

# The Compluvium

A Newsletter for the Atrium Community

October 30, 2009

## The Fall Festival -- Come rain or come shine!

The Fall Festival is back and better than ever!



It was pouring outside and the weather report called for driving rain and wind. At first it seemed like it could add up to a disappointing and low-turn out day for the fair. Instead we had a full house of families -- what else are you going to do on a windy and rainy day but come to a fun day at Atrium with creative and fun list of activities.



From the petting farm to the incredible box maze, the school was buzzing with activities for everyone. There were many new faces around the school -- families who had never been to our school before and were getting a wonderful taste of our community (as well as some delicious goodies at the bake sale).



Thank you to the PTA and all the parents who helped create another wonderful Atrium community builder. From building the box maze to baking for the bake sale, from decorating the Atrium space, to welcoming folks as they walked into the school, everyone helped make this a fun, warm and welcoming event on a cold, wet and rainy day.



### Dates To Remember

- Nov. 6 - Bring A Friend or Grandparent Day 9:45am
  - Harvest Assembly 11:00am and Early Release at Noon
- Nov. 11 - Veteran's Day -- No School
- Nov. 18 - Puppet Show!-- Admissions Event 1pm
- Nov. 20 - Admissions Open House 9am-10:30am
- Nov. 22 - Admissions Open House and Speaker Panel 2pm-4pm
- Nov. 25 - Thanksgiving Break begins, Early Release at Noon

# BFG Day & Harvest Assembly

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2009 9:45 AM TO NOON**

Bring a Friend or Grandparent Day (BFG) is coming up this Friday, we have RSVPs from many of you. If you haven't yet RSVP'd, it's not too late.

BFG offers a chance for students to share their life at school with an adult who is special to them and for those friends and relatives to see your child at school with their friends and teachers.

BFG guests join students in their classrooms to participate in special activities, and then attend Harvest Assembly. If your child does not have a relative or friend they would like to invite, or who could attend, you are welcome to 'stand-in' as a parent guest.

**IMPORTANT:** If siblings have invited the same guests, to avoid hurt feelings we highly recommend that you arrange ahead of time, with both your guest and your children, which guest will visit which classroom. Likewise, if siblings have invited one guest, we suggest that you arrange ahead of time which class will be visited first and for how long.

## BFG DAY SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

9:45 am – Friends and relatives arrive and gather in the Atrium Room or coffee and conversation.

10:00 am – Friends and relatives join students in the classroom for special BFG Day activities.

10:45 am – Friends and relatives meet with Susan Diller, Linda Echt and Ginny Kahn in the Atrium Room while students and teachers prepare for Harvest Assembly.

11:00 am – Harvest Assembly.

11:45 am – Students return to classrooms.

12:00 pm – Dismissal (outside).

## Ginny's Corner

*News from Ginny Kahn, the founder of the Atrium School.*

Dear Atrium Community,

I am looking forward to seeing you all at BFG Day next week. It is one of my favorite days at the Atrium. Although there are so many favorite days.

What I particularly enjoy are the interactions across generations.

When Atrium first began, oh so many years ago, I wanted it to be a multi-generational environment. After all, from the smallest to the oldest, we can all learn from one another. It is a joy to see children, parents, grandparents and special friends join together in song and learning.

I love hearing from all of you, especially past students and their parents as well as faculty. You can always reach me via the school. Enjoy the day and I look forward to seeing you all on Friday.

-- Cheers, Ginny

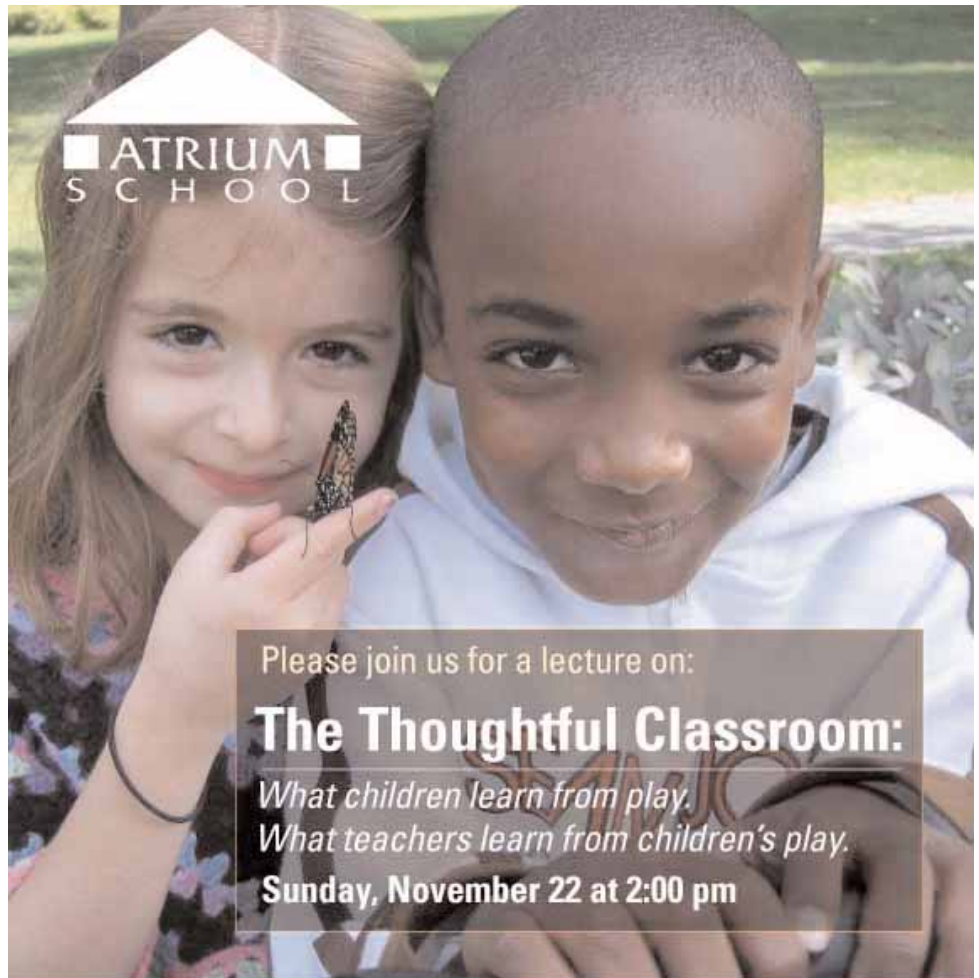


## Coming November 22. Admissions Open House and Panel Discussion: *The Thoughtful Classroom: What Children learn from Play. What Teachers Learn from Children's Play*

We will be hosting our November Open House on the Sunday the 22nd . Concurrent with the Open House, Atrium will be holding a panel discussion on the importance of play in the classroom. The panel will be at the school from 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. and is titled, *The Thoughtful Classroom: What children learn from play; what teachers learn from children's play.*

The panel will be moderated by Professor W. George Scarlett, Deputy Chair of the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts. Professor Scarlett's six books include *Children's Play and the Developing Imagination* (Sage Publications) and *Small Ball: Coaching Youth Baseball* (McFarland Publishing Co.). Several Atrium teachers will be on the panel.

We hope that prospective parents, Atrium parents, and educators will attend. Please spread the word. Look for a flyer in your next PTA e-news to forward to friends. The event is free and all parents are encouraged to attend. If you know an educator or parent who you think would like to attend this event, please contact Simone Liebman, [berlin2@verizon.net](mailto:berlin2@verizon.net) with the individual's contact information and we will send out an invitation.



Please join us for a lecture on:

### **The Thoughtful Classroom:**

*What children learn from play.*

*What teachers learn from children's play.*

**Sunday, November 22 at 2:00 pm**

#### **OPEN HOUSE**

Tours of our school  
(PreK–Grade 6) available before  
and after the lecture.

The Atrium School  
69 Grove Street, Watertown, MA  
Tel: 617.923.4156  
[www.atrium.org](http://www.atrium.org)

Main entrance is on Crawford ~ Parking is off of Kondazian and Crawford

# What's Happening at School

## The Originators

*PreK/Indergarten*

*Rachel Crimmel and Barry Wilensky*

### Science



The Originators completed a science experiment by placing white carnations and celery in colored water. Originators predicted that the color would go to the top. The next day we observed the changes and concluded that the veins carried water up to the leaves and turned the leaves and petals beautiful colors. During Writing Workshop we wrote about what changes we saw and why they happened. We also took our first field trip to Filipello Park. We learned about the different types of trees and leaves. We compared oak, maple, elm, birch and cherry tree leaves. Each Originator chose a tree to observe, figured out what type of tree it was, and will continue to observe his/her tree's changes through the school year.

## The Travelers

*K/Indergarten/First Grade*

*Merry Murray Meade and Liz Perekrests*

### Theme



This month the Travelers took public transportation to the banks of the Charles near Watertown Square. Children worked with a partner to closely observe

this part of the river. They answered questions such as:

*What do you smell ?*

*What do you hear?*

*Do you see any animals?*

*How many people do you see?*

*What does the bottom of the river look like?*

*How fast is the river flowing?*

*What do you see that is made by humans?*

*What do you see that is natural?*

We got back to school and reflected on our observations and talked about our favorite parts of the trip. As we explore different areas of the Charles River we will pose the same questions to see if we get different results!

## The Explorers

*Second/Third Grade*

*Jill Ferraresso and Susan Jacoby*

### Science



What do you wonder...about trees? This is the question that greeted Explorers on our science bulletin board during the very first week of school. All this year, we will be wondering and learning together about trees. We began our "wonderings" with a late summer walk at our class "special spot," Willow Pond in Mount Auburn Cemetery. We were lucky to be accompanied by our friend (and official Explorer Class Naturalist), Carole Berney. As we walked excitedly down the long driveway into the cemetery, Carole stopped us almost immediately, to take a look at a tall pine tree, and to ask the children questions about its leaves - their shape and size, and whether or not these leaves would change color and fall. All the way to Willow Pond we stopped here and there, identifying trees, noticing leaf shape and bark, picking up and

examining seed pods on the grass. Isabel and Miranda, near the front of the line, were tireless collectors of all sorts of tree related items, which they excitedly gave to Carole to add to her basket

Here are just a few of the many “wonders” about trees that the Explorer class has come up with so far:

*Is sap melted bark?*

*How did trees first come on this planet?*

*Do trees breathe?*

*What are in the seeds?*

*Why do weeping willows weep?*

*How do trees get food?*

*What's the difference between a weeping willow and a regular one?*

*Why do trees lose their leaves in winter?*

*Why do weeping willows bend down to the water?*

*What are the tubes and fluids in leaves all about?*

*Why do bark and branches fall off?*

*Why do some leaves turn yellow, some goldish, some brown?*

*What kind of tree was the first tree?*

*How do leaves grow?*

*How do trees produce fruit?*

Many of our future explorations of trees will be driven by these and many more questions!

## **The Adventurers**

*Fifth Grade*

*Craig Rochkind and Kristen von Hoffman*

### **Theme**



The Adventurers have begun an intense study of immigration to the United States. While they've been concentrating on the mass movement of people to America at the turn of the 20th century, they've not neglected the continuous arrival of those in more

recent years. The class has been learning about the procedures accompanying the processing of new arrivals at both Ellis Island on the east coast, and Angel Island on the west coast. The comparisons and contrasts are sometime stark, as well as informative. The attitudes, perceptions, and misunderstandings displayed by both immigrant and those who were in charge, have allowed the class to get a clearer idea of the dynamics of immigration into our country.

Meanwhile, the class has been involved in exercises that are related to how those in other countries perceive the United States. Reading stories about recent immigrants has allowed students to understand the struggles and successes that are faced by those who enter a country in which they have difficulty with the language and culture. The Adventurers have also completed building a “tenement” area in the classroom that resembles the type of living quarters that most immigrants inhabited while living in New York City; small, cramped, rooms, filled with their possessions and furniture. As the weeks continue, students will study what the lives of these families were like as they tried to eke out a living in their new home.

## **The Trailblazers**

*Sixth Grade*

*Dan Riles*

**Science**



### **How Light Travels**

The Trailblazers are studying optics. Three questions are guiding our investigations: how does light travel, how can light be used, and how do scientists work? Our beginning experiences have directly addressed how light travels and have begun to build a foundation for discussions about how scientists work.

In the first several optics investigations, we have explored how light spreads out and appears dimmer over distance. To measure this, students created a square of light on the wall by

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holding a piece of cardboard with a square cut out between their flashlight and the wall. They started the cardboard at 10 cm from the wall and moved it away in increments of 10 cm. Each time, they measured the square and then used this data to discover the rate of change of the area of light. This experience led to an understanding that light appears dimmer quickly with distance. We followed this with an experiment in which we measured the shadow of an object as it moved closer to the source of the light.

Next we explored the different shadows cast by directed light and point sources of light. With the directed light, such as that cast by a flashlight, each shadow had a gray border. We learned that this zone of the shadow is called the penumbra and the dark part is called the umbra.

Most recently, we discovered what happens when there is only a small hole for light to enter the room. As our eyes adapted to the dark, the building next door appeared upside down and reversed on the wall opposite the hole. This type of room, known as a camera obscura, has amazed people for thousands of years. The students followed up this experience with an exploration of small pinhole cameras made from cardboard tubes and shopping bag plastic.

## Around the Library



During Library class the Explorers class experimented with writing Chinese characters after reading *The Pet Dragon: A Story about Adventure, Friendship, and Chinese Characters* by Christoph Niemann. We talked about the Chinese zodiac, drew an ox representing this year's animal and wrote the character for luck to represent having a lucky year. Afterwards children browsed for books sharing cool things they found with each other. In addition we are lucky to have a first edition copy of a collection of short stories in our library penned (okay, penciled) by our own Wilder. He is pictured here cataloging his book for our collection.



# Atrium Fundraising

Fundraising at Atrium supports the core program (see Atrium Fundraising FAQs below) and provides funds for enrichment and capital improvements. It is organized either by school faculty and staff, or by the PTA leadership with help from family volunteers. As a new family, or even returning family, the various events and their goals can be confusing. Hopefully the following guide will provide some clarity.

These activities can be a lot of fun, like the Auction for instance, which is an entertaining, grown-up night out. Some can even save you time, like Pizza Lunch. Working on them—as a volunteer organizer or as a participant—is a great way to get involved and make connections in the Atrium community.

**Annual Giving (formerly the Annual Fund):** is Atrium's single most important fundraising event of the year. It is organized by the Development Director with help from parent co-chairs and volunteers from the greater Atrium community. We ask current families, faculty, past parents, alum, past faculty, and friends of the school to make a tax-deductible contribution toward the current year's operating budget. Annual Giving is a line item in the school's budget bookmarked at \$85,000, though the need can be greater in any given year. Last year we raised ~\$111,000 and therefore were able draw down less than was budgeted from special funds (see below), preserving them for future years. Our goal is for all current families to participate in Annual Giving.

**Capital Campaign:** Atrium has run 2 Capital Campaigns in its history. The recent *'The Future is Now'* campaign raised almost \$4 million in gifts and loans to fund the renovation of 69 Grove Street. We continue to accept new gifts and gifts against pledges to the building fund.

**Special Funds:** have at various times been established to support school activities that donors have a special interest in such as music, diversity, math, professional development, visual arts and financial aid. Gifts to existing funds or new funds are always welcome.

**Classroom fundraising:** we try hard as an organization to limit classroom fundraising. Exceptions are pizza lunch (see PTA fundraising below) and activities the sixth grade undertakes to fund its culminating trip to New York City each spring. (During the 'New York trip', as its known, students are able to visit landmarks and museums that tie into 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom work.) Fundraising for these trips purposefully includes the students—in keeping with our goal for them to take ownership of their learning experience and to discourage a sense of entitlement around the trips. Fundraising for the New York trip usually includes the **Iggy's Bread sale, Atrium t-shirt sales** and **Yearbook** proceeds. Depending on PTA plans, it could also include other activities like a raffle, movie night or other family fun activity, or yard sale.

**Library fundraising:** The library can raise money for books and resources by running a Scholastic Book sale, usually in the spring. The birthday book program (where you make donation in honor of your child's birthday) also provides new books for our library.

## **PTA fundraising**

Each year the PTA provides \$20,000 toward the school's operating budget. These funds are a line item in Atrium's budget. The funds for this contribution are generally raised at the annual Atrium Auction and are earmarked for financial aid. This year's auction will be held April 10th (mark your calendars now!). This is the PTA's most important fundraising event of the year and depends on all of us to be successful.

Other PTA fundraisers include:

**Fall Fundraiser,** this year featuring Equal Exchange Coffee and organized by Renata Barrozo. Families are asked to buy and help sell Equal Exchange products. Prior years' proceeds have funded technology and the new playground, **plus started the process of acquiring a new 'Atrium Space' floor.**

**Pizza Lunch,** this is a joint PTA and 5th/6th grade fundraiser. Proceeds are shared by the school and the PTA, providing several thousand dollars toward the 5th/6t class trip to Project Adventure in Beverly, MA (ropes course, personal challenge and team building activities) and funds for general PTA operating expenses.

**Yard Sale,** some years the PTA organizes a yard sale, which is a great excuse to clean out your attic and basement for a good cause!

Examples of major gifts the PTA has made to the school over the years include: classroom computers, digital cameras, and our new playground. **Last year, the PTA launched fundraising efforts to raise money for a new floor in the Atrium assembly/gym space and raised half of the \$35,000 needed to complete the floor project.**

The PTA also organizes important community-building events like the recent Fall Fair, class potlucks, family fun evenings, and the Atrium Art Show, as well as parent information evenings. (Activities can vary from year to year.)

If you have questions/comments about fundraising events or communication around fundraising, or you would like to volunteer, please contact Linda, Susan, Jenny Brinkley (PTA President) or Ashley Nazemi (Director of Development).

(Please know that we understand the demands these activities can make on families' attention, finances and time as volunteers. So, the PTA and school leadership work together to try to balance and minimize fundraising activities over the school year.)

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## Fundraising at Atrium School FAQs

### 1. Why do we have to fundraise when I already pay tuition?

- ◆ The reality is that tuition at all independent schools would have to be many thousands of dollars higher than it is today if it were to fully cover the cost of providing their programs.
- ◆ Non-tuition revenue (e.g. Annual Giving campaigns and endowment income) can range from 10% to over 25% of a school's operating budget.
- ◆ Enrichment programs and small class sizes are costly. Atrium is no different. In keeping with our philosophy to build a diverse and vibrant community, we try to keep tuition as affordable as we can for our families but that means that we need to make up the difference in other ways.

### 2. Why doesn't the endowment cover the difference?

Atrium is a young school relatively speaking, this is our 27th year, and we have not yet built a traditional endowment fund. Generous donors have made, and continue to make, significant gifts for special purposes such as the music program, math and science enrichment, advancing diversity, professional development, and funding visiting artists. However, there is no multimillion dollar endowment generating income for operating expenses as some of our older peer schools enjoy. The money to cover this year's core program, needs to be raised this year.

### 3. Who gives to the school?

Atrium gets donations from current families, their friends and relatives, past families, alumni, past and current faculty and a broad base of friends of the school who strongly support our mission. Our first alumni are just reaching their thirties so robust alumni giving is not yet a major source of support for the school. Gifts have ranged from \$0.50 from a student to \$750,000 from a past family.

### 4. How can I help?

You can help in two major ways:

- ◆ By attending Atrium events, volunteering and participating in the life of the school you help build a strong, connected community of students and adults.
- ◆ By supporting Atrium, and Annual Giving in particular, as generously as possible for your family you help us provide the strongest possible program for our children.

## Alum News Fall 2009

**Annie Sussman** (Class of 1999) graduated from Connecticut College in 2007, Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude. She just completed a year teaching 5/6 grade at the Common School in Amherst, MA. The previous year she split her time between working at Contact Quarterly Dance magazine and working as a long-term substitute teacher (6th grade math) at an Amherst area public school under the direction of former Atrium School teacher, and current Atrium Math consultant, Polly Wagner.

**Louisa Rigali** (Class of 2001) is back at Atrium for the year. She is working with Merry Murray and Liz in the K/I classroom and helping out in the office. Please say hello if you see her.

**Pete Sussman** (Class of 2003) graduated from the Cambridge School of Weston where he was involved

with music and also served as a teaching assistant for an interdisciplinary course on flight. This summer he is working on the grounds crew at CSW and is taking a "gap" year this year.

**Katherine Nazemi** (Class of 2007), sister of David in Adventurers, swam for the Metro/Central region in the Bay State Games this past July. She started ninth grade at the Winsor School this fall, joining former Atrium students Becky Benett and Chloe Kliman—Silver.

**Amos Damroth** (Class of 2007) will be attending Concord Academy this fall.

If you have Alum news you would like to share, please email it to [alum@atrium.org](mailto:alum@atrium.org).