



Parkmont School

Passing Notes

WINTER 2025-26



Parkmont middle school students jump into experiential learning at the National Gallery of Art.

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Snow Days

After two days of cancelled school and two days of Zoom classes, everyone was thrilled to return to campus after the January snowstorm! A huge thank you to Sam and students Mikiyas and Ebenezer who warriored through a frigid weekend to clear our sidewalks and driveways, making sure we could all get back safely.

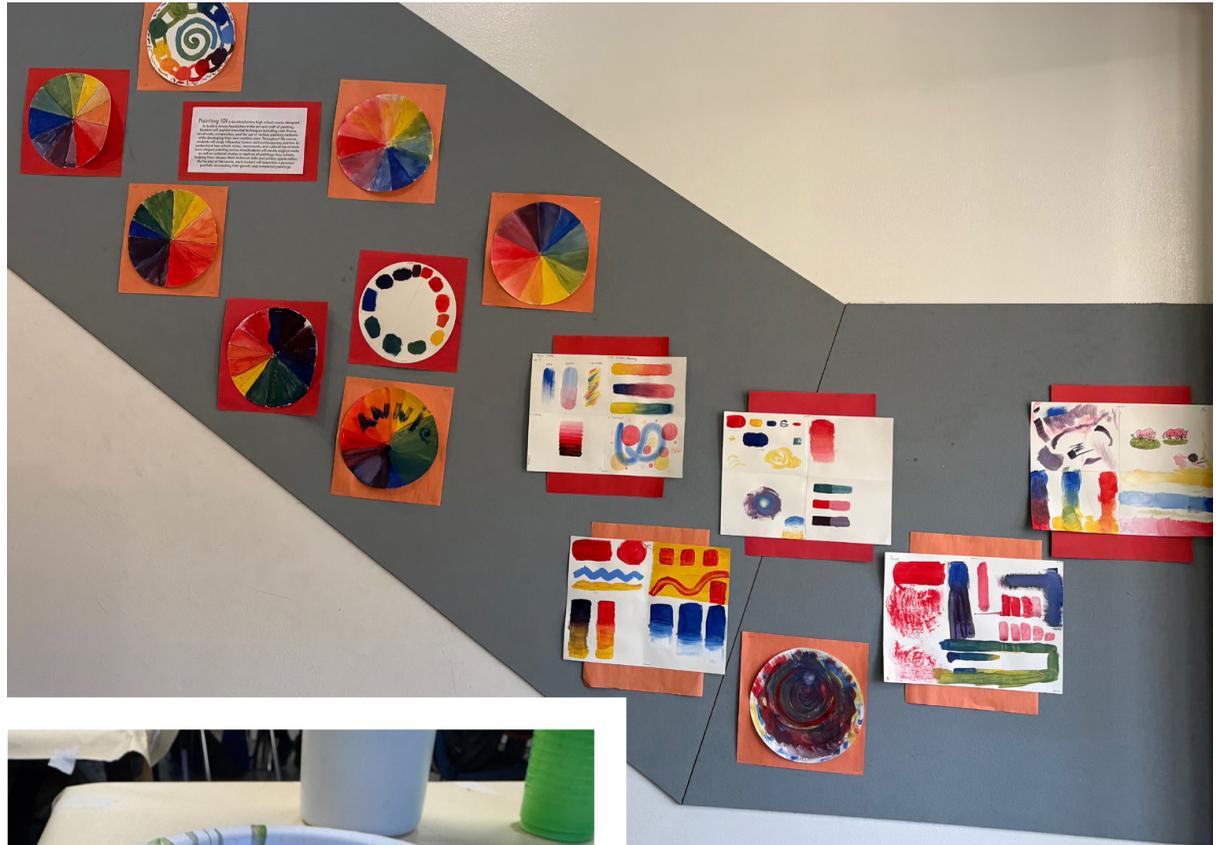
More students clamored to pitch in with snow removal once we returned. During morning break and lunch, volunteers grabbed shovels and helped teachers carve out additional pathways. A crew of middle schoolers designed and constructed a very impressive igloo, complete with a foyer and dining area! Others embraced their inner otters, sliding gleefully across the packed snow and ice.

The enthusiasm to help clear snow didn't go unnoticed. How about an Afternoon Class called Buildings and Grounds Maintenance 101? ■



Studio Notes

Students are wowing us with the work they've been doing in Imani's art classes. In Art as Utility, Imani introduced them to creative practices that merge design with everyday use. Considering style, purpose, environmental factors, and their own creative intentions, students designed and constructed original building models. They also designed and sculpted models for shoes. In Painting 101, they've been



exploring essential techniques and various painting mediums while also studying influential painters and movements of the past and present. The students are creating original paintings and honing their skills by reproducing a famous painting of their choice, drawing inspiration from the intense futurism of John Blanche, Monet's Giverny

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idylls, and Albert Bierstadt's epic masterpiece *The Last of the Buffalo*, among other works.

Meanwhile, the middle schoolers have been learning about public art and working on their teamwork and artmaking skills in Public Art and Mural Making with Imani. The year-long class will culminate in student-designed and produced murals on the walls here at Parkmont! ■

Congratulations, Imani!

We are absolutely thrilled to share that Imani received the Award for Excellence in Visual Arts at the 40th Annual Mayor's Arts Awards this fall! The Award for Excellence in Visual Arts honors those making significant contributions to the city's visual arts landscape. A well-deserved honor and very, very exciting!





Student Art Contest

In November, Parkmont senior Xavier organized an art contest that drew impressive entries from all ages. The optional theme was School Spirit. While many opted to follow their own muses, the contest did indeed generate lots of enthusiastic school spirit. Congratulations to Parnyan, whose dreamy palm tree won first place! We love everything about this contest: The optional theme, Xavier's leadership in putting it together, the energy of the contestants, and the incredible creativity they shared with the whole school. We hear there might be an Art Contest Part Two, this time with 3-D works included. We can't wait! ■



Welcome, Cornelius!

Parkmont has a new school pet! Specifically, a juvenile albino cornsnake named Cornelius. Thank you to Annabelle for making such a persuasive case for a pet snake, and to Gabo, who coordinated bringing Cornelius and all the necessary equipment to school. Cornelius was only about 10" when he first moved into the Southeast Room in November. By February 1, he'd almost doubled in size. If Cornelius is male, which we think is likely, he'll be about 3' long when fully grown. Why a pet snake? They're easy to take care of, they aren't venomous, they're interesting, and, importantly, no one has snake allergies! Students have found that watching him for a few minutes can help them calm down or refocus during class. He has already figured in many class stories and lessons. For those of us who grimace at the thought of snakes, Cornelius has proven to be a charismatic ambassador of *Serpentes*. He's just so cute! ■



One-to-One Chromebook Initiative

All students received a Chromebook for academic use at school and at home this fall as part of Parkmont's new one-to-one Chromebook program. In past years, about half the students used school-owned Chromebooks while the rest brought their own devices. More than halfway through the school year, it's clear that switching to an all school-owned Chromebook environment has made a positive difference, says Sam Graul, Parkmont's technology and facilities coordinator and longtime teacher. For starters, the new approach keeps our devices and system more secure. All of the Chromebooks are managed under the protections and added security of Parkmont's Google Workspace domain. It's also a lot more efficient. When everyone has the same hardware and apps, teachers and students can share materials without compatibility hitches.

Perhaps just as important has been the effect on student engagement. Like most schools, Parkmont blocks certain web content, including most social media



and AI chatbots. The presence of just a few devices able to bypass our system's controls has an outsize negative effect in the classroom. With everyone on the same system, the school can more effectively monitor and manage access to the Web's tempting feast of distractions. There are exceptions to the policy for students who use assistive technology, but the new policy has made it easier for teachers to help students use that tech because they're not also figuring out the

quirks of five other different devices.

To be sure, the lock down on games and social media apps has not been universally applauded! At a recent school meeting, students called for lifting the app blocks after school hours, arguing that blocking those encourages students to try to hack the system, which could make their devices vulnerable to viruses and other malware. Sam wasn't persuaded that day, but it's probably a safe bet that the debate will continue! ■

Holiday Books

With help from the Popkin Fund, every student, teacher, and staff member at Parkmont receives a book of their choice to read over winter break. The teachers hand them out at Announcements, and we all enjoy seeing what everyone else receives. *The Fault in Our Stars* is a recurring favorite, and there are usually at least one Stephen King novel and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* in the mix. Cookbooks, too, always make the list. This year, when one student received *The Crème Brûlée Cookbook*, Nijole spoke for all of us when she said, “Ooh! My new best friend!” [Click here to learn more about the Popkin Fund!](#) ■



Scrapbook



A

A Day 1 of Spirit Week: Pajama Day! A very chilly Pajama Day.



B

B Leo and fellow middle schoolers enjoyed a pre-Halloween hay ride at Butler's Orchard.



C

C Smore's aren't just for students! Teachers gather around the campfire at their fall retreat.



D

D Gavi shows off a frog in Rock Creek.



E

E Solomon checks out the Paint & Play at the National Gallery of Art



F

F Cal and Ebenezer hanging out

MORE ▶

Scrapbook



A



B



C



D



F



G



E

- A** The whole Upper School enjoyed a Halloween outing to Markoff's Haunted Forest. L to R: Noah, Mikiyas, Cristian, Fletcher, Nick, Rafa, and Max
- B** Jai, Owen, Nicky, Micah, and Ethan in Colonial Williamsburg. Bunny ears not historically accurate.
- C** Lunchtime hoops
- D** Mikiyas and Mak at the National Museum of the American Indian's Dia de los Muertos display.
- E** Miles and Sam dig for "bones" in Crime Lab.
- F** Fall Adventure Trip to Calleva!
- G** Esther paints the mood at Planet Word.

Let the Games Begin!

Since October, Parkmont's Advisory groups have been locked in an epic (and very friendly) quest. We call it The Tournament of Advisories.

The premise is simple. Each advisory forms a House, complete with colors, coat of arms, motto, and legendary



Florence's Flying Squirrels

MOTTO
**If thou shall fly,
thou shall soar.**

LEGEND

One day an acorn fell out of a tree and landed on a squirrel's head. It was a magical golden acorn and it said "If you catch me I will grant you immortality and a billion dollars." As soon as the squirrel heard that, it leapt to try and catch the acorn, and dragon wings sprouted from its sides! The squirrel has been trying to catch the golden acorn ever since...



Heck Nags

MOTTO
**Knowing is better than
wondering.**

LEGEND

Long ago before the stars learned how to shine, the night sky was only black, deep and endless. In that darkness lived the Heck Nags, mysterious horse-shaped spirits like flowing dark purple water and eyes glowing dark blue. They galloped silently across the heavens, carrying questions that mortals whispered but never dared to answer.

Legend says that every time a person wondered about something: a lost love, a secret, a hidden truth about the Heck Nags, they would drink from the river. There was one mortal from the tribe of Dungeons of Anthony's Underground World who would often ponder the Heck Nags. The Heck Nags captured and put him in their dungeon, where he lived for the rest of his days of living.

origin story. The Houses then compete in challenges throughout the year, earning points toward the ultimate prize: The Parkmont Paragon of Pride.

Parkmont's Programs Coordinator *ne plus ultra* Mel Kates masterminded the program. The students and their advisors



Los Ocho Poco Locos

MOTTO
Vamosos!

LEGEND

Loosely translated to "The Slightly Crazy Eight," our name is a reference to the eight members of our advisory and the prevalence of Spanish speakers. And how we celebrate our unique eccentricities.

The globe of our coat of arms represents our diverse backgrounds as an advisory while the eight ball is a reference to our goal-oriented nature. We, Los ocho, keep our eyes on the prize.

Our slogan represents our eagerness to tackle what's in front of us to accomplish our goals.

have taken it from there, shaping legends, parsing mottos, and designing crests. In building worlds for their Advisory Houses, they're getting to know each other better as individuals and teammates, deepening their sense of connection.

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House of the Eclipse

MOTTO

What's in the dark comes to light.

LEGEND

Within the realm of Parkmont there are the Daybreakers and Nightwalkers who rule the school. The Daybreakers are the beacon of hope, the promise of life beyond the borders of 16th and Blagden. The Nightwalkers are their successors, learning as much as they can from the golden ones until their fated Graduation Day. For once the Daybreakers finally spread their wings and leave their post as Parkmont's protectors, the old Nightwalkers pick up the mantle and become the new Daybreakers, protectors of the castle.

House of the Eagle



MOTTO

Unfocused and determined

LEGEND

Long ago there was a wizard named Rhodes. He had three squires he taught many things. Over time, he has gotten more squires. One of his squires turns out to be a queen of her own kingdom. The other two are almost ready for their own quest.



Chill Cheetahs

MOTTO

Stay woke!

LEGEND

One day we were all running from different cheetahs (this is a metaphor for running away from what is scary and unsafe) and needed a safe space to recuperate. All of us found one another and ended up finding family.

The Underground Dwellers



MOTTO

Pacificus, Traquillitas, Atlanticus (Calm and Peaceful dwellers of the Down Deep)

LEGEND

We are descendants of the lost Atlatians, calm and comfortable in the vast, deep, spaces below all others.

Students can earn points for their Advisory House in bi-weekly lunchtime trivia quizzes, participation in Spirit Week, School Meeting leadership, and other challenges posed by teachers and staff throughout the year.

Enjoy this gallery of Advisory Houses' heraldry and legends. We've got Flying Squirrels chasing golden acorns, Shadowy Heck Nags galloping across the night sky, Chill Cheetahs finding family, Slightly Crazy Eights keeping their eyes on the prize. Underground Dwellers guarded by whales and dragons, and more.

To all Parkmont students and their Advisory Houses, May your House be bold, your trivia answers precise, and your teamwork inspiring. And to Mel, Advisor to House of the Eclipse but truly a queen, thank you for bringing magic to the House of Parkmont! ■

What We're Learning: Main Lessons

Held from 10-12 every day, Parkmont's Main Lessons combine traditional academic disciplines with student interests and are the foundation of our schedule. Check out some of the options from Sessions 2 and 3.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Crime Lab. Become a super science sleuth while performing crime-solving, case-breaking, and crook-catching activities. From dusting for fingerprints to analyzing handwriting and identifying ink found on a ransom note, this course is designed to give you a first-hand look at how detectives and forensic scientists use science to solve real-life crimes. Make a plaster cast of a shoe, identify lip prints left on a glass. Examine hair and clothing fibers. Practice chemistry to identify mystery substances. You will learn even more of the techniques practiced by professional crime detectors. In addition to having many opportunities to experiment with forensic science techniques, you'll also learn about some famous crimes and how they were or weren't solved. More importantly, by using your crime-detecting skills, you'll learn how to think more clearly and effectively

Geography. Students will study the interconnectedness of cultures, environments, and regions worldwide. Through map skills, cultural exploration, and environmental inquiry, students will gain a foundational understanding of geographic concepts, from physical features to human activities and global issues

Robotics. This class will start by reviewing the history of robotics and AI. We will discuss where the word robot comes from, what robots do, and their importance in our every day lives. We will also learn what goes into building a robot and programming it. We will assemble

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closed circuits using batteries, resistors, switches, and LEDs and learn how to draw circuit diagrams. We will also learn how to use block-based coding with Micro:bits and in Scratch. Using the building and programming skills learned throughout the session, we will finish the class by building our very own robots using the Lego Robot Inventor Kit. Students will be graded on their homework assignments, tests/quizzes, classwork, and projects/labs.

UPPER SCHOOL

Comparative Government. Students will learn about traditional and modern approaches to comparing governments. Using what they've learned, they will analyze various historical events and how those events are presented in history texts, literature, and other media. We will progress to analyzing current events and practice discussing them. The class will culminate in a final project comparing an institution in the United States to its equivalent abroad in order to make a systematic recommendation for how to improve the institution.

Journalism and Media Studies. This class has two main objectives. One: for you to become more media literate, meaning able to identify and interpret news, its accuracy, and its message. Two: to improve your writing and reading skills by reading news, summarizing articles, and writing your own stories. In order to achieve these goals, we will analyze current events and write our own articles. We will watch the news, read the paper, listen to podcasts, practice journalistic writing, watch films, and engage in discussions that enhance our understanding of journalism and current events.

Spanish 2b. By the end of this session, you will be able to speak comfortably about past and present events. You will also be able to tell

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others what to do and use object pronouns. You will have developed a full vocabulary that allows you to discuss your daily routines, childhood events, vacations, shopping, and much more. You will be able to read and analyze Spanish texts to decipher meaning and understand the basic conservation of native Spanish speakers. You will be able to intelligently discuss various geographical, cultural, and historical aspects of Spain and the influences of Latin American culture in America.

Research Writing. This course will introduce students to the fundamental elements of the college research paper. Through intensive research in the library and individual analysis in the classroom, students will acquire skills in topic selection, researching and note-taking, the development of an efficient outline and thesis statement, and in accurate documentation through in-text citations and a Works Cited list. Although this course is demanding, it is a necessity for the college-bound student who wants to be prepared.

Anatomy and Physiology. In this section of Biology, the goal will be to enable students to identify and understand key structures, organs, systems, and spatial relationships in living systems. We will start with the anatomy of the human body. We will then compare the different physiologies of the 5 kingdoms to see the unique strategies each has evolved to succeed in their environments. Upon completion

of the course, students should broadly understand the roles of the different organ systems in their body and the mechanisms by which those systems act — at both the macroscopic and a microscopic levels — with the goal that they will have gained a greater appreciation and understanding of their own bodies.

Computer Science. We will start with a high level overview of the world of computing, including the origin of computers, the infrastructure that makes technology work, and how people learn about computers. Next we will explore what computer science is and the different topics it includes. We will also learn about the history of computer science, the internet, and programming. All parts of the course will be contextualized with how technology is used today and how it affects us; and we will also be making guesses about where it's all headed. We will dive into writing some code and programs using Javascript, HTML, and CSS, and we will finish the session by making a webpage.

THE PARKMONT DISH

Gavi's Salmon with Warm Spices

A dinner that's both bright and hearty really hits the spot on a cold evening. This recipe for baked salmon with yogurt and warm spices that Gavi, 6th grade, has so generously shared looks beautiful and tastes delicious. It will nourish your body and your senses! Gavi suggests serving the dish with couscous. If you have leftovers, you're lucky: they'll be terrific on a salad the next day. Enjoy!



Ingredients

4 salmon fillets (about 6 oz each)
¾ c plain Greek yogurt
2 tsp garam masala
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp ground cumin
¼ tsp turmeric, if desired

2 cloves garlic, minced (or ½ tsp garlic powder)
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice, plus more for serving
¾ tsp salt, or to taste
¼ tsp black pepper, or to taste
2 Tbsp chopped or torn fresh mint or parsley, or more to taste

Instructions:

- 1) In a bowl, mix together the yogurt, spices, garlic, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.
- 2) Pat the salmon fillets dry with paper towels. Coat each fillet generously with the yogurt mixture. You can cook the fillets immediately or let them marinate for up to 30 minutes.
- 3) **For conventional oven:** Preheat to 350°F. Place salmon on a baking sheet (lined with parchment paper or foil for easy cleanup) and bake for 18-25 minutes, or until it flakes easily with a fork.
For air fryer: Preheat to 400°F. Cook salmon for 12-15 minutes, or until it flakes easily with a fork.
- 4) Squeeze some lemon juice over the fish and garnish with the fresh herbs. ■



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