

Mid-Peninsula High School

CONNECTIONS

M A G A Z I N E :: W I N T E R 2 0 1 8

The Faces of Mid-Pen, Page 7

RESPECT :: KINDNESS :: ACCEPTANCE :: RESPONSIBILITY



LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Last year, my daughter's ballet company asked me to take part in its annual production of *The Nutcracker*. The show starts with a Christmas party, with about a dozen parent guests in Victorian costumes enjoying themselves as dancing happens around them; that was to be my role. I have some skills and passions in life, but dancing live on stage is not one of them, so joining the ensemble made absolutely no sense to me. After much cajoling from my wife and daughter, however, I eventually agreed and took many deep breaths in fearful anticipation of the first practice.

When I arrived at the studio, I saw a group of high school dancers stretching at the bar and practicing their pirouettes. I tried to blend in, but I can barely touch my shins when I bend at the waist, and my one reliable dance move, the twist, was hardly appropriate to the setting, so I knew I couldn't join them. Instead, I sidled up to another dad and silently uttered the physician's oath to myself: "First, do no harm."

That first rehearsal was terrifying. I had no idea what to do or where to go. For two hours, I fumbled around, bumped into people, and broke out into a cold sweat when I was at center stage. I am glad that no video footage of that rehearsal exists; no one would ever hire me if they saw it.

Over the course of the following weeks, however, things began to settle down. Each rehearsal grew a little better. I learned the choreography, and I managed to figure out what I was supposed to do. I reminded myself to have a growth mindset about the whole thing. With the right attitude, I could work hard, fall forward after mistakes, and even have fun.

Finally, opening night came around, and the show was a big success. I got to wear stage makeup for the first time

in years and lipstick for the first time ever. I did no harm and even managed to smile throughout my time on stage. I enjoyed being part of the cast, and family and friends said they enjoyed the performance.



As I reflect on the experience, I'm reminded of what we as educators ask of students every day. Whether it's a new book in English, a new unit in science, a new song in music class, or a new sport, we frequently put kids in positions in which they feel vulnerable and uncertain, just as I felt in *The Nutcracker*. In doing so, however, we are giving students the ability to grow, learn, and master something.

We are giving them the opportunity to find a passion or nurture a talent. Whether we realize it or not, each day we are making an impact on students by asking them to try something new.

Performing on stage, I understood that being out of your comfort zone is actually good for you. It is not an easy lesson, but one that I hope all Mid-Pen students eventually learn. Fortunately, it is the natural instinct of every Mid-Pen teacher to challenge and nurture their students. We work hard to keep high pressure and high stakes far away from campus so that students can stretch themselves, take risks, and move confidently from setback to success.

My first few months at Mid-Pen have been delightful, and it has been a privilege to be a part of this school community. Whether watching students communicate via sign language in the hallways or listening to student musicians master complicated songs, I am deeply appreciative of Mid-Pen's very special approach to learning. You probably won't see me physically dancing in our hallways, but I'll always hear melodies in my head from the metaphorical music we make on campus every day. 🐉

Phil Gutierrez
Head of School

CONNECTIONS

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Mid-Pen Welcomes New Head of School Phil Gutierrez

The Mid-Pen community came together Wednesday evening, October 4, to officially welcome new Head of School Phil Gutierrez. The evening, sponsored by the Parents Association, featured student speakers and performances, as well as remarks from trustees, a former colleague of Phil's, and, of course, Phil himself.

The program opened with the Studio Ensemble music class performing The Beatles' *In My Life*, one of Phil's favorite songs. Emma Marek '20 and Ernesto Valencia Arevalo '19 then spoke on behalf of the Student Peer Leaders, who had interviewed Phil the week before hoping to learn some of his interests and passions. Among the "Phil Facts" they shared were that Mid-Pen's new head plays the guitar in his spare time and is in a band called Brother Phil and the Hillbillies. They also revealed that his least favorite breakfast cereal is Grape Nuts, as it "doesn't taste like grapes or have nuts in it."

More seriously, they explained that, when asked whom he has looked up to in his life, Phil said that he is continually inspired by his parents, who in 1964 emigrated from the Philippines to Southern California, where they raised four children. After high school, Phil moved north, receiving his undergraduate degree in English from UC Berkeley and his Master's from Stanford. Phil has lived in the Bay Area ever since, but remains a Dodgers fan at heart.

Karen Whitaker, Assistant Head of School at The Branson School, spoke about her friend and former colleague: "In our seventeen years of working together, I watched Phil grow into a talented school leader who never leads with his ego. Phil thinks about what's best for the students,

the faculty, the parents, and the institution. He is aware of the contributions of others and makes sure they are thanked for their contributions. Really, what you need to know about Phil is that he is a person of great integrity, warmth, intelligence, humor, and compassion. I trust him implicitly. You are indeed very fortunate to have Phil as your new head of school!"

For his part, Phil thanked the school community for the warm welcome he has received since starting at Mid-Pen in July and reflected on Mid-Pen's distinctive mission.

"My favorite part of our mission is that it has the word 'community' in it three times," he observed. "While that word isn't unique to schools or mission statements, the word 'community' rings true for me whenever I step onto campus. From the morning welcoming committee of teachers and staff at the front door, to the meaningful individual moments that adults have with kids in classrooms and in the hallways and the friendly farewells at the end of the day, we build community one conversation at a time. I'm honored to be here and look forward to many years of connection, learning, inspiration, and dancing to the metaphorical music we make every day at Mid-Pen."

The evening closed with a special reprise by the Studio Ensemble students, who said they had chosen another Beatles' song especially for Phil on the occasion of his official welcome to Mid-Pen: *Don't Let Me Down*.

Based on Phil's first six months as head of school, that doesn't appear likely to happen. 🐉



Human Relations Class Featured on KQED Report

When teacher Michelle Boire responded to a request for reactions from KQED radio listeners to the Harvey Weinstein scandal, she never imagined that her comments would lead to a feature story on the station's *The California Report* program. Within a week of responding to an online survey about sexual harassment, Michelle was contacted by reporter Tonya Mosley to talk about how students in her Human Relations class were grappling with recent revelations of high profile cases of sexual harassment and assault.

"Sexual harassment is a really important topic – something I was never taught about when I was in high school – but we are fighting against a system that has often communicated the opposite message to young people," Michelle says. "It's very hard to teach students that it's a problem when it is so pervasive, which is why I feel I have to take advantage of this opportunity to use current events to bring the conversation out into the open."

Mosley spent a morning on campus interviewing Michelle and sitting in on her class of seniors as they discussed sexual harassment and sexual assault. Her feature report was broadcast on December 8.

In the age of #MeToo, Michelle believes it is especially important that educators and parents have conversations with students about what constitutes harassment and consent. She feels that talking about the nuances of human interaction is one of the most important, but also overlooked, parts of sex education.

"It was literally, you know, anatomy, physiology, STIs. And that was it," says Michelle, who also teaches art at Mid-Pen.

In her report, Mosley described a class exercise Michelle often uses to facilitate discussion of sensitive topics. Michelle put two signs up across the room. One said, "Disagree"; the other, "Agree." Posing a series of questions, she had the students move from one side to the other based on their stance.

"Sending unwanted, explicit text messages is a form of sexual harassment. Agree or disagree?"

"It's not a big deal to me anymore, honestly," said one student.

"You feel it's normalized?" Michelle asked.

"It just happens so often, you just get over it and move on," the student said.

But another student disagreed. "The other person is doing it without your consent so it's not really agreeable," she said.

With all that they hear in the news, Michelle says, "students know that sexual harassment is wrong and they're very able to say, 'What that guy did was horrible.' But I have also taught students where they didn't even know sexual harassment was a thing."

Even if they do understand, most don't understand the many different ways sexual harassment can play out.

The curriculum Michelle uses goes beyond classroom exercises, asking students to discuss topics like these with adults at home. "The kids hate it, but in the end they realize it wasn't that bad," Michelle says. "And parents love it. They really open up to their kids." 🐘



Art and Human Relations teacher Michelle Boire.



Traveling to Ecuador for an Immersion in Spanish

Last summer nine students, accompanied by Spanish teacher Jon Austin and school counselor Wendi Wells, embarked on a 10-day Spanish language immersion trip to Ecuador.

Prior to the trip, the students spent a week in conversational prep class during the school's summer session to prepare for the linguistic and cultural experiences to come. After an 11-hour flight from SFO to Quito, the group met with the local Ecuadorian families they would stay with for the first six days of the trip. The next several mornings were spent in language classes with the group's guide, Luis, and his wife at the Academia Guayasamin, with afternoons free for sightseeing.

With their guide and teachers, the students explored the capital and the surrounding area. They visited the Equator and found out that the monument marking the site is actually several hundred feet south of the true Equator. Interestingly, the indigenous people of the area had long before revered a sacred site that happens to sit on the exact geographical true Equator.



Another highlight was "La Capilla del Hombre," or "The Chapel of Man," a museum dedicated to the works of Ecuadorian visual artist Oswaldo Guayasamin, a master painter and sculptor of Quechua and Mestizo heritage. Next up was a trip to "El Teleférico," a gondola that takes riders from Quito, at 9,000 feet above sea level, to 15,500 feet in a matter of minutes. The views from the top were stunning. The group was able to see



Student travelers at the Cascadas Nambilla, below left, and, at the Palacio de Carondelet, above.

eight volcanoes, including Cotopaxi, the massive form that dominates the Quito skyline.

Many of the students felt their time with the local families was the best part of the trip and were sorry to have to say goodbye to their host families when the group moved on to Mindo, a beautiful cloud forest that is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world. The day after a night hike to see a stunning array of nocturnal insects and amphibians, everyone enjoyed a phenomenon called the "frog concert." Students sat in silence at dusk as hundreds of frogs created a soundscape with their chirps and calls. After an adventurous day ziplining above the forest canopy, the students prepared for the trip back to Quito and eventually the flight home.

Thanks in part to the generosity of donors to the Douglas C. Thompson Fund for Class Trips, Mid-Pen is pleased to be able to offer special travel experiences like this to all its students, regardless of financial need. Our class trips give students a broader perspective of their place in the world and cross-cultural experiences that they will remember for the rest of their lives. 🐉



Making Music the Mid-Pen Way

By Jameson Swanagon

Some dozen years ago, as he was walking through the Mid-Pen halls, former Head of School Doug Thompson came across a student playing an unusual scale on the guitar. Being a musician with an ear tuned to the wild polyphony of 60's and 70's jazz, Doug recognized the sound as the Whole Tone scale, a symmetrical scale that divides an octave into six equal steps instead of the seven unequal steps on which most pop radio fare is based.

Amazed, Doug asked the student what he was playing. The student responded that he didn't know, but a friend had taught it to him and he loved the way it sounded. It was here that Doug says he had a two-part epiphany: first, that there was already music being made at Mid-Pen, and, second, that this student ought to understand what he is playing – and that a music class was the first step to achieving that goal.

Out of this chance encounter grew the Mid-Pen music program. Doug enlisted Ben Griggs, then an English teacher but also a brilliant musician, to meet with six

or seven interested students; inventory their talents, interests, and perspectives; and start to work together to learn a set of songs.

Applying this format, the Mid-Pen music program has flourished in the decade since and now serves more than 30 students each year, who perform in at least four different ensembles. The process of making music provides a different kind of learning experience for students. Somewhere between the kinetic learning of a PE class and the creative expression of studio art class, music offers students a respite from academic learning. Each year there is a handful of students who are so energized by their success in music that they confidently take on every other challenge they encounter, no matter how daunting or formidable.

At the heart of the program is students' acquisition of two life-long skills. The first is to be able to make music with the people they encounter after leaving Mid-Pen. Whether playing in a dorm-room jam session or with a gigging band, we make important human connections



by making music together. Our goal is that all music students should feel confident that they can pick up and play with others when the opportunity presents itself.

Additionally, music should afford students an outlet for self-expression – that is, the ability to make something that is uniquely theirs and that articulates their identity and gives value to those things that make us essentially human. It is here that Doug's second epiphany is important. He believed that students should know the theory behind what they are playing. The value of music theory is not always an easy case to make to students who are understandably content with learning the songs of their heroes in the form they first encountered them.

In their Music Ensemble courses, students are taught that every great song, every inspired performance, was made through a sequence of hundreds of decisions. Is the song fast or slow? Should this chord progression be a verse or a chorus? Should I play a D chord on the 5th fret or the 10th? Should the chords be 7th chords or have extensions? Musicians with strong artistic identities, recognizable after just a few notes, can turn a sequence of these decisions into a personal style. But it is difficult to make musical decisions if a student has a limited vocabulary from which to draw. It is my hope that our music ensembles, and to a greater extent the Music Theory and Studio Ensemble courses, give students a large enough block of musical material with which to sculpt their personal style.

Over the last two years, I have added to the program. Our Music Theory course, for example, explores music in the Western World from Pythagoras to Miles Davis. But the course is not designed to be a historical survey. Students are presented with the idea that composition is simply improvisation slowed down, and vice-versa, and that the nuts and bolts of music can be a catalyst for artistic inspiration. The goal is that students will apply



Music teacher Jameson Swanagon instructs Quinn Maloney '18, below. Emma Marek '20, above left, and Jeannessa Lurie '19 play with the Studio Ensemble.

their compositional skills directly in the rehearsal room, whether in an improvised guitar solo or as string parts written for the chorus of a song. The Studio Ensemble class was created to give advanced students the opportunity to do just this – apply their newly acquired theoretical knowledge to actual songs.

Whenever we learn something new, particularly in the arts, we first imitate our heroes. Only later can we invent and innovate. The ultimate goal of the Mid-Pen music program is to balance imitation and invention – though if I had to choose, I would tilt the scale to the latter. Observing our students at this year's Winter Concert, I saw the audience react with audible excitement every time a performer created in the moment, whether it was a great drum fill, a vocal embellishment, or a guitar solo. These moments are at the crossroads of imitation and innovation and spark a transcendent energy that is unique to great musical performances. We all look forward to more of these moments as the music program at Mid-Pen continues to grow and evolve. 🐉



The Faces of Mid-Pen

At Mid-Pen every student is known and appreciated for his or her unique gifts and talents. Four students share what brought them to Mid-Pen and what the school means to them.

Alfredo Moran '20

Core teacher

Jon Austin

Previous school

Cesar Chavez Middle School

Favorite class

Music. Jameson is a great teacher. If he sees you are struggling with something, he will help you and he is always willing to help during break or lunch. I played drums before I came here, but Jameson has actually helped me get a lot better.

Favorite book

I wouldn't consider myself a reader, but we read *Catcher in the Rye* in English last year. Holden is pretty relatable.

Why Mid-Pen?

At my afterschool program in 8th grade, the director saw I really like music and told me that there was a school in Menlo Park that has a great music program. That's great, I thought, I could even walk there. Also, I came from a middle school with 600 kids and didn't really like it, so having to switch from a really big school to a really small school was very comfortable.

Cool stuff

In addition to my music, I play soccer and tennis. I play goal in soccer and will be the captain next year.

Summer plans

Maybe I'll do a few weeks of Mid-Pen's summer school again – not because I have to, but because I want to. Last summer I took History of Rock 'n' Roll, Forensic Science, Social Justice in the Bay Area, and soccer all three weeks.

How I've grown at Mid-Pen

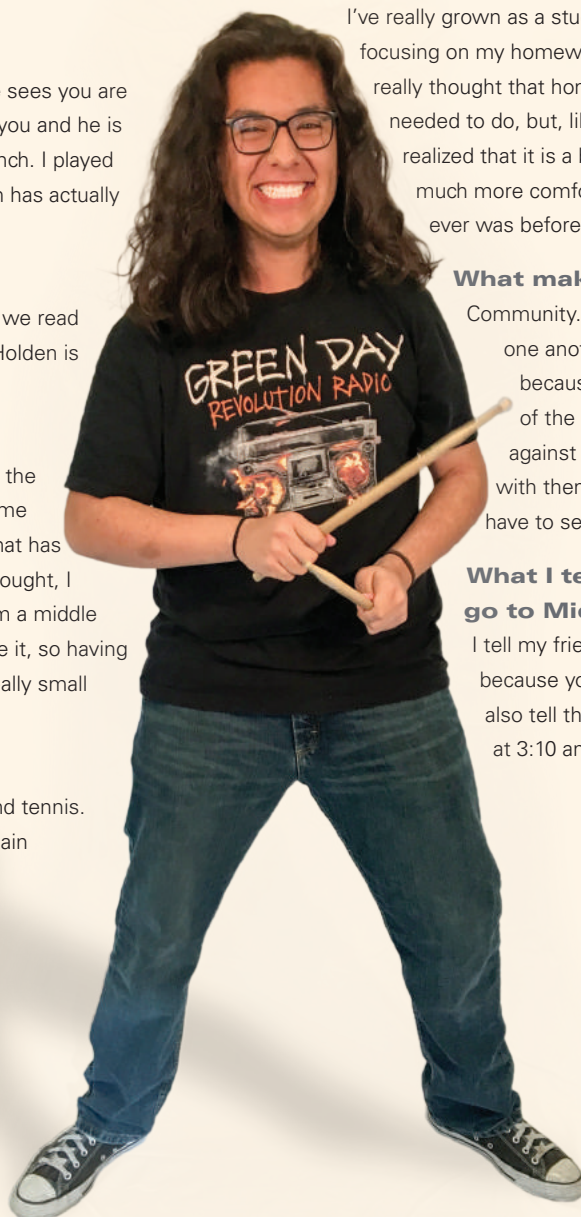
I've really grown as a student, for one. I am actually focusing on my homework. In middle school, I never really thought that homework was something I needed to do, but, like, after freshman year I realized that it is a big part of your grade. I'm also much more comfortable public speaking than I ever was before.

What makes MP different?

Community. Everyone here is close to one another, and I am pretty sure it's because of the small size. Because of the size, you can't hold a grudge against anyone because you will be with them for the next four years and have to see them every day.

What I tell friends who don't go to Mid-Pen

I tell my friends that the small size is great because you get to know everyone. I also tell them we start at 9:30 and end at 3:10 and they go, like, "What???"





Raina Iarocci '21

Core Teacher

Caitlin Berka

Previous school

Los Altos Christian School

Favorite class

I have two: ASL and art. I took ASL at my old school, and I like it because it is really hands-on (literally). Francis is a great teacher. Class is always fun, but you also learn so much. You don't even realize you are doing so much work because you're having so much fun.

I have always enjoyed art and putting my ideas and inspirations from things I have seen down on paper. I have been to a lot of different places, and I always try remember what I have seen and put it into my art.

Favorite book

We just read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* by Mark Haddon in English class. I have never read anything like that before. It was from the perspective of a kid who has autism, and it opened up a new world to me. I learned there is so much that he sees differently, but that there is also a lot that we share.

What I'm holding in the picture

That's the medal I got for qualifying for the CCS cross country championships this year. Until this year, I hadn't really run before, but my sister ran cross country, and she invited me to try running with her. It was really fun running against her. Then when I came to the Mid-Pen summer program and practiced with the team, it was great. It's really fun being a part of the team. Everyone supports you. It's kind of like a second family.

Why Mid-Pen?

When I shadowed last year, everyone was so welcoming that it felt like I already went here.

Cool stuff

I love soccer and fishing. I go to Santa Cruz and love to fish on a boat with my dad. We fish for rockfish, ling cod, and halibut.

What I tell friends who don't go to Mid-Pen

Some of my friends are thinking about coming here, and I tell them that in some ways, Mid-Pen is like our old school: really small, but a really caring and kind community. It was a really easy transition for me. You make friends really fast.

Advice to incoming freshmen

Definitely don't underestimate the school. Even though the school is really welcoming and the teachers will help you out any time, you want to make sure you are on top of your work, because if you aren't, that will cause problems. But remember you can always trust your teachers and talk to them if you have trouble.

Everyone has challenges

I have dyslexia, so teachers give me accommodations, like extended time. At Mid-Pen they are really open to helping you and want the best for you.

If I could change Mid-Pen

I like the school's size... but maybe I'd make it just a little, *little* bigger.

If I could change the world

Global warming. I am really into science and animals, and global warming is causing polar bears and marine life to die.



Ernesto

Valencia Arevalo '19

Core teacher

Julia Longnecker

Previous school

Liceo Salvadoreño in San Salvador, El Salvador

Favorite class

I really like Algebra II with Nicola. I like the way she teaches. I really like that she takes the time to help students understand when they don't feel comfortable with what we are studying.

Favorite book

Dante's *Inferno*. I read it in Spanish about two years ago. My father suggested it. I just feel like whenever I read a book I imagine what the author is thinking about, and the author of this book is a genius.

Why Mid-Pen?

It's a long story. Between 9th and 10th grade, I came to the U.S. for a coding summer camp at Stanford University. A counselor told me that he was interested in the way that I played basketball and thought that I should try to study here. He gave me his number and email, but I lost it when my phone broke. So when I got home I talked to my Dad and started contacting schools, including the Sequoia Union High School district, because my uncle and aunt live in East Palo Alto. I came back to the US to interview with them, but when the director realized that I was an international student, he told me my only option was a private school. He gave me two cards. One was Jamie's [Associate Director of Admissions Jamie Schiessler].

That was a Wednesday and I was leaving Saturday, so I didn't have much time. I immediately came to the school but there was no one here. On Thursday, I finally got through to Jamie. I didn't mention that my family couldn't afford private school, because I wanted to give her the chance to meet me first. She showed me around the school. When I told her my family couldn't afford the tuition, she said that Mid-Pen didn't give financial aid to international students, but to come the next day to shadow a student just to see what the school was like.

The next day was Friday, and I shadowed with Alfredo. I immediately thought Mid-Pen's friendly environment was great, and I just fell in love with the school. At lunch time, Jamie called me into her office and told me that the school was going to give me a full scholarship to come here. I cried. She cried. Then I finished my day with Alfredo and the next day went back to El Salvador to start the paperwork for getting a visa.

On living so far from home

Living with my uncle and aunt is really good. They are really funny and my little cousin is great. I still really miss my parents, though, and I FaceTime with them every night and talk with my little brother and sister on the phone all the time.

Cool stuff

I have been volunteering with Shoeing International. It's a project that was started in El Salvador in 2012. I got really interested in it at my old school and became a volunteer and leader in my old school. We collect new and slightly used shoes and give them to communities in need. In Central America there are a lot of communities where kids do not have shoes to go to school. Last year, I started a shoe drive at Mid-Pen and we collected 160 pairs of shoes. We put them in boxes and shipped them to El Salvador, where they were distributed to other parts of Central America.

This fall I became a Star Vista Health Ambassador. There was an announcement about the program one day in Core, and I decided to volunteer. It is a three-month program where you learn to work with people who are dealing with mental health problems. I hope to go to the Fair Oaks Community Center and offer my help.

How I have grown at Mid-Pen

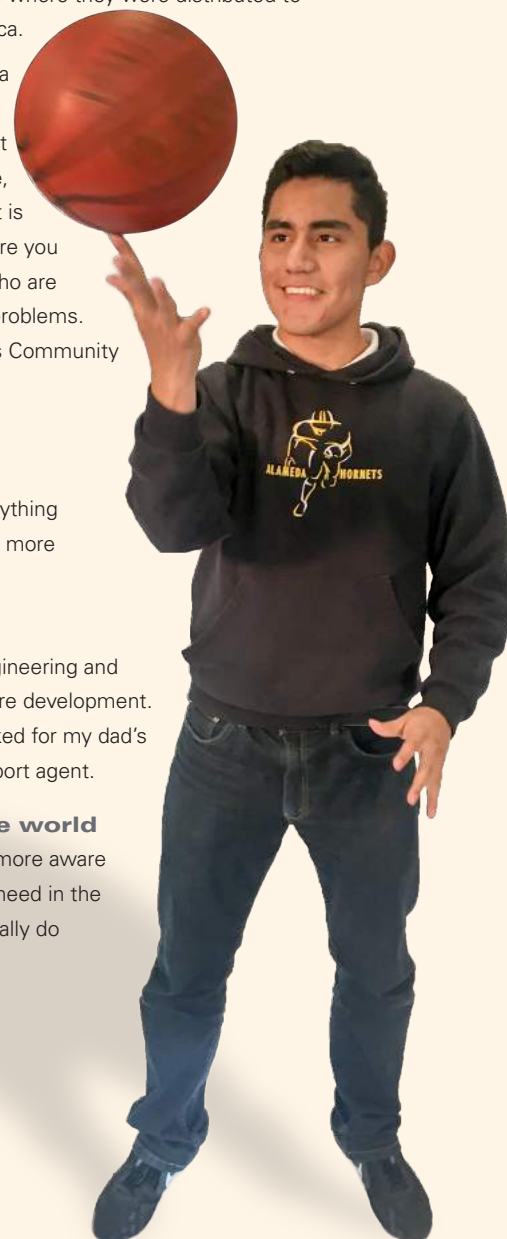
I feel more confident in everything that I do, and I feel that I am more independent now.

What's next

I hope to study systems engineering and would like to work in software development. A couple of years ago I worked for my dad's company as a technical support agent.

If I could change the world

I would like everyone to be more aware that there a lot of people in need in the world, and that you can actually do something to change that.





Chloe Lawler '18

Core teacher

Michelle Boire

Previous school

Monarch School

Favorite class

Advanced Bio – I have always really liked zoology and marine biology.

Favorite book

Ready Player One by Ernest Cline. It's like the world is in a sort of energy crisis and everyone tries to escape from reality by going to this virtual reality world called the OASIS, where you can be anything you want to be. It's a real dystopian sci-fi book.

Why Mid-Pen?

I shadowed here before my freshman year and really liked it, but my parents and I thought I might have more opportunities at a bigger school. I went to another school near here and wound up bumping around quite a lot. When I got back from the Monarch School, I just knew that Mid-Pen was the right place for my senior year.

Cool stuff

I love horseback riding, golf, art and music. I'm in studio art, and I am going to be taking music ensemble next semester. I used to compete in show jumping and I hope to get back into it.

A happy ending

My last school was a boarding school in Montana and it had a riding program. After I started at Mid-Pen this fall, my parents and I heard the school was closing. I had had a favorite horse, Sunny, at the school, and when I learned he was going to be sold, I was really sad. He needed a place, so I talked to my parents and we were able to get him. We are boarding him at the Portola Valley Training Center, and I am really looking forward to riding him again.

School trips

I had a great time on the Advanced Bio trip to Catalina. The night snorkel was my favorite part. We saw this incredible bioluminescence, which is basically a blue light that some animals give off when reacting to stimuli. We were swimming in the dark, and we could see all this blue light from the plankton. We also saw a shark, a couple of rays, and we tried to get ahold of an octopus, but they were too sneaky.

How I have grown at Mid-Pen

I have only been here since September, but I feel like I have become more confident in my school work and my artwork and make friends more quickly.

What makes Mid-Pen different

It's smaller than other schools, much more hands-on, a more close-knit community that doesn't focus only on academics. I am someone who is very interpersonal but also introverted. The small community lets me be in both worlds – I can interact when I want but can also keep to myself.

What I tell friends who don't go to Mid-Pen

I tell them I am so glad that I am in an environment that's not as stressful as their schools.

What's next

I'm almost done with my college applications, and I have already gotten into both my first choices, Colorado State in Ft. Collins and Montana State in Bozeman. But I am still applying to six schools so that I have options.

If I could change Mid-Pen

I'd have a student center where there are couches and places to hang out instead of just tables.

If I could change the world

I'd like to see more empathy and acceptance because I feel like that would lead to solutions to so many other problems.



FROM THE FIELD – THE TERM IN SPORTS

By Kurt Lange, Athletic Director

Soccer Season Is Anything But Typical

With the North Bay wildfires wreaking havoc on the schedule, and our league light on teams, it was an odd season for the Mid-Pen soccer team. From a win-loss standpoint, the team had a “down” year and was 1-4 in league play.

There are normally five teams in our league, with each team playing every other twice in the season for a total of eight league games. This year, however, the season began with league rival Kehillah announcing it was unable to field a team, so we ended up playing powerhouse North Valley Baptist three times, although one was technically a non-league game. In two of those matches, we lost by just one goal. North Valley eventually went on to play Alma Heights in the championship match, which they lost.

Then, in October, due to the smoke drifting over the Peninsula from the fires in Sonoma and Napa, we were

forced to cancel a match against SF Christian twice in two weeks, which was a heartbreaker because it was a team we had beaten handily earlier in the season.

Members of the team included freshmen Karson Beringer, Owen DeCardy, Sebastian Strachan, and Taylor Young. Sophomores included Colder Li and Alfredo Moran. Rounding out the roster were juniors Nathan Cooper and Kevin Belarde, as well as seniors Ryan Burton, Matt Davidson, Alexis Garcia, Quinn Maloney, and Nate Smith. Ryan, Alexis, and Nate made first-team all-league. Sebastian, Nathan, and Alfredo made second-team and Quinn Maloney received honorable mention.

The team was once again coached by Raul Salazar, who got a big boost this year from ASL teacher Francis Phiri as assistant coach. Naomi Orta '19 attended every game to provide translation services for Francis when needed. 🇸🇩





Volleyball Rebuilds and the Future Looks Bright

After graduating eight seniors from last year's squad, this year was Volleyball's "rebuilding season."

The team consisted of six freshmen (Annika Benton, Julia Crouse, Bridget Cruz, Jaelynn Godinez, Sarah McKinley, and Sophia Scheid), four sophomores (Elena Meraz-Baca, Natalie Nunez, Valerie Rendon, and Sanaye Ryder), one junior (Jeannessa Lurie), and one senior (Allyson Hulsenkamp). Because of the newness of most of our players to the sport, we decided to play a junior varsity schedule. Although we did not win any of our six matches, we were very competitive in two that we played against rival Kehillah Jewish School, losing two games to three in both matches.

A special thank-you goes to coaches Franc Salazar, alumna Alana Budak '09, and Michael Vieira for all of their hard work and dedication. With all but one player returning next year, the future looks good for girls' volleyball. 🐉



Matthew Davidson '18, left, takes a shot on goal. Sanaye Ryder '20, above, walks off the court after a game. Coach Alan Cameron, top, flanked by runners Raina Iarocci '21 and Sky Zandbergen '18.



Two Runners Qualify for CCS Championships

Coached by history teacher Alan Cameron, the Mid-Pen Cross Country team enjoyed an infusion of young talent, with five freshmen joining the team (Nate Hopkinson, Heath Myers, Lanier Poland, Raina Iarocci, and Andries Castellano). Runners also included sophomore Dawson Kinnamon and seniors Aidan Lloyd-Tucker and Schuyler Zandbergen.

The team competed in six meets this year, five of them league meets held at Crystal Springs Cross Country Course in Belmont and one non-league meet, the Ram Invitational at Westmoor High School in Daly City.

Special congrats go to Raina, who competed at the varsity level all season as a freshman, and Schuyler, who holds the record as Mid-Pen's fastest runner in the 20 years of the program. Both students made second-team all-league in the Private School Athletic League (PSAL) and qualified for the CCS Championship meet at Toro Park in Salinas, where they each competed against more than 130 runners from 40 schools. Great job Cross Country and great job Coach Alan! 🐉

Falls Sports by the Numbers

33 ATHLETES
30% OF THE STUDENT BODY
15 FRESHMEN
7 SOPHOMORES
3 JUNIORS
8 SENIORS

ALUMNI UPDATES

Ryan Galligan '12 graduated from St. Mary's College with a master's in accounting. While he was in school, he developed an interest in Japan and began teaching himself Japanese. He recently took a position in the tax services department of the big accounting firm Ernst and Young and is currently living and working in Japan.

Kenia Miranda '14 stopped by the school in November to speak with administrators Andrea Henderson and Dave Richardson. She is currently a senior at UC Santa Cruz.

For the past two years **Rachel Thurber '14** has been running her own business on the Peninsula specializing in bridal, fashion, and special effects makeup. After Mid-Pen, she attended the Blanche Macdonald Centre in Vancouver, BC, where she completed a year-long program in freelance makeup artistry.

Marcus Anson '15 visited recently, shortly after getting out for winter break from Northwestern University, where he is in his sophomore year and considering majoring in history.

The parents of **Eli Feuerman '15** report that he is "doing great." Eli completed a gap year before attending Occidental College. "Mid-Pen made that happen!"

Wills Harris '15 spent the summer doing research at UC Irvine and is currently a junior at Reed College, where he is majoring in Physics.



The six alums pictured above joined students and faculty for the annual Thanksgiving Feast and Talent Show on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. From left:

Claire Alix '15 is currently a junior at Nicholls State University in Louisiana, where she is studying for her BS in Nursing.

Yasmeen Magaña '16 is a sophomore at UC Berkeley, where she is deciding between majoring in environmental economics or legal studies, or possibly even doing a double major.

Quinten Suppes '15 recently finished up a job working for a firm doing hazardous material inspections, which involves sampling for lead and asbestos.

Jesse Nemmer '13 visited with his girlfriend, Krystal Rossi. After taking classes at Foothill College, Jesse began a degree program this summer at Academy of Art University in San Francisco, where he is studying graphic design in hopes of becoming a game designer.

Nick Hinson '17 is taking a gap year before heading off to University of Portland in the fall. He recently wrapped up a broadcasting internship in Worcester, MA, through Dynamy and this spring will be touring the world performing with Up With People.

Nathan Suppes '17 recently completed a hospitality training program at JobTrain in Menlo Park and is now working at the Fremont Marriott Silicon Valley hotel.



Jeff Gielow '98 wrote in with a detailed update on what he is up to, nearly 20 years after graduating from Mid-Pen:

Mid-Pen was great for me, and I'm ever thankful for the staff, administration and students I met in my time there. I was a troubled teen (as many maybe are), and between Mid-Pen's care, my outside psychotherapy, and the support of my patient parents, I was able to safely make it through high school, off to college, and eventually graduate school.

I would not have thought I would have ended up in education myself, but for the past six years, I have been a middle school counselor with the Palo Alto Unified School District (the district I left before coming to Mid-Pen, which I find wonderfully ironic). I love my role, and especially so when I meet and support families with kids who fit the Mid-Pen "profile."

In addition to my work as a school counselor, I have also recently opened up a private practice as a Marriage and Family Therapist in Mountain View where I specialize in serving teens and adolescents. This work is extremely important and fulfilling to me, for perhaps the same reasons many choose to work at Mid-Pen. I get to work with great kids who are sadly suffering, or not meeting their authentic potential, and we work on strengthening them from the inside out.

Mid-Pen brought an honest sense of responsibility to me when I was a disillusioned youth, which helped me grow into a young adult and beyond. I'm very proud to be paying it back, and I remember my time at Mid-Pen being integral in leading me to do the work I love doing these days.

Mid-Pen was necessary to my growth and success and deserves to be praised and acknowledged for the positive and empowering difference the school makes in the lives of teens and families.



JENNIFER LOCKWOOD '87: A Career in Education



When Jennifer Lockwood moved from urban Los Angeles to the redwoods of Mendocino County four years ago for her new job as Executive Director of the Willits Charter School, she assumed she might be in for a bit of a culture shock.

"After living in L.A. for 20 years, I needed a little more anonymity than I knew could get in Willits," she recalled, "so I moved the largest town I could find."

That would be Ukiah, population 15,000.

Obviously, Jennifer likes small. Willits has a population of 5,000, and her school, an alternative to the town's public middle and high school, is as small as Mid-Pen, with just 135 students in grades 6-12. But there are other ways that her school reminds her of Mid-Pen as well.

"We have a lot of kids who don't fit into the public school system, kids who are kind of unique and artsy, kids who don't fit into the standard mold," she remarked. "They might not be into sports, but they are into theater and music. They're a lot like me when I was a teen."

Jennifer remembers Mid-Pen, where she enrolled at the start of her junior year, as "a huge influence" on her. "I landed at Mid-Pen because I couldn't find a home, a school where I fit in," she said. "I had made some bad choices, and I was just a sort of lost teenager and didn't know what to do. I don't even know if I would have graduated from high school if my mom hadn't found Mid-Pen. But I knew right away when I walked on campus, 'OK, this is it. This is great.'"

After majoring in theatre at Humboldt State, Jennifer moved to Los Angeles, where she worked backstage in makeup for films and television. After six years she was looking for a more steady line of work, so she returned to school part time to get her teaching credential at Cal State Northridge, while continuing her work in the entertainment industry.

It was a propitious time to go into teaching. "At the time, there was teacher shortage, and you could just walk into



Jennifer Lockwood, left, in her 1987 yearbook and, above, with her daughter, Farrow.

the classroom and teach," she recalls. "I literally went from being back stage doing makeup one day to being in front of the classroom the next."

Jennifer taught English and theater arts in the Los Angeles public schools before being recruited to teach at a small charter school in the San Fernando Valley in 2003, just as the charter school movement was beginning to take off. Three years later, she became the school's principal.

What made the school special, she recalls, was that "we were the only school in the area that included special education kids in the general school population, so we were much more diverse and inclusive than other schools."

Four years ago Jennifer found a tighter market for teachers when she decided to return to her roots in Northern California. "I was so lucky," she said. "I was at a job fair, standing in the lunch line talking to someone I had just met about moving back up north, and the board president from Willits Charter School happened to overhear us and said that they were looking for a new director. I can't believe it just sort of fell into my lap. As soon as I came on the campus, it reminded me of Mid-Pen. I looked around and saw the kinds of kids at the school, and I said, 'I can work with these kids because I was that kind of kid.'"

As the only administrator at Willits Charter, Jennifer does just about everything at the school, including locking up after the last student has left. With her daughter Farrow, 12, a 7th grader, in the passenger seat, she makes the 20-mile drive home to dinner with her partner, Michel, and son Aedan, 8.

"I love being in the same school with my daughter – she's artsy like me." 🐉



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