Meridian School
187 Students, 150 Families, and 1,200+ Alumni Welcomes Jack Shea as New Head of School

Excerpt from the Board of Trustees’ letter to the school community announcing Jack’s Head of School position:
“Jack brings to the position an incredible passion for education and nearly twenty-five years of experience at what is now the Teton Science Schools. He is a proven and inspirational leader who fully supports Meridian’s mission of a balance of mind and heart and our philosophy that learning should be a joyful experience. Jack’s experience with place-based education will serve to further deepen our connections to the Good Shepherd Center, Meridian Park and the larger Wallingford community. Jack understands how independent schools operate and during his tenure at the Journeys School demonstrated his ability to effectively guide curriculum development, inspire and support teachers, and develop programs which serve children with a wide variety of learning styles.

As a member of the NWAIS Board, Jack is already known by many in the broader Seattle education community and we expect that he will quickly establish relationships with both the middle schools in the area and our elementary-school peers.”
transition:  [trans-zish-uhn] noun
1. Passage from one form, state, style, or place to another

By Jack Shea, Head of School

Strong Staff: “My first two months were busy, but made easy, and interesting and fun by the incredible staff at Meridian. When the faculty returned we had a week of focused interaction preparing for the new year. I was impressed by their friendliness, enthusiasm and professionalism.”

Loyal Volunteers: “One of the reasons I took this job was because of the people I met during the search process and on my many visits during the spring. Since school started I am amazed by the level of Parent Volunteerism at Meridian. I have told many of my non-profit friends that I am lucky to have this community of smart, organized and committed individuals who invest huge amounts of their personal time and energy. The Board and the Parent Association are excellent bodies for governance and community connection.”

Bright and Engaged Students: “Although it was a sunny summer the Good Shepherd Center got incredibly brighter on the first day of school; 187 smiling, friendly, bouncy students flowed through the doors and into the halls. Any tension about the work ahead disappeared. I can’t wait to get to know everyone.”

Getting close to the action; engaging with students at Friday morning meeting.

The Board and the Parent Association are excellent bodies for governance and community connection.
Formulating Wonderful Things Ahead
By Jen Zell, Board Chair

The start of a new school year is always exciting for kids, teachers, parents and administrators because of the potential for so many wonderful things to happen. This year the Meridian Board of Trustees shares in that excitement as we begin our work with Meridian’s new Head of School, Jack Shea. Last November the board selected Jack as the school’s next Head because of his exceptional leadership skills, his twenty-five years of experience in independent education and his belief in Meridian’s mission of a balance of mind and heart.

For the coming year, one of the Board’s priorities will be to work closely with Jack to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. In establishing Jack’s goals for the year, the Board selected as its most important one that he “develop positive and meaningful relationships with faculty, staff, parents and students in order to better understand the culture of Meridian and how the school currently operates.” Although plenty will happen in Jack’s first year, we want to make sure he takes the time to truly understand what we have at Meridian and everything we want to preserve while still looking for ways to grow and strengthen our program.

Another of the Board’s priorities for the year will be to complete the development of a strategic plan to guide our decisions in the coming years. Early in 2013 the Board established a Strategic Planning Committee which is being co-chaired by trustees Maria Gingerich and Barb French (see sidebar for details about the strategic planning process). We look forward to sharing our completed Strategic Plan with the entire community in the spring of 2014.

To help us accomplish our goals for this year, I am very pleased to welcome two new trustees to the Board: Dan Raymond (Sophie – 5th, Ella – 4th) and Katie Renschler (Julian – alum, Claire – 3rd). They each bring valuable skills to the Board and both have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the school. I am also pleased to share that three past trustees will now serve as Emeritus Trustees: Sonja Gustafson (past Board Chair), Harold Malkin (outgoing Vice Chair) and Barb Richardson (outgoing Treasurer). Finally, I want to thank our outgoing Board members for their years of service and contributions to Meridian’s mission: Linda Schoemaker (former Board Chair) and Jim Woeppe (long-time Emeritus trustee). The Board will greatly miss their dedication and wisdom.

For the coming year, one of the Board’s priorities will be to work closely with Jack to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

Setting Strategic Priorities
By Maria Gingerich, Strategic Planning Co-Chair

In addition to guiding our children into a new year at Meridian, this fall’s busy back-to-school season will include determining Meridian’s next set of strategic priorities. Strategic planning is a natural and important cycle of reflection and renewal, and through this process, we will focus and deepen our commitment to the qualities of Meridian that make our school special and serve our children.

Our Strategic Planning Committee, made-up of staff, and trustees (including parents), has been hard at work since February assessing Meridian’s strategic potential. Fortunately, we have Jack Shea and Bill Alsdurf’s partnership as we develop our next plan which will in turn help guide their leadership of the school.

As we enter this fall’s active period for strategic planning, we want to let you all know what’s happening and how you can participate. This fall, the committee will work closely with the Board and school Administration to continue narrowing our focus, discuss and debate the opportunity set. Later in the fall, we will engage our entire community – Faculty, Staff and Parents in a discussion around our proposed strategic priorities. After incorporating this feedback, we will embark on the hard work of writing Meridian’s next strategic plan in early 2014.

We will need your support and participation throughout this process, but in-particular, as we get closer to outlining our strategic priorities, we will need you to attend the community forums, tell us what you think, and most importantly continue to support Meridian and our community as we work to further deepen the essential qualities of Meridian.
Customized Learning at Meridian School

By Bill Alsdurf Jr., M. Ed.

Elizabeth Sorby:
In looking at the needs of our school and how to best serve students across the continuum of skills and abilities, Elizabeth Sorby (pictured on facing page) was hired last spring to serve as the school’s new Director of Customized Learning. In her new role, Elizabeth will oversee assessments at the school and work with staff on how to best use testing results and plan for student success. She will also serve as the main point of contact for our Child Study Team which meets regularly with faculty members who are looking to ensure congruous instruction targeted at the needs and abilities of each and every Meridian student.

Small Group Instruction:
The creation of a new academic schedule this year allows teachers more consistent time in the classroom with grade level partners and Associate Faculty members (formerly IA’s). As a result, small group instruction can be utilized to better meet the needs of individual students. Small group instruction gives teachers the opportunity to more specifically target the needs of their students and simultaneously challenges students to think and learn independently when not in direct instruction. After an initial assessment and group placement, teachers are constantly re-evaluating the student’s strengths and needs and are thus able to rearrange and reconfigure groups whenever a child’s performance deems it necessary. Access to three educators during instructional blocks allows for further differentiation and smaller student-to-teacher ratios which better assures success and a deeper understanding of the needs of each student’s needs.

Individualized Learning:
With the addition of Elizabeth Sorby to our educational team, we are able to more readily identify and plan solutions for those learners needing more intensive support. This applies whether a child is struggling with a learning difference or possesses skills and abilities beyond those of his or her grade level peers. The individualized learning model at Meridian is as varied as the students that it serves. This structure allows us to work with tutors and individual support when necessary, or to make accommodations in program and classroom environments to allow for individual student success. This ability to customize our instruction so that each and every child we serve finds success is the heart of the customized movement at Meridian School.

Associate Faculty:
Instructional Assistants at the Meridian School are now known as Associate Faculty members. We’ve made significant changes to our schedule to allow these professional members of our community access to your students so that the student to teacher ratio drops significantly during small group instructional blocks. Our Associate Faculty members are trained and experienced teachers who work side-by-side with their teaching teams to plan and facilitate instruction while at the same time managing ongoing assessments, overseeing the safety of our students on the playground, and deepening their understanding of the practice of teaching by observing, learning from, and working with their grade level teams.

Assessment:
At the Meridian School we find value in an inclusive assessment model that doesn’t value one test over another but instead, uses the information we collect from a variety of assessments to add to our understanding of each and every student. Through this model we can ensure that when we plan for small group, whole group, or individualized instruction, we have the widest set of results to draw upon, allowing us to customize learning and keep each of our students challenged, engaged, and moving forward.
The creation of a new academic schedule this year allows teachers more consistent time in the classroom with grade level partners and Associate Faculty members (formerly IA’s). As a result, small group instruction can be utilized to better meet the needs of individual students.
PAULA PALMER: “As the librarian, I try to integrate my lessons with classroom curriculum. Helping with this was the opportunity to go to this summer’s SDE Differentiated Instruction conference with Meredith Ward (grade 5) and Nancy White (grade 2). We all attended sessions on using iPads to learn and in developing assignments. I appreciated attending other valuable and relevant sessions that were devoted to addressing the different needs of Meridian students be they advanced, needing individualized attention or performing to expectations.”

NANCY WHITE: I relish the time in the summers to be a learner and my highlight from this year was the National Differentiated Instruction conference. I learned many wonderful tools and ideas for engaging all learners in my classroom. I took away ideas for developing engaging lessons for students, ways to track data using forms, and most excitingly some fun ways to collect homework.”

ELIZABETH SORBY: “I attended the Responsive Classroom training and took away so many fantastic things, especially: morning messages to set the tone for the day; specifically teaching positive behavior through interactive modeling; and the power of clear, simple, and direct language.”

SEAN DONOGHUE-NEIDER: This past spring I attended “The Power of Play” presented by a non-profit organization called Playworks. This workshop focused on taking the traditional games that elementary children play during recess and putting a positive, uplifting and community themed undertone into those games. This was accomplished by using some reinforcing language and tweaking of general game rules to help build the children’s sense of confidence, self-esteem and community. I agree with the general philosophy of reinventing traditional games to better serve children in a positive way.”

ANDREA YEE: “I had the opportunity to participate in several professional development opportunities during the summer. This included training for Responsive Classroom, Handwriting without Tears, and the new Bridges mathematics curriculum. I also attended the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) two-day Private School’s Summer Conference, focused this year on high-yield instructional strategies that increase teacher effectiveness.”

CHARLIE BURKLAND: I attended the weeklong August Writing Institute at Columbia University where I was immersed in the Writers Workshop curriculum model. I found the overall model and its principles fit The Meridian School very well. We believe writing needs to be taught, explicitly using modeling and practice every day. We believe in giving writers frequent feedback and clear goals. We believe children deserve to write for real purposes and cycle through the writing process. We believe students should read literature as writers, learning the craft from the books they love.”
New Beginnings
By Andrea Yee, Associate Faculty

The welcome that Meridian has given new staff members has been overwhelming. Before the school year started, I was swept off to trainings, meeting with fellow teachers, and greeted with open arms. The pride, dedication, and collaboration I experienced amongst teachers and students during my visits to Meridian solidified my decision to join the community. As I began speaking with new staff, Meridian’s mission to “promote a balance of mind and heart, of contemplation and action, of individuality and a commitment to the community” unraveled as a unifying reason as to what brought us here. We realize that change can be difficult, but it also serves as an opportunity to explore exciting new possibilities.

Here are few words to get to know us as we begin our Meridian journey:

**Holly Johnson** (Development Associate) – My children are living examples of the balance of mind, body, and heart. I look forward to supporting Marilyn in the development office and continuing to strategically plan our wonderful, successful Meridian auction.

**Erin Ruddock** (Admissions Associate) – I previously worked at a middle school in Boston, MA, and am thrilled to join the passionate, engaged Meridian community. In my free time I enjoy spending time with family and friends, traveling, reading and cheering on my favorite sports teams.

**Dana Scott** (Administrative/Program Intern) – Coming from Teton Science Schools, Dana holds a strong commitment to place-based education, traced back to her Montana roots. Fly-fishing, skiing, kayaking, cooking, and music keeps Dana busy when she is not working on a teaching team or admin project.

**Elizabeth Sorby** (Director of Customized Learning) – Being here at Meridian reminds me why I became a school psychologist; being part of a community of people who care about children and work together to create a warm and enriching place for them to grow and learn. I have an urban farm, complete with a wild vegetable garden, chickens, small pond and other assorted animals.

**Jackie Hughes** (2nd Grade, Faculty) – I am looking forward to impacting students beyond core curriculum, fostering a sense of “community within the classroom, the school, and the world outside. I love competing in obstacle events and placed 4th in my age division at the Spartan Sprint in Fountain Hills, AZ.

**Andrea Yee** (2nd Grade, Associate Faculty) – I hold a deep passion for literacy and fostering global citizenship. I am fortunate to have the majority of my extended family living in the Seattle area whom all enjoy travelling as much as possible.

**Lydia Laurent** (5th Grade, Associate Faculty) – I am a strong proponent of team teaching and building a strong school community that builds connections to the world around us. In my spare time I enjoy attending live theater and playing strategy games, such as Alhambra, Alien Frontiers, and Ascension.

**Mim Turnbull** (Substitute) – I am delighted to be part of this warm community that does such a great job of meeting kids’ needs! In my spare time I enjoy hanging out with my busy family, doing art activities and stealing a few minutes to drink coffee while reading historical fiction.

Our deepest appreciation goes to Jack and Bill for their work in creating a smooth administrative transition in their short time here at Meridian. We have a year full of wonderful memories to create!
Embracing The Meridian School’s New Families

“We live in and as part of an immensely complex web that has evolved over many millions of years, and every member of this web has its essential place and gift.”

–Bill Plotkin, author of Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World

For the last 10 years these words have resonated with me, especially in September when the school doors open to returning and new families. At The Meridian School, admissions events aim to support new families in establishing their niche with and among the Meridian School community.

Attend, enjoy and integrate into this special place.

Play Dates In The Park: New Kindergarten families met all summer on Tuesday evenings at 6 p.m. at the Meridian Park.

Buddy Families: Meridian families were assigned to each newly enrolled family to help with integration into the school community. Buddy families connect with new families prior to school to either answer new family questions or to plan play dates.

“The tradition of assigning a buddy family to new families made our first day at Meridian less stressful. On Ollie’s first day of Kindergarten, he already had a friend and we (parents) were prepared about what to expect. This one-on-one experience just further supports our decision to send our child to the Meridian school.”

–Thea and Joe Tuininga, new Meridian Kindergarten parents to Ollie Tuininga were partnered with their buddy family Colin, Ronit, Talya (2nd) and Aitan (K) Plank.

New Family Ice Cream Social: Newly enrolled Meridian families were greeted by Kindergarten Families. Jill Nishi and Judy Kuo led this event and infused common sense and Meridian-esque style into a more nutritious Ice Cream Social; they added pizza and fruit bars! This April event was the telltale of this summer’s most gorgeous weather – it was 80 degrees in April.

New Family Coffee: On September 19th The Parent Association welcomed new families with local coffee, baked goods and open arms.

Printed on recycled paper made with 100% post-consumer fiber and manufactured Process Chlorine Free (PCF).
As I reflect back on 2012-13, a year in which the school experienced significant leadership transition I believe we should take great pride in celebrating all that has been accomplished. Since this was my last year as your Head of School, it would not be surprising if major changes in the school’s academic programs, support for student learning, staff professional development, facilities improvements and fundraising efforts were to have been temporarily put ‘on hold.’ However, for a school that has never been one to sit on its laurels that has hardly been the case!

First let’s review the ways in which Meridian’s academic programs and support for student learning have grown and improved.

• This year marked the final implementation phase of our new Bridges Math curriculum. Over the past three years, our teachers benefited from numerous grade-specific collaborative professional development opportunities in order to roll out this nationally recognized K-5 math curriculum.

• Our science program underwent a significant overhaul as well. Working closely with the Center for Inquiry Science, we introduced exciting new inquiry-based units in life sciences, physical science, and earth/space science. Additionally, we introduced new equipment to support those units.

• To better address the full spectrum of student learning needs, 2012-13 saw the addition of Meridian’s first learning specialist. This fall, as we transition to a model of differentiated learning within each classroom, we have hired Elizabeth Sorby as Meridian’s Director of Customized Learning.

• Collaborative professional development in the area of literacy and Responsive Classroom reflect the other areas of focus this year. This summer, our most recently hired teachers received introductory training in Responsive Classroom while others moved on to more advanced levels. Similarly, three teachers had the unique opportunity to work directly with literacy expert Lucy Calkins at Columbia Teachers College in New York in July.

Support for these program enhancements, our capacity to better address a broader spectrum of student needs, and continued facilities improvements such as the remodel of our North Annex bathrooms, come directly from the strong philanthropic support of Meridian parents, grandparents, alumni families, and friends this past year. As you will review in this report, we once again exceeded our Annual Giving goal and benefitted from another record-setting fundraising year with 97% of our families participating in one or more of our fundraising efforts! And thanks to a highly successful auction technology fund-a-need, teachers left for their summer excited to be studying iPad applications to further enhance your children’s classroom experiences. In addition to other classroom-related improvements, we provided infrastructure upgrades to handle future technology for years to come. Of equal significance, we had 100% of our families share many hours volunteering in classrooms, coordinating school events, and supporting students and teachers in ways too numerous to mention here.

Our collective efforts have made this past year another remarkable success. On behalf of the entire staff, I extend my sincere thanks to all of you for the time, energy, and dollars you have committed to Meridian. It has been both an honor and distinct privilege to serve as your Head of School over these past eight years. I leave Meridian knowing that its faculty and students are better supported, our programs are academically stronger, its facilities physically improved, its resources financially secure, and its community anticipating the exciting next chapter under the accomplished and experienced leadership of Jack Shea.

Ron Waldman

Over 250 donors, foundations, and companies supported Meridian’s fundraising initiatives. Thank you for giving gifts of time, resources, and heart.

Because of you, we:

• Experienced another successful fundraising year!

• Proved we’re a community of philanthropists – 97% of our families participated in one or more of our fundraising efforts!

• Benefited from 100% of our families sharing a significant number of hours volunteering!

• Celebrated together, which resulted in an incredibly successful auction!

• Received a very generous Fund-a-Need challenge grant!

• Provided funds for technology priorities!

• Enjoyed the participation of alumni and alumni parents as trustees, committee members, classroom volunteers, auction guests, fundraisers, advocates, and ambassadors!

2012–2013 Board of Trustees

Ex-Officio: Nonvoting
Ron Waldman, HEAD OF SCHOOL
Colleen Palkert, FACULTY APPOINTEE
Christian Reynolds, P.A. REP
Thank You Loyal Donors

Meridian is fortunate to have dedicated parents, trustees, faculty and staff, alumni families, grandparents, and friends who support all of our development efforts. Many, many generous gifts supported our Annual Giving, 30th auction, and Fund-a-Need. With a robust 97% percent participation from parents, and 100 percent participation from trustees, faculty and staff, and loyalty from our entire school community, we exceeded this year’s fundraising goals.

Thank you for your commitment to Meridian, our students, and our faculty. Your gifts helped make wonderful things happen this year – a healthy operating budget enhanced school-wide programs and support of technology priorities affected each faculty, student, and classroom.

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Gifts $10,000 and more
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Clive Cook & Sara Allan
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
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Celebration Level
Gifts $3,500 to $5,499
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Founders Level
Gifts $1,976 to $3,499
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Jim Weppel & Joan Beauregard
Brandon & Sarah Wright
Charles & Stephanie Wright
Saleih Yassin & Sinit Gebrehiwet
Zymo Genetics
Meridian Philanthropists are committed to making our school and community a better place – Thank You!

30th Auction: What a Thrill!
Thank you to Laura Osterbrock and Lisa Smith, our Auction Chairs, and the many volunteers who made this a truly wonderful event. We couldn’t have asked for more – the ambience of the Four Seasons Hotel, the delicious and elegant meal created by Chef Kerry Sear, generous donations, beautiful student artwork, heart-warming staff experiences, and lively bidding. It exemplified community and fundraising at its very best.

Fund-a-Need: Technology is Our Focus!
With a very real need and a generous $40,000 challenge grant to spearhead our fundraising effort, parents, faculty and staff, trustees, alumni and alumni families, grandparents, and friends generously invested in school-wide technology-related priorities with remarkable results. Students and faculty alike will benefit in a myriad of ways: upgraded technology infrastructure, enhanced interactive and instructional tools, new music program sound system and music software upgrade, added LEGO Robotics and Midstorm for 2-5 grades, broadened library resources, and even a multi-year subscription to BrainPop! Because of such generous support from loyal donors, our technology needs for the next few years will also be funded by this fundraising effort.

Ellen Toole Fund: Educating Teachers to Educate Children
Our faculty professional development endowment provided a grant to Colleen Palkert to attend the Slingerland Summer Course at Hamlin Robinson School. This research-based program has proven to help all students, especially students with specific language differences, access their potential as readers and writers.

The Ellen Toole Fund was established in 2003 and has awarded twenty-one grants to faculty who have gained knowledge from learning experiences which have included working on an environmental project in Brazil’s Pantanal, visiting our sister school in Colombia, attending the reading Institute at Teachers Columbia College, and learning from the “best” at Westtown Seminar on Teaching.

Matching Gifts: Charitable Community Support
Meridian appreciates the many civic-minded employers who match their employees’ Meridian donations. This is a wonderful way to maximize the philanthropic power of your gift to our school. Thank you for taking the time to apply for these funds.

Volunteers: You Help Keep Our Mission Alive - Thank You!
Every year parents share their time and talents with our students, faculty, and our school. Experiences are enriched by your dedication, loyal support, and caring spirit. Programs are enhanced, field trips made possible, events enjoyed, and people made happier by the hundreds of hours you kindly share with us. Thank you for keeping our mission alive and for honoring Meridian’s tradition of focusing on community.

Financial Summary

**INCOME**

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<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>$135,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>$341,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Spending</td>
<td>$105,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,279,594</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial Summary based on unaudited statement.

Meridian School is grateful for the generous philanthropy of our supporters, who help accomplish our mission.

The Meridian school promotes a balance of mind and heart, of contemplation and action, of individuality and a commitment to the community.