

FalkTalk

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From the Director

Last month I wrote on the subject of "opportunity." As I was preparing my graduate class in social studies during the past week – a class about critical thinking – I began to think about the decision-making ramifications of those opportunities for our Falk School community. I have come to believe that too often we treat decision-making in a far too simplistic manner. Alternatives are either good or bad. There is no middle ground. Shades of gray do not exist. Everything is either black or white. My experience has taught me that our opinions are often based on faulty information, biased resources, or just plain bad judgement.

As educators, the Falk School faculty has the responsibility of producing "deep thinkers," and to accomplish that feat, they must introduce strategies to all our students that promote effective decision-making skill development. The ability to recognize that there are good and bad consequences to almost any alternative is an imperative. The most important factor in decision-making is the weighing of one alternative against another, and finally, making choices based on which has the most positive and least negative impact on the decision. If any person is told exactly how to think, then the results curtail thinking, not only for the individual, but for all those involved.

There will be many occasions for decision-making during the next few months. We must be ready "to dive into problems that go deep beyond the surface."

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From the PTA President

I want to start this month's column by thanking those of you who were able to attend the February General PTA meeting at which we were introduced to the new Falk School Board Chairperson, Dr. Robert Pack, Vice-Provost for Planning & Resource Management at the University of Pittsburgh. I want to also thank Laura Zaspel Lawson, PTA Vice-President, for coordinating the meeting and for doing such an incredible job of publicizing it. Her efforts resulted in a huge turnout – standing room only. I counted – 120

parents and faculty in the audience. The strong turnout demonstrated to Dr. Pack the level of commitment and interest that exists among our parents and faculty, as well as to Dr. McDonald our dedication and support.

I believe that Dr. Pack's visit to our school is important as a first step in the need for both the University and Falk parents/faculty to understand each other's needs, dreams, and agendas as we approach the future.

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Calendar of Events

March 20	Excellence in Teaching Fundraiser, "Romp and Roll"	April 21-27	Achievement Testing Parent Conferences, 1pm dismissal
April 2	End of 3rd Quarter (P, I)	April 21	PTA Meeting, 7:30pm
April 6	No School, Teacher In-service	April 25	Falk Bingo, 4-6pm
April 9,12	No School, Holiday Break	May 14	Spring Carnival, 1pm dismissal

From the Director (continued from page 1)

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I hope we can all display a patient alertness to the need to thoroughly evaluate information or ideas, a willingness to listen to and to test the various opinions, and a desire to consider all viewpoints. Ask many questions, go beyond the superficial to the substance, take positions and explain and defend those positions, examine multiple perspectives on important issues and know all sides of an issue before taking a position, and assess all information carefully and fairly. If we can accomplish all of the above, then the Falk School community will continue to thrive and grow. We are the people who can make it happen.

– Dr. McDonald

From the PTA President (cont from page 1)

The last part of the meeting was spent reminiscing with Dr. McDonald about his early teaching career at Falk, and the years in between then and his appointment as Director in 1996. It was also a chance to look toward the future from his perspective – with optimism, and with the humor and warmth that are part of our daily experience at Falk School and which Dr. McDonald embodies.

These are interesting times – with a new Director in our future, as well as our newly reconstituted Board under the leadership of Dr. Pack. The focus must now be on: 1) The search for the new Director, which is underway – with the Search Committee having met for the first time on February 25th, and 2) participation in the joint (Falk/Pitt) strategic planning effort that will ensue over the coming 6-12 months.

I am pleased to tell you that there is a strong slate of proposed PTA officers in place for the 2004-05 school year – which will be presented for a vote by the general parent body at the April, 2004 General PTA meeting. The proposed slate is as follows:

President – Laura Zaspel Lawson
Vice-President – Sharon Semenza
Secretary – Martina Wells
Treasurer – Greg Weingart

My confidence in these parents to represent us next year, providing leadership as we move forward, could not be stronger. I am indebted to them for their willingness to serve and provide this crucial link into the future.

As spring break approaches, I hope those of you who are traveling during the break travel safely and that everyone has a relaxing and fun break.

– Pam Greenhouse

Music Notes

HAPPY MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH!

March is officially named “Music in our Schools Month,” but here at Falk I like to think that every month is “Music at Falk Month.” One of the highlights of Falk’s observance of the importance of music has been the wonderful array of performers who have come to Falk and performed for our Music classes. Each year, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters and friends volunteer to come to a Music class and share their music with us. This year we will be inviting performers to join us after Spring Break. A letter of invitation will be going home soon. If you care to share your music with an appreciative audience, please sign up. You’ll have a great time and so will our students.

The entire Middle School has begun work on our production of “Alice in Wonderland.” The talent in our Middle School never ceases to amaze me. I hope you will all set aside the week of May 24th so you can join us for what is shaping up to be a fantastic production. We will be presenting school assembly programs on May 24-26, and evening shows on May 25-27. I look forward to seeing you all at one (or many) of these performances.

– Lee Ann Conover

Excellence in Teaching Event

I hope everyone has gotten their forms for the annual **Roy J. Creek Excellence in Teaching Scholarship Event**, which is a roller skating party, on March 20th at Romp and Roll. Duplicate forms are available in the school office. Donation items are sorely needed, so please contact me with anything you can provide for this worthy cause! Hope to see you there!

– Charlene Barnett
EIT Coordinator



B I N G O
Save the Date
FALK BINGO
SUNDAY APRIL 25
4-6 PM

Thank You

Ms. Herward was welcomed back to the library on February 2. She thanks everyone who made her return such an easy transition: Ms. Williams who took over in the library, Ms. O'Brien who worked with Mr. Pihlblad in room 116, as well as the library assistants, the students, faculty, interns, and staff members. This support and understanding were appreciated.

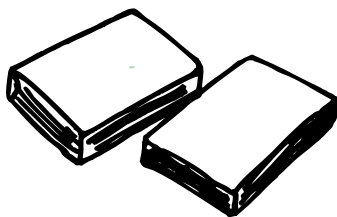
Library Intern

Ms. Mary Kelleher will be working with Ms. Herward as a library intern February 9 through March 19. Ms. Kelleher is currently enrolled in Pitt's Master of Library and Information Science, School Library Certification program. She has an undergraduate degree in English from the College of Holy Cross with a Massachusetts teaching certificate in secondary English. Upon completion of the MLS program in the School of Information Science she will have her Pennsylvania teaching certificate in library science grades K-12. She has experience as a teacher of high school English and middle school reading and writing skills, and as a class advisor, yearbook advisor and mentor. Please welcome Ms. Kelleher to Falk School.

Birthday/Gift Book Program

The library and the PTA coordinate a Gift Book Program as a means of expanding the library collection while commemorating special times and special persons: birthdays, holidays, grandparents, teachers, interns and sometimes even pets. An appropriate bookplate is placed in each book. A note of acknowledgement is sent to each teacher honoree and to others if address is provided.

All Falk students, teachers, interns, and staff benefit from the continuous updating of the collection. The Gift Program information will be sent soon to the families of students with winter birthdays. These materials including the Gift Book Form and Winter Gift Book List of suggested books are also available on the library website at <http://tc.education.pitt.edu/library>. If you would like to make a donation or have questions about the Birthday/Gift Book Program contact Ms. Herward (412-624-8010), Bonnie Gorscak (412-243-3672), or Beatriz Kanterewicz (412-521-7168).



Library Gifts

Thank you to the students and families who recently donated books to the library: *Talia Leschko, Shana Leshko, Noah Kahrs, Rev. & Dr. Keith Conover, and Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Herward*. More complete information concerning these gifts is published on the library web site, <http://tc.education.pitt.edu/library>.

Library Book Fair Volunteers Needed

Volunteers will be needed to work at the Library Book Fair, Thursday & Friday, April 22-23 and Monday & Tuesday, April 26-27, 2004. This involves a one-time 2-3 hour time commitment. Contact Shelley Ross, Book Fair co-chair at 412-687-0503.

New Resource – Britannica Online

Britannica Online School Edition is an outstanding online resource accessible to the Falk School community. This online encyclopedia gives users access to Encyclopedia Britannica, Britannica Internet Guide, and Video & Media. Searches can be limited to include any or all of these. The Internet Guide can be especially helpful in locating quality web sites. The Video & Media section shows short videos related to your search topic.

To access the Britannica Online School Edition go to www.school.eb.com. To login, the user name is "falk" (all lower case) and the password is "school" (all lower case). After the first time your computer should "remember" and there should be no need to you to login. The Britannica is an excellent general information resource. The Britannic subscription is a gift from the Rao family, a former Falk family.

The Library Website

<http://tc.education.pitt.edu/library>

Need information concerning the library? Visit the library website. The site includes information about the library staff, curriculum resources (middle school research projects), class schedule, policies and procedures, the Gift Book Program, new library materials, special events, MLA Work Cited stylesheet, the library catalog, and magazine collection.

The Falk School website (www.pitt.edu/~fls) includes a link to the library website.

– Linda Herward



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FalkTalk

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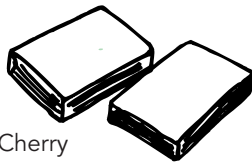
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Heartwood Books

The attribute for February was Respect:

Main Books

Crow Boy - T. Yashima
The Wall - E. Bunting
The Great Kapok Tree - L. Cherry
Last Look from the Mountain - C. Marron
Miss Rumphius by B. Cooney
How My Parents Learned to Eat - I. Freidman



Supplementary Books

Dragonfly's Tale - K. Rodanas
Africa Dream - E. Greenfield
The Blind Man and the Elephant - L. Quigley
Brother Eagle, Sister Sky A message
from Chief Seattle
I Have a Sister-My Sister Is Deaf - J.W. Peterson
Island Boy - B. Cooney
The Legend of the Whale - I. Stansfield
Masai and I by V. Kroll
The Village of Round and Square Houses -
A. Grifalconi
Who Owns the Sun? - S. Chbosky.

Hope is the attribute for March:

Main Books:

Angel Child, Dragon Child by M. Surat
The Cherry Tree by D. Ikeda
We Be Warm Till Springtime Comes by L. Chaflin
Fly Away Home by E. Bunting
Knots on a Counting Rope by B. Martin, Jr., How
Many Days To America by E. Bunting

Supplementary Books:

Amigo by B. B. Schweitzer
Aurora Means Dawn by S. Sanders
Dogsong by G. Paulsen
The Jazzman by M. H. Weik
Kumi and the Pearl by P. M. Martin
The Mountain That Loved a Bird by A. McLerran
My Grandmother's Journey by J. Cech
Odette, a Springtime in Paris by K. Fender
Owl Moon by J. Yolen
Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes
by E. Coerr
Sarah, Plain and Tall by P. MacLachlan
Song of the Swallows by L. Politi.