

## The Gaga Pit: Hyla in Action

One of the most exciting additions to our campus in the 2014-2015 school year came from our students. When the 8th grade class came back from their retreat at Camp Indianola, they were all abuzz about a game called Gaga Ball. So excited, in fact, that they took the initiative to bring it to Hyla. Thanks to our 8th grade class, Andrew Lovejoy, an elective, donations from ProBuild and parents, our back field is now home to our very own Gaga pit. “I can see the Gaga Pit out my window,” said Vicki. “It reminds me daily of how encouraging and responsive we are to student interests. With Gaga, our students took an idea, followed it through to completion by finding support and resources, and then taught the rest of the school how to play. I love it!”

Gaga plays like dodgeball with walls. But it’s much more than that. “It’s hard to pinpoint what exactly makes it work,” said PE teacher Andrew Lovejoy, “but the game is inclusive, fun, competitive, challenging, and rewarding. It appeals to a broader group of our students than just about any other game I can think of. It’s simple, the action is constant, and the rounds are short enough that when someone gets knocked out, they are only out for a couple of minutes.”

Andrew also praised the game for how it encourages conflict resolution. “Debates about whether or not someone is out are pretty common in this game. It’s very easy, for example, to have the ball hit your foot and not feel it through your shoe, which is actually great - players have to referee themselves and others. I’ve been very impressed by the honesty, sportsmanship, and

grace with which our students are handling this challenge.”

Andrew isn’t the only one who loves Gaga. At every break, you can watch a lively match in the pit, rain or shine.



During Exit Conferences last year, **8th grade student Gabriel Fradkin** explained to teachers how **Gaga is a metaphor for Hyla**. So how, exactly, is Gaga like Hyla?



Gabriel summed it up: “The walls around you!” He went on to explain that the walls protect you, confine you, challenge you to change, and push you to be your best. We are happy to share his words with you:

“To make it in Gaga, you need to adapt and change your strategies. You sometimes need to make alliances so you can work together to overcome something too big for just one person. And, yeah, you can always hide in the corner, guarding your feet and you’ll make it pretty far, but soon you realize that that’s no fun and that if you really want to make it far and not just get by, you have to put yourself out there.

You need to step up and take out problems by whacking the ball. But no one goes through a couple of rounds without getting hit by the ball. I think of the ball hitting you as the low points at Hyla... You can’t always control whether or not you get hit by the ball, but what you can control is whether or not you get back in at the end of the round.

On my first day of school at Hyla, I had a hard time with another student. He later became one of my best friends, but on that first day I was upset and mad at him. If I didn’t have the walls of Hyla around me, I probably would have avoided him and never have been friends with him. But I wasn’t at a big school, I was in this gaga pit with him. At the time I resented these walls for trapping me with the people I disliked, but now I see what these walls did for me and how they guided me to make friends with the people I didn’t think I liked.

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# Gaga Pit

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When I got to Hyla I also realized I wasn't being graded compared to the other kids in my class but more to my own capabilities and whether or not teachers



thought I tried. I realized that if I was to do better, I would have to listen to all of your suggestions and change my work. Back then I didn't always appreciate being pushed. But now, looking back on it, I do. If I hadn't been at Hyla where the classes were smaller and the teachers could put more time into their grading and push me harder, I would not be the student I am today."

**Gaga is just one example of how place matters at Hyla.** From the stage, to the cargo net, to the classroom, to the climbing wall, to the bus, to the library – all of these places are where our mission comes to life. These are the places where we create “educational environments where children are intrigued by learning,” the places “founded on close, caring connections between teachers and students,” the places that “encourage students to respect and value themselves and others.” These are the places where students develop into “competent, self-reliant problem solvers.” Gabriel is right: Hyla is Gaga, and we are very proud of that. **Thank you to the class of 2015!**



Thank you for checking the box for Hyla during the red envelope campaign! Please think of Hyla during the next round of One Call for All.



Alumna Bridget Butler and Alumni mom Wendy Welch stuff red envelopes with Vicki Jenkins