



# Field Notes

What's going on at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School

S e p t e m b e r 2 0 1 1

## In the Spotlight New Beginnings

by Damian J. Fernandez, Ph.D., Head of School

Welcome to the new school year! I hope you and your family are eagerly anticipating the opening of school as I am. September has always felt like the real beginning of the year to me, from my days as a student at Princeton to my time as provost at SUNY Purchase. As I look forward to 2011-2012 and the promise it brings, one of my favorite philosophers comes to mind: Dr. Seuss. As he wrote encouragingly, "Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!"



I am excited about beginning my position as head of school of ECF. My family and I are settling into our new home, although there are still boxes of books to be opened and shelved. I am planning meetings with the principals and administrators, and getting to know some of the faculty and staff who are here during the summer.

Our new administrators and principals are also getting ready for the new school year. Please join in welcoming them all, in particular: Kevin Jacobson, Fieldston Middle's new principal; Gina Panza, assistant principal for grades 3-5 at Ethical Culture; Kate Reynolds, ECF's interim dean of faculty and academic affairs; and Jeremy Rosenholtz, the new Form IV dean at Fieldston Upper. Both Kate and Jeremy are longtime Fieldston faculty; Kevin and Gina are new to us this year. (You can read more about them on page 3.)

Our campuses have been busy with the many summer programs the school runs, from Weeks of Discovery and Weeks of Adventure, the French and Spanish programs, Fieldston Sports, and Fieldston Volleyball to the longstanding Fieldston Outdoors, as well as the related programs, FEP (Fieldston Enrichment Program) and Young Dancemakers. Now we are turning our attention to getting the campuses ready for the opening day of school. I just saw the Fieldston facilities team stencil the "F" on the field to get ready for the new season. In addition to the usual painting and repairs, you will notice the reinstallation of the historic lampposts outside Ethical Culture and the renovations of the second-floor classrooms. At Fieldston, you'll see the difference in the refreshed reception room, and at Fieldston Lower, you'll notice the beautiful new bridge in the garden—a gift from the graduating fifth grade.

Soon our technology department will host a "summer beach party" for interested faculty and staff—three days of tech learning in late August in a relaxed atmosphere, with sessions on everything from iPads and SMART Boards, to Google apps and curriculum mapping.

We look forward to greeting our new faculty and staff and welcome back two who are coming back from leave, Charles Vergara, Fieldston Lower's technology integrator, and Hettie Jordan-Vilanova, Ethical Culture social studies teacher.

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School may not have been in session over the summer, but both ECF campuses were abuzz with students attending various camps and programs, including Fieldston Outdoors, pictured above.

## Hold That Date

### SEPTEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Thu. 9/1	<b>F</b>	Form VI Orientation, 9:00 am
Mon. 9/5	<b>ECF</b>	Labor Day—School Closed
Tue. 9/6	<b>FM</b>	Ice-Cream Social for New Families, 4:30 pm
Wed. 9/7	<b>EC</b>	PreK & K Parent Orientation, 8:45 am
	<b>FM</b>	Grade 6 Orientation (Students & Parents), 9:00 am
Thu. 9/8	<b>F</b>	Form III Orientation, 9:30 am
	<b>FL</b>	PreK Parent Orientation, 4:00 pm
	<b>ECF</b>	Classes Begin
	<b>EC</b>	PreK & K Parent Coffee, 8:30 am-noon
	<b>EC/FL</b>	Noon Dismissal
Fri. 9/9	<b>FM/F</b>	Full Day of Classes
	<b>EC</b>	PreK & K Parent Coffee, 8:30 am-noon
	<b>EC/FL</b>	Noon Dismissal
Sat. 9/10	<b>FM/F</b>	Full Day of Classes
Mon. 9/12	<b>FM/F</b>	Families of Color Barbecue
Wed. 9/14	<b>EC/FL</b>	After-School Fall Trimester, First Day
	<b>EC</b>	Coffee w/ the Asst. Principal, Grades 3-5, 8:45 am
	<b>ECF</b>	Head of School Conversation w/ Parents, 7:00 pm @ Fieldston
Thu. 9/15	<b>F</b>	Form III Parent Orientation, 7:00 pm
Fri. 9/16	<b>FM</b>	Grade 6—No Classes
Mon. 9/19	<b>FM</b>	"Extensions" Fall Trimester, First Day
	<b>ECF</b>	Head of School Conversation w/ Parents, 7:00 pm @ EC
Tue. 9/20	<b>FM</b>	Open School Night, Grades 6-8, 7:00 pm
Wed. 9/21	<b>EC</b>	Open School Night, Grades 3-5, 6:00 pm
	<b>FL</b>	Open School Night, K-Grade 2, 7:00 pm
Thu. 9/22	<b>F</b>	Open School Night, Forms III-VI, 7:00 pm
Mon. 9/26	<b>ECF</b>	Head of School Conversation w/ Parents, 8:30 am @ EC
Tue. 9/27	<b>EC</b>	Early Dismissal, 12:00 noon
	<b>FL</b>	Early Dismissal, 1:00 pm
	<b>FM/F</b>	Early Dismissal, 1:40 pm
	<b>ECF</b>	All-School Faculty Meeting, 2:00 pm @ Fieldston
Thu.-Fri. 9/29-9/30	<b>FL</b>	P&T Division Council Meeting, 7:00 pm
	<b>ECF</b>	Rosh Hashanah—School Closed

For a complete listing of ECF events, please see September Datebook online.

Photo of Damian J. Fernandez by Kelly Campbell; Fieldston Outdoors photo by Sara Smelin



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**In the Spotlight**  
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I have met with our new all-school P&T chair, Anne Ackerley, and already appreciate the P&T's role in promoting the mission and building a sense of community among teachers, parents, and administrators. (You can read more about her goals for the P&T this year on page 7.)

I also want to salute the work of the parent volunteers who did so much this past year to raise dollars for the ECF annual fund. Their efforts resulted in an amazing increase in parent participation—now up to 76 percent—and those gifts to the annual fund provide critical support for key components of ECF's mission, including professional development for faculty and financial aid. (Find out more

about these efforts on page 2.)

As you may know from the letter I sent earlier in the month, the ECF board of trustees, led by co-chairs Laura Jacobs Blankfein '71 and Tracy Chutorian Semler '82, and I met in June to identify priority areas for the next 18 months, and our areas of focus are: communication and connection; academic excellence; leadership; and financial sustainability. We are dedicated to making our mission—which embraces ethical learning, academic excellence, progressive education, and multiculturalism—resonate for our times.

We have an ambitious agenda ahead of us, and I look forward to telling you about it and am eager to learn from all of you—faculty, parents, students, staff, administrators, and

alumni. To that end we have organized four meetings in the fall.

**Conversation with Parents:** September 14 (F), 19 (EC), 26 (EC), and October 5 (F)

**Conversation with Alumni:** September 20 (EC)

**Conversation with Faculty:** September 27 and meetings by department

**Conversation with Staff:** Meetings by department

**Conversation with Students:** Upper School Assembly TBD

Please join us. I hope to meet you then. 🍂