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# CELEBRATION OF LEARNING

Students are currently “celebrating their learning” by taking academic exams, planning the final expedition, and reflecting on their growth over the last semester. We are very proud of all the accomplishments the students had in and out of the classroom. Lauren notes she rediscovered curiosity in her Biology class. Harmony came into her own socially while celebrating the Chilean tradition of “face cake” on her birthday. Roxy pronounced her desire to live her next year of high school with intention as she prepares for college. Student growth has been tremendous and there is much to celebrate.

The school has grown along with the students this year. We end the school year hosting classes and preparing meals in a brand new 4800 sq. foot, beautiful building. The Confluence Building will be the gathering place for people, ideas, and discovery for years to come. The Alzar School is excited to be able to award academic visas for our Chilean students to enter the United States to study with us. Our outdoor recreation permits now include the ability to run river trips on the Wild and Scenic Owyhee River, and hike through the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. We established a member school relationship with Shady Side Academy and look forward to seeing bright young students from Pittsburg, PA on our Idaho campus soon. The Alzar School staff scouted the Cochamo area of Chile and will likely take the Spring 2014 semester to the blue waters and granite peaks.

This has been a monumental year for the school accomplishing its mission of educating and developing teen leaders. This is achieved through the integration of the six foundations of the Alzar School: rigorous academics, leadership training, outdoor adventure, cultural exchange, service learning, and environmental stewardship. Interwoven into the formal and informal lessons on and off campus, these foundations guide the activities we select and help students draw connections between academic disciplines. Students apply this knowledge in real world situations.

Great things are happening at the Alzar School. Please join us in celebrating learning and growth.

**KRISTIN BIERLE,**  
Alzar School Executive Director



**ALZAR SCHOOL EDUCATES AND FACILITATES  
THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH  
SCHOOL STUDENTS.**

**ALZAR SCHOOL'S  
SIX FOUNDATIONS** ▶



BY DAN THURBER, MATHEMATICS TEACHER

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The Catalyst is a quarterly publication of the Alzar School, a 501c3 non-profit education organization with the mission to facilitate the leadership development of high school students.

The Catalyst celebrates the accomplishments of young leaders and seeks to inspire other young people to be involved in their communities.

Alumni and supporters can direct address changes to [kristin@alzarschool.com](mailto:kristin@alzarschool.com).

A paperless version of The Catalyst is available at [www.alzarschool.com/catalyst](http://www.alzarschool.com/catalyst)

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The outdoor adventure foundation at the Alzar School offers students a unique chance to critically evaluate perceived risks. Kayaking provides plenty of examples. Student tensions are rightfully high when we contemplate running a major rapid, and never more so than while standing at the lip of a waterfall. In these times of elevated heart rates and vivid imaginations, students identify a risk, assess the consequences, and make an informed decision.

However, the realistic consequences of the drops we select are fairly benign. For developing young adults, fear comes from the unknown more than experience. Running a waterfall with the support of good mentors is no riskier than everyday activities like chopping onions or using a paper cutter. The difference is that we see others take such domestic risks regularly. They are familiar, and we all use testimonials to rationalize risky behavior.

Yet for every movement of great success, someone has to go first. Someone has to take a risk without the security of predecessors. At some point, we each get the chance to be that someone and discover or create something that wasn't there before. Those are the risks that make us leaders, instead of just statistics. Of course, we need to practice evaluating risks and learning who to trust.

The value of risks in education exists in learning when to take them: learning to weigh the rewards, evaluate dangers, and commit with confidence. We could each strive to absolutely eliminate risk from our lives, but without the threat of failure, reward is sterile. To greatly succeed, we must take risks. When Alzar School graduates return to their home communities, they will be continually be presented with a variety of risks from emotional to physical, financial to social. In preparation, they spend a semester with us practicing evaluating risk through confronting physical challenges in the outdoors.

As we cross a horizon line and take the last stroke, the decision has been made. We are fully committed and must imagine nothing but complete success. The risks we take on rivers and in mountains are rather insignificant by themselves. They are metaphors for something bigger. I'll never be able to tell a student just what a waterfall is preparing them for. But as we stand at the edge scouting and considering free fall, they are certain to pay attention. 



Academics



Leadership  
Training



Environmental  
Stewardship



Outdoor  
Adventure



Cultural  
Exchange



Service  
Learning



## ALZAR SCHOOL ALUMNI ARE COLLEGE BOUND

We are very proud of the Alzar School alumni who are making decisions about college. This cohort of alumni were accepted to schools from MIT to NYU- Dubai. A big congratulations to Maggie and Keller who graduated from Colorado College and University of Mary Washington!

### ALZAR SCHOOL ALUMNI CLASS OF 2017:

- Middlebury College
- University of Virginia
- Wesleyan University
- University of the South, Sewanee (2)
- University of Georgia
- College of Charleston
- Naval Academy
- University of Denver
- University of Idaho
- Southern Methodist University
- UNC Asheville

Sue Lovelace, a college advisor wrote about how the Alzar School experience enhances a college application:

*As a college advisor I read a lot of essays. The best ones tell a story that makes me want to hear more. Alzar School students write about managing their AP classes so that they have a little more time on the river. They talk about learning Spanish as they plan meals and buy food for 20 people. They write convincingly about how they will impact the world, because they've already gotten started.*

*A semester spent with Alzar School means spending extended time in another country meeting the unexpected challenges of an unscripted adventure. At the end of the semester the stories these students tell show humility, strength and an awareness of the wider world and their responsibilities within it. Their transcripts will communicate academic ability; it's the essays that reveal resilience, maturity and self-knowledge. [▲](#)*

**“The [Alzar School] stories these students tell show humility, strength and an awareness of the wider world...”**

**- SUE LOVELACE  
COLLEGE COUNSELOR**



## IF I HAD NEVER TRAVELED, BY MCKENNA NOWAK

If I had never traveled, I would not know the little boy named Lucas, who likes Spongebob and the color blue, nor would I have found out how smiles and laughter can break even the strongest barriers of age, language and culture.

If I had never traveled, I would be sitting in the same city that I have always been, thinking the same thoughts and ever imagining what the world is like instead of trying to find out for myself.

If I had never traveled, I would take for granted the times that I spend with family and friends and I wouldn't know what it feels like to miss a brother so much it feels like a small piece

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**“If I had never traveled, I would not believe that I have the capacity within myself to overcome any obstacles that I face, be them physical, emotional or mental..”**

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of you is missing. I would think that peanut butter is something that you can buy at any market on any corner of the world. (It's not).

If I had never traveled, I would not understand that there are cultures out there very different from what I know and that all should be respected and I would not have gained the desire to travel to and experience all of them. If I had never traveled, I would not believe that I have the capacity within myself to overcome any obstacles that I face, be them physical, emotional or mental. I would not know that if I work hard enough, I really can accomplish anything. Because now I understand that the world awaits. 

### STUDENT BIO

#### HOMETOWN

Boise, Idaho

#### GRADE

11th

#### THE ASSIGNMENT

At the end of our six week expedition in Chile, students are asked to write a reflection responding to the prompt “If I had never traveled.”

#### GOALS

McKenna looks forward to continue practicing her Spanish by staying in contact with her Chilean friends and in the classroom her senior year.

### SMALL CLASSES, BIG IDEAS

BY EVAN KRAMER, HISTORY AND SPANISH TEACHER

Flip through a small college viewbook and you'll find statistics such as student-faculty ratio, touting the benefits of small classes. But why all the fuss about these figures? Small classes unearth quiet perspectives and promote student ownership in learning.

I associate the benefits of small classes with two students: Karley and Caroline. Soft-spoken and southern, they possess intellect beyond measure locked behind tight lips and inquiring eyes. They author compelling drafts and pen salient points, and our small classes showcase them as more vocal academics and, thus, more adept leaders. I might never have known how special Caroline and Karley were it not for our open and intimate classes.

Our ideas are only as powerful as our communication, and even the rise of text messages and social media can't completely undermine the spoken word. In a class of 10 or of two, students can't cower behind classmates' cries. Young people have so much to teach us, and at Alzar School we are fortunate to make time and space to listen.

Whether simulating peace talks between Palestine and Israel or practicing pronunciation in Spanish, small classes let Alzar School students own their learning. They can ask questions to clarify or to complicate; they can suggest, critique, and support. Put simply, students learn more, and we can all see it. I can see it in Dez's smile when I reteach the perfect tense. I can see it Lauren's eyebrows as they peak skyward in little rainbows of insight after a discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

They say that big things come in small packages. I believe that, similarly, big ideas come from small classes. ▲



July 15-16



### CAMP CUP CHALLENGE

Monday July 15th

10-2pm Training

5-6pm Ice cream social

Tuesday, July 16th

9-4pm Race Day

4-5pm Awards

Over 100 young paddlers from across the United States come together for two days on the Nantahala River to participate in slalom and downriver races.

June/July



### CAMPUS RIVER RESTORATION

Please join us for a river restoration project along the North Fork of the Payette River. We will stabilize river banks and revive riparian areas.

Contact

[jeff@alzarschool.com](mailto:jeff@alzarschool.com)

# APPLY TO THE ALZAR SCHOOL

Spaces are available for highly motivated sophomores and juniors for the 2013-2014 school year. Spend a semester exploring Idaho and Chile while taking academic classes.

*The world awaits...*

**DEADLINE:** July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Learn more and apply at:  
[AlzarSchool.com/Student](http://AlzarSchool.com/Student)



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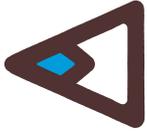
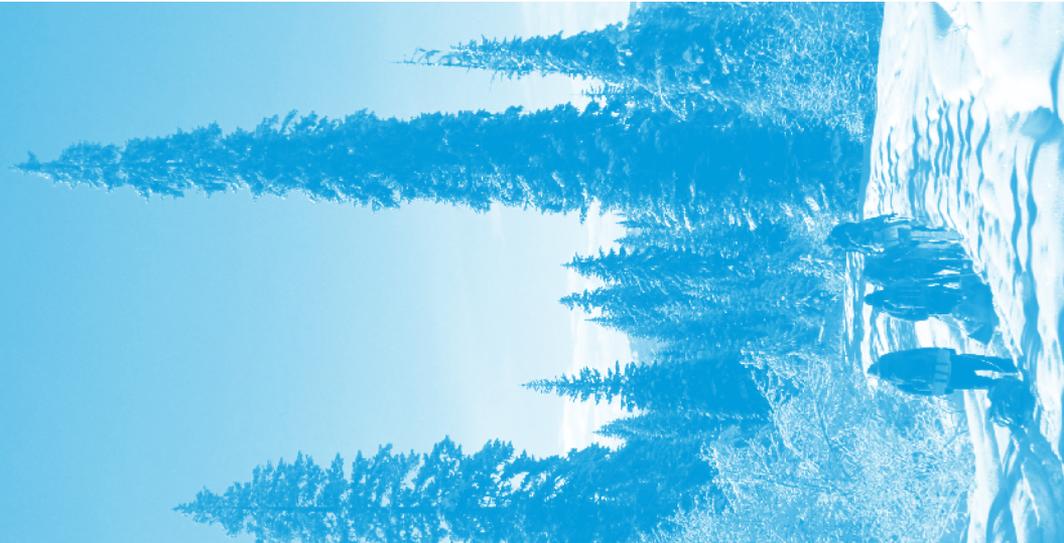
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**ALZAR**  
SCHOOL

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