

Voyages



*Our sisters then, our sisters today.
And a whole world waiting ...*

Our Sisters' School Welcomes The Class Of 2016



Dear Friends of Our Sisters' School:

With year five well underway, OSS has much to celebrate and be proud of as we honor this milestone anniversary. We are pleased to share with you the following information about exciting new programs, highlights from a wonderful summer and all the promising new developments beckoning on the OSS horizon. But first a special "thank you" to all the members of our crew: donors, friends, volunteers, staff, families, students and community partners. Your dedication to and support for our voyage makes for a rich and rewarding undertaking.

Sincerely,

*Lisa Schmid Alvord
President, OSS Board of Trustees*

*Lisa Yates
Head of School*

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STUDENT GOVERNMENT COMES TO OSS!



Inspired by the national presidential election, this year OSS students drafted a constitution and held the school's first student elections. During Morning Meeting on September 28th, candidates made

their respective pitches, which were well thought out and full of passion, promising to deliver to the school everything from more fundraisers to pizza lunches. Students voted later in the day and results were tabulated. Due to the tiny margins -- most within a single vote -- all those who ran were elected, with one 8th grader, Katie Rivera, appointed as the Student Government President.

Students elected to the Student Government will aid the school in its future decision-making processes. They will have a budget all their own to balance and from which to appropriate funds. Discussions to date have included holding an enlarged "Pep Rally" and a "Spirit Week," and even putting on a Homecoming for our alumnae!

The purpose of the Student Government is to give our students an appropriate forum in which to voice requests and offer suggestions. Overall, it should be a fantastic experience for the girls, giving them new responsibilities and privileges in order to better prepare them for the challenge of future years.

Ms. Gonnerman and Mr. Watts are excited to serve as founders and advisors to this new club and are eager to kick-off student government at OSS. Go Team!

Teaching Model Adjustments Enhance OSS Academic Program

Groundwork for the development of an enhanced teaching model began in the winter of 2011/2012 during meetings of a committee of individuals with a variety of expertise, experience and knowledge of the needs in OSS classrooms. After observations, data collection and many conversations, it became evident that additional support for students in the 5th and 6th grades was needed as they dealt with the expectations of a new school, how to manage a greater workload and how to adapt to the responsibilities and accountability instilled at OSS. Students entering Our Sisters' School come from many different schools, having had many different learning experiences. It is therefore up to OSS to meld these varied experiences into a single, unified program. The committee concluded that the addition of professional teachers would greatly further this process, and that more experienced teachers could also supply invaluable lessons in classroom management skills to our AmeriCorps volunteers.



OSS has recognized that volunteerism is key to the success of the school and is also at the core of the values and mission of the work being done. We therefore take great pride in our AmeriCorps model, which has now been improved by the addition of professional teachers in the 5th and 6th grades, as well as two teaching fellows in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades.

After three months of school, feedback from students, families and teachers strongly supports the goals of this new teaching-model adjustment. Our students continue to receive all the support they need to thrive. And our classrooms are pulsating with ever more energy, excitement and education!

PROFILE: Mrs. Tavares, Classroom Teacher & Parent of Jaienne Castillo, OSS Class of 2011

Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in New Bedford and currently live in the city. I am the youngest of six children and went through the New Bedford Public School system.

How did you hear about Our Sisters' School?

I first heard about the school at my church. A dedicated OSS volunteer told me about the school as she had been involved since its inception. Once I heard about this school, I started telling everyone.

John D. Spooner Joins the OSS Crew in a Festive Celebration of the School



On a lovely, late July evening, a large gathering of the OSS family -- staff, teachers, volunteers, supporters and students -- gathered at the family home of Stewart & Deedee Forbes in South Dartmouth, where the

graceful lawn slopes gently down to Buzzard's Bay and the scintillating view includes all the gorgeous boats and nautical activities of Padanaram Harbor. Cocktails were enjoyed, and fine wines and sumptuous hors d'oeuvres were served. And then...the piece de resistance! John D. Spooner stepped forward to regale the crowd with insights about his latest book, *Nobody Ever Told Us That: Money and Life Letters to My Grandchildren*.

John has been described as "one of the best investment advisors in America" and as "one of the best writers in America." Managing director of a major investment firm, John's best-selling nonfiction includes *Confessions of a Stockbroker*, *Smart People and Sex and Money*, while his list of wise and spritely novels features *The Foursome*. His articles have appeared regularly in magazines ranging from *The Atlantic Monthly* to *Esquire*, *Time* and *The Boston Globe* (which has called him a "national treasure").

We are grateful to John for addressing this summer's party and for the patience he displayed after his talk in signing numerous copies of *Nobody Ever Told Us That: Money and Life Letters to My Grandchildren*. Many thanks to Stewart & Deedee for hosting the lively affair. And thanks also to all who attended for your continuing support of OSS. Our thriving school -- and the remarkable achievements of our wonderful girls -- would not be possible without you.

What highlight can you recall as a parent of a student in the first graduating class from OSS?

I knew that OSS would be a good fit for my daughter because I wanted her to be a leader, not a follower, and I knew this school would give her that opportunity. As a hands-on parent, I loved that OSS welcomed parents and made it easy for us to be involved in our child's education.

What would you tell a potential volunteer or supporter of Our Sisters' School?

Come for a tour! Seeing this school in action affirms the importance of the work we are doing for our students and the community. It is clear that the girls who come to OSS are here to be educated, and as their teacher it is incredible to watch them grow and learn. Every day, I work hard to help these girls build faith in their ability to go beyond the norm and to set ambitious goals for their futures.

Summer Fun for OSS Students



Our goal for the summer of 2012 was to secure funding for at least one or two weeks of summer programs, camps or other activities for all OSS students able to participate. For many of our families, providing summer activities for their

student is difficult financially, which leaves many of our girls yearning to learn during the summer break. Thanks to several new grants and gifts from loyal donors, as well as scholarships from these programs, we were able to fund all of the students who wanted to participate. It helps our students in countless ways when they have access to a safe, supportive and enriching environment during the summer weeks.

Here's what several students had to say about the summer programs:

"I learned what it feels like to perform dramatic plays."

"I learned how to garden. It was so much fun and made summer even better."

"It kept me busy and I had a lot of fun making new friends."

"I learned that being a leader happens step by step."

"I learned about the coastal ecologies of salt marshes, estuaries, sand beaches and rocky shores."

These are just a few of the impact statements written by our girls in grades 5 – 8. They learned something new – and had fun, too! The subtle pressures of the inner-city community to "take the summer off" continues to be a challenge we face. The true benefit of summer programs like these is shown in how each girl's life is enriched in a myriad of ways, we expect to see an even greater demand for summer activities in 2013.



Ms. LeBlanc & Mrs. Tavares greeting students as they arrive at school.

Saving Money Is FUN at Our Sisters' School

Our Sisters' School is honored to be one of a growing number of schools which have adopted the informative financial programs offered by the SouthernMass Credit Union. The Credit Union first approached OSS over the 2011-2012 winter season and quickly developed a strong partnership with the school. The idea behind the partnership is to transform the process of "saving money" into a valuable learning experience for our students and their families. Last year, 20 School Savings Accounts were opened; already this year 10 additional accounts have been added. Our students have already saved over \$400. Incredible!

Every other week, a representative of the School Savings program comes to OSS to collect deposits from students during their snack break. In addition to implementing the savings program, members of the SouthernMass Credit Union team have come to the



school for family meetings and back-to-school night. Every member of the SouthernMass team is committed to this working partnership -- to establishing efficient programming and personal relationships, and to educating students and families alike about a variety of ways to save and manage money.

Most recently, members of the SouthernMass team have begun to craft a junior finance club at OSS. This club will meet once a week



and will further introduce students to areas of finance that are applicable to their lives. Adding such appropriate topics to our variety of club offerings gives students the chance to learn about something they may otherwise have never been exposed to. For SouthernMass Credit Union to make this commitment to our students and program is truly fantastic. It is another testament to their dedication to our community, to the younger generation and to Our Sisters' School.

Leadership Search Committee Update for the Next Head of School

The board-appointed Leadership Search Committee has spent six months identifying the best candidates to be the next Head of Our Sisters' School. The committee members have a wealth of different educational, organizational and non-profit experience and have been involved with OSS in a variety of ways. They are: Gaelen Canning and Russ Weigel, Co-Chairs, Lisa Schmid Alvord, Kate Dabney, Gail Fortes, Kim Francis, Doreen Lopes, Peg McGetrick and Bernadette Souza.

The Search Committee first wrote a statement about the school and the position (which can be read on the OSS website -- www.oursistersschool.org). Beyond advertising the leadership opportunity, the committee networked with individuals and professional search organizations to identify promising candidates. Over twenty-five applicants expressed interest in the position and most of these were in-

terviewed by telephone. Six candidates were then invited to visit the school. They were toured by the girls and met with the Search Committee (Three additional candidates were interviewed via Skype since they were in located in the western US or abroad).

The candidates the committee met comprised a strong and varied group. Among them were current and past school heads, assistant heads, interim principals, a dean of students and a middle-school librarian. Most had advanced degrees, considerable middle-school teaching experience and a breadth of leadership experiences. All were impassioned about girls' education and excited about the mission and achievements of Our Sisters' School. Thus it was challenging for the Search Committee to select from these capable, competent, exciting candidates to choose finalists.

After further discussions and reference checking, final applicants visited the school to meet with the faculty, the administrative staff, Lisa Yates, parents, volunteers, students and the Board of Trustees. The goals of these two-day meetings were to give the candidates ample opportunities to get to know the school, the community and New Bedford; to give the community opportunities to meet the candidates and provide reflections to the committee; and to give both sides opportunities to show their "assets" and evaluate "the fit." After these visits, the Search Committee compiled and presented its information about these candidates (based on interviews, school and community reflections, and extensive reference checking) to the Board of Trustees which will be making their final decision this month.

New Crew Members



OSS thanks our returning AmeriCorps teachers for a fantastic 2011-2012 school year, and welcomes to the “crew” three new AmeriCorps teachers and one AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator (see below). In addition, we are excited to welcome: Angie Tavares, a professional teacher in the 5th & 6th Grade; Margaret McSweeney, a former AmeriCorps Volunteer Teacher, now a teaching fellow in 6th & 7th Grade; Jenny Henderson, a teaching fellow in the 7th & 8th Grade; Lauren Knight, the Secondary Schools & Student Support Coordinator; and Nancy Brown, OSS’s new music teacher. Welcome all!

New to the Crew- Four New OSS AmeriCorps Volunteers for 2012-2013

Cassie Canastra is a first-year AmeriCorps volunteer teacher at OSS for Advanced math in 7th & 8th grades. She is originally from Rochester, MA, and graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in 2012 with a B.A. in History. In college, Cassie was a member of the track & field team and performed on the college’s hip-hop team. She also volunteered in the Big Brother’s/Big Sister’s Program and Best Buddies. Her senior year she helped Holy Cross get involved with the Worcester, MA, organization Rachel’s Table, a food collector and distributor for food pantries. She has a love for her local community and looks forward to teaching for her first year!

Tara Penny is the Volunteer Coordinator at Our Sisters’ School and an AmeriCorps Volunteer. Before coming to OSS, Tara worked at Girls Incorporated of Holyoke for two years as their Academic Support Coordinator, training volunteers and working with students in Holyoke, MA. She has also been involved with feminist grassroots organizing, human-rights advocacy, and health education. Tara graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 2011, double majoring in Psychology and Critical Social Thought. She is excited to join the OSS staff and looks forward to working with Our Sisters’ School’s students, volunteers, and families.

Shana Silva has resided in New Bedford for the last several years, but has lived in the Greater New Bedford area for her entire life. Shana graduated from UMASS Dartmouth as a Commonwealth Scholar with a B.A. in Spanish and a minor in Portuguese. Shana is licensed to teach English, Spanish and Portuguese in the state of Massachusetts, and is currently working on finishing her Master’s in Education at UMass Dartmouth. She previously worked at the Immigrants’ Assistance Center, and volunteered at the AMIGOS program at Roosevelt Middle School, both of which are located in New Bedford. Shana is extremely passionate about and proud to be working in her community as an AmeriCorps Volunteer teaching in the 5th grade and in the OSS world language classes.

Greg Watts is from West Chester, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Bates College in 2012 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Classical and Medieval Studies and a minor in Rhetoric. Greg also played soccer at Bates. During the summer, Greg is the Director of Residential Life at the Accelerated Language Program at Kimball Union Academy through Dartmouth College’s Rassias Center. He is excited to be an AmeriCorps Volunteer teaching the 6th grade as well as 8th-grade Advanced Mathematics.

A huge thank-you to departing staff members Jill Howard, Marcus Monteiro and Hillary Parker for your endless commitment and dedication to OSS! Best of luck on your new journeys!

Advancement News

DON’T MISS the OSS ANNUAL APPEAL, in a mailbox near you! The MATCH IS ON!!! Support OSS before December 21st, 2012, and your gift will be matched by 50%. A gift of any size is special because every girl is special. Please contact Abby Keene Magni at (508) 994-1255 or amagni@oursistersschool.org if you have any questions about supporting OSS or if you would like to schedule a tour of the school. For further information or to donate online, please visit www.oursistersschool.org.

OSS extends a HUGE thank you to Wendy Joblon and Folia, Inc. for offering support, guidance and impeccable event planning to our summer evening with John D. Spooner. Wendy, thank you for all you do for OSS. We couldn’t have done it without you! OSS would also like to thank Peter Canning for such a wonderful biography highlighting John D. Spooner’s accomplishments and for reflecting in this issue on the success of the event.

“LIKE” Our Sisters’ School on Facebook to see current happenings and events at OSS!



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JOIN THE CREW - Volunteer at OSS this Winter!

If you are interested in volunteering we have needs in the following categories:

- Office Reception/Administrative Support (Monday - Thursday 7:30AM–6:30PM, Friday 7:30AM-5:00PM) - which involves helping office staff with various administrative projects, answering phones, greeting visitors, filing, and light typing. Schedule is flexible.
- Evening Study Tutors (Monday – Thursday 5:00PM-6:30PM) – tutors help students with their homework and help them develop better study and organizational skills as academic mentors. Schedule is weekly.
- One-on-one and Small Group Tutors (Monday – Friday 3:30PM-5:00PM)-

these tutors work with students who are identified as having specific need for extra help in Math or English. Schedule is once a week and flexible.

- World Language Tutors – which involves a once a month commitment to help a student or students practice their conversation skills in any of the following languages: Chinese, French, Spanish & Portuguese. Schedule is for Wednesday morning or afternoon during class time.
- Library Volunteers– Library volunteers help us maintain our library by cataloging books, processing periodical and book donations, and helping us build a culture of reading in our school. Schedule is flexible.

- Winter Athletics Volunteers (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 3:45PM–4:45PM) - which involves instructing girls in a sport, exercises, or dance activity. Past examples have been yoga, ballet, hip hop, and dance. Schedule is a 12 week time period, one or two days per week.

Please feel free to contact Tara Penny, the Volunteer Coordinator, for more information. (508) 994-1255 ext 300 or by email tpenny@oursistersschool.org.