



CORNERSTONE
Schools of Washington D.C., Inc.

Hope and Academic Excellence
in the Nation's Capital

MEET DEAN LUCKENBAUGH

Dean Luckenbaugh is the incoming Executive Director at Cornerstone Schools of Washington, DC. He has been

serving as the Head of School at Ad Fontes Academy in Centreville for 14 years, starting in 2007. He was co-founder and Executive Director of the Institute

for Classical Schools, a national leadership development organization for classical Christian schools, from 2009-2013. Beginning in 1998, Dean served as the founding Chairman of Veritas School in Richmond, Virginia for 5 years and then as the Head of School for 4 years. Dean previously served the YMCA of Greater Richmond for 13 years completing his tenure as Vice President over three YMCA branches and a community development center in a subsidized housing community. Dean holds a B.S.B.A. in Marketing and Management from the University of Richmond Robins School of Business. Dean is married to Robin and has three children: two college graduates and a current high school freshman.



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THE CORNERSTONE Connection

SUMMER 2021 ISSUE

Note from the Executive Director

Three years ago, the Board of Cornerstone suggested changing my contract from a year-to-year contract to something more long term. I told them that, "in the long term," I was not the right person for Cornerstone. I explained that I have always felt like I was the right person to get Cornerstone back on its feet, but that the day would come when they would want to hire a Head of School that was an academic, loved the classics, was steeped in school administration, and could take the good program I have been part of building and make it great.

As I considered my contract at the beginning of this year, I asked myself, "is this the time for a new leader?" I pondered the amazing staff God has assembled here. I considered the loving culture that has grown amongst our student body and staff. I reviewed our budget and was humbled that our \$600,000 deficit when I started seven years ago has now been replaced with an almost \$600,000 reserve fund. Our building has upgraded WiFi and student technology as well as a security system and a beautiful and safe new playground. Academically, our program is strong and our graduates get into competitive colleges. In short, as I looked to the year ahead, I came to realize that the main area that needed improvement was me! So, in August, I told the Board to begin the search for a new Head of School.

God confirmed this difficult choice in two ways. First, we just finalized what has been a five year effort to get Cornerstone accredited. The accreditation site visit team, filled with expert educators and leaders, confirmed that my positive view of our program as rigorous and nurturing was verifiable! One accreditor said the love between Cornerstone and its students and their parents felt like one big family. That has always been our goal. Second, God sent us a Head of School, Dean Luckenbaugh, who has decades of experience leading two very successful classical schools. Praise God!

Of course, as a founder, I have no doubt that I will be involved in Cornerstone for the rest of my life. After giving Mr. Luckenbaugh space to begin building on our program, I plan to continue mentoring students, minister to the fathers and men of Cornerstone through food, fellowship and prayer, and return to the board in some capacity.

So, this is not goodbye, or even a "be back later." There is work to be done and I pray each of you will join me in continuing to be a part of God's work at Cornerstone for years and years to come.

Sincerely, Derrick A. Max

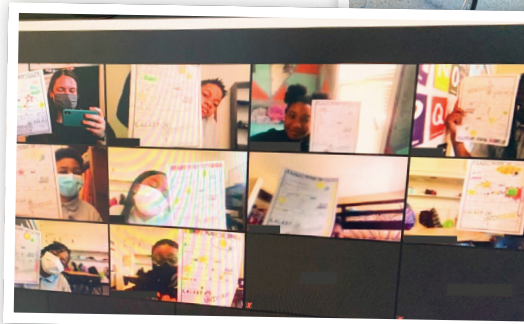


Staying Connected

After a first semester of full distance learning, it has been so good to have students back in the building! We started bringing our K-8 students back in February of this year. Teachers have been able to be more dynamic in their lessons and can plan larger scale projects and experiments. We have also seen how much it means to our students to be back, both academically and socially.

To accommodate students who need to be especially cautious when it comes to COVID, we offered a concurrent learning option. They still log on to Zoom like they did during distance learning, but now they are tuning in to the in-person class that is happening at Cornerstone. While this meets their academic needs, teachers have had to continue to be creative about ways to include these students in the classroom community.

While it has been a unique challenge, our teachers have brought the same creativity to this challenge that they bring to lesson planning every day. They have incorporated games that can be played by virtual and in-person students alike and included fun surprises in the at-home learning packets virtual students pick up from the school every few weeks. Cornerstone's 6th grade teacher, for example, has encouraged her in-person students to write notes to their concurrent classmates to include with their packets. We believe that maintaining this community is so crucial, not just for the social growth of the students, but for their spiritual growth as well. We pray that Cornerstone continues to be a strong Christian community for all our students, staff, and supporters where we are encouraged to grow closer to God!



VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERS

We are blessed every school year to have the **Capital Fellows** from McLean Presbyterian Church volunteer at the school. This year they were crucial as virtual writing tutors during a year when teachers weren't able to give the kind of immediate feedback they would normally. They faithfully signed on to Zoom every Monday to work with a small group of students as they practiced writing theses, organizing their essays, and broadening their word choice. Not only did the Fellows work on writing skills, but they spent time getting to know the students in their group and encouraging them in their studies.

After a year of meeting virtually, we were able to invite the Fellows and the students they had been working with to the building. They played basketball and other games and just enjoyed finally being together in person. It was a great way to celebrate a year of hard work together and solidify the relationships that started on Zoom. While we hope to have Fellows back in the building next year, we will always remember this special group that showed up for students during this very strange year!

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: STARR PARKER

This year has been Mrs. Parker's first year teaching at Cornerstone, but she has already made a huge impact! She teaches Chemistry and Physical Science and she has had to be creative to give her students the full science class experience during distance learning. Our whole staff has enjoyed getting to watch the videos her students record as they do their labs at home! She has organized her class so that all of her students have the opportunity to succeed, even during this challenging year.

Not only does Mrs. Parker show care to her students academically, but she also invests in their personal and spiritual growth. Mrs. Parker taught in DC Public Schools for a number of years before joining the Cornerstone team and she explained her decision to make a change saying, "I saw the need for Christian education in our community. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life!" She shared that her favorite part about working at Cornerstone is, "being able to freely incorporate scripture and prayer into all my lessons. I enjoy being around like-minded believers and helping

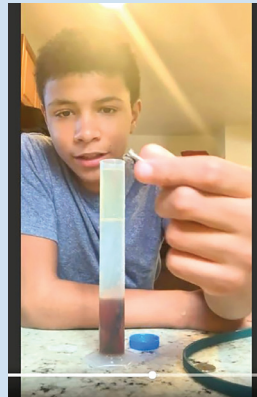
students learn more about God and His creation through science."

Her students have definitely noticed and benefited from her commitment to sharing the love of God in all that she does. During the end of year awards ceremony, the 11th grade class voted her "Most Likely to Pray About It." As one of her students

shared, "What I like about having Mrs.

Parker as a teacher is how she is always concerned about the well being of the students in her class. She is mentally and emotionally connected with us and it's refreshing to know that she cares."

Our students and our school community are so blessed to have Mrs. Parker and we are grateful for all she has done and will continue to do here at Cornerstone!



Outdoor Exploration

At Cornerstone we love our Elementary "specials," the classes our Elementary students take outside of their core subjects. One of the greatest joys of coming back to in-person learning was the return to all of our beloved specials like P.E. and music!

One of our favorites is **Outdoor Exploration**. During Outdoor Exploration, Coach Barnes and Mr. Rees take their classes onto the trails through the amazing woods throughout our neighborhood. They encourage students to use their observation skills to learn about different facets of God's creation! Students describe or draw what they see and learn to ask questions about what they notice. This is a new experience for some of our students and they can be a little

nervous the first few times they go out with their class, but every year we see these students grow to see the beauty of the natural world around them!

While we know that we see God in all subjects, from math to social studies to art, spending time in God's creation is a particularly direct experience of his power and creativity. We pray that, as our students participate in Outdoor Exploration, they grow in both knowledge and love of the God that created them just as he created the trees and birds they see.





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and click on "GIVE NOW" or
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FINANCIAL UPDATE AFTER A PANDEMIC YEAR

We have shared throughout this newsletter that this has been a very unusual school year. In addition to requiring a lot of creativity and extra time from our teachers and staff, it has also required more from our students and families and they have absolutely risen to the challenge!

This has come with additional costs. With distance learning came the need to purchase computers and tablets for each of our students as well as upgrading our WiFi system here at the school for our teachers and students working from the building. Being back in person has brought the added costs of individual desks to replace group tables in our classrooms as well as cleaning supplies to disinfect surfaces though the day and PPE to keep our community safe and healthy.

These additional costs were a worthy investment, but they came with some uncertainty about how

it would affect our reserves. After all, how could we ask people to give more during a time when so many are struggling financially? However, we have not seen any dip in total donations this year. While we are still pushing to close the gap resulting from our increased spending, we wanted to acknowledge the faithfulness of God this year.

Thank you to all who have supported Cornerstone with your finances and time to ensure that our students continue to receive the best possible education, even during this year of uncertainty! We know that God will continue to provide through the generosity of his people as we close out the school year.

**If you would like to give to Cornerstone,
you can do so at www.cornerstone-schools.org/give-now**

