

FalkTalk

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The future of the school continues to be the driving force guiding the decisions that will be made in the coming years.

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From the Director

OPPORTUNITY- a favorable or promising combination of circumstances; a chance for advancement or improvement (Webster,1988).

PTA President Pam Greenhouse’s column this month is an information piece that describes the organization of the Falk School Board, as delineated in the Charter and reports on the first Board meeting chaired by Dr. Robert Pack, Vice Provost. Everyone should read this column carefully in order to understand how this school committee functions in relation to our daily activities, and then to understand my feelings relative to the future of the school.

All of our stakeholders at the school level have been aware of the work of the Strategic Plan Committee over the past two years. A dedicated group of individuals has been gathering information, collecting data, and formulating possibilities to present to the university for consideration. The Board, as newly constituted, will be working with the new Director to continue the development of this strategic plan. The future of the school continues to be the driving force guiding the decisions that will be made in the coming years.

I see this as a positive, exciting venture for all of you who will be here during this process. The recognition that we can and should “stretch” ourselves during the next decade speaks volumes about the history, the reputation and the value of the school. We should all rise to the occasion and identify ways that we can

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From the PTA President

Having recently attended the January, 2004, Falk School Board meeting, I felt that the topic for this month’s FalkTalk article should be to provide you with information about the Falk School Board, as I’m not sure everyone is aware of its existence, composition, mission, and activities.

The Falk School Board composition is set forth in the original Charter Agreement between the Falk family and the University of Pittsburgh (and can be read in its official form in the yellow Falk School

Handbook). The Charter Agreement provides for 11 members of the Falk School Board. The Chair is the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor or his/her designee. In our case, for the past number of years the Chair of our Board has been the Dean of the School of Education, Dr. Alan Lesgold, as the Chancellor’s designee. As of this month, however, the chairmanship of the Board has transferred to the Vice Provost of Planning and Resource Management, Dr. Bob Pack. Dr. Lesgold remains a much-valued member

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Calendar of Events

February 12	General PTA Meeting, 7:30 pm	March 20	Excellence in Teaching Fundraiser, “Romp and Roll”
February 20	No School, Teacher In-service	April 2	End of 3rd Quarter (P, I)
March 5	End of 2nd Trimester (M)	April 6	No School, Teacher In-service
March 8-12	No School, University Spring Break	April 9,12	No School, Falk Holiday Break

From the Director (continued from page 1)

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collaboratively work with the university to improve the school and its mission. The procedure for this collaboration is a work in progress. I hope that many of you will be able to attend the next PTA meeting and hear what Dr. Pack has to tell us. I can verify that he is currently working to gain as much knowledge as he can about the school, its role, its budget, and its relationships.

Change is an opportunity. This is the appropriate time and place for this venture to begin. We will all be challenged to think and work in new ways, but I am looking forward to this challenge during the next six months. I intend to do everything I can to ensure that the Falk School of the future will be even better and more valued than the Falk School of today. Please join me in this effort.

– Dr. McDonald

From the PTA President (continued from page 1)

of the Board, along with two members of the School of Education faculty, the Director of the Falk School, two members of the Falk family, a member of the University of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees, and the three past Falk School PTA presidents (each serving a 3-year term on the Falk School Board). The current officers of the PTA (president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer) are ex-officio (non-voting) members of the Falk School Board, as well, and are invited to the meetings.

The Board meets three times/year, in the Office of the Provost at the University of Pittsburgh. Increasing the number of Board meetings is currently being considered, particularly during this time of change as we begin a search for a new Director of the Falk School and as we become a newly reconstituted Board under the leadership of Dr. Pack, the Vice-Provost.

This month's Falk School Board meeting had two important agenda items that I would like to summarize for you:

1. **The Search.** As you all know, Dr. McDonald has indicated that he will retire at the end of this school year. The search for a new Director is a University of Pittsburgh-led process, as the position is both the school director as well as a University of Pittsburgh faculty member. Dr. Pack informed the Board that the Search Committee is currently being formed, and he proposed its membership. As the membership is still being finalized, what I can tell you now is that 11 members were proposed – with Dr. Lesgold as its Chair, 5 members of the School of Education faculty, a member of the University of Pittsburgh Psychology department faculty, two Falk School teachers, and 3 parents of Falk School students (including one representing the Falk family). I am honored to have been asked to be a part of this committee as one of the 3 parent representatives, and I look forward to being able to contribute to

a successful search. Dr. Lesgold indicated that the Search Committee will meet for the first time within the next two weeks, and that it will likely be two to four months before we have our pool of candidates.

2. **Strategic Planning.** A group of dedicated Falk School parents, faculty, and administration have been involved in strategic planning for the school for the past 2 ½ years – with specific focus on facilities, fundraising, governance, and other areas such as technology. The Falk School strategic planning initiative has not been a PTA-led initiative, but rather a separate entity working in coordination with the PTA and the school administration. At the January Falk School Board meeting, Dr. Pack expressed his knowledge of the strategic planning initiative, and acknowledged its importance. He indicated that he will be initiating a more consolidated, joint strategic planning process between the Falk School and the University of Pittsburgh, to be overseen by the Board, building on the work that's already been accomplished. He will suggest a process for this joint initiative in the near future. In the meantime, he is most interested in getting to know our school, our parent body, and our teachers. To this end, I am extremely pleased that Dr. Pack will be coming to talk with us at the February 12th General PTA meeting, which will also provide a wonderful forum for "coffee and a chat" with Dr. McDonald, one of our last opportunities before his retirement.

As I finish writing this month's article, the weather is icy, stormy, and not much to "write home about." Here's to hoping the chill and ice are short-lived! In the meantime, please be sure to get in touch with me if you have any questions or suggestions about anything in this month's article, or more generally for the PTA.

– Pam Greenhouse

This month's Falk School Board meeting had two important agenda items, the search for a new Director, and the Falk Strategic Plan.

General PTA Meeting

February 12, 2004
7:30 P.M.
Falk Cafetorium

All parents, faculty and staff are invited and encouraged to attend the upcoming General PTA meeting on Thursday, February 12th. Dr. Robert Pack, Vice Provost of Academic Planning & Resource Management at Pitt, will be speaking about the University's strategic plans and how they relate to Falk School. As the newly appointed Chair of the Falk School Board, Dr. Pack will be working closely with us to chart the future of our school, and he is excited to meet us and discuss the exciting possibilities ahead for Falk.

In addition, Dr. McDonald will spend some time reminiscing about his career, his time at Falk and his plans for the future. This will be a wonderful opportunity for us to talk informally with him about this place that has been such a part of his life for such a long time.

Child care for Falk students will be available. Light refreshments will be provided.

Please join us for this unique opportunity to take a look back, and a look forward, in the life of Falk School!

Hope to see you on February 12th!

– Laura Zaspel Lawson



Falk School Annual Fund

The Falk Annual Fund is now 3 months in progress and to date we have received donations from 20% of our current families and teachers. The Annual Fund Committee members send our sincere thanks and appreciation out to all the donors! Because we are hoping to see 100% participation from all the Falk families, we would like to encourage our families who have not yet participated to please consider a donation.

This is your chance to say that you appreciate Falk and are committed to the wonderful missions that make Falk unique from other private schools. Please remember no gift is too small, and you can choose to give through a pledge or payroll deduction (Pitt employees only) if desired. If you need a pledge envelope, please call the office, 412-624-8020, or call any of us. We will be happy to mail one to you! Thanks again for making our first Annual Fund drive a success!

Betsy Levine-Brown	412-521-9324
Nancy Glynn	412-825-6545
Nancy DelPresto	412-247-4129
Jeff Abramovitz	412-422-9296

Save the Date

As difficult as it is to accept, we must face the fact that our beloved Director, **Dr. William McDonald**, intends to retire at the end of the year. Despite our sadness, the Excellence in Teaching Scholarship Fund trustees voted at our annual meeting, to host the **dinner event honoring his tenure at Falk and the University of Pittsburgh**. We are informing the parents, teachers and staff to save **Saturday evening May 15, 2004** for this special dinner, and look for more information to come. Our students are being kept informed about plans including them. If you have questions, as always, feel free to call me!

Hope you can make this event!

– Charlene Barnett
(412) 247-5351

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SAVE THE DATE
Saturday, May 15, 2004
in honor of Dr. Mac
.....

Excellence in Teaching Fund Event



Saturday March 20, 2004 is the annual **Excellence in Teaching Scholarship Fund Family Event**, which will be a roller-skating party at "Romp N' Roll" skating rink in Glenshaw, P.A. All proceeds of the party go to the EIT fund which is used for emergency tuition aid for minority students in our school. We had a blast last year, and plan even more fun, auction items, and prizes this year. If you have items you wish to donate to the silent auction, please contact me. (Monetary donations are always welcome, and much appreciated!) Look for more information about this exciting family activity to come in the mail soon!

Hope you can make this event!

– Charlene Barnett
(412) 247-5351

Computer/Technology



March 20th is the end of the Giant Eagle Apples for the Students program.

Winter may be happening outside of Falk School, but it's always sunny enthusiasm inside! The next time you're near the gym at Falk School, please remember to look at the recently posted bulletin board, "Adobe Photoshop!" You will see the most creative photographic work by our cycle 3 middle school students.

They used the computer to create new photographic images that represent a poem's aura (some written by the same students). Photographs have had other images added, edited, distorted, colored, and then printed.

Intermediate students are currently using a new software program, "Essential Crosswords," to create puzzles about "Explorers" (rooms 224 & 225) or "Native American Tribes" (221 & 222). Students use the Internet to research clues. The students' success will be measured by the ability of other students to successfully complete each other's puzzles and the appropriateness of the clues. Finally, students will be allowed to complete another puzzle using a subject of their choice.

Primary students have been using "KidPix" to create "Patterns" from shapes, colors, stamps, squiggles, etc. After printing their "Patterns," they use the digital camera to take pictures of each other, load the pictures onto the computer, and print them out. All pictures will be compiled into a "Pattern Book" for the classroom.

Primary students are also creating dioramas of the Rainforest. This inventive software subtly teaches the students about the flora, the animals, the people, the homes, the transportation, and life within the Rainforest.

Lastly, Kindergarten and first grade students are exploring a fun, learn-to-read website, www.starfall.com.

Intermediate and Middle School parents: please encourage your children to practice Keyboarding at home (three times a week for fifteen minutes each day, minimum). Keyboarding software is available through Scholastic Software.

March 20th is the end of Giant Eagles Apples for the Students program. Each year we have been able to purchase at least one significant piece of computer equipment for use by all students. Last year, we received our second Panasonic Digital Camcorder and have used it frequently. Previously, we have requested digital cameras, a copier, and various software programs.

If you have not registered, log on to www.gianteagle.com or call 1-800-474-4777. Have your advantage card available. Enter the Falk School ID#0335. Please ask family, friends, and co-workers to register and shop and Giant Eagle.

Feel free to telephone or e-mail your questions, concerns, or compliments.

– Mrs. Bianco
412-648-8459; bbianco@pitt.edu



Music Notes

2004 is off to a very musical beginning at Falk. Rooms 225 and 111 presented their plays in January and Room 115 will present theirs in February. The sixth grade students attended a Pittsburgh Symphony concert on Jan. 13th.

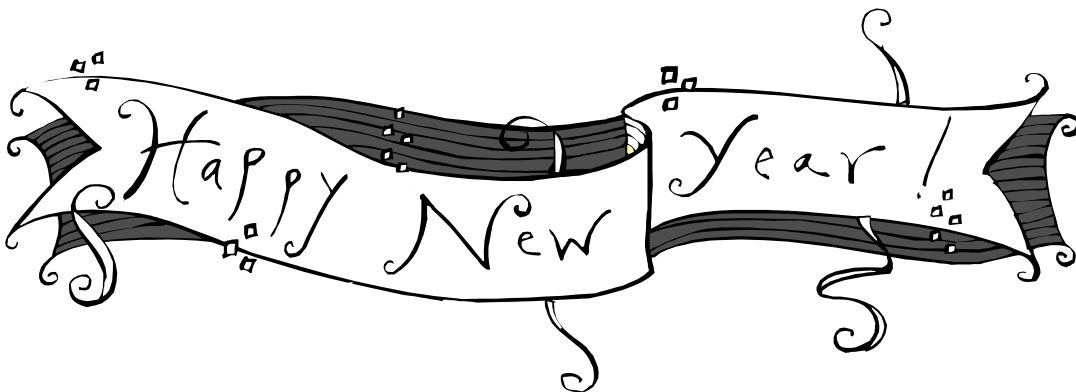
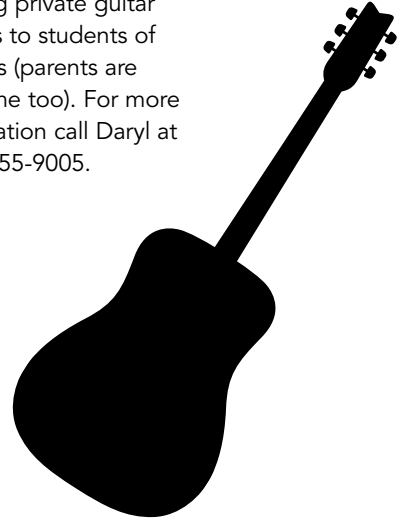
All Middle School students and all 5th grade students in Falk's instrumental program will receive a real treat on Feb. 9th. They will be going to Carnegie Music Hall to attend the Pittsburgh Chamber Music Society's concert, "East Meets West: A Floating World—Japan and the Impressionists." This program features music of Japanese and French composers and slides of art work from Japanese Ukiyo-e prints to French Impressionism. "Windscape," a New York wind quintet will be the featured ensemble. Many thanks to our Falk PTA for sponsoring this program for our students.

The Middle School Musical kicks off on February 16th when auditions begin. All Middle School students who are interested in solo parts in the musical will audition with song, movement and reading. Everyone in the Middle School participates in this production—some on stage, some working on sets, props, costumes, programs, make-up, etc. As always, parent volunteers are needed. Please contact Dr. Conover (412-383-9617) if you are interested in helping out with this year's show. Everyone is reminded to mark their calendars—the musical will be presented on May 24-27th.

– Lee Ann Conover

Guitar Lessons

Falk's guitar teacher Daryl Godfrey, is now offering private guitar lessons to students of all ages (parents are welcome too). For more information call Daryl at (412) 855-9005.



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FalkTalk

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