

Welcome to our public newsletter again. There's so much to report.

Students, students, students: We had our all-time high enrollment of 46 students this academic year, all here for effective in-person learning with COVID precautions (no in-school cases of transmission!). These fine students did well across the board, and notably in the Iowa Assessments, where 12 of our students scored in the 99th percentile nationally for total performance! This is all with our own curriculum not tuned to the test, and no teaching to the test. One of these students, Samantha Brasher, graduated this year and is going on to a rich experience at Las Cruces High, including dance and languages. We also had a visit from three alums who just graduate from Las Cruces high schools with high honors, Louis Pate, Alegra Reinhold, and David Flores. One other high-school graduate, Arabella Camunez, got accepted at Caltech, which accepts 1 out of 68 applicants.



Samantha



Arabella



Alegra, Lou Ellen, Louis, David

Our students had a wealth of classes not found in other schools. Lou Ellen teaches cursive writing. Vince teaches World Culture from experience in 41 nations. Elizabeth Brasher, Arielle Lane, and Katie Bushma teach social studies in earnest. Arielle also teaches American Sign Language in various semesters. The spelling lists in English are college-level. Of course, our high-level 5-days-a-week Chinese classes are unique in the area.

World Culture course – Japan →



Our students had much enrichment this year, as ever. In various grades they had field trips to the Zuhl Museum of Paleontology and to Landmark Mercantile with its diverse animals. They did a Walk of the Solar System to scale, with the Sun as an 8" disk and Neptune at a mile away. They created artistic and punchy Earth Day posters and held them up along Avenida de Mesilla.



They enjoyed parties for Halloween, Chinese Lunar New Year, and Valentine's Day. They enjoyed a field day of athletic competition. They had fun and education in three after-school clubs, engineering/Legos, theater, and math, all run by teachers and parents. We were able to run in-person clubs again with due precautions against COVID. We won the eBay auction for a fine set of choir chimes that really add to Elizabeth's music classes. The students in grades 4 to 8 did a stellar job creating this year's yearbook, with the help online from former teacher Kelly Lin in California. We can add an item of fun: we had a snow day on February 3rd, something so rare here! We take pleasure and chances to learn in everyday things – the local building construction, the repaving of our parking lot, crop plantings nearby. Oh, and a group of students also did a student newspaper in November.



← One of the 40 pages in the yearbook

One of the two big events was on May 23rd, the theater club's hour-long play, James and the Giant Peach (see it on YouTube at XXX), which culminated over one year of work – learning lines, doing rehearsals, building sets, with the help of a number of parents. Another was the **end-of-term performance** by students of all ages on May 26th, with songs, choir-chime ringing, and skits in English,

Chinese, and American Sign Language, including a hilarious performance of Dr. Seuss's Green Eggs and Ham in sign language with narration.



Adaugo and Arezou, in *James and the Giant Peach*

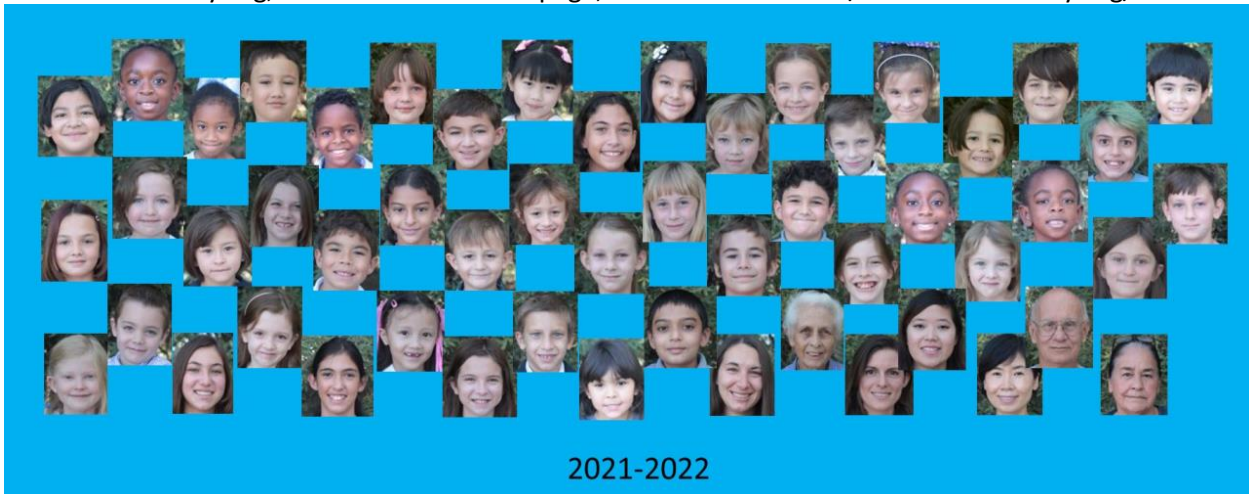


Green Eggs and Ham, in sign language

More enrichment: Lou Ellen ran two Scholastic book fairs at the school; students got a lot of good reading as they and their parents purchases many books.

Preparation of the future: Elizabeth created and gave an evening presentation for older students and their families on April 1st, entitled Looking Forward to High School. She presented the options available in the area high schools and their pros and cons.

The whole ebullient group of students, and the teachers, are **pictured** on both our homepage, lascrucesacademy.org, and on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/lascrucesacademy.org/.



Families, families, families: Parents and several grandparents pitched in to help with all three student clubs. They were also the core of the Annual Fund, which reached our highest total ever, at \$38K, with the help as well of friends of the school, corporations, and the Board of Trustees and Head of School. Families led the drive to collect food to donate to the local charity, Casa de Peregrinos. To celebrate the drive's success and to get us all back together in person we had a community meeting inside the school on December 10th. The Bowman family's company, Ashley Home Furniture, donated a dozen pieces of furniture – desks and cabinets.



The food drive at the Community Meeting

Teachers, teachers, teachers, plus: We have a fine set of teachers who all respect and help each other, while doing stellar jobs of teaching our students. We think they are great, and so does the Mesilla Valley community. The Las Cruces Bulletin again held its Best of the Mesilla Valley contest. Once again we came in as the best private school, Lou Ellen came in as best middle school principal and second best elementary school principal, Elizabeth Brasher came in as best middle school teacher, and Arielle Lane came in second as best elementary school teacher. This is in competition with big schools with lots of

voters.



We have one sad note but with a celebration of her career. Former teacher Paula Hunter (Hines) passed away in Florida after a long illness. She was with us when we opened in 2009 and stayed through 2012. She was both loved and demanding, a teacher you rarely find and whom all cherished.

Some more things we do: Vince continues his weekly 90-second podcast on the local NPR station, KRWG-FM. These *Science Digest* episodes are now in their fourth year and very popular. For fun and community spirit we also gathered a number of families at the school on the Fourth of July to socialize and watch the fireworks show of the Town of Mesilla.

And the nuts and bolts of operating the school: We're still here, Lou Ellen as Head of School, Vince as Board Chair and financial planner and publicist, and the Board of Trustees to keep a critical eye on all the financial and legal items. Board members in addition to Vince are David Gutschick in California, long-serving Paul Deason, Sue Salamanca-Riba, Pritish Chamania, and new members teacher Elizabeth Brasher and LCA parent Kimberly Cichuniec. Board meets quarterly and has running discussions variously in person, by phone, by email, or by Google Message or Google Meet.

The school is in excellent financial shape, on the arc to three big goals. In descending order of financial outlay, these are buying the fine building we rent, transitioning to permanent paid administration, and achieving accreditation with the top accrediting agency in the region, the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest.



With great care in financial planning – tuition rates, teacher contracts, student recruitment, detailed budgeting – we are accumulating funds to support all three goals. We are so close that we are quite likely to take the purchase price offer of our so amenable landlords at Preston

Wisconsin LP at \$1.2 million. Our confidence is born of our strong and incrementally rising student enrollment and a history of generous donations to us. We are very aware of vagaries, as in teacher coverage of classes and the challenges of finding a group of reliable people to assume permanent administrative positions. Meanwhile, we have the virtual guarantee that we can keep occupancy of the Preston building; we've been offered another three-year lease. It's been a long run from August 14th, 2009 and it has done so well for so many students; we will keep going and keep improving.

For up-to-the-minute (almost) news please visit our website, especially the homepage at lascrucesacademy.org and the News and Events page linked from it. The homepage also hosts the 25 most recent posts of events. We're building up a new page of testimonials from delighted and rewarded LCA families.

We hope this finds you well, happy, and enjoying this newsletter,

Lou Ellen Kay

Vincent P. Gutschick

Lou Ellen
Head of School, founder, teacher

Vince
Board Chair, publicist, deputy treasurer, teacher