



THE CRAIG SCHOOL began as a very small community of adults and students who needed a specialized education. The need for a school was powerful and hence our wonderful school began.

I have been asked periodically what we are doing at Craig to build community. It is assumed that because we have a community of learners who learn differently, Craig must be a built-in community, already formed.

Others remark we only have a community when we have shared "community-wide" events. Both points of view are correct. Concerning community-wide events, I ask all to look at formal and informal "events" on the school calendar that do build community. You do not have to look far. I will start with our youngest learners whose parents of our emerging readers come together annually to listen to the student created stories that our students read out loud to their parents, hosted by our talented and dedicated Orton Gillingham teachers. When these students joined us, most of them could not read. We can also look at our school events for targeted populations – artists, athletes, and scientists. All have the chance to participate in afterschool clubs, teams, and fairs with student and parents with the same interests. Our annual **Auction** is a community event, as are our family and



student alumni events. Periodically, we add additional community events, such as a **chili cookoff**, for the entire community to enjoy. We could always do more, but as I am reminded almost daily, our 120 plus student population live in over 60 towns or "other communities," and those communities receive your support as well.

The Craig School "experience" does build the feeling of community. My own personal experience is that my "Craig like" school that I entered at age 10 was a community. There, like at Craig, as a student I found confidence to grow. That has led me to join several other communities in my life – some geographical and some school specific. For me, the communities that focus on helping others are the most powerful. These were the communities that taught me the broadest meaning of community – for which I am grateful.

As we approach the mid-point of this school year, I remind all of us that Craig has welcomed over thirty new students to our campuses – about 25% of our total student population this year. Having "newcomers" so frequently is a part of our culture. It is only possible because of our dedicated faculty and staff, who are called to serve schools like Craig. We strive to get to know your youngster. Our school has a purpose and those who are here – faculty and staff, parents and students, are doing purposeful work, and with that focus we have a vibrant and valuable community serving young people and their families.

TAD JACKS, Head of School

CHS HIGHLIGHTS

BUILDING COMMUNITY AT CHS:

AT CHS, building community is as important and as influential as any academic skill we can teach our students. It reinforces our safe and supportive environment while uniting the various people that make up the CHS family.

Through community, we become bigger than ourselves, part of something special, and can do some amazing things together from problem solving for our school, supporting other organizations, or just celebrating each other's accomplishments! Here are a few examples of our community building.

- **HAVING A VOICE:** Our students have a voice. We encourage them to be involved and, by not exercising their voices, they have said plenty. We started our school year as a community by changing our new school bell. Now, each day, our community is reminded of our unity and that is time to change classes through the sounds of Spanish trumpets.
- **BREAKING BREAD:** Every other week our students choose an Uptown Lunch restaurant destination which allows them to head off campus and dine with their classmates and teachers. A new community tradition this school year is our PACS Parent Lunch where a group of CHS parents put together and serve a pot luck lunch for our students and teachers.
- **SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND THE COMMUNITY:** The families of CHS support more than just our school community. We take part in many of the drives and collections for our neighbors, Boonton High School including their annual Clothes Drive. We also support other organizations that support students with learning disabilities like GreenVision in Randolph through an "e-waste" tech drive. And, finally, we support each other through personal communion, community service, and Eagle Scout Projects.



CRAIG LS/MS HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY IN THE LS/MS:



EACH WEEK AS PARENTS YOU RECEIVE OUR NEWSLETTER.

Hopefully, the information does more than inform you about activities. We hope it helps you be part of the community. In our Lower and Middle Schools, there are intentional things we do each day to build community. One example is **Mr. Smith** (known as George) who greets each person daily coming out of a vehicle. Another example is students starting their day in Morning Gym or the Quiet Room and the familiarity that this brings. It is not long after that the shared experience of the Homeroom

group, along with a daily Mindfulness exercise that bonds us all. As the day continues, formatted and deliberately the same, binders, lunch, and group activities all help students feel a sense of belonging. Finally, although some aspects of a day could be different by each class, all finish their day back with their peers in the homeroom.

The rituals of a school day form community, and that is what makes it work so well for most of our youngsters. The greeting that teachers and students alike give every day, set the tone for the community. For us, the more we can laugh, cry, support and demand the best from each of our friends, the more the community thrives.

CRAIG PARENTS

COMMUNITY – PARENTS:



FOR PARENTS, community is different for each of us. We form our own community by the events we join in. The car line is one form of community, as we can get out of our cars and chat with one another, say hello to **George**, greet **Mr. Jacks** in the morning, or wave to one of our dismissal teachers. Another place where we come together is on the athletic field/court. Sitting in the stands, cheering on our children, we are able to talk about "things" while supporting our students. Also the events that the school and **PACS** (Parents Association of



Craig School) provides are all opportunities to join in the Craig community – **Grandfriends Day, STEM night, Coffees with the Head of School, Waffle Breakfast, Expo/Talent Show, Book Fair, Trick or Trunk, Annual Auction, Golf Outing, PACS meetings, Class Parties**, to name a few. While it is harder for us as parents to find the time to join in, *it is always time well spent.*