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On the cover: Student buddies from different grade levels collaborated to participate in the Hour of Code, a global project within Computer Science Education Week to introduce students to computer science, demystify code and show that anyone, anywhere can learn the basics. Students at The School worked together to solve mazes and puzzles on Code.org and Lightbot, and used Scratch and Google to create lively animations. Students shared ideas and strategies to address these coding projects, working together and putting into practice the idea that creative solutions arise from diverse inputs.

At left: In “The Puppeteer in Me,” one of nearly 40 unique projects pursued during Integrated Projects Week (IPW) at The School each spring, Kindergarten students explored personal identities through the art of puppet-making. They used various art media, such as paper and fiber, to express aspects of who they are now and who they would like to be when they grow up.
A pesar de que el Año de la Diversidad está llegando a su fin, siento que, de muchas maneras, nuestras conversaciones y reflexiones apenas comienzan. Esto representa para mí el indicio de un año exitoso.

Hay una oración en la Misión de nuestra escuela que dice, “Nuestras filosofías pedagógicas y curriculares acogen perspectivas multiculturales, las cuales desafían educadores y alumnos a examinar sus nociones preconcebidas de raza, género, etnicidad, clase, habilidad, religión y orientación sexual.” En las páginas a continuación usted leerá y verá las maneras en las que la apreciación por la diversidad se entrelaza con nuestro currículo de estudiantes, programas de desarrollo profesional para maestros y empleados, eventos y programas para familias, y las relaciones con la comunidad y la Universidad. Este año he sido capaz de reconocer y desafiar mis propias nociones y he visto experiencias similares en estudiantes, maestros y padres. Estos han sido momentos de esclarecimiento que cambiaron mi vida.

Pasamos mucho tiempo durante este año hablando de las maneras en las que somos diferentes. Para mí es igual de importante el reconocer las formas en las que somos uno. Empezamos cada día de escuela en el café, como una sola comunidad. Alumnos estudian las mismas 11 disciplinas, como una sola escuela. Maestros diversifican la instrucción para que las clases progresen juntas, como un solo grupo. Nos reunimos en asambleas, observamos espectáculos y celebramos eventos de la escuela, como una sola congregación. Conversamos los unos con los otros, compartimos ideas, nos retamos a ser mejores y al final salimos adelante con más conocimiento, como una sola unidad. Aunque pueda parecer contradictorio terminar el Año de la Diversidad describiéndolo como el Año de la Unidad, ese es exactamente mi sentir. Somos una comunidad colaboradora y unida de innovadores diversos. Una sola escuela.

Creo que apreciar nuestra diversidad y reconocer nuestra unidad es una receta para nuestro continuo crecimiento como escuela. Pero hay otras recetas, muchas otras, y esa es una de las razones por las que me siento muy emocionada acerca del próximo Año de la Innovación a celebrarse durante el 2015-16. No puedo esperar a ver todo lo que descubriremos juntos.

Gracias por celebrar este Año de la Diversidad unidos como una sola comunidad.

—Translation by Nori Ann Ortiz
Although our Year of Diversity is coming to a close, I feel, in many ways, that our conversations and reflections have only begun. This feels to me like a sign of a successful year.

There is a sentence in our school mission that states, “Our pedagogical and curricular philosophies embrace multicultural perspectives, which challenge educators and learners to examine their preconceived notions of race, gender, ethnicity, class, ability, religion, and sexual orientation.” In the pages ahead, you will read and see the ways an appreciation for diversity is woven into our curriculum for students, our professional development programs for teachers and staff, our events and programs for families, and our relationships with the community and the University. I know I recognized or challenged notions of my own this year, and I saw similar experiences in students, and in teachers and parents. These moments were for me enlightening and life-changing.

We spent a lot of time this year talking about the ways we are different. Equally as important, I think, is to recognize the ways we are one. We start every school day in the cafe, as one community. Students study the same 11 disciplines, as one school. Teachers differentiate instruction so that classes progress together, as one group. We gather for assemblies and watch performances and celebrate important school events, as one community. We talk with each other and share ideas, we challenge each other and ultimately emerge more knowledgeable, as one. While it may at first seem contradictory to end our Year of Diversity describing it as a Year of Unity, that is exactly how I feel. One united collaborative community of diverse innovators. One school.

Appreciating our diversity and recognizing our unity is, I believe, one recipe for our continued growth as a school. There are more recipes, many more recipes, and that’s one of the reasons I’m excited about our upcoming Year of Innovation together in 2015-16. I can’t wait to see what we find out.

Thank you for celebrating this Year of Diversity together as a community.
Primary Division Director
Kathryn Kaiser

DIFFERENCE IS BETTER

The School’s curriculum provides myriad learning experiences across many disciplines and grade levels that address important aspects of diversity including identity development, anti-bias skills, and an ethos of validating the idea that difference is better. Teachers at The School explicitly address these topics in Kindergarten through Grade 8 in lessons designed to challenge assumptions and develop an informed and socially active student body.

We encourage students to affirm their own social identities including race, religion, ethnicity, ability and gender with confidence. We also build knowledge about the culture and experience of these identities among all students through personal interactions, stories, units of study, and field trips around New York City and beyond. Our students collect data about the preferences and interests of their classmates. They compare the data and learn to appreciate the similarities and differences among them. Students continue to examine the multifaceted aspects of their identities and begin to look authentically at stereotypes and assumptions that can box people in. Throughout the school year, through critical media literacy work, read-alouds, classroom discussions, brainstorm sessions and integrated projects, students engage in work around identifying and moving beyond stereotypes, so all community members can be who they are, appreciate diversity within the community, and celebrate their authentic selves.

We develop anti-bias tools for critical thinking, conflict resolution (including teaching children to be self-advocates and to advocate on another’s behalf), and effective empathic interaction strategies with people from different backgrounds. For example, students develop collaboration skills to work effectively in both large and small groups from an early age. They develop relationships with each other and work flexibly with diverse peers, becoming adept at using words to express a range of feelings, and understanding the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions and attitudes. They are inspired by historical and present-day community leaders, change-makers and events to identify ways in which they can affect change in their communities. They act as advocates and problem-solve in authentic contexts to bring about positive change for others.

The School provides explicit opportunities for all students to discover that better ideas come from more diverse communities, and that when diverging ideas are considered, more creative and effective solutions can be devised. From creating family portraits in the art studio or learning songs that represent the cultural heritage of classmates, Grade 1 learners discover that the contribution of many voices leads to richer conversations—that difference is better. Grade 3 students gain insight into the reasons people have chosen to emigrate, as well as the impact immigration has had on the identity, culture and history of people living in America today. They learn that we are who we are because of the influence we create upon each other. Grade 6 students engage with a panel of parents representing wide-ranging religious backgrounds. Students are able to ask questions and learn from the many experiences and points of view present within the panel.

These examples are only a few of the dozens that occur every day as part of learning. Awareness of and appreciation for diversity is woven seamlessly into our curriculum, and is an essential part of education at The School at Columbia.

“Throughout the school year, through critical media literacy work, read-alouds, classroom discussions, brainstorm sessions and integrated projects, students engage in work around identifying and moving beyond stereotypes, so all community members can be who they are, appreciate diversity within the community, and celebrate their authentic selves.”
The 2014-15 school year marked our scheduled return to looking more closely at diversity, one of The School’s four core values. In 2009-10, the first time diversity was our year-long theme, we looked at our curriculum and established that we provide myriad learning experiences across disciplines and grades that address important aspects of diversity, including:

**Identity Development**: Encouraging students to affirm multiple social identities with confidence, and building knowledge about the culture and experience of these identities among all students.

**Anti-Bias Skills**: Establishing anti-bias tools for critical thinking, conflict resolution (including self-advocacy and advocacy on others’ behalf) and effective empathic interaction strategies with people from different backgrounds.

**Difference is Better**: Providing explicit opportunities for all students to discover that better ideas come from more diverse communities, and that when diverging ideas are considered, more creative and effective solutions can be devised.

With the three guiding principles established, the 2014-15 Diversity Planning Committee, composed of faculty and staff members (including myself), chose to focus the work of the year on diversity of learning styles—to explore the impact of identity and difference on teaching and learning. As a non-selective independent school, The School at Columbia University has a wide range of learners. The Diversity Planning Committee decided that it would be meaningful to explore this element of diversity with the faculty and staff in 2014-15, and here are the structures that were created with The School’s head and directors to support that exploration.

### Professional Development for all Teachers and Staff at The School in the Year of Diversity

*From The Diversity Planning Committee*

In spring 2014, the committee developed a survey for faculty to assess their current understanding of diverse learning styles and to gauge their needs for professional development.

Questions included:

- If you had to tweet a definition of diverse learners, what would it be?
- What challenges do you face in meeting the needs of diverse learners in your classroom?
- What kind of professional development would you choose for yourself around diversity?

The committee used results from this survey to think about the year ahead, and to make plans to move forward this important part of our school mission.

### Summer Reading

The committee selected Andrew Solomon’s book “Far From the Tree” as the all-school reading book for summer 2014, to spur reflection and conversation around diversity of learning styles in the fall. Every teacher and staff member received a copy (digital or print) of the book before summer break, and was asked to read and consider:

- What theme did you take away from the reading?
- Were you surprised with any of the information shared in the book?
- How has this book impacted your understanding of diversity?
- What implications does this reading have on our role as teachers?

The full faculty convened in September before school began, and broke into smaller groups, based on different chapters in the book. The groups discussed the thought questions as they pertained to their chapters, and then shared their conversations and insights with the full faculty.

This work allowed teachers to see what Solomon calls “horizontal identities.” “Vertical identities” are passed from parent to child through DNA and shared cultural norms. “Horizontal identities” are typically unrelated to parents and
may come from recessive genes, or be values not shared with parents. Acknowledging the “horizontal” in students enables teachers to look at these as identities, rather than maladies in need of repair. Solomon’s case studies showed that families that embraced horizontal identities in their children found a joy they never thought possible. Embracing this understanding allows educators to see that difference is better, and to recognize the importance of identity affirmation.

Professional Goals
Each year, teachers set professional goals related to the year-long theme. They identify strategies to help them reach their goals, and meet with their division director to discuss professional development for the coming year.

In the 2014-15 Year of Diversity, with focus on diversity of learning styles, teachers’ goals included:

- To investigate ways technology can be used to create a culturally responsive learning community.
- To learn more about specific learning barriers, in order to be more responsive to individual needs when differentiating curricula.
- To learn from colleagues who have expertise in working with students with learning challenges.
- To build capacity in the teaching community so teachers have the tools necessary to assess student learning needs and to support them accordingly.
- To give families more tools to support diverse learners at home.
- To collaborate more closely with colleagues to find ways to leverage student strengths, as well as to accommodate and/or remediate weaknesses.

Student Observations
To further personalize The School’s look at diversity of learning styles, teachers were asked to choose a current student from their class, or a former student who is still a member of The School community, to observe. Teachers were provided with time throughout the year to facilitate observation opportunities during the school day. These observations were organized as follows:

**Current Student:** Please observe this student in a variety of other settings within The School. Questions to consider include:

- How does the student engage in other spaces?
- Is the child’s behavior different?
- Is there a difference in the child’s level of engagement?
- Is the child tapping into different modalities?
- Is the child’s class participation markedly different?
- How does the child interact with peers?
- How does the child interact with teachers?
- Is the teacher using different strategies that you might try?

**Former Student:** Please observe this student in their current educational setting in different disciplines. Questions to consider include:

- What areas of growths do you see?
- Are the child’s goals the same or different?
- Is the child’s behavior different?
- Is there a difference in the child’s level of engagement?
- Is the child tapping into different modalities?
- Is the child’s class participation markedly different?
- How does the child interact with peers?
- How does the child interact with teachers?
- Is the teacher using different strategies that you might try?

Team meeting time was allocated to share observations with each other, and teachers shared experiences at a full faculty meeting in January 2015 as well, contributing to collective knowledge about students and learning.
Panel Discussions and Guests
The School hosted two panel discussions in 2015, both related to diversity of learning styles. One panel consisted of parents whose children had learning differences and were supported by The School. The parents shared their understanding of their child’s difference, and their experience having a child at The School.

The second panel consisted of current students, who shared their experiences as students with learning differences at The School. Questions they considered included, “What have you learned about yourself as a learner during your time at The School that is helpful to you now?” and “What strategies do you use now to be successful?”

Both panels were honest, thoughtful, reflective and enlightening. This sharing of experiences helped to celebrate identity and sharpen anti-bias skills.

The School also welcomed Caroline Blackwell, National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Vice President for Equity & Justice and Research, who met with families and the full faculty in early 2015. Her faculty presentation “Stepping Into Our Future Together: Launching and Leading All-School Engagement” was a practical look at identity, appreciative inquiry, engagement, and how others identify. Faculty took time to explore and share their identities, and to grow in appreciation of the identities of others.

Solutions: Peer-to-Peer Presentations and Workshops
The Diversity Planning Committee wanted to provide practical solutions to teachers for addressing learning differences in the classroom. Leveraging in-house expertise, several teachers offered brief, 10-minute “snapshot” presentations of their work to colleagues, in one of three strands: Content Differentiation, Environment and Space, and Mobilization of Faculty Support.

Snapshot presentations included:

- **Content Differentiation**
  “Choice in Math: Seminars and Partner Strings”
  “Co-taught Humanities Identity Project”
  “How to Keep Documentation to Support the Needs of Students”
  “Math Differentiation in Developing Computational Fluency”
  “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners in Wellness”
  “The Power of Choice”
  “‘Robot TV’ Flipped Classroom Approach for Engaging Students in Science Content”

- **Environment and Space**
  “Classroom Furniture Choices, Chairs, and Workspace”
  “Learning Support through Organization, Weekly Assessments and Use of Space”

- **Mobilization of Faculty Support**
  “A Collaborative Approach to Conferring with Students”
  “Online Tools to Mobilize Support Teams”

Teacher-presenters used examples from their own practice and student work, grounding the solutions in classroom experience. They provided practical applications and also identified themselves as resources for future questions and collaborations within the community.

Later in the year, teachers again presented to each other, this time in half-day workshops centered on common learning differences observed in The School’s students. These workshops focused on:

- Attention Issues
- Emotional Regulation
- Executive Functioning
- Memory
- Sensory/Occupational Therapy
- Sound Knowledge
Committee Share
At the beginning of the Year of Diversity, teachers formed sub-committees to further professional understanding of the year-long theme. Here are the committees that formed in 2014-15, as well as the goals they set out to achieve.

Creative Explorations Committee:
• Develop identities through creative expression.
• Explore new avenues for creative expression.
• Share expertise and passions.

Diversity Professional Development Planning Committee:
• Support meaningful professional development for all faculty and staff around diversity of learning styles.

Faith-Based Diversity Committee:
• Learn about faiths and religions represented at The School, furthering understanding and respect of diverse belief systems and perspectives.

Gay Straight Transgender Alliance (GSTA):
• Plan and support Ally Week and Day of Silence.
• Connect with and reach out to other K-8 GSTA programs.
• Identify and communicate professional development for faculty around how to talk about LGBTQ identities and issues.

Greening Committee:
• Form intra-grade buddy groups around greening initiatives: Grades 1 and 5 on recycling; Grades 2 and 6 on composting; Grades 3 and 7 on marketing and awareness.
• Plan an all-school assembly to raise awareness of ways to be greener within the school community.
• Create and design posters and bulletin boards dedicated to environmental causes.
• Participate in greening initiatives, such as New York Cares Day.
• Organize family events in nearby natural areas, e.g., volunteer work in Riverside Park.

Playgroup:
• Liaise with other committees and plan inclusive, wide-ranging social, health and intellectual events for faculty and staff.

Sound Knowledge Committee:
• Identify common misconceptions about phonological awareness as it relates to literacy, speech and language.
• Help teachers analyze writing samples to determine the existence of gaps in phonological awareness.
• Read and analyze research relating to phonological awareness.
• Hold a professional development workshop for teachers at The School, covering terminology, phonological awareness activities, and assessment.

Just Read! Committee:
• Encourage reading and literature across diverse groups in our community—teachers, staff, students, parents, divisions.
• Share monthly book recommendations and reading resources, both online and off, with the school community.
• Create and share monthly reader profiles of school community members.
• Post poems in the building (poetry-in-motion style).
• Read together.

In April 2015, each committee shared their work from the year—their successes, challenges, and insights gained—with the full faculty and staff, in a celebration of and appreciation for diversity in all its manifestations at The School at Columbia University.
Diversity Conference Reflections: Student and Teacher Perspectives

HILLTOP DIVERSITY CONFERENCE
On Friday, Jan. 23, 2015, 21 students in Grades 6-8 attended the Hilltop Diversity Conference at Riverdale Country School.

“Class is a bigger issue than race in our society.” The room seemed to move as hundreds of students shuffled across the glossy gym floor at Riverdale Country School. On the north side of the court, a large paper cut-out was taped to the gym divider. It read “agree.” On the south wall, another cut-out read “disagree.” After 10 seconds or so, when the commotion of middle school students had died down, the children looked across the room and wondered, “Why was it that more white students weaved their way to the ‘agree’ side than black students? Why did more students disagree than agree? Why was my friend, who could prattle on about income inequality, standing confidently on the disagree side?” This inquiry into the de facto state of our society, those around us and ourselves, is what fueled the discussion at the Riverdale Country School’s 7th annual diversity conference.

As we entered the auditorium, it was clear that it was the perfect environment for the mingling of bright students, and more importantly, bright ideas. Many students broke out in excited, nervous smiles as they arrived. “I had never done something like this before,” Sawyer Cooper, delegate for The School at Columbia, said. “It was just so new and unexpected.” The theme of the conference was made conspicuously clear to us as our shirts were handed out. “Visible,” they read, with a handprint on the back. Above the handprint the writing said: “What do you see when you see me?”

As we settled into our seats, we were welcomed by the coordinator of the event, and then our keynote speaker, Roscoe C. Brown, a former Tuskegee Airman, was introduced. Mr. Brown didn’t preach or speak in a stoic tongue about being a pilot. Instead, he gave us a flying lesson. Speaking in the whisper that only a storyteller could produce, he talked about his training and the formation of the Tuskegee Airmen. He taught us that being black made it hard. It made it about our portrayal in the media. “What Does It Mean To Be White?:” “It was a really powerful workshop that showed the privileges whites received over other races. We did two activities. In one of them, the teacher gave a Post-it to everyone. He set out a trash can and some people were close to it and some were far away. He said whoever makes the shot gets accepted into the top society and whoever missed didn’t. Those who were close made it and the people like me who were really far didn’t. Life works the same way.”

The School’s Gay Straight Transgender Alliance (GSTA) presented a workshop entitled “Invisible No More: Creating An Inclusive Community.” TSC delegate Alpha Bah, one of the presenters, explained, “We were able to share how we as students, along with the faculty, work together to make The School a safe, inclusive place. We talked about the importance of having groups like the GSTA who continue to plan fun and meaningful events that promote the message that it’s okay to be who you are.”

The day culminated with a performance by the Jamal Jackson Dance Company, which TSC delegate Amanda Weisberg expressed, “interpreted everything that we learned that day. Throughout the dances, the dancers were rubbing their arms, suggesting self-consciousness of themselves. They were looking into mirrors and smiling at themselves.” The dance reflected what really made the diversity conference special to every participant. Be it the realization that race does not define you, or that gender inequality is still present in society, everyone learned something from one another’s questions. “The theme of the conference was ‘Invisible Landscapes: Voyages of Self Discovery,’” Bowman said. There was certainly much we discovered during the conference about ourselves, others and society. However, if there was one thing the conference taught us, it was that the voyage for justice in our world has just begun.

–Otto Moran, Grade 7 student
DALTON CONFERENCE: FROM DIVERSITY TO COMMUNITY

On Saturday, May 2, 2015, The School at Columbia sent a delegation of parents, teachers, administrators, students, and alumni to the fifth annual Dalton Conference: From Diversity to Community. The conference focuses on issues of diversity and inclusion in K-12 independent schools in and around the New York City area, and the theme this year was “Race, Privilege, Community Building.” I attended the conference as one of the teacher representatives.

In the morning of the conference, we were divided into groups of educators from different schools. I was particularly impressed by the honesty of the adults in that session, who shared the challenges their institutions face and the successes that they have implemented. It was enlightening to hear that many schools grapple with complicated issues surrounding diversity and inclusion. It was empowering to learn of successful programs that schools have established in their communities.

In the afternoon, we met in school groups to share what we learned that morning and to think about ways in which we can further the mission of The School, particularly as it relates to “embrac[ing] multicultural perspectives, which challenge educators and learners to examine their preconceived notions of race, gender, ethnicity, class, ability, religion, and sexual orientation.” All of the people in the room spoke with candor and compassion. They relayed what was said earlier in the day and shared their own thoughts on challenges The School faces and opportunities we have to better our community as it pertains to diversity and inclusion.

At the end of the day, I was impressed by the level of discussion that we had and by the dedication of parents, teachers, administrators, students, and alumni. It is my first year at The School at Columbia and the Dalton conference reinforced why I choose to work here. The adult community is committed to educating the whole student, beyond the confines of traditional academics. I look forward to participating in future successes around diversity and inclusion in our community.

—Michael Robinson, Kindergarten Teacher
The Power of Voice and the Promise of Peace

There are many times that I feel proud to be part of The School at Columbia community—proud of our voice, proud of our self-reflection, even proud of our sometimes disparate opinions. This feeling was crystallized by our community response to events, protests and outcry in our country stirred by the tragic deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, the ensuing legal responses, the deaths of two police detectives in Brooklyn, and the subsequent concerns about all forms of bias and the true meaning of justice in our nation.

In early 2015, at a time when many schools and families across the nation sought ways to shy away from difficult conversations about race, our school chose to engage in a community call to action. We asked ourselves: How do we as a community engage in this conversation in a way that becomes meaningful and accessible for children as young as 5 and as old as 14? How do we create safe spaces to confront our own history and our own fear, and make room for children and adults to share stories, express feelings, frustrations, fears and hopes? In addition to the ongoing conversations in classrooms and through our ongoing year-long anti-bias curriculum, we chose three community actions.

The first was the “I Believe” and “I Stand For” Statement Poster Project. We wanted an opportunity for our community to express the values they believe in and the truths they stand for. We posted our responses along with our photos through the stairwells of our school. The posters reflected our community’s commitment to equity and justice as well as our responses to recent national events. You can see examples of the posters in the pages ahead.

Our second action was the Community Walk for Peace, Promise and Justice, held on January 9, 2015. Together with neighboring schools the Bank Street School for Children and The Cathedral School of St. John the Divine, members of The School at Columbia community marched through local streets to make a statement about our stand for equity and justice. As a group we numbered more than 500 people. We carried signs advocating for equity, justice, and empathy for all, and ended our march singing together under the Phoenix installation by artist Xu Bing in the nave of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Our third community action was an all-school assembly centered on the theme of peace, promise and justice. The assembly was an opportunity for the full student body to stand together and celebrate our community values. Each grade performed a song or recited words that reflected the theme of the assembly.

As I write this piece I am painfully aware of recent events in Charleston, Baltimore, and Hattiesburg, Mississippi. But I am hopeful that the national dialogue is moving forward. I know there will always be times when words and wisdom fail us. At those times all we have is our hope and our humanity. In all of this, it is important to remember that though we have a responsibility to tell our children the truth about our world as it is, we have an even greater responsibility to inspire them to believe in what it could be.
The Year of Diversity:  
“I Believe” and “I Stand For”  
Statement Poster Project

Each year, The School at Columbia University selects one of its four core values (Community, Collaboration, Diversity, Innovation) to be the year’s theme. This allows us to be reflective as a group and reexamine the values we hold.

In 2014-15 our theme was diversity. To us, diversity means reveling in an environment of myriad learning experiences that address important aspects of diversity, including identity development, anti-bias skills, and the idea that difference is better.

Within the framework of our Year of Diversity, the “I Believe” and “I Stand For” Statement Poster Project began as a way to express our community’s responses to recent events, protests and outcry in our country. In winter 2014-15, everyone in The School at Columbia University community was invited to make a poster with a statement that began “I believe in” or “I stand for.” Students, teachers, staff and families submitted more than 300 posters, which were posted at school for all community members and visitors to see.

Here are posters from students in each grade, illustrating the passion for social justice within our community, as well as the depth and breadth of diversity, of all kinds, that we encompass.
KB believes...

- people should be treated nicely and kindly
- we all need to help each other
- Martin Luther King Jr.’s words live on in peace for the world
- speaking up for others
- using words to share feelings

KC Believes...

* in the Golden Rule
* we should always treat people like it’s their birthday
* in love
* in freedom
* in all the lives of people
* in listening to other people
* that no one should stop our dreams
We Believe in equality.
We stand for peace.
We believe in justice.
We Stand for Respect.

[Image of students]

We believe we should be respectful and kind to one another.
We believe we should get along and help each other.

[Image of students]

Awesome
We believe that people should be free and kind to each other.
Love will always be love.

I believe that if we work together we can make the world a better place.

I believe that we need safety.

I believe in peace and love for all.
I believe the right to vote! I believe everyone needs to be treated fairly and everyone should have the rights.

I believe that police should treat everyone equally.

I believe that it doesn't matter what your gender or your color or your skin is.
I believe in equality for all!

I believe that people are innocent until proven guilty.

I believe in a world with peace and kind hearts.

I believe we won't fall if we fight.
I believe...
Everyone has the right to stand up for what they believe in.

I believe...
People should be part of the solution, not the problem.

I believe...
That the police should help people, not hurt them.

I stand for...
Equal rights, no matter the gender or race.
I stand against the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner.

I believe that people should be treated equally.

I believe that all the children should have an education.

I believe that peace is possible! If we try....
I stand for a world in which
Education is cheap and happiness
is plentiful.

I believe in a world
where ideas and choices are more important than
race and religion.

I believe in second chances.

I stand for equality for all.

I believe that black lives
matter too.
I believe in education for all!

I stand for...
Gay Rights

I believe we should live in a world without......
Sexism

I believe that......
Our society CAN be fixed!!
Congratulations to the Class of 2015, 41 eighth-grade students, on their acceptances to 69 high schools throughout New York City and the Northeast—including the addition of eight new schools to The School at Columbia’s overall admitted list! We also take this opportunity to acknowledge The School’s Class of 2007, who this spring is the first TSC class to graduate from college. These alumni will start new jobs, pursue graduate degrees, move to new cities and countries, and widen the reach of our school community and mission even further. We congratulate our college graduates and the Class of 2015! High school destinations for the Class of 2015 include:

A. Philip Randolph High School
Andover Phillips Academy (MA)
Avenues: The World School
Brearley School
The Bronx High School of Science
Calhoun School
Cardinal Hayes High School
Cathedral High School
Chapin School
Church Farm School (PA)
Columbia Grammar & Preparatory School
Dominican Academy
Dwight-Englewood School (NJ)
Emma Willard School (NY)
Ethical Culture Fieldston School
Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts
Frank McCourt High School
The Global Learning Collaborative
George School (PA)
Grace Church School
High School for Math, Science and Engineering at City College
Horace Greeley High School (NJ)
Lawrenceville School (NJ)
Léman Manhattan Preparatory School
Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics
New Explorations into Science, Technology and Math High School (NEST+m)
Nightingale-Bamford School
Pace High School
Poly Prep Country Day School
Saint Ann’s School
Spence School
Stuyvesant High School
Trinity School
Walnut Hill School (MA)
Woodbridge High School (NJ)
Nearly 150 full-time and 50 part-time educators comprise The School at Columbia University community. Throughout the 2014-15 school year, The School’s educators pursued and received accolades for an impressive range of professional work that occurred in addition to classroom teaching.

Teachers and staff at The School at Columbia organized, presented at, participated in, and attended professional conferences and institutions worldwide in 2014-15, including:

- American International School of Johannesburg
- American Museum of Natural History Master of Arts in Teaching Urban Residency Program
- Black Rock Forest Consortium
- Border Crossers: Talking About Race in the Classroom Workshop
- Code.org
- Columbia University Graduate School of Social Work
- Computer Science Teachers Association
- Dalton Conference: From Diversity to Community
- EdcampBangkok
- EdcampNYC
- Edcamp Leader NYC
- Global Education Teacher Strand, part of Student Global Leadership Institute, at Punahou School
- Harvard Graduate School of Education: Closing the Achievement Gap (CAG)
- Harvard Graduate School of Education: Think Tank on Global Education
- Hour of Code
- International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Conference
- Leaf and Pen: Writing Retreats and Workshops for Educators and Students
- Learning & the Brain: Educating World-Class Minds
- Learning & the Brain: Mathematics and the Brain
- Librarians Knowledge Sharing Workshop
- NAIS Annual Conference
- NAIS People of Color Conference
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- National Science Teachers’ Association (NSTA) STEM Forum & Expo
- New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) Admissions Directors Conference
- NYSAIS Educating Girls: Be Well, Lead Well Conference
- NYSAIS Education & Information Technology (NEIT) Conference
- NYSAIS Emerging Leaders Institute
- NYSAIS Experienced Teachers Institute
- NYSAIS Teaching With Technology Conference
New York University ITP Camp  
Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools (PAIS) Fall Biennial Conference  
RoboExpo  
Scratch Day @ Teachers College, Columbia University  
Spring Blog Festival  
Storefront Academy Harlem  
Teach21  
Teach21 Istanbul  
Teach21 West  
Teachers College, Columbia University:  
  Finding High Achievement in the Midst of High Needs Institute  
Teachers College, Columbia University: Summer Principals Academy  
TeachUp Singapore: The Centre for International Education, UWC Southeast Asia  
TEDxYouth@TheSchool  
Treatment Implementation Collaborative: Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Teachers completed graduate studies throughout the academic year, including DSc in Civil Security, Leadership, Management and Policy; EdM in Art Education; MA in International Education Development; MSEd; PhD in Educational Psychology and in School Psychology; and PsyD degrees. Teachers also achieved national professional certification in Oral Proficiency Interview in Spanish, and state professional certification in Secondary Math Education; and professional licensing in psychology.

The School at Columbia counts among its 2014-15 educators, a/an:

2015 PBS LearningMedia Digital Innovator  
Creative Teaching & Learning (CTL) journal article author  
Fantasy Fountain Fund Fellowship winner  
Solo Flutist with Los Angeles Jewish Symphony  
Tenri Cultural Institute exhibitor

Congratulations to teachers and staff on a remarkable year of professional growth and accomplishments!
The School at Columbia University offers a broad range of student clubs as well as a comprehensive chess program. Club members participate in events across the city and beyond, garnering recognition, exchanging knowledge, and entertaining and beautifying local communities.

In 2014-15, Advanced Robotics students built and programmed technology solutions to real-world problems. They selected challenges and collaboratively problem-solved with other robotics enthusiasts.

The Art Portfolio Preparation Club explored a variety of mediums and techniques, often heading into the neighborhood for inspiration. They created displays for school-wide events, including the backdrop for our annual TEDxYouth@TheSchool event.

Blue Crew is TSC's own version of a pep squad, complete with instruments! This lively bunch provided cheering and entertainment at home athletics events.

The School once again offered a robust Chess Program, open to students in all grade levels. Chess Lunch met weekly and provided children with an avenue for less formal instruction and play. Many children also opted to study chess through the After School Program. More experienced players joined TSC's Chess Team, practicing outside of school hours and competing in local tournaments.

Dance Club members worked together on creative self-expression through choreography and dance. They performed several times this year, showcasing their work at school ceremonies and shares.

The Debate Club honed their skills under the leadership of a Columbia University coach and the CU Debate Team. TSC debaters attended five tournaments, including a unique opportunity to observe a Columbia-sponsored high school invitational. A highlight was the East Coast Championship Tournament, held in Tarrytown, NY.

The Gay Straight Transgender Alliance (GSTA) led an all-school assembly in conjunction with the national Day of Silence, featuring the entire student body dressed in rainbow colors, reflecting the pride flag (see p. 24). The GSTA also offered a student-led workshop at the Hilltop Diversity Conference, which included an activity celebrating visible and invisible identities (see p. 10).

Maker Club members focused on finding new ways to design and engineer solutions, through the use of computing, making and coding. They helped to build the Grade 6 space balloon (see p. 32), and enjoyed a special visit from Stephen Lewis, teacher and inventor of Make!Sense.

The Model United Nations Club attended the Global Classrooms International High School Conference, where they represented the Republic of Ireland and Papua New Guinea. TSC delegates also participated in the Saint Ann's Middle School Conference, exploring solutions to the conflict in Northern Mali and the issue of drug cartels in Mexico.

We look forward to another great year of clubs and special programs in 2015-16.

—Marla Powell, Assistant Director of External Programs
The 2014-15 Athletics seasons flew by and we are already scheduling and organizing practice spaces for next year! However, we would be remiss if we let the year pass without acknowledging some of the wonderful accomplishments of our athletes.

During the fall season, the cross country team proved their speed and tenacity once again. The girls’ team won the championship meet and one of our eighth-grade boys beat the school record (set by his brother!) by 5 seconds in the championship meet, placing first.

The volleyball program saw the addition of a Grade 5/6 team, which practiced alongside the Grade 7/8 team and was able to compete in four games of their own. The Grade 7/8 team won two of their games, against Trinity and Marymount, decisively.

The girls’ and boys’ Grade 7/8 soccer teams combined this year for our first-ever co-ed soccer team. With the strong numbers on both our girls’ and boys’ Grade 5/6 soccer teams, the Grade 7/8 teams should be at full force next season!

The winter season brought with it cold weather and some wonderful athletic entertainment! The basketball teams lit up the MPR and other gyms around the city with their heart and skill. Highlights include the Grade 7/8 boys’ team winning the Grace Church Invitational, the Grade 6 girls’ team beating Hewitt by 18 points, and the Grade 7/8 girls’ team flying past Avenues school by a score of 36-4.

The squash team may have been small in number, but they were dedicated and worked hard in each practice. The three eighth-graders on the team were excellent role models for the sole fifth-grader, who will help to move the team forward in the coming years.

The fencing team grew in membership this year and their talent and focus was apparent in each fencer, Grades 5 through 8. They fenced against schools such as Hackley and Riverdale, posting wins along the way.

Finally, the spring season brought rain, flowers, track and lacrosse! The Grade 5/6 girls’ lacrosse team opened their season with a 10-8 win over Chapin, and the Grade 7/8 girls’ team posted their first win in the third game of the season, beating Chapin 9-8. On the boys side, the Grade 5/6 team had a record number of players, most of them fifth-graders, which will help to grow the Grade 7/8 team in the future.

The track team participated in nine meets this season! The runners, jumpers, and throwers also represented The School at the Gotham Games this spring.

The 2014-15 Athletics seasons have been filled with hard work, focus and fun. It has been a pleasure to watch the participants grow as skilled athletes and as wonderful people! We can’t wait until the 2015-16 season!

—Coach Laura Walrath, Athletics Director and Coach Frank Colantuono, Wellness Teacher
The Parents Association of The School at Columbia University collaborated with The School to once again host many wonderful and enriching events during the 2014-15 school year.

It was an honor to hold Rock the Block, our annual community fall celebration, on Columbia University’s campus for the first time ever! The uniqueness and beauty of our community was demonstrated by the substantial increase in volunteerism and attendance by parents, students and faculty. Their hard work and dedication made the event incredible! We look forward to hosting another great Rock the Block celebration on campus next fall.

In January, we welcomed the school community and several special guests to a meaningful Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. In attendance were Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Council Member Inez E. Dickens and Assemblyman Keith L.T. Wright, among other distinguished guests. Our event provided opportunities for reflection, community service, inter-generational shares, and community building. We concluded with a neighborhood march with participants singing and carrying signs affirming our shared school values in honor of the civil rights movement and Dr. King.

It was a true pleasure to be entertained by our diverse, talented and enthusiastic performers at the Parents Association’s biennial Talent Show “Roar!” in March. The care and attention that the adult volunteers each gave to the children helped them perform to their very best ability. Thank you for the joy and excitement that filled the auditorium!

We closed our year with a stunning Culture Night in May, a celebration of the cultural diversity at The School. Special guest performers, delicious food and music from around the globe, cultural artifacts and dress, dancing and more made the second floor cafe feel like the entire world!

Our school year was peppered with numerous other events sponsored by the parents’ groups. Kaleidoscope’s “Bridging the Gaps” workshop series worked on developing an action plan for bringing the parent community closer. The discussions were insightful, intimate, and productive. The Casa Latina group hosted Spanish Read-Alouds and Games and Salsa Night. The Neurodiversity group provided valuable resources and support for our community.

Wonderful collaborative handmade Gift-Making Sessions were organized to honor our beloved teachers and staff. The annual Teacher and Staff Appreciation dinner, to which so many of our families contributed generously, was held at a neighborhood restaurant. Community Shares, in which numerous meaningful conversations about the needs of our extraordinary and diverse community, took place throughout the school year.

On behalf of the Parents Association, I would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support and participation. We are so very grateful to all the people who helped make these special community-building events possible. In particular, heartfelt thanks go to all our parent volunteers and planning committee co-chairs who gave so much of their time and energy.

All of our programming highlighted our commitment to engage with the greater community by providing thoughtful and collaborative events throughout the school year. Thank you for a wonderful year!

–Marie-France Fleuristal, PA President
Annual Report

School Visitors

The School at Columbia University warmly opens doors to visitors from other schools and educational institutions throughout the school year, in furtherance of our mission to share best practices and connect more strongly to a global community of educators. In 2014-15, we were proud to welcome and host visitors from the following:

Australian Catholic University (New South Wales)
Bloomfield College (Bloomfield, NJ)
Brooklyn College
Bulgaria Young Leaders Program: Educational Leaders’ Training Program –
  Center for Technology & School Change, Teachers College, Columbia University
The Chestnut Hill School (Newton, MA)
Corlars School
Daikyu Elementary School – Higashikurume (Tokyo)
The Dalton School
Dwight-Englewood School (Englewood, NJ)
Harlem Village Academies
Harvard Business School (Cambridge, MA)
High Meadow School (Stone Ridge, NY)
Hong Kong International School
International Association of Laboratory Schools
International School Bangkok
Klingenstein Center – Teachers College, Columbia University
Northwest School (Seattle)
Özel Sezin Okulu (Istanbul)
Ramaz School
River Vale Public Schools (River Vale, NJ)
St. Jude School (San Jose, Costa Rica)
St. Luke’s School
Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Tun Dr. Ismail (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
Seoul National University of Education
Shanghai American School
Sidwell Friends School (Washington, DC)
Spence School
Stevens Cooperative School (Jersey City, NJ)
Tompkins Hall Nursery & Childcare Center
University of Nevada – Las Vegas
Westtown School (West Chester, PA)
Wood Tobe-Coburn College
York School (Toronto)
Zurich International School
As part of their science unit on weather and water, Grade 6 students, teachers, and parents traveled to Black Rock Forest in Cornwall, NY on April 21, 2015 to launch a high-altitude balloon and participate in the Global Space Balloon Challenge. The students’ balloon—equipped with video camera, GPS transmitter, inflight computer and a parachute—traveled 104,000 feet up into the atmosphere, where the air pressure is 1/100th that at sea level. There the balloon expanded to more than 20 feet in diameter and burst, beautifully (photo above). Two hours and 45 minutes after its joy ride began, the balloon’s parachute landed in a backyard in Williamsburg, Mass., nearly 100 miles away by land. The balloon recorded a temperature low of -64.5°F during descent, and a maximum wind speed of almost 87 miles per hour.

In addition to recording data for students to study, the balloon’s flight captivated our school community, and gave us a thought-provoking event to come together around. We tracked it, individually and in groups, and waited with anticipation to see where it would land. And then we talked about our school balloon, with a sense of awe, appreciation and amazement—the same way we’ve talked about our community in this important year of diversity. We look forward to the Year of Innovation together in 2015-16.

Flying High
(A Pantoum Poem)

As the balloon flies high
People ooh, and aah
Flying into the clouds
Up, up, up into the atmosphere

People ooh, and aah
Reaching into the unbeknownst
Flying into the clouds
Without a care in the world

Reaching into the unbeknownst
Flying into the clouds
Without a care in the world
As the balloon flies high

–Hazel Livingston,
Grade 6 student