

# SOAR

SPRING 2025



## THE PRENTICE DIFFERENCE

AN INSIDE LOOK AT STUDENT LIFE AND BEYOND



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# Ben Riebe

## A RECENT LOOK BACK AT PRENTICE

### WELCOME MESSAGE

Over 38 years ago, a determined group of parents came together with a shared vision: to create a school where children with dyslexia could receive the education, support, and respect they deserved. That vision became The Prentice School.

What began as a small, dedicated effort has grown into a thriving 6.6-acre campus with more than 25 classrooms, serving 150 students from 1st through 8th grade.

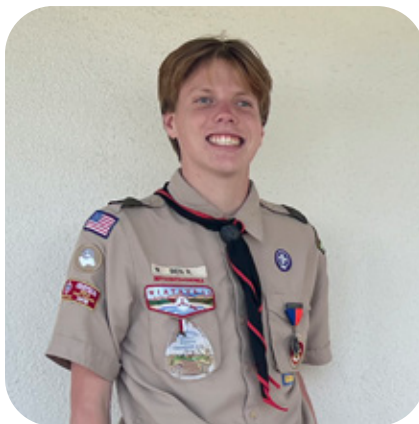
Today, our mission is as strong as ever — to empower students with language-based learning differences and co-occurring conditions, such as ADHD, to realize their full potential. We nurture their creativity, intelligence, and leadership, helping them achieve success they never imagined possible.

I'm proud to share the 2025 Spring Issue of our **SOAR Magazine**, offering a glimpse into the heart of Prentice and the incredible community that makes it so special.

With gratitude,



Devon Green  
Head of School



**When did you attend Prentice? When did you graduate from Prentice?**  
2016-2021 (4th grade – 8th grade). I graduated in Spring 2021.

### What is different about Prentice than your other schools?

There are many differences about Prentice from the other two public schools I attended. My classes were much smaller, and every teacher knew how to instruct in a way that made sense to me. I made great friends at Prentice who also shared the same differences as me and that helped me learn how to be successful and advocate for myself.

### What is your favorite part about Prentice and/or do you have a favorite story about Prentice you'd like to share?

My favorite part about Prentice was the amazing staff. My teachers were always so supportive and understanding and I loved being taught in a safe and encouraging environment. I have so many fun memories of playing football at lunch, going to Catalina, 8th grade graduation, learning with the therapy dogs and having fun with my friends.

### What high school do you currently attend?

I am a senior at Woodbridge High School in Irvine and will graduate this June.

### How did Prentice help set you up for success at your current school?

Prentice gave me techniques to learn and be successful in school. Everything from reading, math and writing to learning how to stay organized and how to break projects up into smaller pieces so it was less overwhelming and easier to focus.

### What is something you wish everyone knew about Prentice?

I wish every kid that struggles with dyslexia and ADHD had the opportunity to go to Prentice and learn in an environment that is supportive and set up to help them succeed.

### What are your current plans for after high school?

My current plans are to go to community college and then transfer to a 4 year university.

### You recently earned your Eagle Scout rank and chose to give back to Prentice for your service project. Could you share why you chose Prentice for the service project? The students and families love our new buddy benches!

I was so excited to be able to do my service project for Prentice. The teachers and staff have given so much to me over the years and I have so many great memories because of my time there. I hope the Buddy Benches are a great place for kids to make friends and create memories together.



# Rewiring the Way We Teach: How The Prentice School Embeds Neuroscience into Every School Day

At The Prentice School, accessibility isn't our finish line—it's our foundation. What sets our program apart is not only our use of the most respected, research-based academic programs but also the intentional, science-driven way we deliver instruction. We understand that great content is only powerful when taught in a way the brain is designed to learn. That's why our entire approach is rooted in Mind, Brain, and Education (MBE) science and the neuroscience of how children naturally absorb, process, and retain information.



### Honoring the Brain's Uniqueness

No two brains are the same—and at Prentice, that truth drives everything we do. Every student arrives with a unique set of strengths, challenges, and life experiences that shape how they learn. That's why our instructional model is built around small, differentiated learning groups, personalized assessments, and multimodal teaching strategies.

**This ensures learning is relevant, challenging and accessible to every student, laying the foundation for strong, lasting neural connections.**

### Engagement that Fuels Attention and Motivation

The brain requires regular resets to stay focused and retain new information. We embed brain breaks, movement, mindfulness, and other regulation tools into each day, giving students the space they need to refocus and re-engage. These practices are especially transformative for students with ADHD, dyslexia, or sensory processing differences.

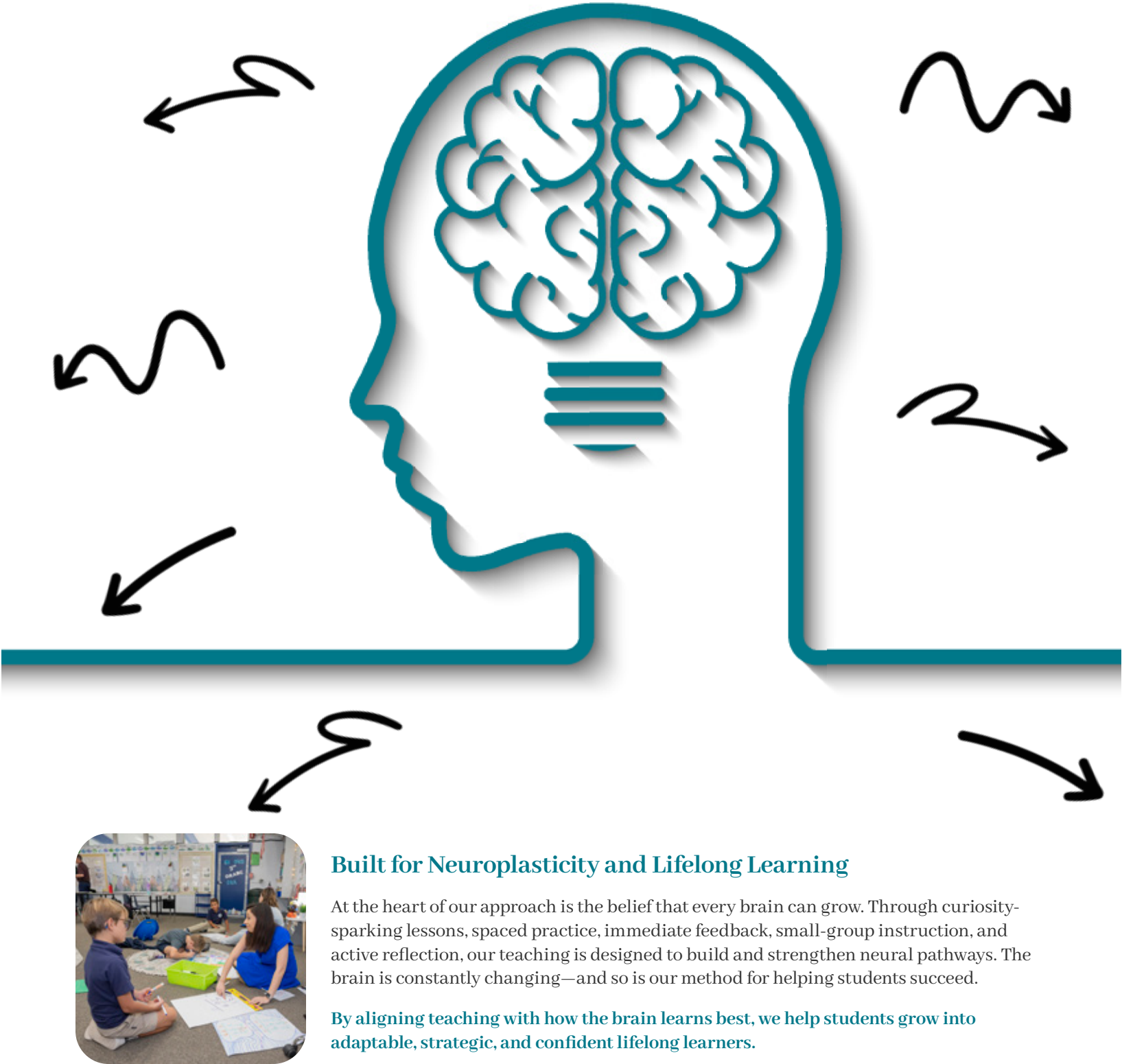
**When students are emotionally regulated and mentally present, learning is deeper, more joyful, and far more sustainable.**



### Teaching that Connects with the Brain's Design

We know that students retain knowledge best when they experience it in multiple ways. Through hands-on science labs, visual models, kinesthetic learning activities, storytelling, and interactive discussions across disciplines, students engage in their small classroom sizes with content through visual, auditory, and tactile pathways.

**This multi-sensory approach strengthens memory, deepens comprehension, and aligns with how the brain naturally processes complex information.**



### Built for Neuroplasticity and Lifelong Learning

At the heart of our approach is the belief that every brain can grow. Through curiosity-sparking lessons, spaced practice, immediate feedback, small-group instruction, and active reflection, our teaching is designed to build and strengthen neural pathways. The brain is constantly changing—and so is our method for helping students succeed.

**By aligning teaching with how the brain learns best, we help students grow into adaptable, strategic, and confident lifelong learners.**

Our classrooms are intentionally designed to support optimal learning conditions, creating a dynamic educational experience where every student - especially those with learning differences - can thrive, as every element of their day is built to honor how their brains learn best. They leave not only with stronger academic skills, but with a deep sense of confidence and self-understanding. At Prentice, students don't just learn more—they learn who they are as learners, ready to take on the world with clarity, courage, and joy.

### Empowering Students to Show What They Know

Standardized tests are only one narrow lens on learning. At Prentice, we expand the view. Students demonstrate their understanding through project-based learning, oral presentations, portfolio work, and creative expression. Whether writing, building, acting, or presenting, students have multiple methods to showcase their strengths.

**Providing choice in how students express their knowledge builds confidence, deepens mastery, and fosters strategic, empowered learners.**



### Emotional Safety as a Gateway to Learning

Research is clear: students cannot learn when their emotional brains feel unsafe. That's why we intentionally cultivate classrooms that prioritize trust, belonging, and emotional regulation. With support from our licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, personalized regulation toolkits, and a positive reward system, students build resilience, take academic risks, and learn to self-regulate.

**When students feel emotionally safe, their brains are primed to think critically, absorb new ideas, and fully engage in the learning process.**

### Learning Beyond the Classroom Walls

We believe in learning that lives outside the page. Field trips, nature exploration, and purposeful play are not "extras"—they're essential tools for cementing understanding and inspiring curiosity. Whether at a museum, in a science lab, or outside under the sun, students connect classroom learning to real-world experiences.

**These authentic, embodied moments deepen emotional and sensory memory, making learning more meaningful and easier to retain.**





# Award-Winning Programs, Proven Results:

## HOW THE PRENTICE SCHOOL TRANSFORMS LEARNING THROUGH RESEARCH-BASED SUCCESS

At The Prentice School, every program is grounded in evidence, informed by data, and designed with intention. Our goal isn't just to teach—it's to reach every student by aligning instruction with how they learn best. Through a blend of top-tier curricula and proven strategies, we help students with learning differences make meaningful, measurable progress.

With award-winning programs, expert instruction, and a school day built around how the brain learns best, our students don't just catch up—they thrive. They leave Prentice knowing themselves as learners, equipped with confidence and the skills to succeed. That's the Prentice difference.



# Empowering Parents: A Year of Learning and Support at The Prentice School

At The Prentice School, we believe that students with learning differences thrive when parents, educators, and specialists collaborate. Throughout the year, we've hosted a series of engaging workshops to deepen understanding, provide practical strategies, and empower families navigating the unique challenges of dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, ADHD, and executive functioning difficulties. Each event focused on the essential skills students need to develop independence, confidence, and academic success.

For more info on how to support your child with ADHD & dyslexia, please scan this QR code:



## 1 - BUILDING EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

Executive functioning challenges can impact focus, organization, and independence. In this hands-on workshop, expert Tia Jones shared practical strategies to help parents support their child's planning, time management, and self-regulation—both at home and in the classroom.

**At Prentice:** Teachers utilize visual schedules, guided task breakdowns, and structured routines to help students strengthen executive functioning. Self-advocacy training and goal-setting activities further enhance students' ability to plan, prioritize, and adapt.

## 2- DYSLEXIA FOR A DAY

This immersive experience, led by Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurley, allowed parents and educators to experience the challenges associated with dyslexia firsthand. Participants engaged in simulations focused on decoding, fluency, and written expression to better understand the obstacles students face.

**At Prentice:** Our structured literacy interventions and research-based reading programs provide students with explicit instruction to strengthen literacy skills while fostering confidence and a love for reading.



## 3 - MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

The transition to high school brings new academic and social challenges, making executive functioning and self-advocacy skills critical for success. Experts guided parents through strategies to build independence, manage increasing academic demands, and develop time management skills.

**At Prentice:** Students in grades 7–8 benefit from structured goal-setting exercises, self-monitoring strategies, and direct instruction in study skills to support a smooth transition to high school.

## 4 - WORKING MEMORY, PROCESSING SPEED, AND YOUR CHILD

Cognitive functions like working memory and processing speed directly impact a student's ability to retain information, process new concepts, and complete tasks efficiently. Dr. Wong's presentation helped parents understand how these challenges affect students in the classroom and provided strategies for support.

**At Prentice:** Our integrated Mind Masters program strengthens memory, processing speed, and cognitive flexibility, equipping students with the skills needed for success across all disciplines. We are the first school internationally to offer this added program to our school day.



## 5 - MIND MASTERS

Mind Masters is a cognitive training program designed to enhance executive functioning, working memory, and processing speed. This workshop introduced parents to the neuroscience behind cognitive development and its impact on academic success.

**At Prentice:** Students participate in structured exercises that improve attention, self-regulation, and cognitive flexibility, ensuring they develop the tools necessary to become independent learners. For more info on our Mind Masters Program, please scan here:



## 6 - ANXIETY, DEPRESSION & SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Students with learning differences often experience higher levels of anxiety and depression due to academic frustration or social difficulties. This workshop explored how Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies can help students develop coping skills and resilience.

**At Prentice:** SEL is embedded into daily instruction through mindfulness exercises, self-advocacy lessons, and positive reinforcement strategies. Teachers guide students in recognizing emotions, navigating social interactions, and building self-confidence to support their well-being.



## 7 - NAVIGATING ADHD

Understanding ADHD can be overwhelming for families. In this workshop, Dr. Amy Weir broke down the assessment process and offered practical strategies to support children from early childhood assessments through early adulthood—giving parents clarity, confidence, and actionable tools.

**At Prentice:** Our educators and support staff understand the unique needs of students with ADHD and provide daily structure, clear expectations, and regulation strategies that help students focus, stay organized, and thrive.

## 8 - SOCIAL COMMUNICATION & YOUR CHILD

Social communication is essential for building relationships, expressing thoughts, and understanding others. This interactive workshop explored the techniques used in Prentice classrooms to support perspective-taking, emotional regulation, and problem-solving.

**At Prentice:** Students engage in weekly Social Communication lessons that incorporate:

- The Zones of Regulation® – Teaching self-awareness and emotional regulation strategies
- Social Detective® – Helping students recognize social cues and interpret behaviors
- Superflex® and the Unthinkabots® – Strengthening flexible thinking and problem-solving skills



## 9 - ORTON-GILLINGHAM SKILLS & METHODOLOGY

Strong literacy skills are essential for lifelong learning. This hands-on workshop introduced parents to the Orton-Gillingham (O-G) approach, demonstrating the multisensory techniques used to strengthen reading and writing.

**At Prentice:** Our structured, systematic instruction integrates phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, and comprehension strategies to ensure students build a strong foundation in literacy. Daily small-group O-G intervention for grades 1–6 allows for personalized instruction that meets individual learning needs.



# Beyond the Bell:

## AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS THAT INSPIRE, ENGAGE, AND EMPOWER

At The Prentice School, learning doesn't end when the final bell rings. Our robust after-school program offers students the opportunity to discover new passions, develop meaningful skills, and connect with peers in a supportive and structured environment. From creative expression and STEM learning to athletics and social-emotional growth, each club is designed with our students' diverse strengths and needs in mind.

### Engaging Options for Every Interest

Our seasonal after-school offerings include a wide range of clubs across multiple categories. Here are some examples:



#### Creative & Performing Arts

Students can take the stage in *Storybook Musical Theater*, bring characters to life in *Dungeons & Dragons*, or develop fine motor and visual-spatial skills in *Fine Arts*. These experiences build confidence, creativity, and communication—essential tools for lifelong self-expression.



#### STEM & Logic-Based Learning

Clubs like *Scratch Coding for Kids*, *Puzzle Club*, and *Fingerboarding Engineering* encourage students to think critically, explore problems from different angles, and engage in hands-on STEM learning. These brain-boosting activities foster innovation, perseverance, and logical reasoning.



#### Physical Activity & Team Sports

Our athletic offerings—*Soccer*, *Flag Football*, *Track & Field*, *Volleyball*, *Cheer*, and now *Blacktop Hockey*—develop coordination, teamwork, and a strong sense of sportsmanship. These clubs give students an active outlet while strengthening focus, energy, and resilience.



#### Leadership & Collaboration

In *Yearbook Club*, students take on the exciting task of documenting the school year through photography, writing, and layout design. They gain valuable real-world skills in collaboration, organization, and digital publishing while creating a cherished keepsake for their peers.



#### Culture & Global Exploration

*Expedition Through Japan* offers students an immersive look at Japanese language, games, music, and anime—broadening global awareness and cultural appreciation in a fun and interactive environment.



#### Support & Study Skills

For students who benefit from additional structure at the end of the day, our *Homework Club* provides a calm, supportive space to complete assignments with the help of Prentice staff. This club encourages independence while ensuring students stay on track.



#### Animal Science & Curiosity

In *Animal Club*, students explore the biology, behavior, and care of animals through stories, discussions, and hands-on learning. This club nurtures empathy, curiosity, and scientific thinking—all while celebrating a shared love for creatures big and small.

### A Program Built for Prentice Learners

Our after-school clubs are intentionally designed to reflect the same values and learning strategies used during the school day. Many clubs are led by Prentice educators, professionals, and trusted outside partners, ensuring a seamless connection between academic learning and after-school enrichment.



# Our Commitment to Excellence:

## THE PRENTICE SCHOOL IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF ALDS

At The Prentice School, we have always been dedicated to providing an exceptional education for students with learning differences. This year, we are proud to announce our status as a **founding member of the Association of Learning Differences Schools (ALDS)**—a groundbreaking initiative that brings together specialized schools from across the country to advance best practices in supporting students with **dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and executive dysfunction**.



ALDS was created to **connect and support schools** that share a commitment to serving students with learning differences through **research-based instruction, professional collaboration, and continuous growth**. As a founding member, The Prentice School plays a **pivotal role** in shaping the direction of this association, ensuring that educators, administrators, and students alike benefit from shared expertise and resources.

### What This Means for Prentice

As part of ALDS, we gain access to a **network of like-minded professionals and institutions** who are committed to the same high standards of education. This collaboration allows us to:

- **Engage in learning cohorts** focused on leadership development and best practices in LD education.
- **Share expertise and resources** with other top-tier schools specializing in learning differences.
- **Stay at the forefront of LD research**, ensuring our curriculum and instructional strategies align with the latest findings in the **Science of Reading**.
- **Advocate for students with learning differences**, strengthening the broader conversation about effective and inclusive education.

### Our Role as a Founding Member

The Prentice School is honored to be among the select group of schools that helped establish ALDS. Our leadership and faculty actively contribute to shaping the association's initiatives, ensuring that students, families, and educators receive the highest level of support. By working alongside other accredited, research-driven LD schools, we are helping to set new standards for instruction, teacher development, and student success.

### A Shared Vision for the Future

As ALDS continues to grow, its mission remains clear: to foster an inclusive, empowering, and forward-thinking community for schools that specialize in LD education. With core values centered on community, collaboration, and continuous improvement, ALDS is poised to make a lasting impact on the field of specialized education.

We are thrilled to be part of this journey and look forward to enhancing our programs, strengthening our partnerships, and continuing to provide the best possible education for our students. Together with ALDS, The Prentice School is leading the way in ensuring that students with learning differences have access to transformative, empowering, and innovative educational experiences.

For more information about ALDS and its mission, visit <https://www.ldschoools.org/>.



# Blair Conklin

## A LOOK BACK AT PRENTICE

**When did you attend Prentice?**

I started Prentice in 2002 mid-way through my 1st grade year and stayed through 8th grade.

**When did you graduate from Prentice?**

I graduated in the spring of 2009 after finishing my 8th grade year.

**What is different about Prentice than your other schools?**

I attended a Montessori school for Kindergarten and the first half of 1st grade. I remember being super stressed at Montessori as I couldn't understand why I was unable to read and write like the other kids. No matter how hard they tried to teach me, I couldn't even recite the alphabet when I left at nearly 7 years old. One teacher said that "I wasn't trying hard enough", but I knew that wasn't true. I went as far as labeling my classroom there as the "danger room." Within two weeks after starting at Prentice my mom recalls that I was able to say the alphabet and was beginning to read. I told mom on the way home from school one day that at my new school the "teachers get me—the other kids are a lot like me." I was so much happier as I knew I finally fit in.

**Tell us a bit about what you do now and how you got here.**

During my time at Prentice I would come home from school after a 45-minute commute and head to the beach with my skimboard in hand. My parents knew I needed to rinse off the day, so everyday after school I would skimboard and surf in Laguna Beach where I grew up. I guess you could say that this exercise helped me develop my water skills enough to eventually be sponsored by a few skimboarding companies. After becoming a 3-time United Skim Tour World Champion, and with my social media following growing, I shifted to putting my efforts toward growing the sport and expanding my appeal beyond skimboarding to the surf world. I created my "Skid Kids" YouTube channel and that is when I guess you could say my media company began. Across all media platforms, I now have a combined following of 6.5 million and more than 5.2 billion views across YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Looking back at it all, who knew that the little sport of skimboarding would lead to this?



**How did Prentice help set you up for success in high school, college and/or beyond?**

In many ways, I guess you could say the skills and confidence gained while at Prentice led me to the success I have achieved today. The teachers taught me that hard work and dedication will take you far. That even when something seems hard and, at times unachievable, you have to push through the challenge in front of you. Knowing I could be successful at Prentice helped to set a solid foundation. It gave me the confidence and determination for success in high school and college. While getting my degree in Environmental Science from UC Berkeley wasn't easy, I know that as a result of my education at Prentice, I was able to push through the challenges—also getting accommodations with extra time for exams didn't hurt!

**What is something you wish everyone knew about Prentice?**

The other thing that was key to my success in school was the way Prentice teachers worked with me on how to keep organized and manage my time in order to get my school work done. Even to this day, I am pretty organized in the way I manage my workload. Although Skid Kids looks like all fun and games, each day I navigate the many demands on my time—reviewing and negotiating contracts, developing current and future sponsors, creating video content, and managing 4-5 content creators who work with me on media creation across all platforms. I am grateful to Prentice that I have been able to do what I love and make a great living doing what I do every day.

**What are your current plans for the future?**

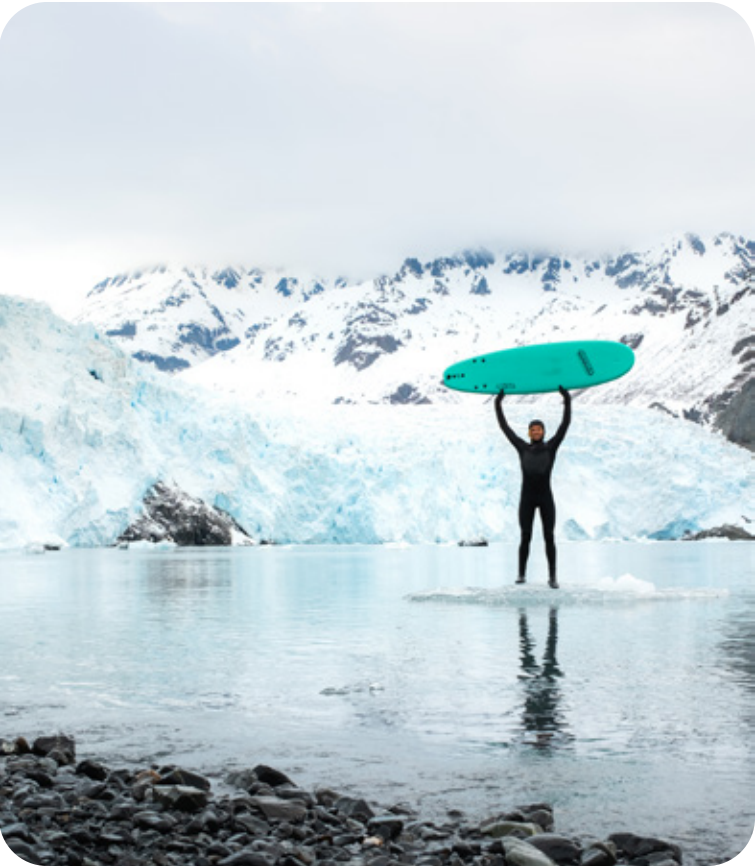
I plan on continuing to develop all aspects of my media content to make the most of the many opportunities that come my way. My goal is to keep on top of ever-evolving media environments to continue to support Skid Kids. As I continue to have interest in the environmental sciences, I hope to expand my presence in support of worthwhile nonprofit organizations working to keep our environment clean. Most recently, I completed campaigns for Surfrider Foundation and Undo Tobacco.

**What makes you continue to support Prentice?**

I will be forever grateful for all the amazing teachers, principals and staff that helped me along the way. Any student who struggles like I did deserves a school like Prentice

**Is there anything else you would like to share?**

Many thanks to Mrs. Offerman (first- and second-grade teacher), Mrs. Carol Clark (Elementary Principal who was my biggest fan), Mrs. Karen Lerner (Jr. High Principal who kept me in line), Ms. Carly Gonzalez (Jr. High Math teacher who continued to work with me after Prentice and the reason I scored so high in math on the ACT), Mrs. Bullard (Jr. High English Teacher who had a great way of picking apart the English language), and to everyone who helped along the way. Thanks to my parents and Grandpa Bear and Kana for seeing to it that I got the education I needed.



## DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

# 2025 Education Elevated Gala

On May 3rd, we proudly hosted the 2025 Education Elevated Gala at the Marriott Irvine Spectrum, uniting nearly 200 guests in celebration of our mission and the incredible impact of the Prentice Family's continued support. For 38 years, Prentice has championed innovative education and a nurturing environment for students who learn differently — and this evening was a powerful reminder of that purpose.

Our featured speaker, Logan Dooley — Prentice Alumnus and 3-time US Olympian — captivated the audience with his inspiring story, reflecting on how his time at Prentice shaped his journey both in and out of the classroom.

Thanks to the generosity of our community and a surprise matching gift during the Scholarship Paddle Raise, we are excited to share that we raised almost \$500,000 — making this another Gala for the books!

To all who attended, donated, volunteered, or supported from afar: thank you. Your commitment to Prentice mission pushes our work forward and helps ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive.





THE PRENTICE SCHOOL  
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# THE PRENTICE SCHOOL

EDUCATION ELEVATED

This year has been truly amazing – from our record-breaking Fit-A-Thon, which raised more than \$60,000, to receiving nearly \$200,000 in grants from a variety of philanthropic companies and generous family foundations! We are soaring from such an inspiring year. We are excited to begin making some capital improvements to Prentice over the next few years, which will kick off with security upgrades this summer and follow with classroom upgrades and new technology. We cannot thank you enough for your continued support of school and the very special students who attend Prentice.

For more information, or to discuss how you can make an impact, please contact Chiemi Lee, Director of Development at 714.786.3599 or [clee@prentice.org](mailto:clee@prentice.org).



Donate online.

