Message from the Director

Brigitte Bertschi

Having just completed a revision of our K-5 curriculum guide, this is a good time to reflect on a recent article from *Educational Leadership*. Written by Kieran Egan, a professor of Education at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, it addresses the issue of testing. "Testing what for what?" Egan suggests that to put testing in its proper place, we need to recognize a distinction between the academic curriculum and the socialization curriculum.

To illustrate his point, Egan gives a radical example. Suppose the government enacted legislation mandating that instead of working for set salaries, every worker was required to watch a movie once a week and take a multiple-choice test after the movie. Test results would determine weekly pay. Imagine how this would affect movie-going, an experience you expect to enjoy. Instead of deriving pleasure from different movies, you would anxiously try to remember the details — the colors of cars, the names of dogs and people, etc. — and miss the deeper meanings. What had once been a pleasure would become fraught with anxiety. In a similar way, many educators view current testing systems as undermining the main purpose of education by distracting from the pleasure of learning, exploring, questioning and critical thinking.

Egan discusses the socialization and academic goals of education. Socialization requires that children be literate and numerate, that they know enough about history to understand their community and the world, current technology, and the basic values of their society. The academic aspect of education goes back to Plato, who argued that the understanding of socialized people is limited to the conventions of their time and place, and that education should teach people to pursue the truth about things regardless of current conventions. Today, our schools emphasize both social and academic goals.

Coming back to the hypothetical cinema legislation, Egan says, "When we use the institution designed for entertainment to perform the social sorting role, we undercut the efficiency of both." The task of schools is to sort students and lead them to future roles and careers that best fit their skills, while recognizing "that the pursuit of truth about the world is an important human good." He asserts that academic testing is not the way to determine future job possibilities and prospects, and does not fulfill education's socializing role. Assessment instruments for the
Independent Schools: Meeting the Financial Challenge
Tom Barton, Board President

Rising tuitions. Escalating salary and benefits expenses. Increased financial aid requests. Facilities maintenance needs. Program expansion and enhancements. These are only a few of the pressing and complex financial issues challenging independent schools today and in the years ahead. As Bertschi prepares to invest over $3 million in the development of its campus, it is instructive to consider this decision within the larger context of financing independent schools in the 21st century.

Patrick Bassett, president of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), addressed this issue in the fall issue of Independent School. According to Bassett, any school that is interested in assuring its long-term financial health needs to take two key steps. The first of these is to initiate data-driven leadership – make sure that financial decisions are based on solid data. The second step is to undertake financial modeling. By projecting forward five years and examining a variety of financial scenarios, schools can purposefully work toward their desired fiscal “picture” down the road.

Bassett goes on to identify five key national 10-year trends that impact an independent school’s long-term financial planning:

~ Tuitions are up, on average, 30% in inflation-adjusted dollars.

~ Demand is up in terms of inquiries, applications, and enrollment.

~ Faculty salaries have improved, but only marginally, up 11% in inflation-adjusted dollars.

~ Total staff has increased by 32% and the student teacher ratio has declined to 9:1.

~ Financial aid awards are up 38%, but the number of recipients is flat.

So what does all of this mean for Bertschi? It is more important than ever that we continue our process of developing, reviewing and revising the school’s five-year financial plan, in light of current trends. The Long-Range Financial Planning Committee is currently drafting a new plan that encompasses the increased campus facilities, the resumption of the pre-kindergarten program, and expanded academic opportunities. The following strategic assumptions, as outlined in the school’s 2001 Strategic Plan, provide the foundation for the committee’s work:

1) Continue to provide competitive faculty and staff compensation packages, in line with our peer schools.

2) Incorporate a level of predictability regarding tuition increases.

3) Maintain a strong financial aid program to support socioeconomic diversity.

4) Ensure stable enrollment through effective student recruitment and retention efforts.

5) Increase charitable giving to the annual fund, capital campaign, major gifts and endowment programs.

It is a fact of life that all aspects of independent schools are inextricably linked to the financial resources available, both now and in the future. To carry out Bertschi’s mission and deliver an exceptional educational program requires not only a sizeable short-term capital commitment for campus development, but also a careful evaluation of the impact of today’s decisions on tomorrow’s finances. As a result of Bertschi’s careful and thoughtful planning, I am confident Bertschi’s long-range financial plan will provide for ongoing financial viability as well as educational excellence.
Clicking into the Future with Bertschi School's Technology Plan

"Technology is the combination of human imagination, inventiveness and electronic tools that transform ideas into reality or solve a problem."

—Bertschi School Education Committee

With this definition as a starting place, Bertschi School’s Education Committee set out to revise the school’s Technology Plan to anticipate the next three years of technology education and assessment at Bertschi. The new plan, due to be completed by the end of this school year, presents strategies for using technology across all grade levels. It addresses the needs of students, teachers, administrators and support staff with clear goals and benchmarks for assessment. It also includes the teaching of ethics and safety and outlines the business strategies necessary to ensure successful implementation.

Comprised of parents, faculty and staff members, the committee aims to create an overall framework for Bertschi’s Technology Plan, and to produce an implementation strategy including grade-specific curriculum plans and assessment tools, as well as a three-year budget recommendation. The first phase of their process was to study current research on educational technology, and to visit other independent schools to observe how Bertschi’s peer schools integrate technology in the classroom. The committee then identified key questions to address in the new plan:

1. Why do we use and want to use technology in the Bertschi School curriculum?
2. What do we mean by technology in the context of the Bertschi curriculum and what is the relationship between technology and science at Bertschi?
3. What technology is appropriate for K-5 students?
4. Why and how should technology be integrated into the rest of the curriculum, taking into account the relative roles of the computer lab, computers in the classrooms, the technology faculty, the classroom teachers, and the other resource teachers?
5. How should faculty and parents be involved in the technology planning process?

By adopting published standards, such as the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) the committee tapped into a tested, dynamic structure for planning and evaluating technology in the classroom, as well as hands-on curricular resources.

A key component of the plan’s recommendations is to determine how technology can be integrated with and support Bertschi’s unique cross-disciplinary learning environment. Project-based learning that is cooperative and interdisciplinary should be enhanced and extended with the support of technology. Students are free to become the “experts”, tapping into their natural curiosity and skills for mastering new information and communication tools.

The committee also recognized that technology comes with inherent risks; it worked to identify many of these and provide strategies to be sure Bertschi students’ use of technology augments learning and supports the core academic curriculum in appropriate ways. One such recommendation has already been implemented, with a shift away from technology in Kindergarten and First Grade in favor of more age-appropriate sensory and artistic experiences.

As Bertschi moves forward in our increasingly technology-dependent world, this revised plan will be a valuable guide and tool to the school. The Education Committee’s leadership, time, skills and planning will ensure that Bertschi integrates technology in an effective and appropriate manner into our educational program.
Second Grade Rain Forest Study

Do you know the difference between a temperate and a tropical forest? Are you familiar with the eating habits of a raven? If not, you may want to ask a student in Anna’s or Brenda’s second grade class!

Bertschi second graders are involved in an exciting forest study project. The project was started at Bertschi several years ago in cooperation with the award-winning Woodland Park Zoo Forest Explorers program. The zoo provides a forest study curriculum to qualified schools and a free field trip to the zoo. The objective of the zoo’s program is to encourage an appreciation of the importance of forests and forest habitats, both locally and around the world.

The Bertschi students have not only studied forests and habitats in the classroom; they’ve also gone beyond the zoo’s curriculum by researching and reporting on a forest animal of their choice. The children have been asked to find out the habitat, food, physical aspects, predators and prey, family life and interesting facts on their animal.

The forest animal project includes research, creation of a report on the animal, a PowerPoint presentation and a habitat/animal exhibit. This is truly a cross-disciplinary endeavor. Their research is conducted in the classroom, with Jane in the library and with Nancy in the technology lab. Working across classroom settings is one of the ways that the children achieve an enriching, in-depth learning experience at Bertschi.

In Nancy’s technology class, the kids are doing more than just research. They are teaming up in pairs to create PowerPoint presentations on their animal! These presentations include at least two pieces of original artwork, snippets about the animal, as well as pictures and photographs the children discovered in their exploration.

The children are also working with Andrea in the art room to create an animal exhibit. The exhibit includes a 3-dimensional clay model of their animal displayed against a habitat backdrop painting, as well as information about their animal and its environment.

The integrated, cross-disciplinary nature of projects like the second grade forest and animal study project offers a stimulating learning environment for Bertschi students. One teacher commented that the students are so proud of their animal projects that they often keep the exhibits at home for years later.

In addition to giving the second graders insights into the importance of forest habitats, the animal study also introduces children to research skills, organizing information from many sources, experience putting information into their own words, practice with communication skills, pride in being an expert, teamwork and cooperation, oral presentation, and an appreciation for one another’s work. And from the students’ perspective, it’s a great opportunity to head to the zoo!
Teaching Community Through Service

"Everyone can be great because everyone can serve." — Martin Luther King

Packing bags of food at Northwest Harvest food bank. Making sandwiches and serving meals at a homeless shelter. Participating in a walk to support PAWS (Pets are Wonderful Support). These are just a few of the many service projects in which fourth and fifth graders at Bertschi are currently participating. Learning to give back to the community has always been an integral part of a child’s educational experience at Bertschi, as we strive to foster a sense of caring and involvement for one another and our community. Building on the organized classroom service activities in kindergarten through third grade, a new service learning program was introduced into the curriculum for the fourth and fifth grade students.

Utilizing the skills developed through their work on Independent Research Projects (IRP’s in Bertschi lingo), students are asked to research, plan and participate in their own service learning project. Their plan must include a description of the project, when and how it will be implemented, and what assistance they will need from their family or others in order to perform their service. Following completion of their volunteer activity, students will share their experience with their classmates, focusing on the following questions:

~ What skills did you bring to the project?
~ What new skills did you gain?
~ What were your challenges? Your successes?
~ How has your understanding of service learning grown?
~ How has this experience prepared you for your future?

While many worthwhile organizations are helped by Bertschi’s service learning program, the benefits go even deeper. By directing their learning toward community needs, students understand that they are part of that community and can make a difference. The experience encourages a greater sense of civic responsibility and ethic of service. The rewards of giving back to their community reinforces behavior that will serve them and their communities well for years to come.

Fifth grader Adam spoke to the Bertschi Parent Council about his project: a blood drive at Bertschi with the Puget Sound Blood Center. Adam shared that he chose his project because his brother died of leukemia and he knows others battling cancer as well. Cancer patients often require blood transfusions to replace blood damaged by radiation and chemotherapy treatments. Adam is working to enlist 30 volunteers to donate blood as well as to raise awareness about the ongoing need for blood donations. He hopes that people who donate will continue to give blood in the years ahead because as Adam noted, “People need blood to stay alive.”
Grandparents & Special Friends Day

Bertschi students welcomed special visitors for this annual celebration of inter-generational learning. Some enjoyed musical or drama performances in the classrooms, while others shared lunch activities with their student hosts.
Pulp to Paper
Third Graders explored the science of papermaking with Art teacher Andrea Braganza and Science teacher Julie Blystad. After studying qualities of paper such as absorbency and strength, they turned their hand-made paper into valentines for their parents.

Welcoming the Year of the Monkey
The Kindergarten classes paraded in honor of the Chinese Year of the Monkey, a long-standing tradition at Bertschi. This capped their study of the Chinese New Year, which included a day-long trip to the International District by Metro bus. Gung Hay Fat Choy!
Imagine attending the 5th grade graduation on the Bertschi campus. Picture students playing volleyball in a gym with a 2-story ceiling. Envision families gathering for a back-to-school picnic on an outdoor playfield. Imagine Bertschi in 2006...

When Brigitte Bertschi opened her school in 1976 in a leased basement room, she could only dream of how Bertschi School would grow and thrive. That single-classroom school for 15 pre-schoolers rapidly grew, and ten years later Bertschi had an enrollment of 124 and was the only elementary school in Seattle with a hands-on science lab. By our 25th anniversary, we had two classrooms for each grade level K-5, had become an NAIS member school, and completed the $1.7 million “Mission 2000” campus renovation. As we head toward the 30th anniversary of the school in 2006, we are poised to take the school to an exciting new level of excellence.

Last fall Bertschi retained the Collins Group, a noted Pacific Northwest consulting firm, to conduct a fundraising feasibility study in preparation for a capital campaign. Through interviews, focus groups and surveys, current and alumni families shared their thoughts regarding the vision and financial viability of the proposed development of the additional property south of the school. The project grew out of the school’s need for expanded programmatic space, particularly in the areas of physical education, art and music. In addition, an outdoor playfield would offer the school wonderful opportunities for community gatherings as well as recreational area for the children.

The Collins Group completed its study and reported the findings to the Board of Trustees in January. Key points include:

~ Bertschi is distinguished by its integrated curriculum, attention to the whole child, and visionary leadership.

~ The Trustees are passionate and prudent in their stewardship of the school, and will respond to the study’s results accordingly.

~ Bertschi’s most compelling needs include additional space for music, art, dramatic performances, community gatherings, and indoor/outdoor physical education.

~ There is not sufficient support for the full $5.7 million campaign; however, there is potential for a $3 million campaign that responds to the identified needs.

~ Alumni families will respond positively to a modest campaign to increase Bertschi’s endowment and secure the school’s commitment to financial aid.

In response to this feedback, the Board of Trustees has revised the scope of the project to meet the school’s most pressing needs. The revised project will consist of a single building at the south end of Bertschi’s campus. As envisioned in our initial plan, this building will house a sizeable indoor physical education and performance area, as well as spacious rooms for both music and visual arts – programs which will benefit immensely from the added space. In addition, an adjacent playfield will provide much needed outdoor space for student activities and community events.

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Where are they now?

Ben Berger attended Bertschi from 1989-1995 (pre-K through Grade 4), and is now a freshman at Pomona College in Claremont, California.

Morgan Patton, class of 2001, is now at The Northwest School. She writes, “I was very prepared for 6th and 7th grades. In math, all of the material we did in those two grades was a review. I am currently in Fast Algebra (highest class in 8th grade).”

Susan Lindsay sent all three of her Bertschi kids to Georgetown University. Scott is a second year Law student. Blake is a senior, and Brooks is a sophomore.

Seattle Academy 8th grader Nicholas Dupree is busy playing soccer, basketball, and tennis. He writes, “In my free time I like to draw, watch movies, eat, play video games, surf the internet, and build things. I will be 14 on December 24th and I have reached a height of 5’8’’.”

Kate Fortmueller (Bertschi student from 1988-1993) graduated from Lakeside in 2001. She is at Smith College, making the Dean’s List her sophomore year. An avid photographer, Kate studied photography at the Rhode Island School of Design during summer quarter 2002. She spent January of 2003 in Cuba with students from the Five College Consortium photographing Old Havana as part of an effort to provide documentation to obtain UN funding for restoration. She is currently in Florence, Italy on Smith’s Junior Year Abroad program, taking all her classes in Italian. She and Cartier Stennis (Lakeside ’01 and Bertschi grad, now at Haverford College) visited another mutual friend in Paris last fall. Kate and Cartier have been friends since Bill Covert’s Kindergarten class at Bertschi.

Jenny Skinner currently lives in New York City, after attending Princeton for four years, where she played soccer. Sister Sarah Skinner is a junior there now, and a member of the national champion lightweight crew team.

Do you remember the days when Brigitte’s chicken laid an egg in her office every day?

Brigitte working with pre-schoolers in 1975.

Enclosed is a postcard for you to share information about yourself or other Bertschi Alumni and their families. Please let us know what’s new with you!
socialization aspect of education should test skills relevant to the tasks students may need to perform in the future.

Beyond social sorting, what type of testing is appropriate? How do you test for the academic curriculum? This includes evaluation of imaginative engagement and delight in the world, understanding, wisdom, and a number of intellectual virtues such as style, honesty and richness of inquiry. The evaluation process, along with students’ self-selection, should enable educators to encourage children to pursue areas of interest for which they are best suited.

Recognizing that the social and academic purposes of education are distinct, Egan stresses that we must not impose the forms of testing for one on the other. For example, social math would include specific skills such as computations, the use of spread sheets, and how to keep bank account records. Academic math could involve the history of math, why it fascinated people and was considered magical. In history, the social curriculum would concentrate on aspects of history that lead to an understanding of students’ own society and its general place in the world. Academic history would explore the varieties of past human experience and how particular conditions have changed that experience.

Egan observes that when testing methods suitable for the socializing curriculum are used exclusively, “testing fails to achieve the social sorting task efficiently, and in the process, undermines the academic role of schooling.” He concludes by encouraging educators to do the rigorous and imaginative work necessary to ensure both aspects are appropriately tested.

The article definitely got me thinking hard about how we teach, prepare, and assess Bertschi students. Our revised curriculum is designed to be challenging, and to lead students to academic achievement, emotional maturity, and social responsibility. We are committed to using evaluation tools that appropriately measure the children’s socialization skills and academic progress while helping them discover and maintain their excitement and pleasure in the process of learning.

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I believe we can make a difference

I believe that everyone should get good health care needs for free.
I believe that all deserve to have a job no matter who they are.
I believe no one should be homeless and all deserve to have a home.
I believe all deserve a friend to play and be with.
I believe all deserve a family to share their thoughts and feelings with.
I believe in helping stop world hunger so that all have food and water.
I believe that no one should be cold so all should have warm clothes.
I believe that everyone should have a good education.

~ by Jenny in Grade 5

The Color of Friendship

Red is the color of Friendship, as warm as a blazing fire.
Orange is the color of Friendship, as orange as Levi’s hair and the famous Florida Oranges.
Yellow is the color of Friendship, warm as the morning sun.
Green is the color of Friendship like the fresh smell of newly cut grass in the summer sun.
Blue is the color of Friendship, as pure as the great blue sky.
Purple is the color of Friendship, like the sweet smell of a summer day, as long as you get to play!

~ by Kate in Grade 5 for her Grade 2 buddy, Levi
Following its review of the feasibility study and additional discussion with the project architects, the Board approved taking the steps necessary to move forward with this exciting vision of Bertschi’s campus. During the coming weeks the project plans and budget will be finalized in light of the report’s recommendation to embark on a $3-3.3 million campaign. Provided the Board and other lead donors demonstrate their support for the campaign in this early stage, the school will launch the fundraising effort with the entire Bertschi community in late spring.

This is a very exciting time for Bertschi. From its simple beginning in a single room, Bertschi has grown to a school of over 200 students on a campus spanning five buildings. Now we have the opportunity to expand our program in ways that previously we have only dreamt of. Dramatic performances for the entire school community. Musical ensembles that incorporate instruments and dance. Opportunities to explore digital technology and multi-media tools in the visual arts. Expanded PE activities both indoors and out. Everyone in our community — faculty, parents, and students — enthusiastically anticipates all the new building and playfield will offer. Imagine Bertschi in 2006!

### La Dolce Vita (the sweet life)

Spending two months in Italy soaking up the arts and culture sounds like a dream come true. For 5th grade teacher Emily Alsop it was also a way to enrich her teaching and return to Bertschi with new ideas for her class. Emily recently participated in Bertschi’s sabbatical program that allows teachers, who have been with the school ten years or more, to take three months leave to explore new horizons. “Rather than a typical whirlwind tour of famous art, being in Italy for two months allowed me to immerse myself in the day-to-day lifestyle and local culture. The lingering memories are still so vivid and certainly will not be forgotten,” says Emily. While she was gone, the 5th graders followed her travels on a classroom map and received postcards and e-mails from her.

Emily’s experiences ranged from magical to comical, from Rome to the Italian Riviera, from simple to complex. One evening, she and two friends came upon an outdoor Puccini opera rehearsal in Siena’s Piazza del Campo, the famous fan-shaped piazza. Surrounded by medieval buildings and elaborate sets under a full moonlit sky, the friends delighted in the music of “Turandot”. On a very different occasion, a curious local man with a broad, toothless smile, struck up a conversation (in Italian) with Emily while she collected sea glass on a Mediterranean beach. After gestures and a brief attempt to converse, he drew a large sailboat in the sand to indicate proudly that he was the captain of a boat. He then bid adieu to his new acquaintance from “Stati Uniti”...a simple human exchange.

Living primarily in rustic villas surrounded by olive groves and vineyards, Emily found plenty to write about and photograph. “I found such great value in keeping a journal for remembering daily highlights and discovering more about myself,” she reveals. Emily hopes to share with her students how important a journal can be for reflecting upon experiences and expressing the joys and frustrations of life. Inspired by her trip and her own writing opportunities, she plans a photo journal project with her class this spring, in addition to art history lessons.

Along with a strong academic foundation, Emily wants her students to graduate with confidence, a solid sense of self, an appreciation for their own individual styles and those of others, and a love of learning. She loved learning in Italy!

“Still I am learning.” ~ Michelangelo
Parent Education Evening with Gary Howard
“The Many Faces of Privilege: Raising Our Children in a Multicultural Age.”
Wednesday, March 10, 7:00-8:30 pm

Choir Performance of the musical “Rats!”
Tuesday, April 6, 3:30 pm

Spring Art Showcase: Many Voices, Many Views
Thursday, May 20, 7:00-8:30 pm

Fifth Grade Graduation
Thursday, June 10, 4:00 pm

All-School Field Day
Friday, June 11

Bertschi Summer Blast 2004
June 21-July 16

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Brigitte Bertschi, Director

Bertschi News is a production of the Bertschi School
Office of Development and School Relations.
Tracy Nordhoff, Director of Admission and School Relations
Pam Lauritzen, Coordinator for Development and Communications
writing by Debra Fromholzer, Julie Weed and Laura Croft
photography by Philip Newton, Julie Bystad and Pam Lauritzen