

PRINCE Leadership MONTHLY

November 2019

“Building Buddies”: Establishing Friend- ships with Intentionality Across Grade Levels

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Early last spring when the administrative decision to temporarily move our PreK through first grade classes into the church was finalized, a great deal of discussion ensued regarding how we could make this move a positive experience for the students and teachers for whom the church would become a new (short-term) home. It was that goal and intention that gave life to an activity that has taken off in the first three months of the school year and become tremendously popular.

Each month, classes from PreK through first grade are paired up with a second through fifth grade class to do an activity. The teachers from the two classes get together to plan and schedule their activity, which lasts 30 minutes to an hour. In the first three months of the year, students have engaged with one another in reading and writing books, playing kick-ball, making and eating fun snacks, and painting pumpkins, to name a few of the activities. In addition to making sure that our younger students are not isolated from their older counterparts, these cross-grade activities have provided unique opportunities for younger and older students to become acquainted and work together with common goals in mind. The older students' confidence is built as younger students look up to them as “experts” in engaging in their Building Buddies activity, and younger students feel special about seeing their Buddies around campus and being able to speak, give a hug, or slap each other a “high five.”

Students are not the only individuals to benefit from the Building Buddies activities. It is easy for teachers in the elementary grades to get comfortable with the age group they teach and to restrict their workplace adult-level conversations to teachers at or around their grade level. Building Buddies activities make it necessary for teachers to intentionally meet with teachers that would, otherwise, be “out of the way” and not easily accessible. The bonds of cross-grade adult friendship have begun to be evident in times that the entire faculty gathers for meetings or to socialize together. This serendipi-

tous by-product of strengthening the bonds of collegiality and friendship between age-groups and adults is one more way in which PACS is a uniquely wonderful place for students and families to learn, grow, and thrive.

To compensate for breaks from school and increased special activities between Thanksgiving and Christmas, classes will be paired up to do one activity for the months of November and December.

That said, though nothing is official, I have it on good authority that some pretty awesome Christmas door decorations will be appearing in the 300 hallway after Thanksgiving break!



Fourth graders and kindergarteners got together recently to celebrate fall by painting pumpkins on a Friday afternoon.