

# Foothills Focus



*Foothills School provides a vibrant learning community where students develop personal, academic, and social responsibility – leading to a lifetime of discovery.*

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## What Makes Foothills Exceptional

I have had the great pleasure of working at Foothills School for the past ten years. In my role as Admissions Director, I've been able to meet all of the amazing families we have here and share with them what makes us different and special as a school. Our progressive educational program and focus on helping children develop personally, academically, and socially set us apart from other schools. But what I think makes us truly exceptional are the people who make up the Foothills Community.

For starters, the parents at Foothills School are exceptional! Foothills parents understand that partnerships between families and the school are essential in making it work for everyone, and they willingly step up all the time to support the school. They share their time, talents, and resources with Foothills, whether it's through volunteering for field trips, class projects, and fundraisers, or through their engagement in school functions and advocacy for Foothills (or in most cases, all of the above!). Foothills parents believe in modeling for children how to live well and care for those around

them, treating all of us here as important players in their child's education.

We also have exceptional Foothills faculty, staff and board members. The people leading Foothills practice lifelong learning and are willing to work hard to improve the school. We know what we do well, but we also know that we have challenges that need to be addressed in order to become not just a really good school, but a great one. To get better, we create goals for everyone at the school and hold ourselves accountable for outcomes. We listen to each other, our students, and our parents so that we can be responsive to our community members' needs. We take the time to get to know our students to build on their individual strengths, support their passions, encourage their thirst and quest for knowledge, and give them the support and tools necessary to face their own challenges in life. Our leaders not only know, but care about our students, and that's not true at every school.

Foothills students work hard every day as they're becoming exceptional learners! Our students have

great confidence to try new things and take intellectual risks; they stand up for what they believe in and aren't afraid to be their authentic selves. When prospective families ask me who our kids are, I tell them that I think they're both worldlier and more innocent than most kids their age. Ask any student here what they think and you'll hear creative and thoughtful insights on any number of subjects. And yet, when I see Foothills students outside of school, they never act so cool that they won't run across the street to say 'hello,' and genuinely be excited to talk with an adult from their school.

I don't think any of us at Foothills would pretend that we are exceptional in every way. We are a "work-in-progress" and know that we need to get better at a lot of things. But what keeps me inspired and excited about being a part of the Foothills Learning Community is that we don't have to figure it out alone. We have each other and are finding our way together, and I believe that ongoing commitment and support will make us the exceptional school we want to become.

Katy Young  
Director of Admissions



## Happenings at Foothills School – Don't Miss 'Em!

Winter Performances are right around the corner!!!

As we get closer to winter break, the weather gets colder and the days get darker. It's time to lighten our spirits by watching our students perform! This is the first year that a theatre class has been offered as an arts elective to the Seniors. They are excited to share with you the plays they have been working on. Their **performance has been rescheduled from our snow day to Thursday,**

**December 16, at 6:00 pm in the Foothills Music Room.**

The music performances have a different structure this year. Instead of one all-school performance, the performances will be split between lower and upper school and will take place in the Foothills Music Room. This allows adequate time for students to share more of what they have been working on in music class and demonstrate that music education is more about process, than product. The **lower school performance will take place on Monday, December 6, at 6:00 pm**, and the **upper school performance will take place Tuesday, December 14, at 6:00 pm**. Come have a nice, casual evening enjoying the music of our Foothills' students!

We cannot have performances without being taken into another world, into a fantasy world of colorful and quirky characters! The after-school musical theatre program brings to the stage this winter: *Through the Looking Glass*. Come enjoy this **performance on Thursday, December 9, at 6:00 pm at Prairie Dog Productions**, located on the corner of Cassia and Latah.



### STRATEGIC PLANNING SETS THE COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

Over the next three months, Foothills School of Arts and Sciences will be engaging in a comprehensive strategic planning process. Starting with a SWOT analysis – looking at our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – and concluding with a five-year plan for the school, this will be a full community effort. Strategic Planning will give us the opportunity to ask the big questions about what kind of school we should and can be that assures our students are prepared to contribute in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

There will be several opportunities for parent and community involvement. We will be having focus group meetings, some “think tank” discussions, and informal feedback opportunities throughout the process. In addition, a core committee of 12, with representatives from our constituent groups, will be working with an outside facilitator to respond to the major issues we are confronting. If you are interested in being involved in any way, please contact Shawn Shepherd, Head of School, at [sshepherd@foothillsschool.org](mailto:sshepherd@foothillsschool.org).

### PARENT FEEDBACK MATTERS!

Foothills School doesn't just evaluate student progress – we are always examining our own work and the progress we are making as a school! For more than five years, the school has initiated a formal feedback process that includes survey instruments generated in-house and provided by a local research firm. Whatever the source of the survey, every parent should realize that your feedback matters! Two years ago we initiated a Fall Satisfaction Survey that will be repeated this year; *look for it in your email in-box next week*.

The results of the Fall Satisfaction Survey help us set the course for the Spring. We are able, unlike so many schools and school districts, to be nimble in addressing concerns. Survey results assist us in making curricular changes, providing faculty with midyear performance reviews, and evaluating our overall program. Your feedback, which is confidential and anonymous, is not taken lightly. Please take the small amount of time it will take to respond to the online survey instruments for your children and help us make Foothills an exceptional program for every family.

## Class News

**Early Learners** • A lively interest in fairies, magic, and make-believe creatures has emerged in the Early Learner classroom. We first discovered these interests when Bannon Lynch donated her fairy house to the classroom for children to play with at school. The fairy house has become the catalyst for dramatic play and the sharing of ideas about magic, superpowers, and experiences with fairies and powerful creatures. Many children in this project are interested in labeling their characters as 'good' or 'bad.' Still other children seem to have a need to explore the idea of magic, flying, invisibility, spells, and potions. Others connect sound or movement to their creatures. The children have been inventing stories around their characters that involve getting hurt or dying. We are excited about the richness of this project. It will be interesting to see where the children take it from here.



**The Primaries** • Paper tubes, string, tape, pipe cleaners, old door knobs, wire, corks, chop sticks and batteries are just a few reusable items the Primary students have been using to create systems of the human body. Initially, Primary students explored each body system and based on individual interest, chose to build a specific system with reusable materials. Some students decided to work independently and some worked collaboratively with a peer to create the nervous system, muscular system, skeletal system or digestive system. They developed plans and experimented with materials to find the "best" femur, skull, nerve or small intestine that worked best for their projects. Students wrote and followed "student rubrics" to assure they had all the required parts to their models. The

Primaries also enjoyed listening to presentations from their peers about their creations. This unit study allowed the students to think beyond what's on the outside of our bodies to develop an understanding of the complexity of what goes on inside of them.

**The Juniors** • At what other school would a class of students have already been on TEN fieldtrips by the end of November? (Actually it's thirteen if you count Lunch Out!) The Juniors have been on the move this Fall. Destinations thus far have included the Discovery Center, the Idaho Historical Museum, the Boise Art Museum, Anne Morrison Park, the library, and the Flicks movie theater. Being within walking distance of both the heart of downtown Boise and the greenbelt, allows us to easily enrich our curriculum with natural and urban experiences. Foothills faculty, students, and parents enjoy and value our ability to utilize our amazing neighborhood resources. Field trips are a treasured aspect of our unique, vibrant learning community.



**Did you know that Foothills School is the oldest independent school in the Treasure Valley? Founded in 1992 by Susan and John Medlin, Foothills is the Valley's oldest non-parochial educational choice for parents and students. And we remain the ONLY school in downtown Boise, offering a truly unique educational option in the region.**



**The Intermediates** • Intermediate students moved into Thanksgiving break with their heads holding new understandings and appreciations about the Corps of Discovery's monumental ventures. Students learned that: During the Corps' crossing of Idaho's Bitterroot Mountains, their meals included soup (can't be too bad?), horsemeat (serious?!), candles (what vitamins there?), and leather (real fiber, for real men). The Corps described and catalogued over 177 species of plants. Only one life was lost over the two plus years the party was on the road – an extraordinary survival rate. The expedition moved through approximately 50 different indigenous nations while traversing the landscape. In the area known today as Western Wyoming /Eastern Idaho, the Corps just happened to run into Sacagawea's brother when they most needed help; lucky? York, William Clark's personal slave, and Sacagawea, were both allowed to 'vote'

for the site of Fort Clatsop – unheard of at the dawn of 19th Century America. Yet upon their return, it took Clark another ten years to grudgingly grant York his freedom. Ask any Intermediate about the intrepid Corps and you're sure to learn a great deal!

**The Seniors** • Why study Cuba in-depth? The Seniors are learning that if you understand the DNA of one revolution, then you'll understand the majority of revolutions. The Seniors began with Cuban geography, building three-dimensional models of this important island nation. The class will then track Cuban history from 1898 to the present, which will include the Spanish-American War and Cuban Independence, Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution, the Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Elian Gonzales controversy, to name a few. To study Cuba in-depth is to better understand the following: power, U.S. relations with other countries, how an underdog triumphs, political leadership, the importance of risk-taking, the complexity of global relationships, how perspectives differ on events, and how media shapes perception. The Seniors are learning the importance of depth – not breadth – in the study of history through this unit of study.



**The Nines** • A pinch of this and a pinch of that and puff! Magic! – You have a molecule. Well, maybe not that easy. In their latest adventure in exploring and learning about the chemical nature of life, the Nines are beginning to apply their new-found knowledge of how atoms come together and form molecules. After spending several weeks in getting to know the Periodic Table of Elements, valence electrons, and the types of bonding that can occur between atoms in compounds, the Nines were able to build in the laboratory some simple and not so simple molecules. In putting the hydrogen and oxygen atoms together to make a water molecule, careful attention was paid to filling outer electron energy levels, bond angles and lengths. Their culminating molecule was a simple glucose molecule that, once built, was readily eaten by all.

Connecting scientific concepts to everyday occurrences and things is our goal in biology, chemistry, and physics at Foothills. The students here may not all become scientists, but they will have a basic understanding and appreciation of these fields in whatever they do.

## Pride in Progress: Mid-Year Written Evaluations

By Susan Wolfe: Director of Education

Every member of the Foothills faculty is committed to regularly providing parents with a snapshot of their child's progress toward mastery of learning goals. Methods of communication include parent-teacher conferences, portfolios, student-led conferences, and formal evaluations. In February, mid-year written evaluations will offer the next meaningful layer to our assessment and evaluation process. Compared to letter grades, the mid-year evaluation is an effective practice that is multi-faceted and discloses so much more about a student's progress in learning. What does an *A* reveal about what a student knows and is able to do? Does a *B* report an analysis of student strengths and areas for further development? Is the quality of work or growth over time indicated in a *C* or *D*? The criteria for an *A* for one teacher may be totally different from another. School improvement expert Dr. Robert Marzano asks, "Why would anyone want to change current grading practices? The answer is quite simple: grades are so imprecise that they are almost meaningless." *Marzano, 2000.*

At Foothills, the mid-year written evaluation was created as an alternative to the traditional report card. It provides so much more than a letter grade when reporting on children's development and progress. The mid-year evaluation describes how well a child is progressing through the lens of the Foothill's learning goals, philosophy, curriculum, and standards. Because each child grows and develops at his/her own rate, students in the same grade may differ widely from their peers. Learning goals are measured on a continuum of progress. Parents can expect a more personal, less competitive report that has a clear measure of student capability while giving parents and students guidance on how to make improvements in specific academic or social areas.

In the Middle School, students and parents can request grades to help with the transition into more traditional school settings. In the Nines Program, formal grading is part of the process to align our program with statewide standards and assure that our students have an easy transition into the next school of their choice.

### NOTE TO E.L. Families:

#### Evaluations Differ to Meet Developmental Goals

Early Learners do not receive the same mid-year written evaluations as the K-9 program. Throughout the year, EL teachers share growth and development through individual portfolios. Through photographs, narratives and work samples, the portfolio addresses personal and social development, scientific thinking, mathematical thinking, visual arts, language and literacy, music and the performing arts. EL families are welcome to view their child's portfolio at any time and teachers will inform families when new pages have been added to the portfolio.



***Foothills School of Arts and Sciences is a vibrant learning community where students develop personal, academic, and social responsibility-leading to a lifetime of discovery.***



### Foothills Alumni: Forrester Excels in Class and Sportsmanship

**Alex Forrester** attended Foothills for 6 years, from 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade. She graduated from Boise High last year with a **3.6 GPA** and **lettered in varsity volleyball and track**. To give back to the community, Alex also **volunteered for the Bureau of Land Management** to help restore Boise Foothills areas damaged by fires. Alex is currently a **freshman at Boise State University**, where she's taking a full course load and **interested in studying math and Spanish**; she's also excited about the possibility of doing a foreign exchange program in San Sebastian, Spain, where she traveled with the Senior Class when she was at Foothills. In addition to school, Alex **works a part-time job** and **visits Foothills** often to see her mom, Primary Teacher Michelle Forrester, and occasionally lend a helping hand in the classroom.

### The Fabulous Foothills Faculty: Meet the EL's Joni Cornell

The EL community is extremely fortunate to have amazing teachers who ensure that every Early Learner gets the incredible education that they deserve. Joni Cornell has been teaching at Foothills School for three-and-a-half years. She began working in After-Care and as a substitute teacher and joined the EL team last year. Prior to that, Joni lived in Western North Carolina where she was the Unit Director at the Boys and Girls Club. There that she oversaw a variety of youth programs including: educational programs, concerts, volunteerism, and field trips in North Carolina and surrounding areas. Joni also worked with the Living Classroom Foundation where she taught Environmental Science, mainly Chesapeake Bay Ecology and Sailing. She was also the First Mate on a Skip Jack, taking school children on tours of the Baltimore Harbor to teach the region's amazing maritime history.



Joni on Mt. Borah Summer 2010

Western North Carolina is also home to Brevard College, which is where Joni received her B.A. in Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education. She also received an Associate's degree in Adventure Sports from Garrett Community College. It is clear why Joni chose the path that she did in college because she is an amazing teacher and outdoor enthusiast who has her hands in just about every recreational activity you can think of. This summer, Joni raced in the Pink Flamingo Classic which is a long-distance endurance race on horseback. Joni and her husband Seth also enjoy fishing, camping, and hiking. They own two horses, Carbon and Jack, along with a few chickens, barn cats, and two dogs. This past summer Joni climbed Mount Borah, Idaho's highest peak at 12,655'. Her athletic goals for this upcoming year are to run the famous Robie Creek, and also the infamous Dirty Dash.

### November Events a Great Success!

*The month of November was one full of outstanding community activities that benefitted the school and continued to build our Foothills Community. Thank you to everyone who got involved!*

We had **one of the most successful Annual Auctions in our school's history with the "Journey on the Orient Express" event on November 13**. With nearly 200 people in attendance, the **school raised \$100,000 in cash** to support our community's financial aid, faculty development, and CHOICE programs. The annual auction truly takes our entire community to be a success, but it takes real leadership to pull this event off with the great outcomes we had this year. **The biggest thanks goes to Coree Carver, this year's CHAIR EXTRAORDINAIRE!** Coree's right (and maybe left) hand was **Ellen Morfit**, a planner and programmer to be reckoned with! **Laura Squyres** lent her creative talent to the event and produced all of the collateral material. **Sarah Wiltz** was THE silent auction leader, soliciting everywhere and managing the silent auction beautifully. **Lisa Lynch** was the all-around go-getter of the committee, lending a hand everywhere it was needed. We had some great repeat leadership this year with **Sue Warnke** soliciting and organizing our cabins, and **Julie Manning** and **Diane Winn** creating a party palette that can't be beat! We also appreciate all of the families who contributed to the class baskets and Wine Cellar Raffle.

Our second great event in November was our **Thankful Feast on November 18**. This great potluck dinner has grown so large that we hold it at the Basque Center and enjoy being a part of downtown Holiday Season festivities!

**To see photos and a full recap of these great events, visit the CURRENT FAMILIES page at [www.foothillsschool.org](http://www.foothillsschool.org) (and remember to visit the website over Winter Break for news from the school!).**

## From The Board of Trustees

Hi Everyone,

Wow...what a jam-packed school year so far! It seems like classes just started and here we are nearing Winter Break. Congratulations to the entire school community for a very fun and successful Auction, followed up immediately by a terrific Thankful Feast. I want to recognize the effort of the Board of Trustees in the Auction, bringing in several of the live and silent auction items, as well as inviting outside friends to attend the event and support us with their bids! Nice.

From a business standpoint, our annual financial audit was just completed, giving the school high marks for financial procedures and processes.

I feel very fortunate to be chairing a team of Trustees who do not have to worry about the day to day operations, quality of education, or immediate financial condition of the school, as was the case just a few years ago. With a strong Head of School and a qualified administrative staff supporting a dedicated and talented faculty, the Trustees have the luxury, and obligation, to look forward.

Looking ahead for the Board, our focus moves to the strategic planning initiative. We are fortunate to have engaged a fantastic facilitator, Bill Drake of Drake-Cooper, for our process this year. Bill has vast organizational strategic experience in the private sector as well as with schools, non profits and government agencies.

Input from parents, faculty staff and the community, as well as a comprehensive marketing study of education in greater Boise, have helped us narrow our scope to the large questions addressing education for this 21<sup>st</sup> century, and how Foothills can best deliver it. A team of volunteers is being assembled to dissect these grander topics, and to distill them into a direction for Foothills over the next several years. The group will be meeting several times between now and early Spring, with the intention of delivering an executable strategic plan for Foothills for the next decade.

The process will be challenging and exciting. Those of you who have suggestions, comments or questions are welcome to contact me directly at ezimmerglacier@gmail.com.

Many thanks for the great school year so far!

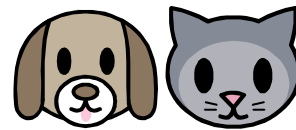
*Ed Zimmer*

Foothills Parent and Board President

## WINTER BREAK SCHEDULE

We all look forward to Winter Break! For some of us, it's a time for reconnecting with family and enjoying Holidays. For others, it's time to hit the slopes (and this year is starting out great with some big storms!). For others, it's just a good time to unwind and collect ourselves in preparation for the New Year. Our commitment at Foothills includes the recognition that our faculty and staff work extremely hard and they, too, deserve a great break. **This year, the school will be closed and no staff will be available from 4:45 p.m. on Friday, December 17, through January 4, 2011.** The school will be open for regular administrative office hours – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. – on Wednesday, January 5. Classes resume at the regular time on Monday, January 10.

***Please work with your children to assure that no items you need are left in the school before Winter Break. In addition, all food and perishable items will be removed before the Break begins. If your child has left something at school, it may be retrieved on January 5.***









## FEED FREDDY'S FRIENDS & SIMPLY CATS!

As part of a Service Learning Project, all Foothills students will be organizing a food drive/fundraiser to benefit the Idaho Humane Society and Simply Cats. We will be collecting food and supplies before and after school. This holiday fundraiser will run December 6-15. Foothills students and families will have the opportunity to help by donating one or more items from the list below. Winter is a difficult time for unwanted animals and these items are badly needed.

- Pet Food
  - Pet Blankets/Beds
  - Yarn
  - Doggie Treats
  - Cat Litter
  - Pet Toys
- And cash is welcome, too!***

Service opportunities offer students the chance to learn the great value –and the great joy – of sharing their lives with others. It helps foster a love of knowledge and a love for all living things. For questions, contact Sue Wolfe, Director of Education, at [swolfe@foothillsschool.org](mailto:swolfe@foothillsschool.org).

# FOOTHILLS DECEMBER CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Hanukkah Begins 	2 EL Parent Meeting 6-7 pm <i>(to be rescheduled due to inclement weather)</i>	3	4
5	6 Lower School Winter Performance: 6:00 pm @ Music Room Feed Freddy's Friends & Simply Cats Begins	7	8	9 Musical Theater Performance 6:00 pm @ Prairie Dog Productions	10 Winter Formal Grades 6-9 <sup>th</sup> : 7:00-10:00 pm @ Foothills School 	11
12	13	14 Executive Committee @ Noon Upper School Winter Performance: 6:00 pm @ Music Room	15 Faculty, Staff and Board Holiday Party @ 6:00 pm 	16 Finance Committee Meeting @ Noon Theater Class Performance: 6:00 pm @ Music Room	17 <b>Last Day of School and Early Release @ 1:00 pm</b>	18
19	20 <b>No School- Winter Break to Jan. 9</b>	21	22 	23	24	25 Merry Christmas! 
26	27	28	29	30	31 	1 Happy New Year!

**Healthy New Year's Resolution: Substantial health benefits are gained by doing physical activity according to the Physical Activity Guidelines presented below for different groups.**



### Children and Adolescents (aged 6–17)

- ▶ Children and adolescents should do 1 hour (60 minutes) or more of physical activity every day.
- ▶ Most of the 1 hour or more a day should be either moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.
- ▶ As part of their daily physical activity, children and adolescents should do vigorous-intensity activity on at least 3 days per week. They also should do muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activity on at least 3 days per week.

### Adults (aged 18–64)

- ▶ Adults should do 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes, preferably spread throughout the week.

# FOOTHILLS JANUARY CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 No School- Winter Break	4	5 <i>Administrative Team Back to Work</i>  Office Hours Resume: 8 am to 5 pm	6	7	8 
9	10 <b>Classes Resume</b>	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 <b>No School: Martin Luther King Day</b>	18 Executive Committee Meeting @ Noon	19	20 Finance Committee Meeting @ Noon	21 <b>CHOICE: Day One</b>	22
23	24	25 Board Meeting @ 4:00 pm	26	27	28 <b>CHOICE: Day Two</b>	29
30	31	<b>Coming Soon....</b>	<b>February 3</b> Open House 6:00 pm	<b>February 18</b> Early Release at 1:00pm	<b>February 21</b> No School- President's Day	<b>February 22</b> Financial Aid Forms for 2011-12 Due

## FOOTHILLS FAMILIES, MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**Foothills School's Spring Open House will be on Thursday, February 3, 2011, from 6-8 p.m.**

Please join us and invite your friends, relatives, and any prospective families you know to come for a fun night, showcasing what makes Foothills School and your child's education special! If you know families interested in applying to the school for next year, they shouldn't wait until February to start the application process! They can contact our Director of Admissions, Katy Young, at [kyoung@foothillsschool.org](mailto:kyoung@foothillsschool.org) or 331-9260 today for a tour of the school.