“As a tennis player, I’ve always been interested in the importance of mentally preparing for a match, of getting into the right state of mind,” says Dylan Flanagan ’16.

coaches in Training

As a student in The Art of Coaching: Beyond the Xs and Os, one of 23 June Term courses offered this school year, Dylan will explore how impactful coaches inspire their players and how the skills of coaching can be applied beyond the playing field.

Created by Spanish teacher Lynne Barker and mathematics teacher Arky Crook, both experienced varsity coaches, The Art of Coaching allows students to learn and to practice the skills of effective team management and motivation. The course includes case studies, debates, and on-the-field scenarios, and it promises to be great fun. Lynne is looking forward to sharing her passion for coaching with students. “I can’t think of a better way to spend nine intense days,” she says, “than guiding each student as they hone their personal coaching style through hands-on practice, in collaboration with their peers – all through the medium of play.”

Read the full story, beginning on page 27.
Long after the final class bell has rung, many Newark Academy students delve deeply into pursuits that demonstrate their passion for the intellect in ways that are creative, quirky and immeasurably fun. This devotion to intellectual challenge reflects an ethos common among the NA community, who know that a good time is had when the mind is engaged.

Intellectual

POWER,

Intellectual

play

by Jeff Vinikoor
Chair, Humanities Department
Intellectual exploration is par for the course within the walls of Newark Academy

“Our goal,” says Upper School Principal Dr. Richard DiBianca, “is to fan the flames of intellectual engagement, or to light the fire in the first place.” This achievement is made possible by teachers who are passionate about their subjects, by an academic program that values learning for its own sake, and by an atmosphere that honors the individuality and autonomy of each student.

From the classroom, intellectual exuberance spills out into the hallways and beyond. Whether discussing Shakespeare at a Harkness table or politics at the lunch table, NA students find great joy in exploring ideas. “You are as likely to hear two eighth graders walking down the hall discussing fiscal policy as hear them talking about video games,” observes Rich. Middle School Principal Tom Ashburn agrees: “For our students, intellectual engagement is fun. It’s a way for them not only to interact with their peers but also to understand the world better in all kinds of ways that you would not expect from them.”

“Ultimately,” says Rich, “it’s the passion and quality of experience inside of the classroom that sparks an interest in pursuing ideas outside of the classroom.” For many students, this spark yields a commitment to activities that become more than typical teenage diversions, and it is these that are featured in the pages that follow.

Some students compete in battles of the mind, others in battles with nature. Some pursue the arts, others the sciences. Some seek to enrich the lives of those in the school community, others the lives of those around the world. But all engage with purpose and have come to discover the joy that springs from wholehearted commitment to intellectually challenging and fun pursuits.

Of course, NA students are not alone in these pursuits, nor do these end when one ceases to be a student. Indeed, one hallmark of a Newark Academy education is a passion for lifelong learning, and the school’s faculty and alumni are engaged in exciting forms of intellectual exploration and achievement as well.
Halle Abraham ’15

LEADER AMONG LEADERS

When, as a junior, Halle Abraham ’15 first learned of Autumn Adeigbo – a celebrity stylist who sought to create an ethical fashion line – she was intrigued.

Adeigbo dreamed of creating an African-inspired women’s wear collection that invested in the future of African women, and Halle was inspired by this socially conscious vision.

Halle came to learn that, in order to develop her leadership skills, Adeigbo had received a yearlong fellowship from the Global Good Fund, a nonprofit organization that matches future leaders with mentors and investors who share a commitment to social impact. After studying the organization, Halle applied for and received a seven-week summer internship working closely with the group’s chief operations officer.

During the internship, Halle learned both about managing a small enterprise and about herself as a leader. “I noticed that articulating my insights on the intersection of international relations and the social good comes naturally to me,” she says. Among her many responsibilities, Halle was tasked with interviewing fellowship applicants – a challenging job for the rising high school senior who had only recently arrived at the organization’s headquarters near Washington, D.C. “I was encouraged to lean into discomfort and was told that I was trusted.”

Halle says that her internship taught her “how to network and create long-lasting relationships.” Indeed, near the end of her work, Halle met a previous intern who had founded the Collegiate Leadership Collaborative, an organization that matches social entrepreneurs in high school with mentors in college. Halle now sits on the executive board of that organization, advancing a mentorship program that will support the next generation of emerging leaders.
Mollie Wohlforth ’15

Designer and Seamstress

“There’s a good bit of shape geometry needed to figure out how to make a skirt or shirt fit a three-dimensional person using two-dimensional fabric,” says Mollie Wohlforth ’15, who first discovered the fabric arts during summers spent helping her grandfather work his loom.

When Mollie received a sewing machine as a gift in the 10th grade, she became enraptured by the creative possibilities of fabric, scouring sewing blogs in order to learn about the art. “The first thing I made with my machine was a skirt,” Mollie recalls. “I used a circle skirt pattern where you basically just cut a large circle out of a piece of fabric and sew the edges, but I added in a zipper and a waistband, which were both rather complicated, especially for a beginner.” Even though Mollie mismeasured the zipper and placed it upside down, she still wears the skirt. And since then, she has created many more articles of clothing, including at least a dozen of the garments she wears regularly.

In addition to designing and sewing her own clothing, Mollie has pursued her interest in fashion by working as a costumer on nearly every Newark Academy theatrical production since she was in seventh grade. Kristin Duszak, the assistant to the dean of students and head costumer, praises Mollie for her eye for detail and commitment to the theater. “Mollie makes alterations seem effortless,” says Kristin, “and will often go home after a dress rehearsal with a gigantic armload of clothing and return everything in the morning ready to go for that evening’s show.”

While Mollie doesn’t think that she will formally pursue fashion in college or beyond – “I’m more interested in visual arts and art history as a major,” says the multi-talented artist – she does hope to maintain her skills and join a sewing club. “It’s wonderful,” says Mollie, “to feel so completely comfortable in something you’ve made yourself.”
Growing up in Cuba, on the other side of the “Sugar Curtain,” Newark Academy Spanish teacher Alexis Romay could only dream of the level of intellectual freedom enjoyed by students at NA.

Education in Cuba,” notes Alexis, “is very dogmatic, the antithesis of intellectual power, intellectual play.” In fact, Alexis doesn’t recall having an inspiring teacher until his sophomore year in college, when one professor finally encouraged him to think for himself.

Although he had limited access to the literary giants who would later shape his own work as an author, such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Jorge Luis Borges, Alexis took an early interest in storytelling and poetry. As a young adult in Havana, he found that writing in verse allowed him “to cross certain lines protected by a cryptic tone that would make it easier to defend my work and myself against government censors.”

Today, when his English-speaking friends ask him what he writes about, Alexis jokes, “Cuba, literature, and other tropical diseases.” Yet his articles, novels and poems, which have been published in Spanish, English and Italian, shed light on the enduring challenges faced by the Cuban people under the Castro regime. Critics have praised his work as smart, fresh and bold. A brilliant novel in which the author elegantly plays chess with his readers” is how critic Teresa Dovalpage described Alexis’s latest book, The Cuban Opening. She added that the book “captures two periods of time in Cuba, each with its own color, lexicon and anxieties.” This reflects Alexis’s desire to, in his words, “give a voice to the voiceless Cuban people.”

In addition to teaching Spanish, Alexis directs the NA Global Speaker Series, and he brings to both endeavors a passion for exploring politics, thus ensuring that students have the opportunities he was denied in Cuba. “When you grow up surrounded by the protective cloak of freedom of expression,” he notes, “you may take for granted the right to have your own thoughts, and voice them publicly without fearing immediate governmental repercussions. I never forget that in order to be able to speak and write without looking over my shoulder, I had to vote with my feet.”

Thrilling” is how the sophomore angler describes the feeling of catching his first “bucketmouth” – the term that experienced fishermen use to describe the North American freshwater fish that Matteo had bested. “I enjoyed fighting that fish so much,” he recalls, “that I knew I had stumbled upon something that would stick with me for the rest of my life.”

Several months later, Matteo purchased his first bait-casting rod and reel, and since then he’s been, well, hooked on the sport. He is now part of several junior bass fishing clubs in New Jersey and has competed in tournaments around the state. This year, after a grueling eight-hour state championship event at Manasquan Reservoir in August, Matteo placed fifth in the state in his age group, and he has plans to participate in the high school state championship tournament as well.

“One of the reasons I enjoy bass fishing is because it is a challenge,” explains Matteo. “Bass fishing is a puzzle, and the most challenging part about becoming a successful bass fisherman is learning how to solve that puzzle.” Bass fishermen, like Matteo, use artificial lures rather than live bait, and they must know not only how to select the right lure, but also how to read the temperament of the fish, gauge the weather, identify a fertile spot on the lake, and adapt to change. “Every day on the water is a new day and a new puzzle,” observes Matteo. “Some factor has changed from the previous day and some factor will change in the next day.”

As a way to document his successes and share his passion with others, Matteo started the NJ Bassin’ YouTube channel, which currently has more than 325 subscribers and contains videos that have been watched more than 12,000 times. He also co-founded the Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation Club at Newark Academy. “Fishing has taught me a great deal about respecting our environment,” says Matteo. “That is why I practice catch and release.”

As a leader of the club, Matteo seeks to inform his peers about the sport and to educate them about the importance of wildlife conservation. He hopes that “we can all, as a community, preserve the beautiful environment that surrounds us.”
NA Chess Team

CHAMPIONS OF STRATEGY

During his day-long visit to Newark Academy as a prospective student, Michael Lim ’17 recalls playing chess in the dining room with a number of students on the Newark Academy Chess Team.

The group’s enthusiasm for the game excited Michael, and when he and his twin brother Matthew decided to enroll at NA, they quickly joined the team. Three years later, in 2013, Michael, Matthew and several of their teammates advanced to the National Junior High School Championships and took first place, a remarkable achievement by any measure.

At a time when interest in chess is increasing globally, the NA team offers all students, from beginners to highly-ranked players, the opportunity to develop their chess acumen under the guidance of two faculty coaches: humanities teacher Joe Ball, who has coached the team for more than 20 years, and science teacher Bill Hobson, who himself won the New England Junior Championship at age 16. Regular guest coaches, including Grandmaster Magesh Panchanathan, also support the players’ development. The team meets weekly, although many players engage in substantial daily practice.

Joe and Bill are quick to point out that learning to play chess well has many advantages. Chess requires problem-solving and concentration skills, a strong memory, and unyielding perseverance. “The games are long and grueling and often stressful,” says Bill, “but then the product that results can be viewed as a work of art.” Joe agrees and remarks how impressive it is to see a rambunctious teenager sit down at a chess board and concentrate intensely, sometimes for three to four hours or more at a time.

For the students, representing their school at tournaments has been especially meaningful. Jeremy Glassman ’16, who played alongside Michael and Matthew at the national championships in 2013, relishes what he calls “the camaraderie, the friendship, the fun” of the group. He has been asked to join other teams but has remained, proudly, a member of the NA squad.

Looking ahead, the future of chess at Newark Academy is bright. This year, sixth-grade twins Taran and Roshan Idrani ’21 represented the NA team at the National Scholastic K-12 Championships. As a team of only two, often competing against schools represented by teams of five or more, they secured fifth place. Their mother, Nidhi, delights not only in the boys’ successes but also in their participation in the program. “Playing with other members of the chess team motivates them to do their best,” she says. “Reciprocity and collaboration are perhaps the two strongest attributes they find in the team.” Joe echoes Nidhi’s sentiment when he notes that chess is more than just a game. “Chess,” he says, “can be life changing.”
as the fourth-grade students at Park Elementary School in Newark finished performing their skits on the health benefits of eating vegetables, Brittney Tong ’16 couldn’t help but smile. In the quality of the students’ skits and in their enthusiasm for the undertaking, Brittney could finally see the fruits of her many months of planning. She knew that her work in the weeks ahead would make a difference in the lives of these children. That afternoon, the students were engaging in an activity from E.A.T (Education. Action. Transformation.), a program that aims to help elementary school students learn about and adopt healthy eating and exercise habits. Brittney developed the program in pursuit of the Girl Scouts Gold Award, the highest achievement in the Scouts. Girls who seek to earn the award must identify and research an issue, develop a project to tackle that issue, and implement that project successfully. Alarmed by the rate of childhood obesity in New Jersey, Brittney chose to focus her project on improving children’s health.

Brittney has been teaching E.A.T. at the Park School since mid-winter. During the twice-monthly sessions, students not only learn about nutrition and physical fitness but also, with the help of a cadre of Newark Academy student volunteers, make and enjoy nutritious (and, as Brittney notes, delicious) snacks. At the end of the program, each student receives a cookbook with recipes. Brittney has chronicled her experiences online at www.learntoeat.weebly.com.

Brittney’s mentor for the Gold Award is Newark Academy health teacher Megan Lopretto, who earned the Gold Award herself when she was a Girl Scout in high school. Megan has greatly enjoyed working with Brittney throughout the project’s development, refinement and implementation. She has been impressed by Brittney’s drive and the impact of her work. “She definitely has the personality and skills to make this program a success,” says Megan, “and something that will be continued in years to come.”
Andrew Pulver ’20

WORLD-CLASS OPERA

performer

Andrew Pulver ’20 was three years old when he first performed in front of an audience.

He remembers receiving a standing ovation. “That’s where it started,” says Andrew, who began voice training in the second grade. Today, Andrew has emerged as a rising star in the professional opera community as a boy soprano.

“The great thing about opera,” says Andrew, “is that the art form combines many other artistic disciplines such as vocal performance, drama, orchestral music, costume and set design, history, and literature.” Fortunately, Andrew has had many opportunities to explore the genre. Last year, he co-starred in Nico Muhly’s Two Boys at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. This year, he played the title role in Rachel Portman’s The Little Prince with the Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In that role, he worked under the direction of Francesca Zambello, one of the world’s leading opera directors.

Andrew, whose voice has been described as “pristine,” has enjoyed the challenge of performing with professional opera companies. “In opera,” he explains, “every soloist is expected to know by heart the words and music on day one of rehearsals.” Once rehearsals begin, success requires tireless commitment as well as the ability to interact effectively with a slew of directors, designers and support staff. Rehearsals generally run from late morning through early evening, but in spite of the long hours required, Andrew has greatly enjoyed learning from and befriending others in the field.

While Andrew is passionate about opera, he hopes to perform in other genres as well, including Broadway musicals; he has his eyes set on the role of Tony in West Side Story. Andrew also enjoys performing for people in assisted living facilities and at church, and he has performed at a number of fundraisers. “It is incredible how people respond emotionally to the human voice,” he says. “I enjoy sharing the gift of music with other people.”
James Blume ’19

AWARD-WINNING CREATIVE WRITER

“I have journals filled with words I love, ideas that I think are interesting, and stories waiting to be written,” said James Blume ’19, the first Newark Academy student to win a National Gold Medal in writing in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

His winning story, Are Rabbits Feet Really Lucky? explores the relationship between a child narrator and his teenage brother during their summer vacation.

James began writing stories as soon as he could put pen to paper and, like many talented writers, he is a voracious reader. He has found that he is frequently inspired and influenced by the works of other authors, whose ideas animate the story elements in his own mind. “There are authors whose styles I love and try to emulate, like Haruki Marukami,” remarks James. “I spent last summer reading plays because I find it really interesting how playwrights use dialogue to build character. I also love short stories because of the economy it requires to tell a complete story.” James’ latest pieces are based on John Darnielle’s novel Wolf in White Van and the Bhagavad Gita.

English teacher Alexandra Mahoney has helped steward his development as a budding wordsmith. “James has a minimalist’s style in his writing,” says Alexandra, “and his sharp observations reflect his probing view of the world and his willingness to reflect on how we as humans make meaning within our lives.” In class, she observes, “He appreciates the abundance of sarcasm among his witty peers who tend to thrive on an ongoing game of intellectual take-down.”

James’ passion for reading and writing is well known among his peers, and he says that writing is one of the most important parts of his life. “If I am in the mood to write a good a story,” says James, “I will put it above doing my homework.” He earnestly continues, “Luckily for me, I am very fast at doing my homework, so it has not affected my school work.”
Vanessa Jimenez Gabb, *English Faculty*

**New York Poet and Publisher**

Many members of the Newark Academy faculty engage with enthusiasm in intellectual avocations. Standing out even among this exceptional group is English teacher Vanessa Jimenez Gabb, whose creative talents and hard work have resulted in her emerging as a formidable literary force in New York City.

Critics have lauded Vanessa’s poetry, which has been published in two chapbooks as well as in both print and digital literary journals. Of her first chapbook, *Weekend Poems*, critic Leesa Cross-Smith wrote, “Gabb’s writing is at times gritty and dirt-in-your-teeth, at times strikingly pretty, at times both.” In addition to writing, in 2012 Vanessa co-founded *Five Quarterly*, a publication that recruits five guest editors each season, who then choose five poems and five pieces of fiction for publication online. Thus far, guest editors, who are intentionally selected from diverse backgrounds, have included everyone from high school students to construction workers to acclaimed writers.

Writing and publishing professionally has had a profoundly positive impact on Vanessa’s work in the classroom. “I’d like to think working creatively translates to teaching creatively,” she says. Indeed, since arriving at Newark Academy three years ago, Vanessa has sought to foster a creative spirit in each of her students, who together form a community of authors and audience. “Writing can be a solitary enterprise,” notes Vanessa, “but it can be a collective experience, as well. I hope I communicate a sense of the collective in the classroom.”

As a faculty advisor to the *Minuteman* and to the Performance Poetry Club, Vanessa shares her passion for words with students outside the English classroom. Additionally, in 2013 she co-created a June Term course in which enrolled students become the guest staff of *Five Quarterly’s* annual fiction and poetry electronic chapbook contest. During the intensive two-week course, students not only choose the two winners of the contest but also take on the roles of editors, designers and marketers for the publications.

Not surprisingly, Vanessa’s students have found her to be an inspiring instructor, and she in turn has celebrated their creativity and willingness to take intellectual risks. The best moments in the classroom, she says, are “when my students and I reach that level of mutual trust, where we open ourselves up to trying new ideas out, to thinking in ways that are new. That moment a student has an original and interesting idea and is excited about exploring it and sharing it is a special moment.”

Old-Time Music Revivalist

“I always enjoyed folk music, but in the early ‘90s, I became increasingly drawn to a traditional form of music called Old-Time Music,” says longtime Newark Academy librarian, teacher and Director of Summer Session Bob Mallalieu.

Old-Time Music developed in the rural mountains of the American South during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The tunes, which are usually played by an ensemble of stringed instruments, are uniquely American, blending English and Scottish melodic phrases with African syncopation.

In order to pursue his interest, Bob, an experienced guitar player, learned how to play several instruments common in the Old-Time Music tradition. First he picked up the banjo and taught himself how to play in the clawhammer style, a rhythmic strumming style created by African-American slaves. Then he learned the Appalachian mountain dulcimer, a narrow string instrument strummed by hand. Finally, he mastered the hammered dulcimer, a trapezoidal instrument with strings animated by small mallets.

As Bob became involved in the Old-Time Music community, he sought to support it by co-founding the Pocono Dulcimer Club, which seeks to promote the playing and teaching of Old-Time Music. The club has scores of members and, each winter, sponsors the Pocono Winter Dulcimer Fest, a gathering of performers, teachers and fans. Bob has also released five recordings and regularly performs at concerts and living-history events.

In 2014, Bob brought his passion for Old-Time Music to NA. During June Term, he offered a course on the Appalachian mountain dulcimer. Twenty-four students signed up for the class and learned basic strumming patterns and songs. At the end of June Term, they performed for their peers at Morning Meeting. “The mountain dulcimer is easy to play,” says Bob, “and it gives us a means of connecting with music and passing it on to the next generation.”

As much as he enjoys teaching and performing Old-Time Music, Bob is equally appreciative of the history and stories that accompany the tunes. “I recently discovered an old hymn with a beautiful melody put to the lyrics of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s Crossing the Bar,” reports Bob. “Add a dulcimer, guitar, mandolin, flute and some harmony, and its ability to touch people becomes profound and enjoyable.”
Having spent months scouring affidavits, preparing witness testimonies, refining opening statements and developing a deep understanding of civil procedure, these students, members of the Newark Academy Mock Trial Team, were headed to the 2015 Essex County Mock Trial Championships, hoping to walk away with a first-place trophy for the sixth year in a row.

Despite homework that remained to be completed after the night’s event, the competitors remained focused on the trial because, as Asia Moore ’16, one of the team’s plaintiff lawyers, explains, mock trial competitions are intensely fun. “The rush of adrenaline that courses through your veins when the judge sustains your objection or when you successfully crush a witness on cross examination is something extraordinary,” Asia says. That evening, she and her teammates once again secured the Essex County title for Newark Academy.

Humanities teacher Benson Hawk, head coach of the Mock Trial Team, says that his primary task in preparing students for success on the courtroom floor is training them to think on their feet. “Chiefly,” he explains, “this involves giving them a superior command of the facts, and having them learn the rules cold.” The students then must practice for trial extensively, applying their knowledge in real time while using rhetorical and theatrical skills appropriate for judge and jury.

Achieving success, says Benson, requires a tremendous investment of time and energy from the students. Alec Rubman ’16, who served as a plaintiff witness this year and hopes to earn a spot as a lawyer in the future, agrees. “The most challenging part of mock trial is the workload,” Alec says. “Despite this, I love being part of the team. We are an incredibly close-knit group.” Asia adds, “I’ve never had so much fun doing work in my life.”

Not surprisingly, many students who compete on the Newark Academy team go on to win legal internships later in high school and to earn spots on their college teams. Loryn Helfmann ’12 decided to try out for the mock trial team at Yale precisely because of how much she enjoyed her experiences at NA. She now competes for Yale’s team as an attorney, sits on the team’s executive board and plans to attend law school.

Loryn readily recognizes the value of her experiences on the NA team. She recalls that the most challenging aspect of her participation was public speaking. “It wasn’t something that came naturally to me, and it was definitely frustrating at times,” she says. “But I think it was also the single most valuable skill I developed during my time at Newark Academy.”
JOSEPH ENJOYS THE SURPRISES THAT ARE PAR FOR THE COURSE IN HIS FIELD.
As the recipient of a Fulbright Postgraduate Scholarship, Joseph has been discovering and studying the diverse works of art on the streets of Australia’s capital, a city known for the richness and diversity of its public artistic expressions. Specifically, he is spending the year analyzing the medium from a cultural as well as legal perspective alongside a cultural criminologist at the University of Melbourne.

Unlike the works studied by many art historians, the objects of Joseph’s analysis can change at a moment’s notice. “On my first few days here I was taking pictures of work by different artists within the city,” he explains, “and I came across a Keith Haring mural that in less than 24 hours after I had taken pictures of it had been defaced and tagged.” While this ephemerality presents difficulties for the cultural historian, Joseph enjoys the surprises that are par for the course in his field.

Joseph recently graduated with a degree in the history of art from University of Pennsylvania, yet he first encountered the formal study of art history at Newark Academy. “Mr. Abbey was the first teacher who showed me that studying art history was possible,” recalls Joseph about his junior-year humanities teacher, “and it was a great set-up for my senior-year art history class with Ms. Galvin, which pretty much solidified my interest.” Joseph also fondly remembers the many classes he took in the Arts Department at NA, including ceramics, photography, drawing and creative writing.

Joseph’s work in Melbourne will include conducting interviews with artists and writers throughout the city as well as drafting a position paper related to graffiti regulation. Thus far, Joseph reports that his year has been both enriching and enjoyable. “I’ve been experiencing the city in really dynamic and interesting ways,” he says.

“One of the images in Melbourne that Joseph is studying is a mural by the artists Rone and Wonderlust from Everfresh Studio.”