

# Steppingstone

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**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

I recently met with two Scholars from Steppingstone’s pilot class, and it was such fun. After we got caught up with the latest class news, we began, as usual, to look back on the experience we shared 15 years ago. While there was plenty of nostalgia, I was struck by how much the program has changed and improved as compared to what the Class of 1991 experienced. While the mission and our passion for delivering on that mission are as strong as ever, there is no comparing what we offered then to what The Steppingstone Academy provides and demands now.

In 1991, we taught two classes: English and math. Now, the offerings also include social studies, Latin, and test prep, to name just a few. Electives are challenging and fun, and we introduce the Scholars to organized sports that many will play at their placement schools.

Moreover, it isn’t just that we offer more; what we offer is carefully considered, planned, and delivered within the framework of the 14-month program. Our Director of Organizational Learning evaluates every aspect of the Academy to make sure the program is as effective as possible. Recently, we hired a Director of Curriculum to review and revise our

curriculum to ensure that it meets the Scholars where they are and prepares them for where they need to be in 14 months. We are implementing a new entrance exam that will not only give us more information about the Scholars’ academic needs as they begin the 14-month program, it will also allow us to measure how well we are meeting those needs over the course of the academic preparation component.

I am not at all ashamed of what Steppingstone offered, in terms of curriculum, back in 1991. It was the best we could do, and the results were wonderful. And, I also won’t be surprised if in 2021, I am having lunch with Scholars from the Class of 2006, and we look with amazement at how far the curriculum had progressed since 2006!



*Michael Danziger is the president of The Steppingstone Foundation.*

**STEPPINGSTONE NEWSMAKERS**

**Christina Wing-O’Donnell** of Wing-O’Donnell Ventures joined Steppingstone’s Board of Directors in January . . . It’s a baby boom at Steppingstone. Congratulations to **Oksana Bondar**, Director of Organizational Learning; **Yully Cha**, Head of Academy; **Sarah Conrad**, Dean of Placement; and **Alyssa Zink**, Director of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations on the births of Solomon, Carmen, John, and Charlie . . . Steppingstone welcomes **Jaime Bard**, Associate Dean of Academic Preparation and **Karin Cooley**, Counselor . . . Steppingstone Fellow **Michael Posternack** is taking a course at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education on how non-school hours provide opportunities for closing the achievement gap.

## SPOTLIGHT ON CURRICULUM

Keeping abreast of the curricula of Steppingstone's 24 placement schools is, literally, a full-time job. Last summer, Melissa Rubin joined the Steppingstone staff to do just that. As Director of Curriculum, Rubin ensures that the 14-month academic preparation component is as effective as possible. "Not only do I need to look at what the Scholars are learning, I need to stay on top of content being taught at the independent and exam schools." Rubin explains, "For example, I need to make certain that the Scholars experience Shakespeare as well as have a

**"The Scholars' passion for learning is already there, and my job is to . . . make sure the 14-month academic component prepares the Scholars to succeed."**

good grasp of Algebra II and Geometry fundamentals. They need exposure to the academic content awaiting them at their placement schools." She goes on to say,

"The Scholars' passion for learning is already there, and my job is to provide a solid structure, fill in any gaps or inadequacies, and most important, make sure the 14-month academic component prepares the Scholars to succeed."

With feedback from the independent and public exam schools with which Steppingstone works, Steppingstone has identified five core academic values that are the foundation of the Steppingstone curriculum—reading, writing, critical thinking, problem solving, and oral presentation skills—and Rubin reviews, revises, and develops curricula with these values in mind. Any new trends, testing measures, or tools are assessed and if they're relevant, will be incorporated into the Academy and Academy Nine curricula.

Mindful of the significance of continuous improvement, Rubin has met with several Steppingstone placement schools to talk about what Steppingstone does well and what needs improvement. She has also introduced a comprehensive test that is used by independent schools and will help to evaluate the overall



Melissa Rubin, Director of Curriculum

academic skill sets of the Scholars before they start The Steppingstone Academy. "The results of the test will help to delineate each Scholar's strengths and weaknesses," explains Rubin. "With this data, we can customize an academic plan that will best suit the needs of the individual."

Rubin, an alumna of The Park School and Milton Academy, was Assistant Director of Academic Support and taught English and history at Milton before joining the Steppingstone staff. "Things seem to have come full circle," says Melissa.

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Red Carpet Wrap-up

The 2006 Crystal Ball committee, led by co-chairs Jen Berylyson & Natasha Velickovic'91, drew over 500 guests down the red carpet on Friday, February 3, 2006 at The Four Seasons Hotel in Boston. Guests were serenaded by a



Crystal Ball co-chairs Jen Berylyson and Natasha Velickovic '91



The Crystal Ball

Left to right: Committee members Glen Sutton, Kate Lubin, Megan Rowe, and Kim Bohlin

Frank Sinatra impersonator while sipping champagne at a reception sponsored by Wells Fargo Foothill and bidding on over 60 silent auction items donated by companies such as Ame & Lulu, Emily Starr, and The Sports Club/LA. After the reception, attendees danced the night away to music by Flipside.

The event is well on its way to raising over \$85,000 for Steppingstone. Thanks to all of the volunteers and donors who helped to make this year's Crystal Ball on the red carpet a true award-winner.

### The Fourth Annual Golf Classic Tees Off

The fourth annual Steppingstone Golf Classic, spearheaded by co-chairs James Wolfsberg and Scott Friend, will be held on Monday, June 5 at The International Golf Club in Bolton, Massachusetts. This year, golfers will play on the famous Oaks Course, New England's first Tom Fazio design. To buy a foursome or to receive more information about The Steppingstone Golf Classic, please contact Kelly Glew at [kellyglew@tsf.org](mailto:kellyglew@tsf.org) or 617-423-6300, ext. 222.

## SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

Boston Latin Academy's **Lizmarie Camacho '00** was inducted into the National Honor Society and elected president of the BLA chapter.

**Robyn Gibson '00** of The Winsor School, **Bree Roberson '00** of Boston Latin School, and **Deanna Cox '00** of The Rivers School were awarded Posse scholarships for this year. Robyn and Bree will attend Hamilton College in the fall, and Deanna will attend Union College.



Left to right: Dana Ostberg, Associate Dean of Support Services, Robyn Gibson '00, Jazmine Coleman '99 (freshman at Hamilton College and Posse scholarship recipient), Bree Roberson '00, and Deanna Cox '00

Recognized for high academic achievement and exemplary moral character, **Fedna Jacquet '00** and **Sophia Tsakmaklis '00** were inducted into Beaver Country Day School's chapter of the national Cum Laude Society.

**Samantha Layne '00** of Boston Latin School is the winner of the National Merit Achievement Award.

Milton Academy's **Ivy Martinez '00** earned a first-place finish at the Acton-Boxborough Tournament for Poetry. She is the captain of the award-winning Speech Team and has been competing in Prose and Poetry.

At Noble and Greenough School, **Mariel Novas '00** and **Felipe Pimentel '00** were selected as Hispanic National Merit Scholars. Mariel was also recognized as a National Merit Commended Scholar.

**Christian Arroyo '01** and **Vicky Arroyo '02** earned honor roll at Beaver Country Day School.

**Chimaobi Chukwu '01** of St. Sebastian's School was inducted into the National Honor Society. He is also the Defensive Tackle for the Varsity Football team and serves as the Financial Secretary for Men With Positive Attitudes club.

**Daraiha Green '02** of the John D. O'Bryant School received the Headmaster's Award first and second term for earning all As on her report card.

**Tiago Barros '03** was elected captain of Derby Academy's Varsity soccer team.

**Nick Medrano '03** of Thayer Academy is serving as Treasurer and Secretary for the eighth-grade class.

At St. Sebastian's School, **Dean Ebozue '04**, was elected eighth-grade Vice-President.

**Elvis Lara '04** of The Meadowbrook School of Weston starred as the headliner in the school's seventh grade play, "The Baseball Play," and also reenacted the classic baseball scenes of Abbot and Costello, including "Who's on First?"

The Rivers School's **Teori Shaw '04** was elected eighth-grade Co-Class President.

John D. O'Bryant School's **Yaritzta Pena '05** won the Science Award and earned a spot on the Honor Roll.

Roxbury Latin's **Nelson Tamayo '05** defeated 16 competitors in the national Geographic Geography Bee. Nelson will compete in the State Tournament later on this academic year.

Steppingstone Scholars have been admitted Early Decision to the following colleges:

Hamilton College  
Hampshire College  
Harvard College  
Howard University  
Johnson and Wales University  
Northeastern University  
Simmons College  
Spelman College  
Suffolk University  
Trinity College  
Union College  
Yale College

## STUDY HALL SPECIALIST: LENORA DAY

It's Saturday morning and Lenora Day, an engineer, is heading to school. It's not just any school—Boston Latin Academy, to be precise. Lenora participates in Steppingstone's SMASH (Saturday Mentoring and Study Hall) program as a Study Hall Specialist. Unlike Mentors, who meet regularly with the same Scholar to provide academic support, Study Hall Specialists attend the Saturday sessions less frequently, serving as a resource to Scholars needing short-term help in a given subject. "I can't think of a better way to spend a morning than working with Scholars who are so invested in learning," she says of the one Saturday morning a month she spends at Study Hall. "It gives me a lot of satisfaction knowing that my time at SMASH makes an impact."

Lenora's passion is numbers and she

has a knack for demystifying mathematical concepts, such as multiplying polynomials and calculating derivatives, for the Scholars. "The Scholars are talented in so many ways; I'm floored by their intelligence and maturity."

Lenora, who is a Quality Assurance Manager for RSA Security, learned about SMASH while at a Steppingstone event and signed on to be a Study Hall Specialist last September. As an African-American woman in the engineering field, Lenora speaks passionately about encouraging young girls who have an aptitude and interest in math and science to seek a career in the field. "Girls tend to shy away from technical career paths for varied reasons, but I want to change that way of thinking and show them that it's a rewarding career, intellectually and financially," she explains. Furthermore, Lenora is working hard to recruit her



Scholar Alejandra Baez '05 with Lenora Day at SMASH

female colleagues to become tutors, too. "If young girls see that there are more female engineers in the workforce and that we are successful, maybe we can persuade them to follow our lead."

For more information about the SMASH program, please contact Jenny Foster at (617) 423-6300, ext. 254 or [jfoster@tsf.org](mailto:jfoster@tsf.org).

Founded in 1990, The Steppingstone Foundation is a non-profit organization that develops and implements programs which prepare urban schoolchildren for educational opportunities that lead to college. The Steppingstone Academy in Boston and The Scholars Program in Philadelphia have prepared children who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to get into and succeed at top independent and public exam schools. Steppingstone programs emphasize rigorous standards and achieve meaningful results.

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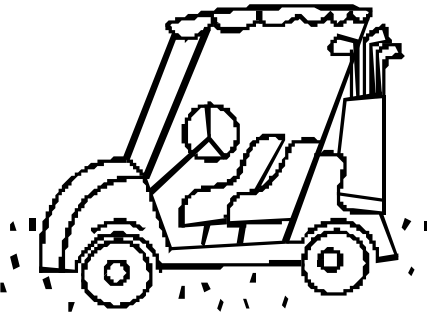
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**SAVE THE DATE**  
THE STEPPINGSTONE  
GOLF CLASSIC  
MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2006  
THE INTERNATIONAL  
BOLTON, MASSACHUSETTS

**JUNE 5, 2006**

This year, please join us at The Oaks course, an 18-hole masterpiece designed by world-renowned architect, Tom Fazio.