One of my favorite times of the school day is 8:25 a.m. I’m either on the corner of Bay Place and Montecito Ave, opening car doors at the Veteran’s Green, or on the mezzanine at the top of the stairs. Outside, I see a flow of students excitedly streaming down the sidewalk from the playground into the School. When I’m on the mezzanine, I watch a steady, bubbling flow of students walk up the stairs as they head to their classrooms. I savor this window of time.

Happy kids. I know that sounds so simple, yet the daily view of hundreds of students who are excited to be at school - eagerly anticipating their learning, engaged with their friends, at home in their community - is actually quite incredible. I am humbled as I watch. I realize everything that goes into this moment: the vitality of the present, the foundation of the past, and the hopefulness of the future.

St. Paul’s Episcopal School in 2017 is thriving. We have talented teachers, a dedicated administrative team, engaged parents, and, of course, extraordinary students. This doesn’t happen in a vacuum. We are who we are today because of all who came before us. While we continue to grow, develop, and innovate into the future, our unique mission continues to be as relevant and integral to the School as ever.

This year’s edition of The SPARK focuses on how the students live our Mission & Values. We have articulated a model of educational excellence called the Portrait of a Graduate. You will read stories of how our gifted teachers engage students to realize our programmatic vision. This issue of The SPARK also highlights two alumni who have “returned” to St. Paul’s via different paths. We feature the graduating class of 2017 and close with exciting news from alumni.

As we move into our fifth decade as a School, alumni begin to play a large part in the life of the School. What’s remarkable about St. Paul’s is that our alumni come back! Those students, who 20 or 30 years ago came bounding up the same stairs with bright eyes and wide smiles, are now leading us into the future. They believe in the mission of the School, the same one that shaped them as students.

I am inspired everyday by our community. Those first five minutes of the day, where I see the joy in our students, connect me to the vibrancy of our community, both past and present.

Warmly,

Josh Stern, Head of School
The graduates of St. Paul’s embody the traits that we wish for the future leaders of our society: fearless learners with keen analytical skills, depth of knowledge, a grasp of ethical decision making, and a sense of the importance of being actively engaged in the community around them.

The Portrait of a Graduate explains in more detail how St. Paul’s students are shaped by their education here and the steps we as a school take to provide them with the skills, knowledge, and mindset they will need to be able to go anywhere in the world and connect with anyone, academically and socially.
Huddled around a smooth white table in an office with chalkboard walls holding various quotes from teachers, a group of eighth grade students study the St. Paul’s Mission & Values: Academic Rigor, Service & Stewardship, Spirituality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Fearless Learning. Head of School Josh Stern asks them, “Which of the five values resonates with you the most and why?” Thoughtfully and earnestly all of the students reply, highlighting both their academic and social experiences.

Meeting with the Head of School for lunch in small groups is an annual tradition for eighth graders at St. Paul’s. There were trends in the discussion, and, consistent with the St. Paul’s experience, there were unique qualities to what every student had to share. Academic Rigor was a recurring theme as students reminisced about the previous years, like the challenges of learning long division in second grade, and trying to get “the most out of every learning day.” Community and friends frequently came up as the students reflected on their time at St. Paul’s. One student stated, “I like the community. I have built so many friendships that I think I will have for the rest of my life.” Another explained, “I have learned to see other people’s views and to respect other people’s opinions because of the diverse community.” A third eighth grader perfectly summarized how the Mission & Values are intended to work together: “I look at [the five values] like a jigsaw puzzle. They all mesh to work as one, so one doesn’t resonate better than another.”
We must let our own hope push us. We, the people, must hold our bright lights of hope high and let them lead the way, but we must never forget that we are the ones walking. The ones marching. We are the driving force, and though hope might keep us going, we keep ourselves strong. Hope belongs to all of us. It is the bridge that keeps us together. We must never let our separate hopes divide us, but let them guide us towards the future, a better future, together.

The Mission & Values of St. Paul’s Episcopal School are an integral part of the school fabric. Students, faculty, and community members show their dedication to these values through their actions inside and outside of the classroom. By providing a space for students to pursue and share their interests within this framework, St. Paul’s becomes a richer community that prepares students to be generous and active citizens, beginning with their time here and continuing through high school and beyond.
Jaime Williams ‘93

Education after St. Paul’s: Head-Royce School, B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and Material Sciences from Harvard, M.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford

22 years after graduating from eighth grade, Jaime Williams returned to St. Paul’s in a new capacity - as a parent of the class of 2024. Jaime explains, “[My wife and I] were looking for a lot of things for our son. Mainly an environment that gave him room to grow and challenged him to grow. I wanted him to feel comfortable learning how to learn. St. Paul’s provided all of those things to me, and I wanted a similar experience for our son.” Both Jaime and his wife Bärí (the Head Business Operations, North America for StubHub) have shown a commitment to lifelong learning and dedication to bolstering their communities, ideas strongly supported at St. Paul’s Episcopal School.

After graduating from Harvard University with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science, Jaime worked at engineering design and consulting company CH2M HILL, where he combined his interest in technology with engineering to build solutions for environmental problems. He proceeded to earn his M.S. from Stanford and says his St. Paul’s education gave him a boost in both spaces. “I was comfortable learning and pursuing knowledge… and there’s the diversity component of St. Paul’s - I was able to interact and work with people from different backgrounds. It goes a long way for communicating and interacting with people because you aren’t afraid to try.”

Jaime has since become the Information Technology Officer and Director of Engineering for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District where he is spearheading the implementation of new air quality regulations and the redesign of permitting and compliance processes with a new software platform. “I only took one software course in college but managed to make a living out of writing programs and designing platforms. I think that is connected to learning outside of the classroom, like we did at St. Paul’s. I can pick up a book or go online to solve a problem because I can think of the tools to help me get there.”

Annie Wong ’08

Education after St. Paul’s: College Preparatory School, B.A. in Biology and Geology from Mount Holyoke, starting M.S. in Environmental Science and Policy at Northern Arizona University

How does someone decide to pursue a M.S. in Environmental Science and Policy? Annie Wong ’08 gives some of the credit to her K-8 schooling: “St. Paul’s set the groundwork for my later science classes. I learned how to ask questions, which is the centerpiece of all scientific research and important to being a good citizen.”

Asking questions and being a part of the community are two continuous threads in Annie’s journey thus far. After completing a rigorous course load in college, it was time to evaluate and assess where Annie wanted to go next. In addition to her science courses, she had also studied education. “I worked in summer camp during college, and I wanted a job that allowed me to work with kids while I was applying for grad school,” explains Annie. “It was an easy choice to come back as part of the After School Program staff… It’s cool to be on the teacher side - I realize now that the teaching philosophies I learned [at Mount Holyoke] back up everything I remember from St. Paul’s.”

Now Annie spends much of her time teaching the current students how to ask questions and answering some of those questions. “I really believe in helping the kids become confident learners so that they can them become active citizens, like the mission says,” Annie smiles and laughs. She is frequently found engaging with various facets of the St. Paul’s community from students to faculty to parents. But learning and teaching at St. Paul’s is not all she wanted to accomplish this year.

This April, Annie Wong ’08 spent a month in Svalbard to complete a masters course in sea ice and recent geological history. “It’s a one month program with a research trip via snowmobile to see a calving glacier front… I started college as a biology major but added geology because I took an earth sciences course and couldn’t stop taking them!”

“I cannot wait to share what I learned in the Arctic with the students when I return,” Annie said before she left for the course. “Maybe my stories and pictures will inspire some of these students to really study something they are passionate about.”
Parents jockey for a good viewing spot in the street on Montecito Ave as a group of 39 well-groomed eighth graders gather on the chapel steps for their final class picture. There is a palpable energy coming from the group, and that’s not the nervousness caused by the dark sky that lets out a few drops as the graduates line up. Sixth graders graciously serve the eighth grade families at the reception in the kindergarten courtyard before everyone moves towards the ceremony.

The program flows quickly. After a rocking rendition of “All Night Long” by Lionel Richie from the eighth grade band and choir, the students bring the house down with their drumming performance. At the end each eighth grader walks with their kindergarten buddy up to the stage before handing off their rose, giving secret handshakes and many tight hugs before one student moves towards the end of their time at St. Paul’s and the other joins their teachers and classmates to watch what they too might be doing in eight more years. The cheers of family and friends send the graduates back through the crowd to celebrate this momentous occasion.
BARRETT:
St. Paul’s has made me who I am today - a confident, socially conscious, global citizen ready to go out and leave my mark on the world. My classmates and I aren’t just able to solve quadratic equations and write essays analyzing literature; we’re able to see the world through compassionate and critically thinking eyes.

TIP:
Standing outside with my friends and watching the sunrise over the sea on the fourth grade camping trip is one of my favorite St. Paul’s memories.

ARI:
By learning with kids who are different from me, I learned how to value all opinions.

High School Acceptances

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Malik S. St. Mary’s
Grayson S. Bentley
Charlie S. Athenian
Juliana S. Head-Royce
Ariane S. Berkeley High
Alana T. Branson
Barrett V. Berkeley High
Dezia W. Bishop O’Dowd
Michaela W. Bishop O’Dowd
Lick-Wilmerding High School
Marin Academy
Maybeck High School
New Hampton School
Phillips Exeter Academy
Proctor Academy
Salesian College Preparatory School
Shawnigan Lake School
St. Joseph Notre Dame
St. Mary’s College High School
St udents and parents of the class of 2013 were joined by their kindergarten buddies (now fourth graders!) to celebrate old friendships, senior spring, future plans, and to reminisce about their days at St. Paul’s.

Gathering on the playground and in the new gym, alumni laughed as they shared plans for the fall and new experiences of the last four years. Old stories from their days at St. Paul’s came into the mix as former teachers and parents joined in on the conversations. Old kindergarten and eighth grade buddies entered the photobooth to take fun pictures as they remembered sitting together in chapel four years before.

We wish the class of 2013 the best of luck in their endeavors! Please let us know what you are up to (email news to DeAndre Calhoun at dcalhoun@spes.org), and come back to see us any time.
Richard Curis IV ’10 recently performed at the Billboard Music Awards with Nicki Minaj. He is an entertainer living in Los Angeles.

Currently a communications & media relations intern with the New York Yankees, Jack Coppinger ’07 has enjoyed living around the country after he graduated from Bentley School and Whitman College before moving to New York.

A team of alums, Manolis Sueuga ’08 and Spencer Lymburn ’08, are working together to produce music. They just released their third full album on an independent record label they started called Like Minded Collective.

Rachel Desoer ’12 just finished her freshman year at Birmingham-Southern College where she is studying to be an elementary school teacher. She sends here good wishes to everyone at St. Paul’s!

Andrew Williams ’96 is leading a team that is organizing and hosting the 2020 Conference this summer in Oakland. The 2020 Conference is a weeklong empowerment experience for high school students where professionals work with students to develop tools to build the world that they want to live in.

Yaluen Yu ’02 toured the new Middle School building before stopping to say hello to his old Spanish teacher, Sr. Vaillar.

Rachel Schwemberger ’04 is in her fourth year at Tulane University School of Medicine.

Jordan Turner ’04 graduated with his JD from the University of San Diego this past spring. His mother says, “Thank you [St. Paul’s] for creating an environment of enthusiasm for learning and appreciation for growing. As a mom, I reflect on St. Paul’s as being a wonderful foundation for my son’s early development towards higher education.”

Email us your news! dcalhoun@spes.org

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Alumni from the classes of ’76 through ’08 gathered for the first St. Paul’s Alumni Winter Happy Hour.
We Need You

Give Now to the Annual Fund 2017-2018

The St. Paul’s Episcopal School Annual Fund supports every teacher, student, and program. St. Paul’s is a school where we couple academic rigor with fearless learning, we make service and learning interdependent, and we achieve deeper learning by harnessing the power of diversity. Please consider making a gift today.

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