Google Chromebooks Excite Teachers and Students

To the ears of any parent or teacher, the question “Can I work on my homework now, please?” is delightful, surprising and relatively uncommon. However, since the arrival of the Chromebook at OSS, our students have been more motivated than ever as they actively pursue access to their personal laptops.

September 2013 began a campaign to bring our wonderful computer lab and supporting school-wide technology resources to a renewed state. After much investigation and research, it became apparent that creating a 1:1 laptop program using Google Chromebooks would be our best option. We settled into a fundraising campaign to purchase a Google Chromebook for each student, to overhaul our supporting systems including our staff server, and we upgraded our tech support and the wireless capacity in the building.

The result has been phenomenal: staff and students alike have entered a world where things work in a predictable and efficient manner. This is a blessing that allows us to focus more on using the technology and learning, and less on fixing stuff and solving technology problems. Students have projects that are fun to do on their computers, and we are better positioned to prepare our students for their academic and professional futures, which will inevitably require a considerable level of comfort with technology.

Full STEAM Ahead

by John Sargent

Turning raw ideas and raw materials into finished works. Transforming thoughts and feelings into poems and expressions. Conveying information with authority and gestures. To expand the educational horizons of OSS students, aspects of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) are combined into three new courses this year: Construction, Creative Writing, and Stand & Deliver.

Construction began with students employing their math, science and engineering skills while brainstorming, designing, and
Award-Winning Teachers

Humanities teachers Shana Silva and Elena Maker hail from different New England states, but they share award-winning inspiration and enthusiasm with OSS students daily.

Awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 2013, Elena Maker was able to teach and learn in Cali, Colombia, where she taught at the University de Valle, helping teenage girls achieve college access. Ms. Maker, a 2012 Brown University graduate, sought to assist Colombian students in their pursuit of proficiency in English. All of her students improved their test scores and several of her students applied to colleges in the United States. Prior to her Fulbright, Elena taught English for six months in Guatemala City, Guatemala, at a nonprofit organization called Safe Passage.

Her desire to teach in Latin America began when she was in middle school. “An educator named Hanley Denning was my role model,” she explained. Maker met Denning when she came to speak in North Yarmouth, Maine. “Denning started a school to serve kids living near the Guatemala City dump who couldn’t afford to go to other schools. Denning went to Guatemala to learn Spanish, but when she saw the dump and the deplorable conditions, she decided she had to do something. She came home, sold her belongings and moved to Guatemala City.” Maker spoke of an intense woman with a passion for education. “She came to speak at my church when I was 14 and I became intrigued. It truly launched my passion for education in Latin America.”

“She came to speak at my church when I was 14 and I became intrigued. It truly launched my passion for education in Latin America.”

“/The most valuable thing I learned about teaching is the value of interaction,” Maker said. “If you can’t get up and use information it feels sort of meaningless. I try to be as creative as possible in the classroom. My creativity started at Safe Passage and those experiences teaching English as a foreign language complement my experience here nicely.”

The process of applying for the Fulbright Scholarship is daunting. First she wrote a proposal that included career plans and long-term goals. Continuing on that path, Maker plans to continue her education in the Brown University Masters program for English as a Second Language and Cross Cultural Education next year. The Maine native will remain close to her Massachusetts friend and OSS colleague, Shana Silva.

Ms. Silva holds a B.A. and a Master of Education from UMass Dartmouth. Her hope is that her students are able to “gain a deeper appreciation for other people and cultures.”

A native Portuguese speaker, Silva enjoys leading the Writer’s Workshop which meets weekly and invites published authors to come and talk about their work with OSS students. She also leads the student publication of creative writing called The Chatterbox. She’s a busy person, but always finds time to engage her students during and after school.

The 2014 Winner of the Barnes and Noble My Favorite Teacher Contest, Silva blushes as she recounts how her student, Victoria, wrote an essay explaining why Silva deserved to win the award.

The award is for “your inspiration and commitment to your students and the community.” She continues to live up to that expectation.

Silva was also awarded the 2014 Uberoi Foundation Fellowship at Bridgewater State University sponsored by the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies. She attended the 5-day program and learned the Dharmic traditions which help her “create curriculum to help students learn to identify stereotypes in our culture and avoid close-mindedness.”

Our Sisters’ School students truly appreciate these bright young teachers in our community. Students’ work proudly decorates classrooms and corridors, hallmarks of student-centered lessons and tributes to the positive learning environment their teachers create every day.
Each school day is so packed with excitement that time can pass without a moment to stop… and smell the roses! I pause now to reflect on events that add up to a year’s worth of effort, and I am awed by our progress. With each step forward, teachers, students and volunteers have planted seeds that will bear flowers and fruit, best appreciated from the distance that perspective can offer.

Last August, our school trekked to Driftwood summer camp in NH for a week-long retreat; staff learned to work as a team while getting to know students, and we all practiced shaping our “building blocks of community.” After nights of sleeping in yurts, we returned with dirt under our fingernails, invigorated by the experiences that bonded us. We continue to explore the meaning of “community,” understanding our respective roles in the effort to build more of it: What does it mean to be a caring friend? When is it important to say the unpopular thing? What does it look like “maintaining the momentum.”

Accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth. If we are committed to living our values? We will bring it all together in June when our unique school play showcases our ability to think, share, listen, compromise and create as a community of learners.

In the past I have spoken about “polishing the jewel” and about “maintaining the momentum.” This year I am thinking in terms of planting and harvesting a steady yield of crops. Relationships with partners such as the Community Boating Center, the YWCA, the Immigrant Assistance Center, the Lloyd Center, Buttonwood Zoo, and Trips for Kids continue to blossom. Our volunteer-driven academic coaching program is stronger than ever with a steady flow of UMass students working regularly with ours. Students are doing meaningful work, like curating an exhibit at the Whaling Museum about the role of women in the whaling industry. These accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth over time.

There is much to celebrate this year; appreciation is due to the patient, trusting and consistent efforts by students, parents, staff, teachers and hearty volunteers who plant and harvest in steady cycles throughout the days, weeks and months to produce our abundance.

Accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth. If we are committed to living our values? We will bring it all together in June when our unique school play showcases our ability to think, share, listen, compromise and create as a community of learners.

In the past I have spoken about “polishing the jewel” and about “maintaining the momentum.” This year I am thinking in terms of planting and harvesting a steady yield of crops. Relationships with partners such as the Community Boating Center, the YWCA, the Immigrant Assistance Center, the Lloyd Center, Buttonwood Zoo, and Trips for Kids continue to blossom. Our volunteer-driven academic coaching program is stronger than ever with a steady flow of UMass students working regularly with ours. Students are doing meaningful work, like curating an exhibit at the Whaling Museum about the role of women in the whaling industry. These accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth over time.

There is much to celebrate this year; appreciation is due to the patient, trusting and consistent efforts by students, parents, staff, teachers and hearty volunteers who plant and harvest in steady cycles throughout the days, weeks and months to produce our abundance.

Accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth. If we are committed to living our values? We will bring it all together in June when our unique school play showcases our ability to think, share, listen, compromise and create as a community of learners.

In the past I have spoken about “polishing the jewel” and about “maintaining the momentum.” This year I am thinking in terms of planting and harvesting a steady yield of crops. Relationships with partners such as the Community Boating Center, the YWCA, the Immigrant Assistance Center, the Lloyd Center, Buttonwood Zoo, and Trips for Kids continue to blossom. Our volunteer-driven academic coaching program is stronger than ever with a steady flow of UMass students working regularly with ours. Students are doing meaningful work, like curating an exhibit at the Whaling Museum about the role of women in the whaling industry. These accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth over time.

There is much to celebrate this year; appreciation is due to the patient, trusting and consistent efforts by students, parents, staff, teachers and hearty volunteers who plant and harvest in steady cycles throughout the days, weeks and months to produce our abundance.

Accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth. If we are committed to living our values? We will bring it all together in June when our unique school play showcases our ability to think, share, listen, compromise and create as a community of learners.

In the past I have spoken about “polishing the jewel” and about “maintaining the momentum.” This year I am thinking in terms of planting and harvesting a steady yield of crops. Relationships with partners such as the Community Boating Center, the YWCA, the Immigrant Assistance Center, the Lloyd Center, Buttonwood Zoo, and Trips for Kids continue to blossom. Our volunteer-driven academic coaching program is stronger than ever with a steady flow of UMass students working regularly with ours. Students are doing meaningful work, like curating an exhibit at the Whaling Museum about the role of women in the whaling industry. These accomplishments are not low-hanging fruit; they are the result of intentional strategy, teamwork and steady efforts to nurture growth over time.

There is much to celebrate this year; appreciation is due to the patient, trusting and consistent efforts by students, parents, staff, teachers and hearty volunteers who plant and harvest in steady cycles throughout the days, weeks and months to produce our abundance.
ALUMNAE NEWS

These 10 brave young women graduated from OSS in 2011 as the first class to complete 8th grade at this new, independent middle school for girls. This spring they graduate from 7 different secondary schools and will attend 10 different schools of higher education in pursuit of their dreams. Our Sisters’ School honors them!

Rabiet Dasher will graduate from New Bedford Vocational Technical School and attend UMass Dartmouth on the Endeavor Scholarship.

Samantha Chan will graduate from Tabor Academy (full scholarship) and attend the University of California Fullerton.

Nepherterrie Pierre will graduate from Bishop Stang High School (full scholarship) and is accepted at 13/15 colleges.

Ariana Mello will graduate from Phillips Andover Academy (full scholarship) and plans to attend Amherst College.

Irene Luperon attends St. George’s School (full scholarship) and is considering a range of schools from Stanford to Boston College.

Jaianne Castillo will graduate from Voc-Tech and plans to study nursing at Bristol County Community College.

Vanessa Martinez will graduate from Voc-Tech and plans to continue her education at Bridgewater State College.

Carissa Mak will graduate from Wheeler School (full scholarship) and will study engineering at the University of New Hampshire.

Jarynette Gonzalez will graduate from Lincoln School and continue to study music and theatre at one of several art schools.

Aaliyah Colon will graduate from Voc-Tech with OSHA certification. She will attend Framingham State College on the Dan Pires Scholarship.

Above: Rabiet Dasher, left, shares a peak at the slide show with Jary Gonzalez, Irene Luperon and Aaliyah Colon, right. The slide show was a highlight of the evening.

Right: Board members Bernadette Souza, left, Lisa Alvord, center, and Joann Tschaen, center right, with Irene Luperon graduating from St. George’s School, right, with her sister Melanie, studying engineering at Voc-Tech.

Below: Graduating senior, Rabiet Dasher, center, receives her keepsake clock from Johnna, left, and Hanna, right.
March 18, 2015 was a special evening. The 8th graders shared exciting news with a gathering of 70 guests that included alumnae and their families, former staff members, current students and volunteers. The First Annual Senior Honor Event starts the tradition of celebrating our alumnae as they graduate from high school.

This tradition begins in the classroom. Each 8th grader interviews a member of the alumnae class who is a current high school senior. The students write reports about news gathered, gaining an appreciation for journalism as well. Finally, speaking loudly and proudly to the large audience, they share the stories of travel, stage appearances, and academic honors, classes, sports, theatre, the college application process and career aspirations with the audience. The process is intentional, and the news is riveting!

Reflecting on the whole experience, one 8th grader noted, “Reaching out to someone I didn’t know was awkward at first, but in the end it was a great experience! Now I have friend going to college.” An alumna remarked that she loved finally meeting the 8th grade girl who had interviewed her via email, noting that “We have more in common than I thought.” Building an alumnae network is happening, one relationship at a time.

All of these OSS grads are college bound, and now each has a special connection with a younger Sister Sailor who will soon embark on her own journey into high school. Pairing these classes and fostering these relationships are designed to encourage mentoring as these bold students move forward toward new horizons.
Media Technology Internship for OSS Junior, Jaeliana Ortega

Voc-Tech Junior, Jaeliana Ortega, completed a ten week, unpaid internship at Our Sisters’ School assisting with media technology during the remaking of our website. She is in the media technology shop at Voc-Tech. She assisted volunteer webmaster, Tucker Hood, and Communications Director, Laurie Knight, with the collection and classification of alumnae data.

She also coordinated the details of an alumnae event. The OSS alumnae at Voc-Tech gathered in the Cafe after school to honor Ms. June Pina. Ms. June was instrumental in the lives of these girls and originally led many of them to Our Sisters’ School. “It is so nice to have a chance to see these girls at their school,” she commented.

Additional internship opportunities will arise whenever alumnae skills are compatible with OSS needs.

Student Internships? It’s About Experiential Learning

Several hardworking and consistently responsible students have the opportunity and the privilege to participate in internships. These happen at various locations and provide the students with hands-on learning experiences. Organizations participating in the internship program include the New Bedford Whaling Museum, Buttonwood Park Zoo, the YWCA, the Immigrants’ Assistance Center, and the Lloyd Center for the Environment in Dartmouth.

Kailani Henderson, a seventh grader, reflects on her internship experience at the Lloyd Center in Dartmouth:

Question: Kailani, what does a typical day at the Lloyd Center look like?

Answer: When we get there, the first thing we do is help the Lloyd Center staff prepare for the students that they will teach. Then we feed the fish, crabs and the hawk. We also get a chance to clean the tanks where the fish and crabs live.

Question: Do you feel as though you are gaining valuable information? Why?

Answer: Yes, because they teach me interesting information about the animals that I wouldn’t have learned if I didn’t go there. Something that I learned at the Lloyd Center that I did not know is that in order to get the hawk to eat his vitamins, the vitamins must be put inside the hawk’s food.

Question: If you were given the opportunity to continue your internship at the Lloyd Center, would you?

Answer: I would continue my internship at Lloyd Center because I am enjoying the information I am learning and the experience I’m having there.

There are currently thirteen students participating in the internship program. There are an abundance of students who are eager to have an internship; however, each organization is only able to take a limited number of students. If you are interested in participating in our internship program, please contact Victoria Wood: vwood@oursistersschool.org. If you would like to learn more please call 508-994-1255.

Secondary School Update

This year the 8th graders were accepted at multiple schools, and many are still on waiting lists. Full scholarships were awarded to several students who plan to attend Bishop Stang High School (1), St. Andrew’s School (2), and Tabor Academy (1).

Classmates will also be attending Bristol County Agricultural High School (1), City on a Hill Charter School (2), Greater New Bedford Regional Vocation Technical High School (5), and New Bedford High School (1).

We expect that they will bring academic strength, confidence, and leadership to each of these schools. The goal of the Secondary School Program is to help students and families identify a school that best matches a student’s aptitude and her personal and professional aspirations. Students choose schools deliberately knowing that her secondary school is a step in that direction; the right school match can make a difference.

Eager to go to her internship at the Lloyd Center for the Environment, Kailani, right, waits for her ride with friends.
Profile: Linda Fenton

About two years ago, Linda Fenton retired from her responsibilities as the Director of Development at the Charles River School and began enjoying living on the SouthCoast full time. When Abby Magni took a position at Wheaton College, we found ourselves searching for a new Director of Advancement. Fenton jumped in and kept OSS running, working tirelessly for six months during this critical period. This April, South Coast Serves recognized her extraordinary volunteer service.

Fenton continues to volunteer a couple of days a week to help with the transition for our new Director of Advancement, Georgie Goulding, and she will continue to be an integral and much-valued part of the Advancement team. Not only is Linda Fenton a hard working and dedicated volunteer, she is also one of the most caring, supportive, and upbeat members of the Our Sisters’ School team.

Volunteers Get Technical!

What is that yellow iPad on the counter in the front office? It’s the new location where our loyal and devoted volunteers log their hours using the Volgistics online system. Volunteers sign in using an assigned number. Volgistics allows them access to view schedules, sign-up for schedule openings, update key information, post their service, and receive messages through the online portal.

Our new website has been redesigned by volunteer webmaster, Tucker Hood, and features an up-to-date calendar, fresh new pictures, and links to our favorite articles and books. Mr. Hood has been volunteering his technical skills since the school began in 2008. If you have a skill or area of expertise that you would like to share, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Jocelyn Mitchell.

Come join the fun! We have needs in the following areas for the 2015-2016 school year:

Evening Study Tutors: (Monday to Thursday, 5:00 PM to 6:15 PM)
Tutors help students with their homework and organizational skills and act as academic mentors. We ask that volunteers commit to once a week for 12 weeks (or more!).

Office Support: We always need professional and enthusiastic individuals to help us in the front office in 2 to 3 hour shifts with filing, shredding, photocopying, maintaining various logs, and answering phones. Experience with Excel and Microsoft Word is a plus but not required.

Athletics Volunteers: (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 4-5 PM)
Instruct girls in an exercise or dance activity, or help with lacrosse, soccer or basketball. Mentor students and work out at the same time!

Celebrated volunteer, Linda Fenton, third from right, enjoys time at recess with students from all grades. Her dog, Saga, is one of our school volunteer mascots.
**Board of Trustees**

**Officers**
- Lisa Schmid Alvord
- Alison Coolidge Boreiko
- Gaelen Canning
- Elizabeth Huidekoper
- Susan Perry
- William Prescott

**Trustees**
- Talbot Baker, Jr.
- Stephen Barker
- Laurie Barrett
- Christina Bascom

Linda Fenton
Alice Flint
Kim Francis
Doreen Lopes
Maria Mojica
Bernadette Souza
Abbey Spargo
Catherine Stone
John Vasconcellos
Russell Weigel

**Head of School:** Sarah Herman  
**Editor:** Laurie Knight  
**Layout and Design:** Cela Hobbs  
**Photography:** Virginia Sutherland  
**Consultant:** Peter Canning

**Why “Our Sisters”?** During New Bedford’s storied past, it was not uncommon for young wives to join husbands on extended whaling voyages. These brave young women were known as "Sister Sailors" and in their way, they were seeking then, on the oceans of the world, precisely what the brave young “sisters” of New Bedford are seeking today, in the classrooms of tomorrow: to sail beyond familiar horizons, into unknown oceans of adventure and possibility, of growth and learning and accomplishment. Our sisters then, our sisters today, and a whole world waiting...

**Mission Statement:**

The mission of Our Sisters’ School is to educate and inspire middle-school girls from the Greater New Bedford area to reach their full potential in a safe, supportive and challenging environment. Our Sisters' School provides a quality tuition-free education and welcomes girls from diverse faiths, races and cultures to our unique learning environment.