



# THINK

FALL 2017

# From the President



## CONTACT:

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Dear Cornerstone Families and Friends,

Words are powerful. They can build up or tear down. They can encourage and inspire or discourage and depress. I remember as a child chanting when kids picked on me: “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” The truth is sometimes the words of others did hurt me; they still do. In fact, unkind words hurt as badly as, if not more than, sticks and stones. Bruises and cuts can heal, but a broken spirit is hard to mend.

This year at Cornerstone we are embracing the practice of positive language and positive behavior modification. As a way to ensure that our students feel physically and emotionally safe, as well as learn skills to work cooperatively with others and truly enjoy being at Cornerstone, we have introduced new school-wide principles based upon the biblical command to “Love God, Love Yourself, Love Others, and Love God’s World.” Everyone in the school community is being held accountable to four principles:

**Respect and Celebrate Yourself**  
**Respect and Celebrate Others**  
**Come to School Prepared and Willing to Learn and Serve**  
**Keep our Environment Safe and Clean**

One of the important ways we show respect is by giving careful thought to what we say to others and the tone of voice with which we say it. The Bible instructs us to “let no evil or unkind talk come out of our mouths, but only what is useful for building up, so that our words may give grace to those who hear.” All of us at Cornerstone are encouraging one another to think before we say something. To help us be mindful of the words we speak there are colorful posters around the school that say THINK. The letters are an acronym to remind us that before we speak we ask: “Is what I am about to say True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, and Kind?”

It feels like a particularly good time to be emphasizing the practice of positive language. There is an epidemic today of thoughtless and unkind talk by people, leading to discord, divisiveness, violence and even death. Name-calling and hateful speech are far too common in society at large and also in our schools. In nationwide bullying surveys, educators and students report wanting more kindness and less cruelty at school. This is what we are striving for at Cornerstone. By integrating character and spiritual development into our rigorous academic program, we are educating our students to be kind and to THINK before speaking or acting in unkind ways.

Thank you to our many prayer partners and donors who model kindness and generosity for us by your positive encouragement and faithful support of our work at Cornerstone.

Gratefully,

Dick Ollinger, President/CEO



# Responsive Classrooms

As a Responsive Classroom school, Cornerstone's approach to teaching emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a caring and safe school environment. This approach consists of practical strategies for helping students build academic and social-emotional competencies day in and day out.

Recent studies show that "social emotional learning programs (like Responsive Classroom) can promote academic success and increase positive behavior, while reducing misconduct, substance abuse, and emotional distress for students" (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). Their reviews stress that "students need safe, supportive learning environments to thrive in school and to prepare for life."



Cornerstone's new school-wide principles were established to help create a climate filled with kindness and mutual respect so that our students will thrive in school. We are teaching students skills for showing respect to others, getting along with others, solving problems peacefully, and maintaining positive relationships. These skills include listening with an open mind, self-regulation and self-control, empathy, positive assertiveness, and taking responsibility.

We believe if students are to achieve at high academic levels, the school has to teach the social emotional skills that enable this standard of academic learning.

## Thank You for Your Service

The Cornerstone community expresses deep gratitude for the faithful service of four longtime employees who are no longer at the school. Each of these individuals helped advance the mission of Cornerstone during their tenures and in their own unique ways made a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of students.



**Helen Spencer**  
1st Grade Teacher,  
22 Years



**Ben Sweat**  
Maintenance,  
22 Years



**Alvin McNeal**  
Maintenance,  
16 Years



**Chris Petersen**  
Development Director,  
15 Years

We extend heartfelt thanks to each of these faithful servants and pray God's blessings upon them in all the years ahead.

# Cornerstone Reports

There's so much going on at Cornerstone Christian Academy. Here, in bite-size pieces, are some of the most exciting.

## THINK Success

This year, since we're asking our students to T.H.I.N.K. before they speak, we figured we'd think about what more we can do to help them learn.



### TRUTH Seekers Gather for "Genius Hour"

The importance of critical thinking has never been more apparent than it is in today's world. It's no longer efficient to simply teach the facts, but to give our students the tools and methods of applying their critical thinking to all facets of their lives.

To help guide our students in this path, we are proud to introduce Genius Hour, a weekly learning seminar for all 8th grade students. Meeting in our Learning Commons, this initiative is spearheaded by our new Integration Specialist, Anup Somalwar. Through active participation and interactive research activities, these students will be challenged to think critically, observe and identify bias, and question their initial assumptions. As a result, we believe our students will learn to be thinkers and not simply passive recipients of information.

### HELPFUL Hours: Introducing Morning Care

As a way to support our parents, we are excited to announce the start of a new Before School Program being provided for our students by The Common Place. Starting at 6:45 a.m. until school begins at 7:50 a.m., parents can drop off their children where dedicated staff is here to greet them and provide morning care, at no cost.

### INSPIRING New Additions to the CCA Family

Our 2017-18 school year will be supported by the additions of the following new staff and faculty members:



**Anup Somalwar**  
*Integration Specialist*



**Donna Gosse**  
*Office Receptionist*



**Greg McFarland**  
*Kindergarten Assistant*



**Estelle Wilson**  
*Office Assistant*



THANK YOU to The Common Place for providing this valuable service.



## NECESSARY Meals

It's no secret that breakfast is the most necessary meal of the day, especially for students. In order to give our kids the fuel their brains need to start their day eager and alert we have introduced a new Grab-and-Go Breakfast Program.

Every morning a free nutritious breakfast is offered to all students, bagged and ready for pick up before classes begin. After their Morning Meeting, students are given time to eat their breakfast while preparing for another day of learning and enrichment.



## KINDNESS Now Informs our Discipline Philosophy

In an effort to build on Responsive Classroom principles and create a Responsive School Culture throughout the entire school community, CCA has adopted a positive discipline approach to misbehavior. With an emphasis upon kindness and respect rather than yelling and threats, when a child misbehaves teachers and staff respond firmly but respectfully reminding the child of our school-wide principles.

Our first step is to stop the misbehavior quickly with a brief word or gesture. If needed, further action is taken to help the child regain self-control, fix any problems caused by his or her mistake, and get back to productive learning.

Our effort is to preserve children's dignity and to help them develop skills for listening with an open mind, self-control, empathy, positive problem solving, and taking responsibility.



### Cornerstone Kids Challenge:

Which scripture tells us to **THINK** about things that are honorable, just, pure, lovely, or commendable?

Answer: Philippians 4:8

# Alumni Spotlight

We love keeping track of how our graduates are realizing their dreams. Their success is an inspiration to our current students and a reassuring return-on-investment to our many donors and supporters. Here are two:



## Welcome Home Mr. McFarland! Alumni Joins Full-time Staff

Gregory McFarland is a graduate of Cornerstone's Class of 2005. He attended high school at The City School and graduated from Philadelphia Mennonite High School. In 2013, Gregory graduated from Cairn University with his undergraduate degree in Biblical Studies. This fall he came back to Cornerstone as the Kindergarten Aide.

Gregory is passionate about teaching the Bible. He hopes to use his degree and experience in ministry to help students grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Word of God.

## Give Today, Inspire Tomorrow: The Cornerstone Christian Annual Fund

The need to raise annual unrestricted funds to support and enhance the educational program at Cornerstone Christian Academy (CCA) is critical. Donor contributions help bridge the gap between the actual cost of educating our students and the tuition our families pay. On average, CCA families pay \$2,500 per year toward an actual cost per student of over \$10,000. It is our commitment to keep tuition at a level that makes a Cornerstone education accessible for families we serve in southwest Philadelphia.

Our Annual Fund Goal this fiscal year is \$1,800,000. This is the amount we need to raise in order to fulfill the scholarship promises we have made to our families and to support our academic program, teacher salaries, technology enhancements, and facilities upkeep.

Your gift today to the Cornerstone Annual Fund inspires hope in tomorrow's leaders. To donate today, please visit

[cornerstonephiladelphia.com/get-involved](https://cornerstonephiladelphia.com/get-involved)



# Thank You for Your Support!



## Be a guide. Be a coach. Be a friend.

**CCA Mentorship Program** is looking for adults who are willing to help guide a young student in all facets of their academic careers. Our program offers an enriching experience for people of all backgrounds and experiences who want to invest a piece of themselves to make a lasting difference. Kick-off event is October 25th, please contact **Ashleigh Bynum** at [abynum@cornerstonephiladelphia.com](mailto:abynum@cornerstonephiladelphia.com) or **215-724-6858 ext. 233** if you are interested in being a mentor.

**On-Site Volunteers** are needed throughout the year for classroom support and facilities upkeep. We offer one-time opportunities and long-term engagements to fit almost any schedule. Opportunities include: Middle School Mentors, K-5th Classroom Assistants, Computer Lab Assistants, After School Tutors, Library Program Assistants, Lunch Room/ Recess Assistants, Work Day Volunteers, and Special Events. Service days are scheduled for October 15th and January 14th, where groups can help with maintenance projects at the school and The Common Place. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact **Ashleigh Bynum** at [abynum@cornerstonephiladelphia.com](mailto:abynum@cornerstonephiladelphia.com) or **215-724-6858 ext. 233**. Please note: volunteers working directly with students require criminal background, FBI, and child abuse clearances.

**The Cornerstone Teammates** program is beginning its seventh year of providing encouragement and support to our middle school students. This year, 5th and 6th grade students will be matched with an adult Teammate who contributes to the Student Scholarship Fund at the Teammate level. The teams remain together for at least one year, and can renew until the student graduates. Strong relationships develop by spending time together on campus and exchanging cards and letters. The Fall Teammate Day will be Thursday, November 2nd, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Teammate Day is a highlight of the year, when teams have lunch and fellowship together. Several students across both classes are in need of Teammates this year. If you would like to join a team, please contact **Ashleigh Bynum** in the Development Office at **(215) 724-6858 ext. 233** or by email at [abynum@cornerstonephiladelphia.com](mailto:abynum@cornerstonephiladelphia.com).

**Corporate Tax Credit Partners** are essential contributors to Cornerstone who give to the school's Scholarship Fund through Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTC). These programs offer tax credits up to 90% per fiscal year to businesses when they make a financial contribution to the school. Last year we saw a 20% increase in corporate giving through these two programs. This year, we hope to add to the momentum by adding new partners. To learn more about this tremendous opportunity to support Cornerstone students, please contact **Dick Ollinger** in the Development Office at **(215) 724-6858 ext. 232** or by email at [rollinger@cornerstonephiladelphia.com](mailto:rollinger@cornerstonephiladelphia.com).

### How to Support Cornerstone

#### Direct Gifts

Tax deductible gifts of cash, by written or electronic check, or by credit card. Send checks by mail to:

**CCA**  
**PO Box 5520**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19143**

Contribute online:  
**CornerstonePhiladelphia.com**

#### Securities

Publicly traded stock, mutual funds, EFT: Deduction received on gift; capital gains passed on to Cornerstone.

#### Planned Gifts

Bequests, charitable gift annuities, cash and other planned gifts can be made to **Cornerstone's Endowment Fund**. If you are 70 1/2 or older and have an IRA, you can roll over your Required Minimum Distribution to Cornerstone completely tax free. To know more contact Chris Petersen in the Development Office.

#### United Way

Employee pledges can be made through two United Way agencies:

- **United Way of Southeastern PA, Donor Choice Agency #9616** (donations designated for CCA's Extended Care Programs)
- **United Way of Tri-State Donor Choice Agency #0265566**

#### Match

Ask if your employer has a matching gifts program.



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## Our Mission

The mission of Cornerstone Christian Academy is to educate children, including those from at-risk neighborhoods, in an environment that provides the highest standards for academic achievement and spiritual development.

## Our Vision

It is our vision to be a model urban Christian school where students are grounded in faith, shaped with Christ-like character, and equipped with knowledge and skills to excel in high school, college, and throughout life.

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