GRADUATION 2020 COVID STYLE

This year’s graduating class was intended to be the first class to walk across the NEW Lee Performing Arts Center stage when their name was called to collect their diploma, move their tassel, and begin their new adventure. Due to Covid-19, plans had to change. After much persuading by the Seniors, a ceremony was held and was still extremely memorable. A stage was set up in front of the original entrance, students and staff stayed 6 feet apart, family (that could fit in one vehicle) parked in designated spots to watch, and the ceremony was broadcast on the radio and live on YouTube.

Congratulations, Seniors!

“This show was very unique. This was our very last show in the Lower School gym and also our first production with just middle schoolers. Knowing all of this, we, the directing team, decided to make it extra special. We created an interactive show with real-life first graders participating in the dance numbers. We had surprise cameos from some recognizable LILA teachers. We used smaller stages placed around the audience for flexible performance space. We built custom light canopies to go over those stages. The show that we were performing was also very special. We were the premier performance of the show in the Midwest! We made the show our own. This was such a fun show to put on, and it really set a good stage for what’s to come for Time Dragon Theatrics.”

~Rylee Bain, Student Director
BE BOLD CAMPAIGN HITS THE MARK!

Thanks to the generosity of our LILA community, the Be BOLD Capital Campaign raised over $1 million dollars to outfit the new Upper School addition spaces and make other improvements throughout LILA. Funds will be used to support the physical education, art, music and science departments, address needs in the media center, create new outdoor learning spaces, ensure our talented students have a state of the art performing arts center, and more. The landmark goal was celebrated on February 20, 2020, at the Grand Opening.

BUILDING UPDATES

The Kinder Center (formally the Annex) opened in September 2019 and the Headwaters new wing opened in January 2020. Everyone was excited to explore and use the new spaces. The Dragons basketball team loved playing at the Upper School full-sized gym with bleachers. Our amazing maintenance staff strategically moved many classrooms into the new spaces, gave the empty rooms a full cleaning, then moved more classrooms out of the temporary portables. We look forward to seeing our students and staff back in our buildings!

LILAVision Begins at the Upper School!

A group of students led by Isaac Rodell took it upon themselves to begin recording and sharing episodes on the Upper School’s daily announcements. They shared everything from interesting facts on reptiles (thanks to Max LaPointe and Max’s Wilderness Diaries) to sharing reactions to trying new foods (candy). Check out their hard work by clicking here or follow LILAVision on Instagram!
When my parents enrolled me in LILA in first grade, I had no idea how much it would impact my life. Learning Spanish the age of six changed the way that I viewed the world. As I continued to learn in Spanish throughout elementary school, I was no longer entertained by the idea of just traveling throughout the country. I wanted to travel to countries where I could practice the Spanish language that I had grown to love. I didn’t know it then, but LILA ignited my passion to travel the world with an open mind, and gave me a drive for global understanding.

When I left LILA in six grade, I was far from done practicing the language. I continued to take Spanish classes in middle school and high school, and it followed me throughout college. Eventually, I earned my bachelors of arts in communications and Hispanic studies at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. Not only did I continue learning the language, but I had the opportunity to travel to Costa Rica, Mexico, and Puerto Rico to practice with locals. I’m always striving to plan my next trip, because I’ve learned that traveling is where I grow the most.

In the summer of 2018, I decided to study abroad in Salamanca, Spain for two months. I lived with a host family, adjusted to living in a different culture, and completed eleven credits. I even got to participate in the Running of the Bulls festival in Pamplona! It was stupendous, since I had first learned about the tradition in LILA. Studying abroad was such a life changing experience, I wanted to become a voice for international travel. It had helped me grow in so many different ways and I wanted others to experience the growth that I had.

After I returned home from Spain, I decided to engage in a couple of internship opportunities to become a proponent for studying abroad. I visited classrooms, hosted informational sessions, planned events in my community, and attended student panels. It made me feel impactful, hoping others would take the leap, too. The following year, I was hired as an intern for Academic Programs International, the study-abroad provider that I had used. I traveled throughout the Midwest, where I attended universities to inform students about the company. In a total of three months, I traveled to five different states, helping students step out of their comfort zones.

Once my internship ended, I still wasn’t satisfied. I decided to write a book, *Become a Better You Abroad*. In my book, I talk about ten skills that you gain throughout your study abroad experience, and why it’s so important to go! I relate my Running of the Bulls experience to each chapter, explaining how studying abroad can be scary, but most definitely worth it.

In the fall, I’ll be attending American University to pursue my master’s degree in international and intercultural communication. I hope to work at an international embassy in the future to advocate for human rights in Latin American countries. Overall, my goal is for others to be open to different cultures, embracing diversity, so that we can obtain global peace.

If I hadn’t attended LILA in first grade, I have no idea who I would be today. LILA sparked my passion for traveling and embracing diversity. If I hadn’t gone to LILA, I can honestly say I don’t think I would’ve studied abroad, become an advocate for international travel, nor published a book. LILA made me who I am, and I am forever grateful I had the opportunity to attend such an amazing institution.

If you’re interested in reading my book, it’s available on amazon at https://www.amazon.com/dp/8089B5WZJY!
LILA began as wishful thinking for my children—for all of you. My husband and I had adopted a baby in 1997 and I was seven-months pregnant in 1999 when we moved back to Forest Lake. We hoped our family would continue to grow, too. After living and teaching abroad in Germany and finishing graduate studies in second-language acquisition in multicultural Hawaii, I wanted our children to grow up bilingual and internationally-minded. I soon discovered that many other parents here also wished that for their children.

With a group of talented and driven parents, we set out to create the kind of immersion-based international education we envisioned. Many of us worked on the school’s startup full time without pay until LILA finally opened in 2004. Some of us are still here (thankful to now be employed!), and we’ve seen LILA’s impact firsthand. We believe more than ever in the far-reaching importance of guiding students to become global citizens.

Personally, LILA has been a huge part of my life. I’ve had many roles, starting as a volunteer founder in 2001, then curriculum coordinator, eventually jumping in to paid work, as LILA could afford to hire me. I’ve been the IB coordinator, the PR manager, a grant writer, and more. Most of my years at LILA to date were as Assistant Director, with Cam Hedlund as Director. As of July 1, 2020, I have become LILA’s Executive Director.

These years have been a time of great personal and professional growth. Encouraged by Cam and the growth and needs of LILA, I returned to grad school about 10 years ago to earn my principal licensure. While raising three actual children (all LILA grads!), the school often felt like a fourth, sometimes very needy child. I suspect my children and husband would agree! But none of us would have it any other way; the benefits of LILA, both to our family and to our community, far outweigh any pain or sacrifice it took to make it happen.

I’ll always be grateful to the first groups of families who jumped in, back in the mid-2000s, with great hope and support, trusting LILA with what was most precious to them: YOU, their children! And I want to thank all of you, LILA alums, who helped along the way to form LILA into the welcoming, inclusive, and successful school it is today.

Please keep in touch, and stop by to see us anytime. You’re always welcome!
NAVIGATING DISTANCE LEARNING

Our teachers left school on Friday, March 13, unaware they would not be greeting students in person again for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year. This created “Sudden Onset Distance Learning,” as Executive Director Shannon Peterson called it, created challenges, frustration, and also success for everyone.

We hope our students have learned as much or more about IB Learner Profile attributes than they would have from inside a classroom.

Here are the IB Learner Profile attributes that the LILA community embraces, and that we try to instill, elicit, and enhance from preschool through 12th grade (See diagram).

We suspect that every one of us at LILA—student, staff, or parent—has had an opportunity to practice at least seven of these attributes over the last three months of the school year: inquirer, knowledgeable, open-minded, risk taker, reflective, principled, and caring.

We’ve been challenged to try new things this past spring. We’ve kept going and faced our fears, making changes to how we work, and doing our best. While the Department of Education has posed three scenarios for returning fall, there are still so many unknowns. What we do know is our learning environment will not be what we would consider “normal.” But we WILL make it the best possible experience we can.

*From a distance we still roar, we are DRAGONS to the core.*

Together, we’ve got this!

THE BIG WAVE

In an attempt to provide some closure for the 2019-2020 school year, a reverse parade was planned on the last day of school. Staff lined the streets of Fenway and Headwaters; families decorated vehicles and made signs to hold as they drove by to say goodbye (aka: have a great summer). In a two-hour period, approximately 700 cars drove through. The event also included a fly-by with a huge banner attached that read “Congrats Dragons” (thanks to an anonymous donor). To see Profe Raul’s video celebrating the day [click here](#)!