

# Bertschi news

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE BERTSCHI COMMUNITY

*This spring Bertschi will break ground for construction of the Living Building Science Wing, in partnership with the Restorative Design Collective. This project incorporates leading edge green building design in responding to the Living Building Challenge, and is on track to be the first living building in the state of Washington.*

## An Interview with Eden Brukman

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LIVING BUILDING INSTITUTE



### What is the International Living Building Institute?

### What is goal of the Living Building Challenge?

The International Living Building Institute (ILBI) was formed in May 2009, under the umbrella of the Cascadia Region Green Building Council (CRGBC). It was created as a way to support the Living Building Challenge, but also to provide a better contextual understanding for the Challenge. The Living Building Challenge is an international

program and the role of LBI is to help foster future relationships with other countries and organizations. More than a dozen groups from other countries have contacted us about the LBC and green building issues already.

The Living Building Challenge provides a good reminder of where we as a global community need to be. There are many pressing environmental and ecological issues that we need to face in a short period of time. The LBC offers a guide for what we need to accomplish. Because it is performance-based, it has the endgame in focus. The Natural Step uses the term “back-casting”—you find a goal and then work backwards to figure out how to accomplish it and identify the limits that are impeding us. For the Living Building Challenge, the baseline requirement is as close to the goal as possible based on what we know can be accomplished now, and our work is to close the gap between where we are today and where we need to be.

### What would you hope elementary school students might learn through their exposure to a Living Building?

The opportunity for education is tremendous. So many of the new efforts focused on environmental change have been initiated and fueled by young people. We should listen more to them and encourage their level of creativity. They are unencumbered by limits; for them the possibilities are limitless. As soon as we have doubt we are sunk. Kids are hopeful, and we can learn from them. As these students grow up, this early exposure to learning and caring about environmental issues can have a much bigger impact on the level and quality of change they can effect, which is very exciting.

### Bertschi has a LEED Gold certified building—how does having a building certified as a Living Building differ from the LEED process?

The US Green Building Council introduced LEED in an effort to get broad market transformation in building practices. The Living Building Challenge is fundamentally different: we are looking at the end goal, and are not prescribing strategies. The



THOUGHTS FROM

## Julie

**Julie Blystad has been teaching science at Bertschi for 20 years. She shared these thoughts as she looks ahead to the new Living Building Science Wing.**

Many things excite me about the new space. One is just that—having more space. It will allow us to stage multiple projects across grade levels at the same time. Students in second grade can see what students in fifth grade are working on and vice versa. This offers a wonderful opportunity to revisit and reinforce concepts they have learned previously, as well as pique their curiosity about what lies ahead. Having the flexibility to expand the floor area into the technology lab will be terrific for our robotics program. Computers and software will be readily available, and the open area is great for testing the robots.

One of the things that is particularly unique about having our science classroom in a living building is that we don't have to set up the experiment—it's right there. It offers tremendous opportunities for ongoing observations and data collection at all grade levels. And we will truly be breaking new ground—we don't really know what to expect, which is very



A MESSAGE  
FROM THE  
**HEAD**  
OF SCHOOL

*Brigitte Bertschi*

**One December morning I spent more than an hour talking with Julie Blystad, science teacher at Bertschi, about plans for the new Living Building Science Wing. Julie's enthusiasm for teaching is contagious, and her delight in working with children inspiring. When asked what she enjoys most about teaching science at Bertschi, Julie immediately responded, "The kids. They are naturally curious, and find out about the world by asking questions. They are willing to take risks, make mistakes, gain knowledge and move on. Every day is different."**



I was reminded of a presentation I viewed recently by Sir Ken Robinson as part of the TEDTalks series. An internationally acclaimed leader in education and innovation, Robinson passionately argues that we are educating children to become good workers, rather than creative thinkers. Students with restless minds and bodies—far from being cultivated for their energy and curiosity—are ignored or even stigmatized, with terrible consequences. "We are educating people out of their creativity," Robinson says.

Robinson uses the example of dance. Throughout the world there is a hierarchy of subjects—math, language, the humanities, and then somewhere near the bottom, dance. He notes there isn't an education system on this planet that teaches dance every day to children the way we teach them mathematics. Why? Because our education system focuses on academic ability and assessment. As a result, Robinson warns, children's creative energy is often lost, or worse, shut down.

At Bertschi, I believe we celebrate the innate curiosity and creativity our children bring to school each day. We encourage students to take risks, make mistakes and solve problems, within a safe and nurturing environment. Children who learn to take a chance and move out of their comfort zones develop into more resilient, innovative and self-confident people. They are not afraid to be wrong—they will ask questions, go out on a limb and try new ways of doing things. For students at Bertschi, learning is an experience, not an outcome.

Our robotics program is a marvelous example of this. Using Lego robotics equipment and sensors, students design, construct, and program robots to perform complex tasks using touch, light, temperature and rotational sensors. They work with a partner or a team to solve problems and trouble-shoot their programs. I love to observe the children in this effort—they laugh when the robot doesn't do what they hoped, and then start all over with a new idea. Similarly, the literature circles we have initiated foster asking questions, sharing ideas, and looking at things from a range of perspectives. There are no "right answers;" the children read books through their own lens of life experiences.

In her classroom, Julie takes the lead from the kids. As she said, "It's not about imparting knowledge as much as learning together. Kids believe anything is possible—that's what makes teaching so exciting."

*You can view Sir Ken Robinson's presentation at [http://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html)*

## LITERATURE CIRCLES

# Read any good books lately?

Bertschi students have—and they love talking about them. The introduction of literature circles this year in grades 2-5 gives children the opportunity to read to one another, share their thoughts about books, and represent their literary experience in creative, collaborative ways.



A literature circle is a student's equivalent in the classroom of an adult book club. The aim is to encourage student-choice and a love of reading in young people. In literature circles, small groups of students gather together to discuss in depth a piece of literature they have all read, and guide the conversation themselves. In the third grade, students are encouraged to talk about events and characters in the book, the author's craft, personal connections related to the story, links to other texts they have read, and lots and lots of questioning.

As they read, we encourage students to use post it notes, and write ideas, questions, vocabulary questions, and significant lines on the notes. They stick these notes into the books as reminders when they are engaging in the group discussion. Literature circles provide an exciting way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books.

Collaboration is at the heart of this approach, like many other learning experiences at Bertschi. Students reshape and expand their comprehension of the book as they construct meaning with other readers, and gain a deeper understanding of the literature. In addition, the children develop an artistic response, such as designing a group poster for scenes in the book or creating a game board together. Who knew that reading could be so much fun?!

## COMMENTS FROM THIRD GRADERS ABOUT THEIR LITERATURE CIRCLES:

"I like the reading part because it fun to read. When you're finished you can say your thoughts aloud. This helps me understand."

LELAN

"I like the discussions because when there's a question it helps me to make connections."

CHANCE

"I like making the poster because we get to draw pictures of the scenes."

HANNAH

"I like how the tension in a book builds like a rubber band."

GUS

"I like making and sticking in the post it notes as we go along. When you're further in the book, you can go back and the post it notes help you to remember."

CHLOE

*"I like listening to other people read in my literature circle."* SARAH

# Roots of Empathy

*“Great thoughts come from both the heart and the mind. Education is the most effective peace-building institution in the land.”*

MARY GORDON, FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, ROOTS OF EMPATHY

**If you visit Randy or Peter’s fourth grade classroom, you might find students gathered on the floor engrossed in watching an infant sit up and roll over. Or they could be measuring how much the baby has grown since its visit last month. These and other activities are part of Roots of Empathy, an evidence-based classroom program that strives to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children. Roots of Empathy was founded in Canada a decade ago by Mary Gordon, an internationally recognized educator, social entrepreneur, and child advocate, and today has reached more than 270,000 children in 11,000 classrooms worldwide.**

Bertschi is one of a handful of schools in the Seattle area integrating Roots of Empathy into its classrooms, this year in the fourth grade. Monthly visits by an infant and parent provide children an opportunity to observe first-hand the loving relationship between parent and child. A trained ROE instructor guides students to label the baby’s feelings, which lays a foundation for then naming and reflecting on their own feelings as well as those of others. The students learn about temperament, brain and human development, safety and the experience of parenting. Fostering this “emotional literacy” in students encourages constructive conflict resolution and consensus building, develops respect and compassion for others, and creates a more caring classroom environment. Through Roots of Empathy, children learn how to challenge bullying and meanness, and develop a sense of social responsibility for one another.



## REFLECTIONS FROM BERTSCHI FOURTH GRADERS INCLUDE:

- When Eli came it was fun. Once he opened his mouth wide and made a little noise. I had fun and felt happy.
- Baby Eli made me really happy, joyful and connected. I love babies so much and I really appreciate Roots of Empathy for doing this for us.
- Eli has grown a lot! I learned that parents sometimes get frustrated that they can’t get the baby to be quiet when it is crying. I think Eli really liked the CD we made because he was playing with a toy and when the music was on he was mesmerized by the sounds.
- Eli is a very cute baby with lots of love. When Eli came into the classroom I could see everybody’s face light up. I loved having him here because he is not afraid of us.

The ROE curriculum focuses primarily on the affective side of education; however the activities enhance academic skills as well. For example, students use math skills when they calculate and chart the baby’s weight and measurement. Following each visit the fourth graders write a reflection about their interaction with the infant, changes they have observed, and emotions they experienced. This opens the door to talking about feelings, and the written reflection and discussion that follow build compassion and empathy.

The benefits of Roots of Empathy have been measured by numerous scientific studies that show that students who are exposed to this program have a decrease in aggression and an increase in social skills. The curriculum facilitates a genuine experience of caring and loving and provides vocabulary of emotions that equips children to respond in empathic ways. In the words of founder Mary Gordon, “Empathy is not taught, it must be caught.”

# Alumni Spotlight



*“I loved returning to Bertschi and I’m glad that I could give back to the school.”*

This fall, in tandem with PE teacher Vida Towne, **KIRSTIE BARTON** (class of 2005) returned to Bertschi to coach the school’s first Ultimate Frisbee team. Over the summer, Vida and Kirstie ran into each other several times at ultimate tournaments. Through conversations on Facebook, they hatched a plan to coach Bertschi’s first ultimate team, which has been a dream of Vida’s for many years. In her never-ending quest to find more opportunities to play, Kirstie stumbled across a first-ever league for 8-13 year olds at the Seattle Community Center. Finally, there would be other teams to compete against! Kirstie loves ultimate and “knew that kids at Bertschi would enjoy it too. Most kids have to wait until middle school to try ultimate, but the sport is catching on very quickly and I wanted to do my part in helping it grow by bringing it to my elementary school, where I played it for the first time.” Since the eldest of Bertschi’s players are just 10 years old, they were the slight underdog in their games, but, of course, rose to the challenge!

We are proud to share that Kirstie is now a sophomore at Seattle Academy and quite an accomplished athlete. This summer, she was nominated for Female Athlete of the Year by King 5 and WA Games II, an Olympic-style amateur sports event in Washington State featuring 25 different sports with 10,000 participants statewide. The event is also held in 40 states with over 500,000 athletes participating nationwide. Kirstie is consistently on the high honor role for academic excellence, while also holding down two paying jobs (youth soccer referee and Kumon math instructor). As if that doesn’t keep her busy enough, Kirstie also assistant coaches Seattle Academy middle school soccer, basketball and ultimate teams. Phew!

As an outstanding and dedicated PE teacher, Vida is building a living legacy of sportsmanship, while promoting sports and lifelong fitness at Bertshi and beyond. Kirstie “loved having the opportunity to work with Vida. She is an accomplished and amazing ultimate player who knows a lot about coaching and playing. It was great for me to be able to see how she coached and to learn from the experience.” Kirstie is certainly a shining example of not only Vida’s influence, but that of the entire exemplary faculty at Bertschi School.

## INTERVIEW WITH EDEN BRUKMAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

LBC also requires one year of operation before a building is certified to ensure it truly meets the goal because an empty building serves no purpose—we need to acknowledge that there is a symbiotic relationship between a building and its inhabitants. LEED looks at improving on the baseline, whereas LBC wants to quickly close the gap between where we are and where we need to be.

### **If you could impart one piece of advice or information to the students at Bertschi, what would that be?**

This is the hardest question, but I think it comes back to keeping in context the endgame. You always have to be driven by your goals. And though it may seem difficult to grasp, this can even be demonstrated in small actions that you are already taking now. For example, if a student knows he needs to head to lunch at 11:20 he ends up going to the dining hall, not the science lab. How can they apply that to the outside world? You need to measure what matters and get rid of some of the noise. Keep in mind what’s most important and stick with it.

## THOUGHTS FROM JULIE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

exciting. I look forward to engaging the kids in telling the story about the building and what they have learned by simply being in the space and seeing how it “lives.”

When kids graduate from Bertschi, I don’t expect them necessarily to love science. My goal is for them to know they can do it—formulate a question, develop a hypothesis, plan an experiment, collect data, and then share their findings. Hopefully they will develop tools to approach the world scientifically and make sense of what they see. Children are natural scientists, and find out about the world by asking questions. I see my job as helping them gain the confidence they need take some risks, make mistakes, and learn something in the process.



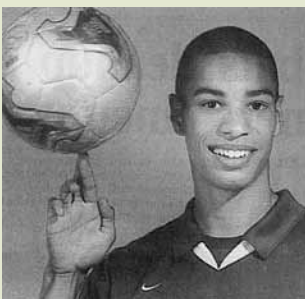
# CLASS OF 2009

Thirty-four very excited fifth graders received their graduation certificates in June and have moved on to middle school. Highlights of their final year at Bertschi included a week at IslandWood to learn more about environmental responsibility, an exploration of civil rights issues and the challenges of leadership, and production of their class play, "The Homefront." We wish them all well and look forward to hearing about their successes in middle school and beyond!

**Our graduates are now attending a number of schools, including:**

Billings Middle School  
 Forest Ridge School  
 Lake Washington Girls School  
 Lakeside School  
 Northwest School  
 Seattle Academy of Arts and Sciences  
 Seattle Country Day School  
 Seattle Public Schools  
 St. Joseph's School  
 University Prep  
 Villa Academy

## ALUM UPDATES



and seven assists." Congratulations, Marcus!

**MARCUS BRANDFORD** attended Bertschi from 1997-2002. Last spring he was featured in the Seattle Times for his soccer skills. "The talented co-MVP of the Metro Mountain division helped lead Lakeside School to the division title and a berth in the state tournament with nine goals



**LINDSAY VANDERGIFT** (class of 2005) is currently a sophomore at Seattle Academy. In November she was featured on the front page of the Seattle Times sports section for her achievements in the Class 1A girls' soccer semifinal. Congratulations, Lindsay!



**BEN BISHOP** attended Bertschi in 1992 and recently was a big winner on "Jeopardy!" Ben graduated from Lakeside School where he honed his skills on their quiz bowl team before he stepped onto the Jeopardy set as an Amherst College senior this past March. Way to go, Ben!

**HARRY OLSWANG** (class of 1996) is a driver with the Seattle Fire Department right down the street from Bertschi. Last year, he surprised Brigitte when he came to school for our fire drill! Harry graduated from University Prep in 2003 and now serves on their Alumni Board.

**WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!**  
 Send your updates to [tiffanyc@bertschi.org](mailto:tiffanyc@bertschi.org)

## DEPARTING TRUSTEES

**MARGOT KENLY** served on both the Board and the Facilities Committee for two years as an alumni parent. Her love and devotion to Bertschi is profound and she has supported the school in many ways. Margot brought an invaluable perspective to the Board as an alum parent; her time and many talents were appreciated. Margot's son, Colin Narver, graduated from Bertschi in 1997.

**KIM HARDMAN** joined the Board in 2006 and also served on the Diversity Committee for four years, the last three of which, she served as Co-Chair. Kim was instrumental in starting the tradition of "Bite of Bertschi", an annual event that celebrates the school's many different cultures and backgrounds. Kim's two children, Henri and Jenna, both attended Bertschi. We are grateful for her contribution of time, energy, and commitment to the school.

**KATRINA HARVIE-WATT** served on the Board for four years, beginning in 2005. Katrina was an integral member of the Development Committee for four years, two of which she served as Chair. Katrina also was involved in the Strategic Plan implementation. Katrina's daughter, Lexie, graduated from Bertschi in 2007 and her son, Jackson, graduated in 2009.

## NEW TRUSTEES

**WASSEF HAROUN** joins the Board as both an alum and current parent. His children, Roya and Azmi, attended Bertschi in the late 90's and his son, Rashid, is now in kindergarten at Bertschi. Wassef has many years of experience in the technology industry both in the United States and abroad. Wassef says that "Roya and Azmi's experience with Bertschi in the formative years helped them adapt and excel despite country, language and culture changes. This has made us into strong believers in "the Bertschi way." Wassef serves on the Facilities Committee.

**JONATHAN KIL** is founder and CEO of Sound Pharmaceuticals, a private biotechnology company in Seattle developing the first drugs for hearing loss. He supports a number of other non-profits, including the Experimental Education Unit at the UW, The ARCS Foundation, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Autism Speaks, City Year, and the Northwest Center. Jonathan serves on the Advancement Committee and his daughter, Skylar, is in first grade at Bertschi.

**MARY SEIFRED** joins the Board as Chair of the Believe in Bertschi campaign. Mary is a former educator and was a faculty representative for the Finance Committee at Bush School. Her knowledge about independent schools and education is invaluable. Mary's son, Adam, is currently in second grade at Bertschi.

**CHARISSE COWAN PITRE** is an assistant professor of Teacher Education at Seattle University. In addition, she researches socio-cultural and schooling factors related to the educational achievement of students from diverse social and economic backgrounds. Charisse is Co-Chair of the Diversity Committee and also a member of the Families of Color Affinity Group. Her daughter, Gabrielle, is in kindergarten at Bertschi.

## IN Memoriam

It is with a heavy heart that we share the passing of **DENNIS MCLEAN**, alum parent and former trustee. Dennis served on Bertschi's Board twice; once from 1998-2001 and again from 2003-2008. He was a key member of the Facilities Committee for five years offering his expert legal advice and institutional knowledge. His leadership, guidance, time, and experience on the Facilities Committee and Board are truly missed. Dennis' son, Alex, attended Bertschi and Noah graduated in 2009. Our thoughts are with his family at this difficult time.



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WINTER 2010

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## NEW FACES



**RACHEL O'LOUGHLIN, Executive Assistant to the Head of School** I was intrigued with Bertschi School from my first conversation with Brigitte. I appreciate the strong emphasis on the arts, the sense of community and the level of expertise among the faculty and staff. The children bring a delightful energy

to every inch of our beautiful campus, which makes for a great working environment. I've enjoyed getting to know students, parents, board and committee members and being involved in the many events hosted at the school. I look forward to developing professional relationships within the Bertschi community, and getting to know more of our fabulous students!



**DERREN HASKELL, Extended Day** At any point in the day you can find me leading the outdoor sports and recreation group, reading stories and playing games with Sophia and Asha's Pre-K class, and learning about the culture of Bertschi School. Bertschi is an amazing place that allows me to share my love of sports,

teamwork and sportsmanship with kids of all ages. Basketball is one of my passions—I play and coach, and I look forward to bringing the joy of March Madness to Extended Day! I want to thank everyone for being so welcoming and supportive during my first months as a new Bertschi community member.



**SOPHIA TOLENTINO, Pre-K Teacher** Last year, Bertschi fell into my path when I was looking for substitute work. I was a young teacher who had only worked in public schools, and I was looking to experience many schools as I searched for a place I could call "home." I was offered a maternity leave position in the Pre-K

classroom last school year, and immediately fell in love with the mission, values and community. When I was offered the Pre-K position this summer, I was elated and could not imagine working anywhere else. It is such an amazing feeling to have finally found a place where I am supported yet challenged, and love coming to every day.



**ANDREW FOX, First Grade Teacher** When I decided to move to Seattle, I knew I wanted to work at Bertschi. I had been told many wonderful things about the school from my friends, so I decided to see if there were any openings. Now that I am teaching first grade, I am constantly impressed by the sense of

community at Bertschi. I feel very fortunate to be able to work with so many amazing people. Everyone at Bertschi has been so helpful in making my transition to Seattle a smooth one. I am so proud to be a part of such a warm and welcoming community.