

FOCUS

Faculty Issue

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Focus is a student driven newspaper, written by the students for the students. But that doesn't mean that we don't appreciate our faculty - in fact, it's just the opposite. This year, Emilia and I made it one of our goals to highlight more faculty and to show the adults at Friends' Central that we appreciate their work tremendously. When it came time to brainstorm a theme for our Early February issue, Focus came to the consensus that it was time to really spotlight all of our faculty, from teachers who are continuing their education, to the ones revolutionizing the ways in which FCS students think about the world around us. We had so many great articles written that not all of them will make it to press this month! In our next issue (Coming before Spring Break), look out for another page of articles dedicated to the faculty. Here's to the people who make an incredible difference in FC students' lives - enjoy the issue!

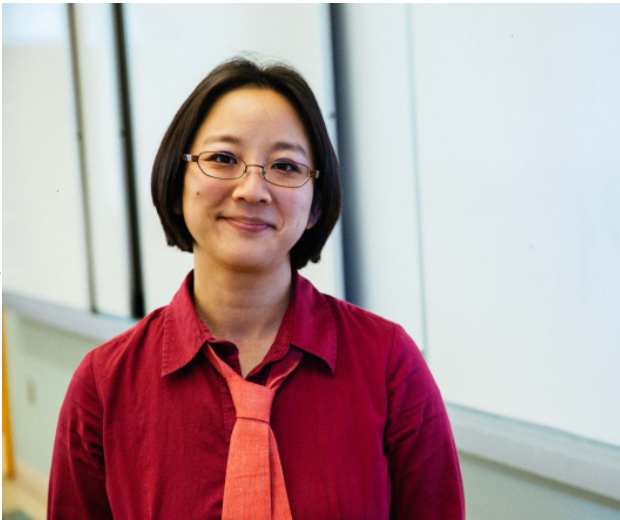
-Peter Dissinger

Dr Yin in the Lab

By SAOIRSE HAHN '15

While we are all aware that our teachers at FCS have a vast array of knowledge and experience in their respective fields, we seldom know of the work that they put in to get where they are today. Dr. Yin is a prime example of a well respected teacher at Friends' Central with a very surprising work life outside of school. She began her career by getting her doctorate, which required extensive research and time. In her first year at graduate school, she began by working at three different labs within her University to get a sense of the different paths she could take. While she decided that embryology was the path that she was interested in studying, she ended up choosing to work in a lab studying a very rare bone disease, which causes people to form bone after birth, primarily in their skeletal muscle. She was motivated to research this genetic disease because it originated from incorrect development of the embryo, which she could test more easily with animal embryos.

Dr. Yin began by studying chicken embryos, interfering with their bone formation by performing microsurgery, and then allowing the embryo to continue to develop. She found that depending on the timing of the procedure (even a matter of days), she could either prevent



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Why Africa? An Interview with Mr. Fisher

Introduction BY EMILIA WEINBERG '14

As co-Editors of Focus, Peter and I obviously have a shared interest in journalism. However, as we learned this year, we also share a love of history. It was no surprise then that we both found ourselves in Mr. Fisher's Post Colonial Africa history class. Open to seniors and juniors, this advanced elective covers modern African history from the colonial period to the present day. Since day one, Peter and I have found ourselves wondering what inspired Mr. Fisher to start this unique and fascinating class. We figured this special "Faculty Issue" of Focus would give us the perfect chance to seek some answers.

Our first question is why did you choose to start this elective?

There are really three reasons that I wanted to teach this class. First, I think we lose track of the idea that history is around us all the time. We live in a world of "historical infrastructure" that defines who we are, the questions we ask, and how we see the world. I think it helps us to see the world historically when we look at what might be different for other people in other places. Their history is different, their cultures are different and their way of seeing the world around them is shaped by different forces.

Second, I have often thought in terms of what kinds of things students should know something about. It seems irresponsible to leave a significant portion of the world outside of our curriculum. I also feel that all educated people should wrestle with the question of why wealth, opportunity and privilege are so unequally distributed in the world.

Third, I have had the chance to come to know a variety of expats from Ethiopia and have been fascinated by their range of experiences and stories. I am also struck by the many ways that they have seen the implica-

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Teachers Go Back to School

By CAROLINE BARTHOLOMEW '15 and FARIA REHMAN '17

At a place like Friends' Central, it's easy to see that learning never stops. We're always experiencing new things both in and outside of the classroom. Yet students are not the only ones who are eager to learn; this applies to teachers too. At FCS, we are truly fortunate to have teachers who not only are exceptional educators, but who also want to further their own education out of love of learning.

Ms. Plunkett, who teaches Calculus and Algebra II, already has a master's degree in teaching high school math, but she is currently earning another degree at Villanova. "I really missed doing math and learning math," says Ms. Plunkett, "and I started to feel envious of my students who were leaving and going to college to take more math!" When it came to making the decision to go back to school, Ms. Plunkett had nothing but support from both her family and the FCS math department. As for balancing teaching full time and schoolwork, she says, "It's insane. There are a lot of weeks where I go to bed at 12 or 1 every night, but my family is very understanding and I couldn't do it without them." After getting her new degree, Ms. Plunkett isn't looking for any specific new opportunities; she only wants to enjoy herself and to bring what she is learning about math to her high school classes.

Ms. Plunkett isn't the only teacher who is going back to school. Galen Guindon, the 4th and 5th grade music teacher at the Lower School, is currently taking classes at Temple University to earn his master's degree in music education. Galen attended Goucher College as an undergrad and graduated with a degree in music, concentrating on music history and violin performance. "After I graduated from Goucher, I'd been doing some camps and working with kids in the summer and I had already been thinking about going into education for music," said Galen, "so when I came back and started subbing and coaching here at Friends' Central, just being in the academic universe made me realize how

much I enjoy working with young people and helping them develop in creating music and seeing the lightbulb moment happen." Aside from teaching and going to school, Galen also coaches boy's Varsity Soccer and girl's JV Basketball. He says it keeps him balanced because it allows him to take part in all the different areas of life he's passionate about. Galen hopes that his master's degree will lead to a full-time position teaching music and working with a middle or high school orchestra, and that "hopefully somewhere out there I'll find a good fit."

Last, but certainly not least, Ms. Petrie from the Upper School Office was kind enough to talk to us for a bit about taking the same leap back into school. "I have recently graduated from West Chester University with a bachelor's in psychology. [I] have always known that after I acquired my bachelor's I would continue on to get my masters." Ms. Petrie said that she is going back to get her masters in education, and that she is planning on achieving that through West Chester University's program in Higher Education. However, she said that she has never truly stopped going to school - in fact, for the past ten years she's been taking one class every semester, and she believes that she will continue to do that. "I thoroughly enjoy being in a classroom and getting to meet and interact with all types of individuals. I have had the pleasure of learning and debating subjects, breaking down problems, and addressing conversations about what I know and recognizing what I don't know, and that's what keeps me going back to school- there's always something to learn!" Clearly, Ms. Petrie is not only a hardworking and friendly face on the Friends' Central campus, but also a diligent and lively student.

To the three teachers going back to school - and any more who will do so in the future - the FCS community is incredibly excited for you. We wish you the best of times back at school, and we're thankful that we have educators at our school who truly understand the importance of always learning more.

FCS’s New US Citizens

By JULIA BARR ‘15 and JULIA STERN ‘15

Ms. Socorro

“Young enough to dream about discovering a new fascinating world, full of adventures in a vast, rich and dynamic country... Naturally I longed to know it first-hand, so I had no hesitation in grabbing the first opportunity that offered me that chance.”

At age 25, Maria Alejandra Socorro came to the United States with her cousin, who had moved to Philadelphia for work, pursuing the American dream that for her “was living life like the characters in the sitcom television show Friends.”

Ms. Socorro grew up in Maracaibo, Venezuela, “a culture born in the colonial expansion under the Spanish crown, and consequently very different from the Anglo-Saxon world.” In comparing the cultures of the United States and her home country, one difference she noted was that “people [in Venezuela] are usually very friendly, warm and loving. They make a joke out of everything. The so-called ‘personal space’ does not exist or is rarely respected. There is no sense of time, usually people don’t plan things in advance... What struck me the most was the dynamism of life [in America]. The biggest lesson that I have learned: work hard and you will be rewarded. The process of gaining citizenship itself is a most severe lesson in that; it is painfully lengthy, expensive and full of risks. But again, nothing good comes without sacrifice.”

Twelve years after arriving in America with a tourist visa, Ms. Socorro has completed the complicated and involved task of gaining her full US citizenship, a process that in total took 10 years. After finding an employer willing to sponsor her in gaining a work visa, she undertook the three-year process of obtaining her green card (or permanent resident status). After another five years, Ms. Socorro finally became eligible to apply for US citizenship, which she received this fall. Although in many ways she still holds on to the culture she grew up with, she says, “I feel very lucky to call myself an American, to have gained a new home and have met so many wonderful people who have become family to me. I am fortunate to live in the land of the free!”



Mr. Barry

Padraig Barry had no intention of staying when he won a green card in the lottery and arrived in the United States in September of 1990. After all, he had found his United States college experience four years earlier to be quite unimpressive. Despite his first experience across the pond, this second visit to the States proved to be a real discovery. In comparison to his small hometown in Ireland, a tight-knit community with an idyllic sense of safety, this new country seemed enormous and incredibly diverse. In Boston, a big city with a large Irish population, he felt especially welcomed and treated like royalty; however, “small-town Ireland- culturally- was a million miles away.” At Children’s Hospital, Barry got first-hand experience in a fast-paced society while working with people from all over the world. Despite his initial sadness in leaving his friends and family back at home and his opinions on political polarization and gun control, Barry never forgets the opportunities “to make a good living, raise a family, and live the American dream” that the U.S has given him and Ireland could not. When he did go back to Ireland in 1994 for a couple of years and found he could not settle down, Barry knew he had “gotten bit by the American bug.” Despite his U.S citizenship, however, whenever he returns to Ireland, he always considers it to be “going home.”



Dr. P on Advising Students for Diversity

By DR. PATTERSON

Often it is amazing to see what our students can do when teachers step back and allow them to take charge. Certainly that has been true of this year’s editors-in-chief of Focus, Peter Dissinger and Emilia Weinberg, and their hard-working, dedicated staff. It has been true, too, of a new group that is up and running at Friends’ Central US – Students for Diversity (S4D).

Last spring, 3 students -- Isabel Nardi, Drew Winig, and Matt Wilson – came to Mr. MacFarlane and I to ask if we’d be willing to sponsor a new club focused on diversity issues at school. In a very short amount of time, that “club” has become a strong alliance of dedicated students, including leaders of the existing affinity groups (BSF, ASA, GSA). It has been a genuine pleasure -- and often an education for the adults -- to see these students working together on projects during their weekly Monday meetings. Like the Focus staff, they know how to have fun, maintain an air of friendly discussion, and actually get very good work done.

S4D’s intention, put simply, is to generate conversations around diversity issues at FCS and in the world at-large. Getting the leaders of the affinity groups to work together was the first-step toward that goal. Very quickly, however, other students joined the group, and there has been a great deal of positive energy towards figuring out ways to promote dialogue and thinking about diversity. Lately, the members have been working on presentations they will give to the faculty and to the student body. They are making a video of anonymous student and teacher responses to questions about the “typical” FCS student and about what diversity means at our school. While it is hard to predict what the outcome of these endeavours will be, at the very least the presentation will allow for conversations about what we believe we are and what reality tells us.

The group also hopes to find money so that

students can attend conferences on Diversity. (The idea for this group came, in fact, after Isabel, Drew and Matt had been inspired at conferences they attended.) They are very aware, too, that diversity can be defined in a variety of ways, and so over time they want to make sure that diversity in all its forms is respected and valued. This spring, for her senior project, Isabel plans to visit selected schools in the NE to see how they address diversity issues, what sort of programs they have, and what kinds of support they have, financially and otherwise.

Twice this year Students for Diversity has presented some of its ideas to the faculty, and already they are admired and respected in our community of teachers. They welcome both faculty and, especially, students, so come by Main 25 during Monday late lunch and be part of something extraordinary.

From Dr. Yin on Page 1

the disease from occurring, or actually accelerate bone formation. Since it was impossible to figure out during what period of development she interfered with the embryos, the procedure was found to be too risky to perform on patients. Almost directly following her graduation, Dr. Yin began teaching at FCS and had to put her research aside. She was able to continue her work in the summers, however, and began studying turtle embryology.

Dr. Yin’s research surrounding turtles was at first concerned with the shell of the turtle and how a turtle embryo knows to form a bone in that specific place. She deduced that instead of growing their ribs forward and around from their spines, turtles would grow them out laterally to form their shell. The turtle’s shell is fused with its ribs, leaving its organs unprotected. However, turtles grow ventral shells around their stomachs to protect their organs. The last few years of her research have been focused towards studying this ventral shell on the stomach, which is oddly not connected to any muscles or ligaments. Dr. Yin began to ask the question: if the ventral shell is separate from all of the other bones and muscles, how did it form there?

After years of research, Dr. Yin and her team found that cells in the spinal cord that do not become neurons and travel to other parts of the body could be responsible for this bizarre separate shell. To find out whether or not these cells could have created the ventral shell, they injected the spinal cord of a turtle embryo with fluorescent dye to track the cells as they travel throughout the body. They found that after the cells leave the spinal cord to create bones like the skull, they take what she called a “detour” to the belly of the turtle to form this protective layer. Dr. Yin and her colleagues just had a paper published in November on this fascinating discovery.

She not only uses her knowledge of embryonics outside of the classroom, but also inside of it by conducting labs using zebrafish embryos. While studying the unit of genetics, students get the chance to try and mate zebrafish, and if all goes according to plan (which in biology it usually does not), they get to observe the embryos produced by the female. As students, we are very lucky to have such amazing opportunities in the sciences, and Dr. Yin without a doubt adds exponentially to that experience.

The Doctors at FCS

By SAM VEITH ‘16 and ANTHONY CANDELORI-MORAGLIA ‘16

In January, Focus had the pleasure of sitting down with the teachers in our community who hold doctorate degrees. During these meetings, these teachers discussed the experience of earning their degrees and gave us some insight into the world of higher education. It is an incredible honor to have teachers who have chosen to enlighten us with the unique breadth of knowledge they have acquired. The teachers at Friends’ Central are a treasured aspect of our time as students, and here’s to meeting a few of them.

History teacher and author Dr. Kelley Graham spent her early college years in Canada at the University of Toronto. After receiving her Bachelors and Masters degrees, Dr. Graham moved to Philadelphia to study for her PhD at Temple University, where she first taught classes. While teaching classes of over 100 students was stressful at times, one of her advisors reminded her that this was her “last chance to pick and choose the books you want to read. For the rest of your life you will have to make a living, now all you have to do is read and think.”

Biology and Foundations teacher Dr. Holly McCloskey earned her Ph.D. in Biochemistry at the Medical College of Pennsylvania (MCP) where she contributed to research on cholesterol. During her time at MCP, she spent the majority of her days doing “fascinating” research. Dr. McCloskey ended our interview with a sentence which summed up how difficult it was earning a doctorate and ended up on my “favorite quotes” list: “It’s a lot of work and a lot of time, but when you have the passion, it doesn’t matter.”

Chemist extraordinaire Dr. Phyllis Hanson earned her Ph.D. in Environmental Chemistry at the University of Maryland, after studying Applied Chemistry at the University of Georgia and University of Missouri. In reflecting on

her experience, she said, “If there is one thing I learned during that time, it’s that you need to have grit to keep focused for the long haul.” Remarkably, as Dr. Hanson was doing fieldwork around the Chesapeake Bay and laboratory research on groundwater chemistry, she was raising two very young children. On balancing her two separate lives, she said, “You always need to pace yourself, while keeping your eye on [your] goal and what you want in life.”

English teacher Dr. Steven Patterson received his Ph.D. in Renaissance Literature at Temple, after studying as an undergraduate at Ohio State University and the University of Illinois. He was interested in the works of Shakespeare and Renaissance drama, and knew he wanted to further pursue those studies for his career. Dr. Patterson noted that a number of students dropped their studies because they couldn’t handle treating the work as their main focus. He explained, “it helps to be self motivated... Especially during the dissertation stage, treating your studies like your job helps a great deal.”

Latin teacher and archaeological authority Dr. Erika Harnett (known as Doc to her students), received her Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr College in classical architecture after studying Latin as an undergraduate at Temple and teaching in the Philadelphia public schools. Doc learned a lot during her time at Bryn Mawr, from reading and writing in various languages to understanding how to critically analyze documents. One of the most important things she learned during this time was that, “to get a humanities major, you have to get used to spending many hours studying alone in the library.” Doc’s hours of studying evidently paid off, as she has become a renowned expert on classical architecture.

Josh Weisgrau Goes International

By JESS MILLER ‘15

The American School of Bombay is giving us a look into the future with its online schooling program. ASB is a school located in Bombay, India, that requires its students to take at least one elective online; the choices cover a wide range of topics, such as astrobiology and culinary art. Our own Josh Weisgrau is deeply involved in this innovative program.

Josh Weisgrau’s passion for media studies and arts has led him to the opportunity to teach courses for the online schooling program. ASB students can choose to take his courses such as photography, filmmaking, screenwriting, and multiple levels of media studies. About the program, Josh says, “It’s something new to explore,” and he is interested in tackling a new challenge as a teacher.

Since all of the courses are online, and Josh is used to teaching these courses hands-on at FCS, he has to find the best way teach through the computer screen. For his courses, he created a website using the learning management system Haiku to lay out course content, assignments, and resources. This website has discussion forums and controls to upload work, very similar to Veracross, according to Josh. However, with Haiku, he creates websites solely for specific online courses. Additionally, since Josh does not conduct class in person with his students, his writing on his Haiku page must be precise. Josh must present assignment directions, course lessons, videos, and demonstrations digitally in simple and deliberate words, so that students are able to make the most progress.

The students attending ASB use laptops or other internet-receiving devices to access the online course during a scheduled block at school. The school has a lounge-like room where students sit and learn online. This setting contrasts to the classroom settings at FCS, in which we have face-to-face discussions. ASB’s long term goal is to have a greater international student body; since the school has no central classrooms, it seems that this goal is highly possible. Soon Josh will be teaching media and the arts to students from countless locations.

Josh is lucky to have this opportunity to teach his passions worldwide and we’re excited to learn more about this amazing program.

From Mr. Fisher on Page 1

tions of the Cold War more directly than I ever did, in terms of opportunity or challenges. For me the Cold War meant the occasional “duck and cover” drill. For an acquaintance, “Tom”, it meant the opportunity to study at a university in Poland. This was possible because after a coup in 1974 the Ethiopian government aligned itself with the Eastern block. So, “Tom” set off with a handful of other Ethiopian students to take a crash course in Polish over the summer. Now, “Tom” speaks at least 5 languages and is a well accomplished doctor.

Where did your interest in modern Africa come from? Do you have any collegiate background in African studies?

I took one class in Modern African History in college, I think it was the only one offered, which was impressive in 1980. I have also done courses on colonial literature and politics generally. In college I also became interested in the divestment movement that sought to discourage major corporations from investing in South Africa until apartheid was brought to an end. As I think back about the relevant classes I took and reading that I have done I am struck by how much has happened. Since 1980, Africa has seen massive change: new governments, big shifts in political ideology, new social movements, and new economic opportunities.

Have you taken any trips to Africa and have they influenced what you teach in the class?

I have made two trips to Ethiopia and have spent a total of several weeks in Ethiopia and Egypt. I think about it a great deal and of course it influences the way that I think about things, but it mostly comes up in little things. My favorite example is the taxi driver in Cairo who casually referred to Mubarak as “Pharaoh.” Or I think of the image of aggressive middle-aged Egyptian women whose hijabs gave them full capacity to assert themselves in virtually any public setting. I will never forget the intensity of Cairo. It makes Hong Kong and Taipei look like sleepy backwaters.

How do you choose which countries/events to cover?

I start this class off explaining that we cannot do much of anything in great depth. I think the massive dimensions of the region pose real problems. However, since most students start knowing almost nothing aside from references to famines, genocide in Rwanda and apartheid in South Africa, and lots of ambiguous information about political and social strife, there is relatively fast payback for any contextualization that we can do. We look closely at a few countries and this list has changed from time to time. I try to pick examples that we can develop quickly, and sometimes these are nations that have current event relevance. This year, we have looked at Nigeria and a little bit about politics in Tanzania; we will also look at Egypt.

Why do you think students should take Post Colonial Africa and what do you expect your students to take from the course?

I expect everyone to have some appreciation for the impact of colonialism and to understand that the extraction of resources, the taxes imposed for foreign administration, the failure to promote balanced and diverse social institutions over many decades came with a huge social cost.

It’s important to know that the Cold War had a vastly more tangible impact on many people in the developing world who had to suffer harsh regimes of both right-wing and leftist varieties, as American and Soviet policy sought to promote loyalties to their own alliances. This was the logic that led the US and Europeans to benignly accept apartheid policies in South Africa because South Africa was a bulwark against communism.

It is also important to realize that globalism will continue to reshape the way that others think of their opportunities and we should think more broadly about what this means for us; that social inequality comes with a real cost; and that ideas carry real meaning. The story of what it means to belong to a specific nation is important, and people are always framing stories about who they are and what that means.



Phoenix in the Phast Lane

Matt Cohen: Runner

By JOSH BENJET ‘16



Matthew Cohen, a substitute teacher who now works in the Office of Advancement, started running as a way to train for soccer, but after one cross country practice, he was hooked. He turned running into his passion, doing cross country in the fall and track in the spring throughout high school. When asked why he enjoys running so much he responded that, besides the sense of accomplishment, “Running has been a hugely positive force in my life. I’ve met most of my best friends through running.” After a successful high school career, Matt decided to take his talents to the well-regarded running program at Haverford College.

In his junior year at Haverford, Matt was part of the NCAA Division III National Cross Country Championship winning team, which he described as “an absolutely incredible experience.” The next year he captained both cross country and track, and Haverford’s team won their conference in cross country, indoor track, and track, a “triple crown.”

Nowadays Matt averages 80 miles a week and runs twice a day, while also continuing to compete in races. Earlier in November, Matt ran in the Philadelphia half marathon(13.1 miles) and finished it in a blazing-fast time of 1 hour and 15 minutes. Matt continues to train to improve on his 5k (3.1 miles) time of 16 minutes and twenty seconds and his 10k (6.2 miles) time of 33 min and 51 seconds. Matt says that his long term running goal is to run a fast marathon, even though he thinks that is still thousands of miles away.

Mrs. McConnell: Lifelong Athlete

By EMMA XU ‘14

You can always find Linda McConnell in the gyms or on Friends’ Central’s sports fields overseeing the athletic activities of Middle School and Upper School students. This year is her 23rd year in Friends’ Central athletics, yet not many students at Friends’ Central know how and why she became interested in being involved in athletics and physical education.

When Ms. McConnell was in 5th Grade, she admired her PE teacher for inspiring students to have a blast with athletics. She became determined to become an athletics instructor and never wavered from pursuing her dream. She played tennis, field hockey and basketball at Upper Moreland High School, PA. Later, she attended Penn State University and enjoyed a college athletic career at the very beginning of Title IX. She played center halfback for the field hockey team and shooting guard for the basketball team at Penn State.

Ms. McConnell began her teaching and coaching career at The MacDuffie School in Springfield, MA. Then she came back to Pennsylvania and coached Varsity Women’s Basketball at Haverford College while also assisting in field hockey and lacrosse. However, she discovered that she missed coaching high school athletes as they began their athletic careers. She loved guiding the students in their athletic careers and teaching the all-important components of fair play and sportsmanship. Ms. McConnell became a PE teacher and coach at GFS. Four years later, after Mr. Felsen had left GFS to become Head of School at FCS, Ms. McConnell “came across the river” and continued her career here. At FCS, she has held various positions in the athletic department. In her first eight years, she was the head coach of Varsity Girls’ Basketball. During that time, she also became the Director of Girls’ Athletics. She has coached Girls’ JV tennis, JV lacrosse and JV field hockey, Middle School field hockey and lacrosse, and she is still coaching Middle School basketball.

In her lifelong career as a versatile athlete and coach, Ms. McConnell concluded that being in sports is about having fun and growing from the experience of being on a team. She thinks it is important not only to give it all in sports, but to do so also in life. This is how you become a better athlete and, even more importantly, a better person.



Artist In the Spotlight

Diego Luzuriaga

By GRACE KAUFMAN-ROSENGARTEN ‘16 TAYLOR WILLIAMS ‘16 and NATASHA GUY ‘16

Diego Luzuriaga is known by many at Friends’ Central as the friendly Woodshop (woodworking for 8th and 12th graders), Music (Music History and Music and Society) and Spanish (Level 2) teacher. He has earned himself a reputation as a wonderful and helpful teacher both in the Middle and Upper schools. Everyone has a vague sense of his myriad of other talents, including his fluency in Spanish and French, but for the most part, Mr. Luzuriaga keeps the focus on his students. It turns out he is not only a talented woodworker but an internationally renowned composer as well. He is not from a particularly musical family, but when his brother started playing instruments, Mr. Luzuriaga took up the guitar and flute and realized that he had a knack for putting notes together and creating his own music. He began composing at the age of 15 and hasn’t stopped since. His favorite instrument is the guitar, but he also plays some piano.

Mr. Luzuriaga has studied at multiple universities and conservatories for composing and he has taught at the University of Brasilia. Many of his compositions are influenced by South American folk and classical music. Just a few years ago one of his pieces was played at the Kimmel Center. However, Mr. Luzuriaga does not consider that achievement as his greatest musical accomplishment. That place would go to his opera *Manuela y Bolivar*, which is wrote in 2006 and was the first ever Ecuadorian opera. It has been performed 20 times.

Mr. Luzuriaga loves to compose his own songs for guitar and voice, some of which are available on iTunes. He remains humble despite his many accomplishments, stressing the importance of being a good listener. Make sure to stop by the woodshop sometime to see what musical things Diego is up to!

Dear Georgia Fox: Teacher Edition

By SOPHIE MACFARLANE ‘15 and HANNAH KAMINSKY ‘15

Dear Georgia Fox,

I’m having trouble keeping my students awake during my block 7 class. I think that maybe if I added something to the decor of the classroom, I could get them to stay more alert. Do you have any tips for spicing up my classroom and getting the students to not catch some Z’s during class?

Sincerely, An FCS teacher losing his or her students to nap time

Dear FCS teacher,

When I was a teacher I had this problem as well! Students love to sleep... it is just the way they are. Before retiring as a teacher, I developed a method called the “Spice, Voice, Style” or “S.V.S.” to ensure your students will stay awake throughout the whole class. The first part of my method is spicing up your classroom walls. Having bright-colored posters, fun facts, and other visually pleasing decor will surely keep your students more awake. In fact, the boring neutral-colored walls that most schools choose are one of the main reasons why students doze off during class! Next, change your tone of voice. If you are talking in a monotone voice for the entire class, the information will go in one ear and out the other as though nothing was said, almost like a soothing white noise. That is NOT what we want in our classrooms! The last step of “S.V.S” is to vary your teaching style. A constant lecture in a class can be a little boring for students. Changing your style around from lecturing to group work to an open discussion will keep your students from dreaming about rocking the blue and white. I hope that this helped you! Happy teaching!

Your friend, Georgia Fox

FOCUS

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