



Board's Strategic Planning Results in Moving Odyssey Forward

Last year, the Board of Trustees embarked on a year-long process that resulted in Moving Odyssey Forward, a "road map" that sets the stage for the school's future.

"After 13 years, the Odyssey School is known for its dedicated staff and outstanding program," said Nancy Wolf, Board President. "The school is solid; the community is committed. Now, we want to broaden awareness to a wider audience."

The board's focus has been on relevant, strategic goals that build on Odyssey's strengths – and take the school to the next level. The first phase was a communication audit, which resulted in a new logo, tagline, and website. Now, the Board is focusing on broadening admissions and fundraising efforts to ensure the school is here for future generations.

"Our faculty and programs are a much-needed resource in Austin," says Wolf. "The Board is excited about making the school the best it can be with the support of our constituents."

Also serving on the Board are Linda Classen, Barbara McEachern, Stacey Reese, Jeff Savage, Ed Schleicher, Rita Sherbenou, and Stephen Theis.

From the Head of School –

New Programs and Graduating Classes Highlight Achievements

Looking back over my first four years as director of Odyssey School, I see numerous achievements, and I am proud to say we have really accomplished a great deal.

Three years ago, we created our enrichment program that allows students to have a richer elective experience. This has enhanced our ability to offer elective classes, as well as have students participate in the Austin Community College Early College Start program and earn college credit while attending Odyssey School. In this update, you'll read more about the staff-created Thursday Connections program where teachers co-teach subjects and students experience learning in a multi-faceted way. With the help of a generous grant from the Vernick family, as well as the leadership of Matt Holloway, our Career Connections program has been a great success in enriching our high school students' experience. Significant credit goes to Mr. Holloway for making Connections a wonderful part of Odyssey School's curriculum.

Our students' educational experience has also benefited from changes we made to our portfolio-based assessment program two years ago. The modifications have made a difference in helping students take charge of their learning and empowering them with the understanding of how they learn best. Supporting the portfolio program is our study skills program that I am proud to say every student now receives. This class not only focuses on the multiple intelligences approach that supports portfolios, but also directly teaches study habits. The study skills program has also been a way to add time and support to our language arts curriculum.



Head of School John Brinson welcomes Cindy Bradford and Janet Asghar of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation team in November.

Another fantastic addition to the school is our in-house diagnostician, Evelyn Bollinger. She has led the way in helping us increase our effectiveness in assessment and accurately tracking student progress. Improvements are not limited to our school year. Our summer school continues to thrive and allows for students to avoid the summer slide in achievement and gain ground in learning. Our Service Learning program is as strong as ever, as students continue to branch out into the community and feel a sense of pride in their ability to accomplish great things in the name of service.

The success of our high school can be measured in where our students go. For the past two years, Odyssey has graduated seniors from our high school program and these alumni are now thriving in post-secondary education.

This November, Odyssey School had its five-year accreditation review by AdvanceED and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. We not only passed, but we also earned five commendations. I credit the staff and their hard work and dedication for this positive feedback.

– John Brinson



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MISSION

Odyssey School is committed to the development of academic excellence and self-acceptance for students who struggle in traditional educational settings. We believe that all children can be successful in their intellectual, creative, and social development. Our goal is to help each student discover his or her individual potential for greatness.

How you can support Odyssey School...

Share what you do with a student during a job-shadowing visit. **Welcome a student into your workplace** for a morning and allow them to explore their interests and aptitudes.



Introduce Odyssey School as a **resource to the learning disabilities community**, regardless of whether they are interested in enrolling. The faculty's hour-long presentation is offered at no cost to Austin-area groups of parents, professionals, and others who work with children with learning differences.



Recommend Odyssey's Summer School. The program is July 1-29, 2011, and features fun, fast-paced academics in the morning and stimulating, creative electives in the afternoon.

Contact Matt Holloway at holloway@odysseyschool.com to learn more about these three programs.



Make a donation! The school depends on the generosity of families and friends to cover the gap between tuition and the cost of educating our students. **Give online at www.odysseyschool.com.**



Follow Odyssey School on Facebook and **keep up with the latest** student activities and accomplishments.

Students Make the "Connection" Between Subjects as Classes Combine

Odyssey teachers are known for utilizing innovative methods to engage students and, with Connections Thursday, they have hit another homerun. Once a week throughout the quarter, students experience the interconnectedness of their classroom material as two teachers blend their subjects and deliver lessons that are applicable to both.

Geography and English came together to explore Homer's *Odyssey* as students worked in groups on travelogue presentations that included maps and skits. A self-published book of poetry and math puzzles emerged from a study of Lewis Carroll. And, Language Arts and Science resulted in the Second Annual Film Fest where students wrote and directed short films that incorporated their science fair experiments.

"The students have really made the Connections Thursday projects their own," says Matt Shelton, who teaches English and Social Studies. "It's great to see them step up and do what has to be done to finish the projects associated with these classes. They have fun and they achieve things they never thought they could."

Math teacher Brandee Fritsch partnered with science teacher Matt Stephens for a Marvelous Measurement class that performed science experiments involving areas such as measurement, temperatures, and distances as well their conversions. "Graphing and statistics were also incorporated," Fritsch says. "The kids would perform the experiments, crunch the numbers and then graph the data."

The Physics of Sport, Money Academy and Legendary Experiments are a few of the other recent offerings. Prior to each quarter, the faculty collaborates to create the classes. "We look at what we're covering that quarter and see where we can meld subjects," concludes Fritsch.

Exploring Careers through Job Shadowing in the Community

What guides a career path? What determines a college major? With an eye toward their future, students are getting hands-on experience in different work environments through Odyssey School's new Career Connections program.

Once a month, students spend a morning on job-shadowing visits with professionals in their fields of interest such as Fiddler's Green, the LBJ Library and Museum, Bravo Interior Design and Old Timer Watch Repair. Prior to their meeting, the students research career fields and create their own "career cluster" of closely related groups of jobs. They are expected to dress professionally and discuss their experiences afterward.

"I always give the employer the appropriate background about a student's disability and learning style," says Connections Coordinator Matt Holloway. "But we think it's important to both the kids and the community that they get this exposure."

For Connor Binns, a junior, the program is "a real eye-opener. It's given me the chance to see how people earn a living and it's helping me plan for my future."

The students are enthusiastic about the program, as are their parents, who see it as a great way to teach social skills, career readiness, and self-advocacy. As John Brinson, Head of School, says, "The Career Connections program is another way to improve the lives of students with learning disabilities, which is totally in line with what Odyssey School is all about."

The program is funded by the Learning Disabilities Foundation of America and by private grants. Holloway says that the professional response has been overwhelmingly positive. "The kids are only there for three to four hours, but it's amazing what a strong connection these kids forge in such a short period of time."

Watch a video on the Career Connections program at <http://www.youtube.com/user/OdysseyAustin?feature=mhum>. Thanks to the Odyssey School student newspaper for additional reporting on this article.



Congratulations to the winning team: Fred Chozick, Sam Copeland, Don Coplin, Philip Sanger

The annual Odyssey Golf Tournament in November raised \$13,000 for the school. **Thank you to all the players and sponsors**, including:

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