

Canticle

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Saint David's School

Summer 2025

Solving Mysteries with DNA

By James Chan '28

A young woman covered with scars was found in a hospital and claimed she was a missing Russian princess. This enigma was what the fifth-grade students of Saint David's uncovered when they went to Cold Spring Harbor right after Winter Break. Through DNA comparison, the boys unraveled the mystery to try to discover whether this woman—Anna Anderson—was actually the Russian princess Anastasia Frank.

Saint David's fifth-graders went on their field trip to CSH (Cold Spring Harbor), a DNA lab in New Jersey, on January 30. At CSH, students learned about the evolution of life on Earth and how DNA developed from single-celled organisms to multicellular organisms.

Before the visit, the students learned about DNA, which was a large unit in their science classes. Homeroom teachers and science teachers planned out the day-long exciting field trip. The hands-on experience helped the fifth graders get a profound understanding of the secrets behind DNA and how it functioned. The various activities were fun and intriguing for the students.



Gathering up pencils and packets, the fifth graders assembled at different stations and took down notes. At one station, a huge piece of dark blue wallpaper with a bright yellow line centered in the middle showed important events in the evolution of Earth. Above this timeline, students could see different predictions of what Earth probably looked like at different points of time. Students also took down notes at a different station to find out the probability of the certain gender of a child. They spun a wheel 10 times and saw the chance that they would have a male or female child.

"I liked examining the differences in the mitochondria in the DNA," noted Gray Henderson.

"It was interesting and fun to solve the mystery," added Harrison Smith.

Next year's fifth graders will likely enjoy making their own discoveries in the Cold Spring Harbor computer lab or exploring other science projects in Saint David's classrooms and beyond.

A crucial event in the evolution of Earth was when prokaryotes and bacteria slowly evolved into eukaryotes, forming more advanced forms of life. Digging deeper, students explored the difference between prokaryotes and eukaryotes—how prokaryotes did not have a protective nucleus, and how eukaryotes had beneficial nuclei to help store important information and DNA.

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News

Mysteries with DNA continued

But what was most intriguing was trying to solve a mystery as a whole class.

"My favorite part of the field trip was learning about Anastasia Frank in the computer lab," Dean de Csepel said. "That was creepy. I liked it, though!"

The computer lab was dark, fancy, and full of technology, casting an eerie light. "I particularly liked the unique design of the room," remarked Brooks Brown.

After students walked up the spiral ramp to get seated at their own computers, they examined the story of Anastasia Frank.

According to the famous mystery of the family of Tsar Nicholas, a woman under the fake name of Anna Anderson was a refugee in a hospital but claimed to be Anastasia Frank. She had similar scars and looked alike.

However, the British government claimed that she was actually a grenade worker who got her injuries from an explosion in the factory. Students used DNA to figure out if Anastasia Frank was really Anna Anderson.



Fifth graders at the Cold Spring Harbor DNA Center during their DNA studies

Class of 2025 Heads to a Variety of High Schools

By William Kadiyala '25

"Can you see yourself at this school?"

Mr. John Dearie's question is not only a familiar question, it's an important one for seventh and eighth grade boys considering prospective high schools. In fact, the Class of 2025 will head off to many different high schools this year, ranging from boarding schools in New England to day schools in the city, reflecting each of the graduates' specific strengths, interests and tastes.

The Class of 2025 will head off to many different high schools this year, ranging from boarding schools in New England to day schools in the city.

One eighth grader liked their school's "campus," the "welcoming community," and the "rigorous academic challenge," while another liked that their school felt "pretty similar to Saint David's" because they did not want to leave, while also appreciating the "great community" and teachers.

Having gone to schools in the city like Saint David's, attending a school with leafy campuses was very appealing to some, while others shied away from potentially long commutes or leaving home. Nine Saint

David's eighth grade students will attend boarding schools next year, slightly down from previous years.



The Class of 2026 during the Salamanca Study Tour

Spanish Tradition

By William Vandever '26

Saint David's students took their first summer trip to Spain 15 years ago, but the trip remains a strong annual tradition. This year, 30 seventh-grade students and their teachers headed to Salamanca, Spain, from June 14 to June 28. While there, they took immersive language classes and went on field trips.

For those who go, the trip is a signature Saint David's experience. "I can't wait to travel internationally with my friends. I can't wait to learn about the new culture involved with this

trip" said Joseph Bonkeranko prior to his departure to Spain.

Only minor parts of the trip have changed since boys first hopped on an airplane to Spain in 2010. Rather than staying at a residence for retired nuns, they now stay at a school for learning nuns.

"This is a very exciting time for students, and I hope they enjoy it as much as students before them," said Dr. Victoria Gilbert, who directs the trip.

Students will be accompanied by teachers and staff from Saint David's. Mr. J.P. Hormillosa, Director of Development, has gone three times. "As a chaperone I look forward to getting to know the seventh graders better. It is a great practice to be able to learn not only the Spanish language but the culture as well."

Mr. Michael Nelson, a teacher, added that "the Spain trip is an incredible opportunity to learn about the language, history, and culture while being immersed in all three in a historical and student centered city such as Salamanca."

Beyond the Page!

Scan the QR below to hear the latest podcast episode of *Beyond the Page!* Co-hosts **Soren Klimczak '26** and **Andrew Oneglia '26** interview **Nicole Ransone**, Director of Horizons, the academic and enrichment program hosted at Saint David's every summer.



Right and above. This summer, students from New York in grades 1 through 8 participated in the Horizons program at Saint David's.

A Warm Farewell for Profesora Pipitone

By Friedrich Harris '26

Profesora Saybel Pipitone, one of Saint David's most cherished teachers, has announced her retirement after leading Saint David's boys on an enriching, imaginative, and immersive discovery of the Spanish language for an astounding ten years.



Profesora Pipitone's joyful enthusiasm and high standards inspires students to become good men,

The moment Profesora Pipitone stepped foot on the grounds of the school in 2016, she knew she was in a special place. Saint David's culture, anchored in strong ethical values and steeped in tradition, set the school apart from other institutions she was considering. She said she enjoyed daily rituals such as offering firm handshakes with the boys in the morning, engaging in reflective chapel talks and exchanging beaming smiles within a loving community.

"This is truly a happy community. Everyone is always ready to lend a helping hand, and happy to support each other," said Profesora Pipitone.

Profesora Pipitone has made a profound and lasting impact on her boys. Personally, I discovered a passion for

the Spanish language and culture that reflects Senora Pipitone's unique style. I fondly remember my sixth, fourth and third grade days in her memorable Spanish classes. In particular, the most monumental memory I made along the way was cooking up a Peruvian storm at home and trying my delicious *Arroz Chaufa* with my mother.

"Since sixth graders aren't ready to be left unsupervised in a kitchen, parents know they need to participate in the project, either by filming or supervising," Professora Pipitone said. "Initially, I was afraid parents wouldn't want to bother, but as it turns out, they love it! The project is such a hit, my eighth graders asked to do it again!"

On behalf of all the Saint David's faculty, students, and alumni, I would like to wish Senora Pipitone well in the next chapter of her life. We all wish you continued success, unending days of sun-filled warm weather and happiness. No matter where you go Mrs. Pipitone, the lives of the people around you are easily brightened day by day, and you never fail to inspire someone to be the best version of themselves.

Regis Students Return to Saint David's

By Soren Klimczak '26

This spring, Saint David's was lucky enough to welcome back alumni Maximus Hansen, Matthew Cosenza, Emmet O'Sullivan, Ethan Klimczak, and Colin Jennings from Regis High School for their third trimester service. All are members of Saint David's Class of 2021. All of the boys are seniors at Regis High School.

At Regis, seniors have an opportunity to volunteer rather

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From left: Class of 2021 alumni, Colin Jennings, Maximus Hansen, and Ethan Klimczak help with the coat drive.



Regis Students Return to Saint David's continued

attend classes during their last trimester. Some seniors prefer to help out at a church or a soup kitchen, but these Regis boys offered to return to Saint David's, demonstrating their affection for their alma mater.

While here, they received daily assignments from Head of Upper School, Mrs. Ali Aoyama, such as assisting on field trips. Regis volunteers also helped teachers in the classroom by serving as classroom assistants.

When reflecting on his time at Saint Davids, Ethan Klimczak '21 said that "returning to help the school that gave me so much during my younger years was a full-circle moment. I especially enjoyed collaborating with the amazing teachers and having the opportunity to mentor younger students, giving back to the community that shaped me."

Matthew Cosenza '21 conveyed a similar message. "I really enjoyed working with familiar faces and engaging with athletes of all different ages, which made the experience especially meaningful. Coaching middle school baseball while also playing for Regis gave me a unique perspective. Bringing my coaching skills to my high school team and my playing experience to the middle schoolers was especially rewarding."



A "full-circle moment" for Regis High School seniors who returned to Saint David's to pitch in and support current students

From left: Colin Jennings, Maximus Hansen, Emmet O'Sullivan, Ethan Klimczak, and Matthew Cosenza

Everyone Loves the Nerdy Derby!

By Connor Shah '26

Saint David's third graders got to channel their inner Henry Ford during the annual Nerdy Derby competition this spring. The popular event, part of the Grade 3 science curriculum, challenges boys to make miniature rolling cars utilizing common and affordable materials, like wood and pipe cleaners. The



catch: they have to withstand a journey through the track, which drops precipitously, and make it over the finish line faster than anyone else. Ultimately, boys have to "independently learn and use the engineering cycle, which will help them be more creative in any projects in life," said science teacher Mr. Brian Donnelly, who is the main instructor of this project.

"This project started when Saint David's was looking for ways to incorporate more technology and engineering in the science program," said Mr. Donnelly. "I've been doing this project for four years but have been involved since the very beginning, about 10 years ago. It changes every year."

So, while Nerdy Derby may feel like fun and games, it's a rich opportunity for boys to experiment with different designs, run them, and adjust them based on their performance on the track. They also apply concepts like friction, gravity, balance, and aerodynamics through real-world experimentation while fulfilling their creative problem-solving skills. Finally, Nerdy Derby sparks curiosity and teamwork. With so many benefits, everyone's a winner, even if their cars don't cross the finish line first.

Great Prizes Illuminate a Fabulous Benefit

By Liam Smith '26

Raising Cane's, Coaches Night, throwing a football with Michael Burton, and closing the stock market at Nasdaq were among a dazzling array of prizes auctioned off at the annual Parents Association benefit gala held at Cipriani on Feb. 7.

This year's gala theme, "Illuminate," reflected Headmaster Dr. David O'Halloran's theme for the 2024-2025 academic year of "Strong Values."

Led by co-chairs Tierney Smith and Laura Pietropinto, the benefit attracted close to 600 guests. In addition to auction items—which also included class events and international trips—the benefit featured its signature journal featuring photographs of Saint David's families.

Mr. J.P. Hormillosa, Director of Development and Alumni Relations, credited volunteers who worked for months to organize and execute "a perfect evening."

"The Benefit is an amazing opportunity for



Benefit co-chairs Laura Pietropinto and Tierney Smith

the Saint David's community to celebrate the school every year," Mr. Hormillosa added. "It is a privilege to work with so many dedicated, parent volunteers, who make this fun event a huge success."

Raising Cane's Lunch has Students Asking for Seconds

By Hank McVey '26

Buttery toast, chicken fried to perfection, and mouth-watering sauce. Seventh graders got all of that and more when they were treated to a take-out feast from Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers on May 8. The special meal was an auction item purchased for the class by seventh-grade parents. In addition to a Raising Cane's lunch, the seventh grade class was given the green light to wear jerseys from their favorite sports team and a day off from homework.

"It is an opportunity that you never come across at Saint David's," said Cruz Burton.

Raising Cane's is a fast-food chain that serves chicken fingers, fries, and Texas toast—large pieces of bread bathed in warm butter. The chain is also popular for its signature dipping sauce and coleslaw. Like the best fast-food chains, Raising Cane's serves up delicious food without a huge wait.

Still, that doesn't necessarily make it convenient. Raising Cane's is located in Times Square, making it too far from for many students to order take-out on apps like Doordash.

The novelty of the event—a first at Saint David's—was also exciting. As student Tyler Williams observed, "We never get to do this at school." The seventh grade is grateful for this opportunity. So, how did this popular fast-food chain make it to Saint David's?

"The idea came from the auction committee," said Mr. J.P. Hormillosa, Director of Development and Alumni Relations. "They thought the boys would love it."

As for next year? "It was a success, and they should bring it back for future auctions," said seventh-grade student Alex Demauro.

New Chef in Town: Diaz-Rodriguez Takes the Reins

By Jack Janus '25

Ever since Chef Franklin Diaz-Rodriguez joined the Saint David's faculty in January, he has put his own spin on Saint David's lunch. He has much experience in the field of culinary arts, working previously as the executive chef at the JFK Airport Delta Sky Club. There, he cooked up several delectable cuisines, such as Latin, Asian, American Greek, and Mexican. He has recently commented about how his "favorite food [cuisine] to eat and to make for lunch is Mexican. One, It's straightforward and two, it's fresh . . . lots of veggies."

Once Chef Franklin joined Saint David's, he began adding attention to detail, or, as he puts it, "add[ing] more love." He expands on this idea further explaining how he and the chefs "try to simplify things in terms of what goes into it [the food], and of course, [use] more whole foods."

Furthermore, he explained how the dining team is "making sure that we give all the attention to detail and give you guys a quality product to enjoy, which sometimes is not so easy."

When asked about how much control over the menu his team has, he said that "the recipes actually



Chef Franklin (far right) and the Saint David's masterful dining services team

come directly from corporate, but I make changes where I feel needed, and if we have the means to make a recipe better, we do not hesitate to do so."

Chef Franklin has a very positive relationship with the other chefs. "We're one team—all for one, one for all," he says. He is also very passionate about cooking.

"Cooking doesn't feel like a job," he says. "When doing so, I forget the world and I get lost in my cooking. I focus on the food. It's the one thing in the world that does that for me."

Spanish Students Bite Into AAPPL

By Tyler Williams '26

The AAPPL (pronounced Apple) test is a proficiency test in Spanish. Seventh and eighth graders take it to assess their ability in Spanish.

According to Professora Leonor Brenes, Saint David's Spanish teacher, the AAPPL test "gives students feedback about their current level and strategies for working on each skill to improve their proficiency." A level up from the STAMP test, which students take in the lower school and 5th and 6th grades, the AAPPL test assesses students' skills in Interpersonal Speaking, Listening, Writing, and Reading.

AAPPL tasks explore various topics that are familiar to learners through classroom instruction or other language-learning experiences, such as school, family, and community. Test questions also vary depending on a student's level of proficiency.



Seventh-Grade Chapel Talks

By Mark Carey '26

It's only a few steps from the pews to the pulpit, but for seventh graders, the opportunity to deliver a Chapel Talk requires thoughtful scholarship, lots of writing, and even a few rehearsals.

Created by Headmaster Dr. David O'Halloran, Agent for the Good Chapel talks have become a signature experience for seventh-graders, preparing them to become leaders prior to becoming eighth graders.

The Chapel Talk program begins with boys taking four lessons with Dr. O'Halloran because he loves teaching. Dr. O'Halloran also wanted to get to know the boys as writers, thinkers, and scholars. Then, the boys work on their talks, writing a three-page speech over the course of March. The speech allows boys to choose and integrate three out of four choices into their talk: a Bible passage, a personal experience, the school's Mission Statement, or lessons from an inspirational individual or so-called "Agent for the Good."

While seventh graders often write about all four options, the most popular option is selecting and sharing a lesson inspired by an Agent for the Good. This year, seventh grade chapel talks shed light on a variety of pivotal change-makers, from abolitionists William Wilberforce and Harriet Tubman to chocolatier Milton Hershey, Pope St. Leo, and naturalist John Muir, who was the subject of Lucas Chung's Chapel talk.

"When our country seemed to only care about economic development, he worked hard to protect God's creation in the face of many challenges," Chung '26 told fifth and sixth graders who listened to his talk. "To John Muir, God and nature were entwined."

After researching and writing their talks, students met with Dr. O'Halloran to practice delivering them. Dr. O'Halloran always says, "You don't read your Chapel talk, you give it."

Boys present their Chapel talks to both Lower

School boys in second through fourth grade and Upper School fifth and sixth-graders. After each talk, they shake everyone's hands, often receiving praise for their hard work.



Jake Salvatore '26 giving his chapel talk

Preparing for High School Success

By Gavin Touhy '26

Students get a lot of help when it's time to apply to high school, thanks to Saint David's well-planned process for strengthening boys' schoolwork, life skills, and self-confidence.

The application process kicks-off in February with a meeting for seventh grade parents led by Headmaster Dr. David O'Halloran. John Dearie, Head of Secondary School Counseling, distributes handy guidebooks to help guide families as they support their sons through each step.

"We have panel talks with people who run admissions at both boarding and day schools," Mr. Dearie says. "Then, I meet with each family for about two hours to help them understand everything from test prep to how the interviews work."

Students kick off their eighth-grade year by crafting a personal essay titled "About Me," in which they write about their hobbies, personal interests, and high school "must-haves." The essay gets students thinking about what to do in high school to help prepare for school interviews, but it also helps their teachers write strong recommendation letters. "Effort grades matter a lot for recommendations," Mr. Dearie says.

More than 20 Saint David's teachers help students do three practice interviews. "We want them to feel ready and confident," Mr. Dearie says.

Sports

Despite Setbacks, Saint David's Baseball Stays Strong

By Jackson Feil '26 and Kai Mejia '26

Injuries,, bad weather, and a small team could not stop Saint David's Baseball from finishing a strong season, going 4 and 4 with a thrilling walk-off win against Collegiate in the team's final game.

Coaches Ted Friedman, Craig Learn, and Michael Balter led the team through innovative drills when bad weather prevented practices at the start of the season. Instead, players spent more time in the fitness room—a change from prior seasons.

"I always had a vision for the fitness room to not only be used for fitness classes, but for team workouts as well," said Coach Learn. The fitness room "builds a camaraderie within the team as well as the health benefits that come with the workout."

Players included Charlie Baer, Cruz Burton, Luke Djunic, Jackson Feil, Ryan Golding, William Kadiyala, Alex Johnston, Kai Mejia, Griffin Roth, Jamie Voorheis, and Miles Waterman.

This year's roster was smaller than usual, possibly as a result of the introduction of cross-training, also known as "intramurals." In cross-training, boys get to play some of their favorite recreational games while chatting with their friends. The combination of a non-competitive atmosphere mixed with having fun with friends during school hours is an enticing sports activity for boys who might have otherwise played baseball.

Given the baseball team's strong season, the real question is: Will the drop continue or was intramurals a one-hit wonder? Meanwhile, the team's coaches did a great job of working with what they have and making sure players were just as competent, comfortable, and competitive as any other school.



Ingenuity, heart, and the school's fitness room helped pave the baseball team's way to success this spring..

Saint David's Own Sportscaster

By Andrew Oneglia '26

The New York Rangers have Sam Rosen. The Boston Red Sox have Joe Castiglione. Saint David's School has Mr. Tom Ryan.

"I just like talking about the game while watching," said Mr. Ryan, the school's resident on-air talent. In addition to talking about his beloved New York Yankees, Mr. Ryan used to commentate for Saint David's home basketball games back in the 1980s with retired teacher Mr. Robert McLaughlin.

Two years ago, Mr. Ryan, who teaches English, decided to return to commentating, and his insights have been a staple of Red basketball home games ever since. Since his comeback, Mr. Ryan has had an eighth grader help him. This year, it was Matthew Parsons '25. This season, he and Mr. Ryan sat on the seventh floor directly above the bleachers during home games.

Mr. Ryan applies the same skills he brings to his English classes as he does to commentating, that is "as much humor as I can and gentle sarcasm. It is not just the basket and who scored it, it is the humor and the analysis. I think my classroom mirrors the commentating. Even though it's my free time, I enjoy it. If I had a chance to do it on a higher level, I would."

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