Dear Friends and Families of Center School,

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented real and complicated challenges to our communities. Businesses were told to close their doors. Parents were charged with becoming teachers overnight. Schools were tasked with quickly turning around a nearly identical replica of in-person instruction in a virtual format. It has been, and continues to be, a challenging time. Yet, while it might be difficult to view this time through a positive lens, Center School has chosen to accentuate the positive and focus on the uniqueness that has supported our success, especially in this year.

While many schools struggled with the restrictions placed upon them to open their doors in the fall, Center School seized the opportunity to provide in-person instruction. We have always limited the size of our population to address the individual needs of our students, and we used that decision to our advantage. Limiting class sizes also turns out to be beneficial during the pandemic, as it allows us to set up smaller groups of students, thereby minimizing interaction, and thus minimizing the spread of germs between students. Center School also offers a hybrid learning model for those families who are more comfortable having their child learn from home but who still want their child to access Center School’s curriculum because they know how important it is to the academic and social growth of their child. The success of this hybrid model is outlined in the following pages of this newsletter.

Center School has also been able to provide a safe learning environment for in-person instruction. One of the great advantages that Center School has is the size of its building. The building boasts very large classrooms and plenty of internal space to organize furniture and lesson plans to comply with physical distancing. The school also sits on 14 acres of land and provides many opportunities for teachers to conduct classes outside. And just this year, Center School embarked on building renovations which included an upgraded HVAC system that continuously circulates fresh air throughout the building. In the pages of this newsletter, the full building renovations are featured in an article written by two members of Center School’s Board of Trustees.

Businesses and schools struggled to figure out creative ways to raise funds due to the inability to host large groups for events. Center School, however, embarked on a new type of fundraising platform - virtual fundraising - and was humbled by the response. As Center School’s Board of Trustees reached out to supporters, they were met with great enthusiasm. Generous donors showed their true dedication to the mission of Center School. Our annual spring fundraiser, the largest one of our school year and one upon which Center School is dependent, was extremely successful and nearly equaled what was raised last year. At the end of this newsletter, you’ll find a list of our donors. I encourage you to support these businesses as they have supported Center School over the years and during a time that is so difficult for small schools such as ours.

A large part of Center School’s success this year is made possible because of the cooperation of the members of our community in managing and adhering to the many protocols and procedures in place. Our students, and families, are excited to be back and are thriving with the support of their incredibly talented and dedicated teachers. As you read this newsletter you’ll see that, despite the new changes, there is a community that continues to understand the impact that Center School’s mission has on so many people and is willing to work through the challenges, and focus on the positive, to support the continued success of Center School.

Sincerely,

Mindy Wawrzyniak
Head of School

Center School’s mission is to provide children who learn differently with a personalized education to realize their potential and reshape the way they view themselves and their future.
Building Improvements Enhance Learning

By Terry Quinn and Morrie Zimmerman

In April 2019, a decision was made by the Center School Board of Trustees to modernize the infrastructure of the school and classrooms to provide sustainable equipment and to enhance the quality of the learning environment. While these projects are mostly hidden in the walls and ceilings, they are critical to the success of the students and the school.

The school’s first project was adopting a program offered by PECO to replace outdated fluorescent lights with new LED lights. What a difference! Not only was the lighting more pleasant, the cost to convert was recouped in short order due to less energy consumption and lower bills. Both students and employees commented on the improved aesthetic of the light and how it made a difference in the classrooms.

The board and school then identified other issues that sorely needed attention. Over the years, our Head of Facilities, Quince Hunt, and Director of Finance and Operations, Lisa Steiert, had been given the difficult task of, among many other things, maintaining original windows, supporting an aging HVAC system and managing a roof that was well beyond its expected life. As a building built in 1953, Center School’s electrical service and central heating system clearly were operating on borrowed time. The electrical service was replaced with new service wires and a new transformer. For the HVAC issues, many modern alternative systems were reviewed, and an exciting new technology, Variable Refrigerant Flow, was chosen as the best option. This system allows for significant localized control of each teaching space instead of the previous centralized systems, providing the teacher with control over the comfort level of their room, thus enhancing the learning environment.

The next projects considered were components of the exterior, namely the roof and windows. A new roof system with insulation specified to current standards was added after removing multiple layers of roof and diminished insulation, thereby increasing its efficiency and reducing heating and cooling loss. New windows along the north side of the building were replaced providing the building with a much-needed facelift. Like the new roof, the new windows improved efficiency with the updated HVAC system, and in turn improved the comfort and learning environment of the classrooms.

As of November 2020, we are quickly approaching the conclusion of our projects with the completion of most everything we planned, including some that were not slated to be a part of this initial renovation, like beautiful new corridor floors. In keeping with the main building renovations, attention was also focused on the back wing of our building, the annex, which is rented to two local nonprofits in the area. The annex now has the same attractive enhancements, improvements and cost saving advantages. Currently, a plan for a new driveway accessing the lower level entrance to the annex, with multiple additional parking spaces, has been submitted to the Township for approval.

As the Board and Facilities Committee, led by Terry Quinn, became immersed in planning these projects, it became clear that considerable management expertise would be necessary to oversee these projects. We were extremely fortunate to find and enlist the help of the very capable construction management firm, Abriola Company of Glenside. As the leader in design and construction for these projects, Joe Abriola has shared innovative ideas, contained costs and added a personal approach to the project.

It would be remiss not to recognize the unending help and guidance that Quince Hunt and Lisa Steiert have provided. Their insight and devotion to Center School has been invaluable. Without their support and that of the members of the Board of Trustees, this project would not have been possible. We can certainly appreciate the cost savings associated with all of these improvements, but the true measure is reflected in the longevity of Center School and its impact on the success of its students now and into the future.

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Timothy Hilbert, Treasure
Morris Zimmerman, Secretary

Stephen FitzPatrick, Trustee
Marylee Mundell, Trustee
Terry Quinn, Trustee
Mindy Wawrzyniak, Head of School
Carol White, Former Director
EMLOYEES IN THE NEWS

Christine Petruccelli,
Middle School Mathematics Teacher
Christine Petruccelli has joined Center School as the new middle school math teacher. She was born in Hamilton, New Jersey and was raised in Yardley, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Cedarville University and got her Bachelor of Arts in Middle Childhood Education with concentrations in mathematics and science along with a minor in Bible. Prior to teaching at Center School, she taught middle school mathematics and science at Calvary Christian School in Fairless Hills. Christine loves technology, nature, coffee, exercise and teaching middle schoolers!

Kristin Troiano,
Administrative Assistant
Kristin Troiano became Center School’s Administrative Assistant in February. Kristin was a bus driver for eighteen years with the Philadelphia School District. She learned about Center School from the students she transported and the staff that she met over the years. Her experience with transportation over the years brings a new perspective to the front desk. Her favorite thing is knowing all the students and seeing them each day. Kristin has a granddaughter who is the light of her life and she enjoys photography, knitting, and baking.

Nia Bowser,
School Nurse
Nia Bowser has joined Center School’s staff as the first school nurse. Before moving to this area, Nia lived in Hyattsville, Maryland. She obtained her Practical Nursing diploma from Prism Career Institute. Nia is continuing her studies in the healthcare field and is enrolled part time at Community College of Philadelphia. Nia has worked at Sunrise Senior Living and various sports camps. Most recently, she was the staff nurse for William Penn School District for students K to 12. In her spare time, Nia enjoys family outings, basketball games, and watching thrillers! She likes working at Center School because in the short time she has been here she has witnessed our team approach in supporting our students.

Noah Clouse,
Middle School Social Studies Teacher
Noah Clouse joined Center School as the middle school social studies teacher. Noah was born, raised and still lives in Cheltenham. Noah did his undergraduate and graduate studies at LaSalle University where he majored in history and political science. In his freetime, he likes to read historical novels, enjoys watching Netflix series, loves ice hockey, and football. He became a teacher because so many of his own teachers over the years inspired his love for learning. He is excited to bring that enthusiasm to Center School and is impressed with how our students want to learn.

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Alyssa Conrow is a current 8th grader. She came to Center School in the fall of 2016. In her own words below, see how her years at Center School have helped her grow both socially and academically.

Why did you come to Center School?
I came here in 4th grade because I needed to learn how to read and write. My old school pulled me out of classes to teach me reading and writing. It was upsetting because I was not learning.

What are some of the things that you have learned that have helped you the most while at Center School?
I learned to read and my writing has improved. I can now read instructions on the papers in all my classes. Center School taught me many strategies like chunking large articles, reading smaller sections and mindfulness.

What do you look forward to most each day?
I look forward to seeing all the teachers because they help me learn in the way I need to learn.

What do you hope to achieve in the future?
I love art and drama and hope to do something in that area.

What would you tell a new student coming to Center School?
Ask questions when you do not understand and if something is hard do not give up.

Is there anything else you want to share?
I will miss everyone in the school when I have to leave.

LOWER SCHOOL

Toren Hale is a current 3rd grader. He came to Center School in the fall of 2019. Toren was excited to share his experience at Center School.

Why did you come to Center School?
At my other school the teachers couldn’t help me as well and my mom found this school.

What are some of the things that you have learned that have helped you the most while at Center School?
The thing that has helped me the most is I learned about Growth Mindset and that I can say “I can’t do this YET” instead of “I can’t”. Teachers are kind and they help everybody in the school.

What do you look forward to most each day?
I like to see all my classmates. I like to do reading class.

What do you hope to achieve in the future?
I’d like to get better at reading, math and social studies.

What would you tell a new student coming to Center School?
This school is fun and everybody is nice.

Is there anything else you want to share?
Everyday I feel proud of something and sometimes I can do my homework by myself now.
Virtual Graduation
The end of the 2019-2020 school year was certainly unique. When Center School was mandated to close in March due to COVID-19, we had no idea that it would continue until June. As June got closer, it was obvious that our traditional Graduation/Step Up Day would be different. Our middle school teachers came up with a plan to personalize the graduation experience by delivering congratulatory yard signs for our graduates as we could not host an in-person graduation. While delivering them they took photos of each graduate with their sign. Thanks to our middle school faculty for making this experience a special moment for our graduates. We wish all our graduates continued success!
CS Service Project

As part of a joint community service project to support families in the community who are affected by the financial impact of the pandemic, Center School and The Rotary Club of Jenkintown worked to clean up our school’s gardens. This project supported the Jenkintown Food Cupboard which provides food to 180 families each week. Donations for the Jenkintown Food Cupboard were collected at the event.

Drive-by Step Up Day

Step Up Day has always been a tradition at Center School that celebrates every student moving up to the next grade. With COVID-19 guidelines and social distancing, we had to redefine how we were going to host this event. Through careful planning and creativity, faculty and staff coordinated a car parade celebration that would allow students to drive by to pick up awards, certificates, and see teachers along the route. Families and students came out with their cars decorated with signs, banners, balloons and silly string. Even though we could not host this event in the traditional way, we were still able to make our students proud of all that they accomplished and achieved this year!
Center School at Home Hybrid Model
Bringing Center School to Your Home

Recognizing that there are some families who are uneasy about their child returning to school, but who still want their child to access Center School’s curriculum, Center School has addressed those concerns by creating the Center School at Home Hybrid Model. Through this model, students are able to access all of their classes, with the exception of gym, throughout the day. Center School has installed a SmartTV in every classroom which is connected to a camera that has an integrated microphone. The teacher simply invites the student to class through a Zoom link, and the student “joins” his/her classmates from home, and is displayed on the SmartTV, so that the student can be a part of the class and the learning experience that is unique to Center School. Once the parent becomes comfortable with the student returning to school, the student will have benefitted from being a part of the learning experience all along.

What Road will you Take?

By Linda Jarrett Armiger, Developmental Guidance Counselor

“You Choose the Road to Take; Where Will It Lead You?” is Center School’s theme this year, and it supports our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum. Our theme is the vehicle through which we teach concepts and strategies to help our students become their best selves. Given the changes life throws at our students, choosing the best roads to take are not easy tasks! The roads will be bumpy and curved and many times involve a hill or two. Students will often come to forked roads, and one of our goals is to empower them to make the best choice. If they find themselves going down the wrong road, they learn that they have options to get back on track. We do not expect our students to do this alone as they have a whole roadside assistance crew for support. From teachers, coaches, counselors, and families they are encouraged, when needed, to advocate for assistance. As our students build roads to new learning, they will be empowered to be gritty and persevere when their road is bumpy.
The following is a list of individual, business and organizational donors from August 1, 2019 to July 31, 2020.

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FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020

SUPPORT & REVENUE

- Tuition and Fees: 82%
- Donations: 12%
- Ancillary Revenue: 6%

EXPENSES

- Instructional Expense: 73%
- Administration Expense: 23%
- Fundraising Expense: 4%

2019-20 BY THE NUMBERS
- TOTAL DONATIONS $345,744
- 100% FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS DONATED
Giving Opportunities

Every dollar benefits Center School programs that support children who learn differently. There are many ways to donate to Center School, and donations are tax deductible. We are grateful and thankful for your support.

Annual Fund

All gifts contribute to the ongoing success of Center School. The Annual Fund provides immediate and flexible funding to support important initiatives such as enhancing academic programs, technology, and leadership programs. Tuition funds alone do not provide the funds necessary to cover the costs associated with these educational opportunities.

Scholarship Fund

The Scholarship Fund provides opportunities to students whose financial situation may otherwise prevent them from attending our school. This fund is supported through the generosity of individual donors, contributions through EITC and OSTC tax credit programs, and designated foundation grant funds.

Leave a Legacy

From bequests to annuity plans, talk to us about the may ways to ensure the long-term stability of Center School while you receive tax credits and other benefits through endowment and planned giving.

Matching Gifts

Companies offer gift programs to match your contribution. This is a great way to increase the value of your gift.

United Way Donations

Our United Way Donor Option Number is 009850.

Gifts of Appreciated Securities

Center School gratefully accepts gifts of appreciated securities. Please consult your financial advisor, attorney, or accountant for assistance with your philanthropic plans. To transfer eligible securities, please give the following account information to your broker:

- Broker: TDAmeritrade Clearing Inc.
- DTC Participant ID#: 0188
- Client name: Center School
- Account # 427-601338
- Please include donor’s name in memo section and notify Lsteiert@centerschoolpa.org of the transfer.

Pennsylvania Tax Credit for Corporate Donors

Pennsylvania’s Education Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC) and the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTC) enable businesses to redirect PA corporate taxes to an approved scholarship organization, such as Center School. Scholarship funds are directed to eligible families based on income (EITC) as well as those residing within the boundaries of low-achieving schools (OSTC). For more information, visit www.newPA.com.

CARES Act

The recent CARES Act legislation allows taxpayers a 2020 deduction from gross income for charitable contributions up to $300 even if a taxpayer(s) cannot itemize deductions on their tax return.

For more information on giving opportunities or donor options, call 215-657-2200 or visit www.centerschoolpa.org
In honor of Susan Floyd, Tim Hilbert, Quince Hunt, and Carol White
for over one hundred years of their collective commitment and service to Center School

Memberships & Partners