



Journey's School of Teton Science Schools

Academic Excellence · Extraordinary Relationships · Place-based Education · Global Citizenship

February 18, 2011

Dear Journey's School Parents:

The tenth year of Journey's School has been one of incredible success. Thank you to all families who re-enrolled for next year. Our re-enrollment numbers at this date triple those from last year and both our inquiries and applications are higher. It appears that our high school is close to being fully enrolled for next year – a first for the school. Our successes are many and include our first year of International Baccalaureate, a state championship robotics team, over 1000 hours of service learning, a National Merit Finalist, a significantly enhanced Pre-Kindergarten program, curricular adjustments at the Elementary School level, all 12th grade students accepted early decision to college, and more attention than ever before on instruction and assessment through the creation of Curriculum Coordinator positions.

Next week I am attending the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conference in Washington, D.C. The focus of the conference is on the public-private partnership and how independent schools can lead the way in 21st century education. We are already doing both. As part of Teton Science Schools (and with our large service learning program), we provide a benefit to our community that surpasses most independent schools. Our curriculum, as noted by Pat Bassett, President of NAIS, is a perfect blend of right and left-brained education. Our students are prepared well to benefit the common good in the world through a focus on the four pillars of academic excellence, extraordinary relationships, place-based education, and global citizenship. It is not enough to simply educate our students; it is our obligation, in partnership with you as parents, to prepare them with the knowledge and skills to make a positive difference in the world.

In our efforts to grow quickly over the last decade, we also have been challenged by attempting to be a school for all students and families that would like to enroll. While the program has continued to be successful, there is more pressure than ever to deviate from our mission and purpose. This dilution does not serve us well in our small community. We thrive on the niche of our four pillars and indeed our teachers choose Journey's School because of the culture of collaboration, a mission that is for the greater good, and an expectation of excellence. We thrive on the fact that our students are challenged academically, while being taught to be communicators, collaborators, and creators. Our students write intensely and understand how the economy, culture, and ecology of a place function within a community. Our students learn Spanish, create art, solve difficult mathematical problems, and design experiments – but also understand that to be a global citizen, they must be able to step into the shoes of another – to empathize, solve, and enhance the human experience for all. This focus on the common good and a rigorous academic program sets us apart from other choices in the area.

As we embark upon our next strategic plan, the parent survey provides some clues into the context within which we exist. I included a summary table for your review at the back of this letter. A 60% response rate indicates a majority representation of the parent body. Notable on the survey was 97% of parents fully or mostly support the introduction of International Baccalaureate. Similarly high rankings went to teacher-student relationships and parent-teacher relationships. In the comments, it is clear that while there is a majority support for our current program, some feel that we need more change to the curriculum while others feel that the curriculum has changed too much. Our job as professionals is to provide the best program possible that is mission focused, research based, and good for student learning. The data from this survey will be used to help inform our strategic plan.

A concurrent student survey at the middle and high school indicated that over 80% of students indicated that they were challenged, their peers were motivated, and the environment was respectful all or most of the time. Compared to national statistics that hover around 50%, this demonstrates an extraordinary learning environment.



People · Nature · Place · Education

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Communication continues to be of utmost importance to our program. In that vein, the school has redefined our communications policy to help ensure that all questions are answered fully and promptly. The list below articulates the order that you as parents should follow to have questions resolved. Questions not answered satisfactorily at one level should be directed to the next level. A software system has been set up at school so that all meeting notes are recorded to ensure adequate resolution and appropriate tracking.

Parents should contact staff in the following order:

1. Faculty/Advisor
2. Curriculum Coordinator or Lead Faculty
3. Head of School
4. Executive Director
5. Board Chair

As I did last year, it is time to outline the next steps for our school. The ten goals articulated last spring and reported during the State of the School are complete. A new set of goals will help to inform our strategic planning process and provide guidance for the next twelve months as we seek to further strengthen the school. As you will see in the attached letter from John Pierce, Chair of the Board, a strategic planning committee will be created to help complete this process during the spring. A preliminary list of the goals defined for the next 6-12 months are as follows.

1. Complete the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (Grades 6-10) application and training.
2. Review and development of the Global Citizenship pillar.
3. Publication of current curriculum for all parents.
4. Refinement of program for Pre-Kindergarten through 2nd grade students to ensure a smooth and developmentally-appropriate continuum.
5. Increase and focus professional development time for faculty during and outside of the school year.
6. Complete review of elementary school math program and implement any recommended changes for the 2011-12 school year.
7. Continue to develop the after-school enrichment program.

Some of these goals will rise to the level of the strategic plan, while others will simply be short-term programmatic goals. With a strong learning culture, an energetic and dedicated faculty, and a clear direction, Journeys School is the best choice for schools in the valley for families committed to the four pillars of the program. Our students are smart, kind, focused, intrinsically motivated to learn, and thoughtful about the future course of the world.

As always, I am interested in your opinion. Please do not hesitate to call at any time.

Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,



Nate McClennen
Head of School

Journeys School Overall Survey Results – 2010-11

Answer Options	Very or Mostly Satisfied (excluding “Do Not Know” responses)
Relationships between students and teachers	96%
Friday Email Announcements	98%
School Community	94%
Head of School	94%
Relationships between parents and teachers	91%
Instruction (teaching in the classrooms)	87%
Basecamp News	90%
Curriculum (what is taught)	86%
Facilities	87%
Journeys (extended trips)	93%
Finance/Billing Department	86%
Friday School Lunch	87%
Assessment (how students are evaluated)	78%
Admissions Department	84%
Hands to Work	79%
Partnership with Teton Science Schools	76%
School Transportation	73%
Fundraising Department	73%
Parent Council	77%

Answer Options	Very or Mostly Satisfied (excluding “Do Not Know” responses)
Introduction of International Baccalaureate	97%
Increased number of events to inform parents about student progress	87%
Increased communication of assessment results in elementary school	80%
Merging the lower and upper elementary schools	80%
Dismissal time of 3:30 PM for K-5th grade students	77%
Creating curriculum coordinator positions	76%
Extension of the school day for K-5th grade students	75%
New design of pickup/drop off circle	70%