executive directors: Mary Bodo (1974-1982), Charlotte Burchard (1982-1995), and Belann (1995-present). They have kept the school’s energy supply consistently charged.

From the beginning, the founders emphasized the teachers as the school’s greatest asset.

“The teachers have always been highly respected as educators, not just as care givers,” explains Belann. “We have always been competitive in benefits and in some ways trailblazers. I had never worked in a preschool that offered pension when I began in 1995. We want to help the teachers have the time to be the kind of teachers they are. So we added more professional development funding. We added support teachers. And we built in time for training. If you want to be a reflective teacher, then you have to make time for reflection. So we asked the teachers what they needed and continue to ask: ‘What will make your life better? ... What will make your classroom better?’ We have deep respect for really listening to the teachers.”

In the Reggio Emilia tradition, strong parent involvement is considered absolutely essential to the child’s learning. Historically, parents at Pacific Primary have participated in an auction committee and a maintenance day. In the past decade under



Belann, who brought her experience from a motivated parent cooperative preschool environment, Pacific Primary has added an additional parent committee—be it for communications, social events, fundraisers or classroom help. All of these efforts more deeply engage the parents with the school and bring more support to the teachers in the classroom.

“It’s very encouraging for teachers when parents understand what they’re doing,” describes Belann, who also credits the instituting of weekly curriculum journals and the documentation of projects in aiding that goal. “Making the learning visible helps parents to connect, which makes a big difference to the teachers.”

“When you have a community that’s all on the same page—shared values, shared educational philosophy—and you’re putting the time in, it lifts everything,” continues Belann. “Everybody performs better.”

The net result is both powerful and tangible, and according to Belann, it shows up in “a million layers... in how you interact with people, in how you produce, in how you get involved.”

It shows up in parents who leave Pacific Primary trained to participate in their children’s educational lives. They are active on PTA’s and boards, vocal about what they want, and helping to build better schools in our city. It shows up in the children who move on from Pacific Primary able to teach other kids (and sometimes even the ‘boss’) how to problem-solve and handle issues with diversity. And it shows up in the classroom where teachers like Jamie Solomon have the confidence to tackle head on such uncomfortable subject matters around gender issues and stereotyping.

“Think of the world these children are inheriting. Think of how diverse their world will be,” challenges Belann. “One of the biggest gifts we can give them is to develop that open, flexible disposition of welcoming change. That alone is going to serve them so well. And add to that creativity, curiosity, how to problem-solve, how to be a good friend, a love for learning, and all the things we know will make for a satisfying life but also improve the world. Wow! There you go! That’s what’s needed for the future. What a gift!”





# 4<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

By Amy Cebrian

## ***Pacific Primary, we salute you!***

Look at you and how you have grown! You set out into the world in pursuit of knowledge, beauty, and truth. You have fallen down and picked yourself back up again. You have seen loved ones come and go, and have born your own children. You continue to love and nurture our little ones, and continue to thrive.

We carry you with us in our hearts, in who and what we are, in our memories and connections, and we return to you, our glorious school. Last Fall, we returned, closed off traffic and took to the street on the 1500 block of Grove to celebrate your 40 turns around the sun. Teachers and children, alumni and their families, former staff, friends, neighbors, family across the generations and general fans, all convened there in your honor. We found our friends, reconnected and reminisced, toured your campus, played in your sand, enjoyed great music, marveled at all you have accomplished, ate popsicles, and collectively sang your praises.

***Happy Birthday Pacific Primary!  
And many more!***



SAVE THE DATE!

**HERE COMES  
THE SUN  
PACIFIC PRIMARY  
AUCTION 2016**

**SATURDAY,  
MARCH 5TH**

