

THE YEAR OF COVID-19

Challenges
Innovations
Action



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MTS *year in* NUMBERS



126
DAYS OF IN
PERSON
LEARNING
as of May 2

26%

INCREASE *in*
APPLICATIONS
OVER LAST YEAR



NEW FACES

4 ASSOCIATE
TEACHERS

1 CUSTODIAN

1 COVID
COORDINATOR

MONEY RAISED *for the* ANNUAL FUND

\$1 MILLION+

NEW TECHNOLOGY

93
IPADS

44
MACBOOK
AIRS

15
APPLE TVS



63%

MORE RAISED *for the*
ANNUAL FUND THIS YEAR
COMPARED *with* LAST YEAR

11 NEW
CAMPUS
SPACES

- ▶ 1 new STEM Center
- ▶ 1 new lower school classroom
- ▶ 1 new outdoor nature play space
- ▶ 8 tents



Well before COVID-19 had entered our collective consciousness, I had settled on the theme for the 2020-21 school year, Action. With momentum building on a number of fronts, I had hoped that this school year would be a year where we moved from ideas and words to actions. Though we wore face coverings, collected bi-weekly saliva samples, and washed our hands incessantly, the Mount Tamalpais School community took that theme to heart, and we acted.

As you will read in this year's issue of *In Print*, the vast majority of our actions this year were in direct response to COVID-19. "Pivot" was the word of the year. I was blown away by the work our Academic Leadership Team and Trisha Cahill did to create a new schedule over the summer that allowed all 240 students to be on campus five days a week in safe cohorts. In August, nearly every teacher moved into a new classroom and many rewrote curricula for grade levels, programs, and structures that they had not previously taught. Then, throughout the year, every teacher, family, and student reacted deftly and gracefully to the constantly changing dynamics of school in a COVID year. Action was essential to our phenomenal success.

A YEAR OF *Action*

I was also moved by the action our community took around the topics of social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our teachers broadened the voices represented in our curriculum – inspired by Chimamanda Adichie's "dangers of a single story." Our Board of Trustees edited our Mission Statement and approved our first-ever Diversity Statement, codifying our institutional commitment to further building a diverse and inclusive community. Most importantly, our students acted with thoughtful protests against and policy revisions for the gendered dress code policy.

These actions and others led to some of the most impressive results in recent Mount Tamalpais School history. After a number of low-enrollment years, the school is fully enrolled. We saw our best results to date on our fall parent survey. Inspired by our action and further motivated by tremendous challenge gifts, we are on track for our best Annual Fund results. Finally, we have just hired our first Director of Equity and Inclusion who starts August 2021.

Mount Tamalpais School 2020-21 was a year of action. Action, though, does not end this June. We are in the midst of an exciting strategic planning process and invite all of you – current families and alumni – to share in defining the future of Mount Tamalpais School. Enjoy these pages and all of the action!

ANDREW DAVIS
Head of School

26

PORTABLE HAND
WASHING STATIONS
across CAMPUS



25

NEW AIR
PURIFIERS

Right: A beautiful morning on campus!
Below: Lower School students participated in a protest march organized by the 2nd grade as part of their curriculum learning about the power of peaceful protest.



Our young scientists at work.



LIFE @MTS



Marines came to campus to pick up donations for Toys for Tots.



Happy Diwali! MTS students celebrated the Indian Festival of Lights, listening to stories, drawing rangoli designs, making lanterns, and dancing.



As part of Black History Month, students learned about different STEM changemakers. Each student filled out a patent application and created their own invention.



Grades K-2 learned about what it means to vote in the election process.



Take a peek in our classrooms and on our campus
@MTSSCHOOL



So where do
I want to go?
—ALICE

Depends on
where you
want to end up.
—CHESHIRE CAT

MTS Adventures in WONDERLAND

This year, the 4th and 5th graders

performed in an Alice in Wonderland production like no other. Rather than performing onstage, our young talents performed in front of the green screen and made a movie! With direction from performing arts teachers Lindsay Bercovitch and Trevor Marcom and costumes that included matching Esty masks, the students were safe and the results were phenomenal.



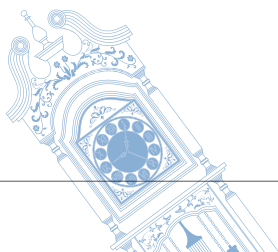
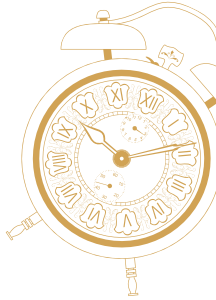
“The show must go on. Like every creative endeavor, you have to keep pushing forward for the pieces to fall into place. The students accepted every challenge, from working on a green screen to acting with someone who was not even in the room.”

Lindsay Bercovitch,
Performing Arts
Teacher



It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then.

—ALICE



“We purchased character masks from more than 20 different vendors on Etsy to match each student’s costume!”



THE YEAR OF COVID-19

A Year of Continual Change & Growth

—by Heather Brubaker

“MTS has gone above and beyond in its careful and consistent response to COVID-19, and the dedication of the teachers and staff has been outstanding. This has given our family complete confidence that the health and safety of our two middle school boys is a priority, allowing them to return to their daily on-campus in-person learning. We are truly grateful.”

—SARA MARSHALL, PARENT OF A 6TH & 7TH GRADER

The Mount Tamalpais School community was faced with a tremendous challenge and did not just survive, but thrived. Tested on nearly every front, the school has never been stronger.

When the MTS professional community arrived on campus late this summer, it was a very different place. Four new tents had sprung up on the large grass field. Room Number Seven had been completely renovated into an indoor/outdoor STEM lab. Two lower school classrooms had been remodeled into three learning spaces. A new outdoor nature play area in the deep field had been created. Portable sinks had been distributed all across campus. Fans were put into place in every classroom providing air circulation. Hand sanitizer bottles stood guard in every nook and cranny while boxes of masks lay in wait and blue tape marked out six foot increments on the ground. After endless hours of hard work and planning over the summer by the administrative team and faculty members, the campus had been transformed to be pandemic safe.



Students followed new class schedules that were painstakingly created to minimize teacher and student exposure while meeting the needs of the students joining via Zoom in our hybrid learning program. The new schedules also meant that at any moment individual cohorts – or the entire school – could pivot to distance learning with minimal disruption.

As faculty arrived on campus to prepare for the school year, employees and families alike nervously waited to find out if our application for a waiver to open school had been approved. With our on-campus status still in question, in-person student orientations with masks and social distancing replaced the traditional first days of school. Amidst palpable nervous energy, staff and students alike spent those days understanding the new spaces, schedules, and protocols outlined in the extensive MTS COVID Response Plan.

This was by no means a simple transition. Morning check in now involved taking every students' temperature and dispensing hand sanitizer before they were allowed on campus. Our newly hired custodian, Omar Paniagua, moved through campus cleaning surfaces continuously throughout the day. The professional community became familiar with the frequent COVID testing regimen, and in January, the students also became accustomed to the weekly testing routine that our newly hired COVID Coordinator, Ariel Levin, managed with the help of Naveen Kanithi, Registrar. Teachers artfully juggled hybrid learners on laptops along with the students present in the classroom.

On September 2, just days before the first day of school, the news arrived – the school's waiver application had been approved – students were allowed back on campus. The collective sigh of relief felt audible. The school was able to move forward with the plan to gradually bring all students back onto campus. Starting with kindergarten and first grade, two grades returned to campus each week until the entire K-8 student body was back learning in person by the first week of October.

As if the pandemic wasn't enough, the smoky air from the California wildfire season threatened to close the school in September shortly after school reopened. Prepared for a COVID-related return to distance learning, teachers and students were able to shift to distance learning when the air quality demanded it. The school installed a generator to

Providing a safe environment in the year of COVID-19 was hard earned in both time and resources, but the benefits have been innumerable as our students learn together in person.



keep the campus open in the case of power outages and purchased air purifiers for every single learning space on campus. Everyone was able to return to campus. By now, MTS was truly ready for anything.

While not easy, all the new safety protocols put into place worked. After 94 days of on-campus learning, the school had no known spread of COVID as of March. The students’ joyful shouts could be heard across the school grounds. African drumming reverberated through the playground and classrooms. Lindsay’s dance classes could be seen shimmying across the red top. Lower school students stepped out of the classrooms to view displays on Kamala Harris, and middle school students used chalk to draw diagrams of molecules on the black top in Toni’s science class. Students were learning together – in person – and it was working.

Providing a safe environment in the year of COVID-19 was hard earned in both time and resources, but the benefits have been innumerable as our students learn together.



The creativity required for a flexible curriculum and the technology required for hybrid learning and pivoting to distance learning when needed has spurred innovation. Teachers placed in new roles have discovered a renewed focus. Zoom has allowed families from afar to share with students about their family traditions or even teach a class. (Example: Julia’s kindergarten class was treated to a drawing lesson by one student’s artist uncle from New York City.)

As we go to print, the rate of change has slowed. Our safety protocols feel like a new normal, teacher vaccinations have lowered the anxiety carried by many, and conversation has shifted to when and how we might “return to normal.” The Mount Tamalpais School community was faced with a tremendous challenge and did not just survive, but thrived. Tested on nearly every front, the school has never been stronger.

“As the world began to shutter and uncertainty was the only certain, MTS emerged as the constant for our family. The ability of the teachers and administration to so quickly pivot with care and sensitivity to each child is something for which we will be forever grateful. We continue to be in awe of how beautifully MTS came together, giving each student the gift of normalcy during such abnormal times.”

—KIRA AND BILL BEER, PARENTS OF A 2ND GRADER





Roses & Thorns

After completing this unique school year, MTS students and parents reflect on their roses (unexpected positive moments) and thorns (challenging moments).

SARAH LATIF, parent of Izzy and Amelia, Kindergarten

ROSE

Using spaces around the house and yard more creatively, thoughtfully and frequently, has made our house into even more of a home.

THORN

I reached new levels of physical and emotional exhaustion - without even leaving the house.



INKA, 1st Grade

ROSE

When it's cold outside, the mask keeps your face warm.



BODEN, 4th Grade

ROSE

We have learned a lot more through technology this year than we normally would have.

THORN

Wearing masks makes it harder to breathe when you are running around!



RYAN, 8th Grade

ROSE

I started skating and that's pretty fun.

THORN

Bad thing about COVID is not seeing friends.

ADELIA, 4th Grade

ROSE

When distance learning from home, I get to sleep in a little bit later!

THORN

Zoom was hard. You don't pass your teacher in the hallway where you can ask them for clarification.



MOLLY, 3th Grade

ROSE

My family got two new pets!



CALUM, 1st Grade

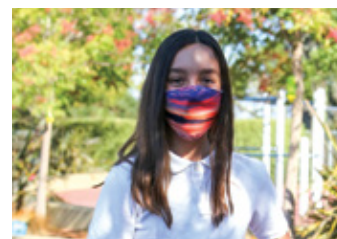
THORN

I don't like that you can't hug people.

TEDDY, Kindergarten

THORN

It's hard to keep my mask on.



ELSIE, 7th Grade

ROSE

Before the coronavirus, my dad would work in SF all day. Now, he works from home, so he sometimes drops me off at school and picks me up.

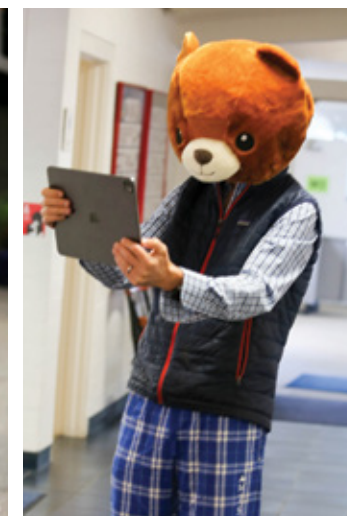
THORN

It's hard not being able to see my grandparents. Although we now Facetime with them every morning, it's not the same as waking up to homemade pancakes.

MIRANDA LUMPKIN,
parent of Mia, 8th Grade
and Alumni parent

ROSE

I love seeing MTS students happily heading off to school for in-person learning!



TRADITIONS REIMAGINED

As we were unable to do the usual Teddy Bear parade this year given that cohorts couldn't mix, the Teddy Bear parade went virtual! Head of School Andrew Davis literally Zoomed his way from class to class, moving his iPad through each grade, so students would all have the opportunity to show off their teddy bears and wave to their school-mates. Meanwhile, the other grades watched the Zoom parade on their large classroom screens while waiting for their turn. Buddy Bears later Zoomed with one another in break-out rooms.



ACCELERATING INNOVATION

Many in the education world saw the challenges presented by COVID-19 – the need for masks, small cohorts, and social distancing – as a roadblock to continued innovation. At Mount Tamalpais School, however, we used these constraints as a means to unlock and accelerate innovation. Much like a poet restricted to the seventeen syllables of a haiku or the cadence of iambic pentameter, the constraints of COVID-19 forced us to find new solutions to how we teach, many of which will be with us for a long time to come.

—by Andrew Davis, Head of School

A Schedule with New Building Blocks

A school's daily schedule – how long students spend in each class – has profound implications for the program and is one of the hardest elements of school life to change. The COVID-driven need for small cohorts of students, limited student-to-teacher exposure, and staggered arrival and dismissal times forced us to create an entirely new daily schedule. Using feedback from teachers, the new daily schedule is built on 30-minute blocks of time rather than 40 or 45 minutes. This small change allowed us to increase the amount of time spent in math class by 30% or more across a week. We were able to give science and engineering classes 90 minutes, sufficient time to introduce a concept, do a lab, and process the learning. We were able to implement these changes while still having PE five days a week in the lower school. Forced to start from scratch, our new schedule is driven by what we teach and how we best teach it.

COVID-restrictions further allowed us to experiment with new teaching assignments and structures, even better realizing the potential of departmentalized instruction. In the lower school, Humanities teachers teach at only one grade level. Math and science teachers span across two grade levels. As a result, we have smaller grade-level teaching teams, better able to focus on the needs of those students and work together for collaborative, interdisciplinary units. Furthermore, students now have a single arts class for three weeks, rotating between the disciplines. This has been particularly helpful for our younger students as it limits the number of adults they see in a single week. While there are ideas for improvement in the future, in early 2021, many of these schedule changes feel like the new, better normal.



Ubiquitous and Intentional Technology

Inspired by technology platforms adopted during distance learning at the start of COVID-19, and limited by safety regulation in our ability to share student devices, Mike Taverna, Director of Technology, onboarded well over 100 iPads and laptops over the summer. This allowed us to have one device – iPad, laptop, or Chromebook depending on age – for each student, a “1:1” program.

The now-ubiquitous availability of technology inspired even more meaningful student growth and understanding. Ed-tech platforms allow students to receive targeted math or reading practice while a teacher works with a small group of students, realizing the best of blended learning. Tools such as Google Earth can provide greater depth and interest. In one project, “A Day in the Life of Seven Kids: Seeing the World from Another Viewpoint,” MTS second graders used Google Earth to better understand the continents and

countries where the people they were studying came from. Finally, students are using their laptops and iPads as creative tools - making learning videos to demonstrate mastery of a mathematical concept

While technology is more accessible, it is only being used when it improves student understanding and engagement.

or skill, using greenscreen to help share about research topics, and using Book Creator to add their own voices to stories they have written.

While technology is more ubiquitous on campus, its use

remains intentional; we only use technology when it improves student understanding and engagement.

In a recent first-grade math unit on coding – launched with a story about Dorothy Vaughan, a famous black woman coder – students learned about loops, a coding fundamental, by learning dance moves and how to write out choreography. They then transitioned to a digital coding platform and applied that understanding on the screen as a “coder” normally would. Similarly, middle school science students continue to take handwritten notes – peer-reviewed research has shown handwritten notes are the best way to remember information – while learning how to use digital data tables, graphs, and charts

effectively in their lab reports. What is best done in analog remains pen and paper. What can better be understood or communicated via technology is accomplished with our now ubiquitous hardware.

New Spaces Inspire Positive Change

Over the summer, nearly every teacher moved into a new teaching space. The process of moving – a tremendous effort – inspired change. Teachers used the opportunity to only move that which is helpful for teaching in 2021 and beyond. Where Marie Kondo asks “does this bring me joy?” our teachers asked, “does this help me teach?” Like with Kondo, the results are tidier, less cluttered spaces that are – more importantly – filled with the best tools and materials for teaching and learning. Reflecting on her move across campus, Jennifer Adams said, “I love my new classroom. The space is bright, fresh, and the newness of it inspires creativity and flexibility for myself and my students.”

While many classrooms had to use desks in rows – a regression in best teaching practice – to achieve required social distancing, some teachers were able to experiment with new uses of space. Most notably, Anastasia Radeva set up her first and second-grade science and engineering classroom without desks, utilizing yoga mats and lap desks for the young “makers” in her class. Not limited to the square footage of a desk, and far more flexible in the arrangement of yoga mats, this allowed Anastassia and her students to experiment and build with even greater creativity.



Constraints Do Constrain

While our response to COVID has unlocked tremendous innovation, we have had to make significant sacrifices that we hope to recover in future years. Our arts teachers have moved from room to room – incredibly flexible on their part – but not ideal for their phenomenal programs – clay and xylophones don’t travel well. A number of teachers and classes have met in tents this year, novel at first, but cold on the wintry days and hot come to Spring. We have also had to postpone important traditions such as in-person Buddy Bear meetings and All School Gathers, as well as re-think major productions of the 4/5 Play and Middle School Play.

With teachers slowly being vaccinated and hopes for a children’s vaccine in 2022, we look forward to holding onto the best innovations of this COVID-constrained year, while welcoming back much missed programs, spaces, and traditions. Still, MTS will be a better school for the tremendous innovations of our COVID year.



ACTION!



Every year Mount Tamalpais School selects a theme to guide activities and provoke thought within our community. The theme for the 2020-21 school year is “Action!”

This year has undoubtedly required many moments of action.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



“We are thrilled to welcome our first Director of Equity and Inclusion to MTS. Through his experience and support, we hope to continue to enhance and strengthen our curricula, and to renew our commitment to social justice and equity.”

— BARBARA GUARRIELLO
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE CHAIR AND DEI STEERING GROUP MEMBER

THIS YEAR, MOUNT TAMALPAIS SCHOOL TOOK IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONAL STEPS to ensure that DEI plays an important role in shaping the school’s community and culture. This work included creating a new Board Committee on Community, a DEI Steering Group composed of board, faculty, administration, and parents to advance program and policy goals for the school’s continued growth

in DEI work. The group collectively made an update to the school’s Mission Statement and created a Diversity Vision Statement to help guide this work. Additionally, the Steering Group played an important role in the school’s recent hire of our new Director of Equity and Inclusion, Quincy Davis, to further champion this work.

DIVERSITY VISION STATEMENT

Mount Tamalpais School is dedicated to nourishing and sustaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school community in which each person can be their truest self, knowing all perspectives, identities, and voices are welcomed and valued. It is our responsibility to create a school community where all members can thrive and where students are encouraged to be engaged and growth-minded citizens.

“Making “Alice in Wonderland” was an adventure, and I love adventures. I was so excited that they picked this story for our play as it is one of my favorites. It was fun working with my friends to practice our lines and act together, as we got to really hang out and get to know each other more. The film and the filming experience was new for me, and it helped make it a creative adventure for us all!” —THEA, 5TH GRADER

ARTS IN A DIGITAL AGE



PERFORMING ARTS

Facing numerous hurdles, the Performing Arts team shifted the 4th/5th grade play, “Alice in Wonderland,” from a live performance to a movie production. There were many constraints: singing was no longer allowed; performing on stage for a live audience was no longer feasible as the school could no longer host large gatherings; unable to mix student cohorts further limited who could rehearse and perform together. In addition, the school schedule had changed such that the performing arts classes were now meeting in 3-week rotations, rather than several times each week through-out the year. While daunting initially, the Performing Arts teachers used the challenge presented to flex their creativity and created a new, dynamic program that continued to educate and inspire MTS students. Mount Tamalpais School is truly lucky to have such an incredibly talented and dedicated group of teachers who were willing and able to make these curricular changes on the fly.

Lindsay Bercovitch and Trevor Marcom wanted to ensure the 4th and 5th graders would not miss out on this important MTS tradition. They worked tirelessly to reconfigure each scene to work in a green screen environment, planning for how the scenes could be edited together, and coordinating logistics in a way that ensured the cohorts would not mix. The videographer, Dan Drasin, a long-time producer for MTS, spent weeks editing the video, replacing the green screen with Alice in Wonderland backgrounds, and re-recording much of the audio that was too hard to hear from the initial recording through the students’ masks. The results were truly astounding, honoring the hard work of the students and inspiring the next generation of MTS thespians.



MUSIC

Not to be deterred by the pandemic and the changes it required to the music program, Lilianna Parker, Music Teacher, orchestrated a number of impressive videos of MTS students performing. One of these videos, “You Can Count On Me,” featured all MTS students in one form or another, shot over many days, including students singing on Zoom, dancing on campus, and playing various instruments in the classroom to go along with the song. She also produced a clever “Cups” video where students performed with cups on their desks, hitting and moving the cups to the beat and rhythm of the song.



SCAN to watch the
“Cups” video

The logistics required to coordinate these videos was no small feat given that she had to figure out when she would see the students for the 3 week rotations in order to capture all of them, teach them the songs, dances, and movements, and then record them. She also collaborated with her husband, Anthony Parker, also a musician, and luckily for MTS, a video editor.

Lilianna also worked with students to put on two Zoom recitals. Students virtually auditioned for and then performed in a Zoom recital for the MTS community. It was truly heartwarming to have the students welcome everyone into their homes and put on these intimate performances. One student’s cat even decided to join in her performance by jumping up onto the desk into the screen, which she handled with aplomb, smilingly removing him from his perch as she continued singing, never missing a beat.

DRAMA & MOVEMENT

Typically twice a year, the Performing Arts Department puts on a concert featuring students performing scene studies, dancing, and singing. Even though these events were off the table for safety reasons, Lindsay Bercovitch still wanted to provide a way for students to learn and perform dance routines. After choreographing and teaching the same dances to each middle school cohort, she gave them costumes, and recorded them performing. She then edited the recordings in a way that all the cohorts were captured performing each number in a video titled, “Time Machine.”



GENDER EQUALITY



IN LATE OCTOBER, 7TH GRADERS CHOSE A DAY TO WEAR THE MTS DRESS CODE OF A DIFFERENT GENDER to draw attention to gender issues and show solidarity, respect, and support for those that might choose another uniform option than is stereotypically boy or girl. In independently requesting, planning, and enacting their plan for the day, the 7th graders exemplified

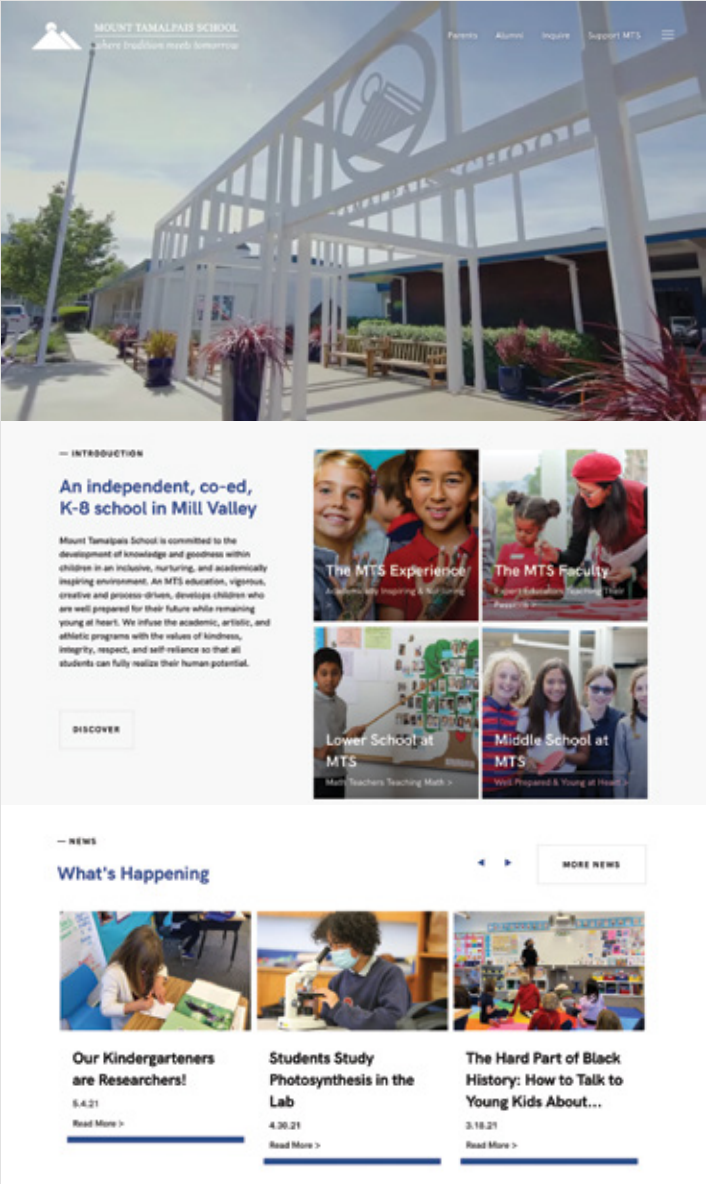
our values of kindness, integrity, respect, and self-reliance. The students subsequently followed up with suggested new language for the uniform section of the MTS hand book, taking action in a show of dedication and perseverance to ensure that their efforts have real and lasting impact on the MTS uniform standards.

“MTS is a caring and kind school and so is our community. We believe that we could make a big difference if we could take away the gender from the clothes and make it “School Uniforms” instead of “Girls” and “Boys” uniforms. You should feel comfortable in what you’re wearing. MTS is not a community where we’re going to bully or make fun of someone just because they’re not wearing something that’s stereotypically their gender. This would impact a lot of people and make everything equal. We want to make a change, and we want to start by making a change in our immediate community and hope that maybe it will inspire others to do things like it and make a bigger change in the world.”

— ASHLEY, LILLY KATE, AND ELSIE, 7TH GRADE

MTS Launches our New Website!

Before COVID entered our world, the MTS communications team had committed to building a new school website. Largely a marketing piece for prospective families, our website needed to more effectively convey the multifaceted depth of our program. After months of design work and content creation, our website now has a contemporary design, more robust content, and ever-changing program highlights. We were also able to design an online portal for our current families. We look forward to continuing to expand our online content, giving families an accurate and inspiring look into our campus.



MTS PARENT EDUCATION SPEAKER SERIES

A Conversation with Julie Lythcott-Haims

Julie Lythcott-Haims, author and parenting guru, joined Head of School, Andrew Davis, in a virtual live conversation for a Parent Education Speaker Series event on March 11, 2021. Andrew talked with Julie about themes in *How to Raise an Adult*, as well as how the stories from *Real American* influence her thinking about parenting and the parent education journey.



See the speakers coming in the 2021-2022 school year!
mttam.org/parent-education

 **Bringing it Home**
PARENT EDUCATION at MTS



MASKED AND *Moving*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT MTS

PE has been more important than ever as the pandemic has required our students to spend more time on screens. With MTS students on campus, we were able to keep our kids moving for PE every day in the lower grades and three times a week for the middle school grades.



ALUMNI PROFILE

INSPIRING ACTION

THROUGH DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

LILY GREEN '11

Lily Green's documentary films are meant to inspire action.

She is passionate about storytelling, and through luck, hard work, creativity, and strong female role models, Green has found her way to a budding filmmaking career. She currently works as Assistant Producer at Finish Line Features. Through its films, the organization aims to tell stories that raise awareness of pressing societal issues with the goal to educate and motivate audience members to take action. Her current boss, Robin Hauser, is an MTS alumni parent and Lily is grateful for the connection that started in her elementary school. "The MTS community has led me to my current role. It just goes to show how strong the MTS community is, even a decade after graduating!"

Green's unexpected foray into documentary filmmaking, a pursuit she discovered somewhat by chance thanks to a scheduling shift at Colorado College, led her to "catch the bug." Her very first class – Introduction to

MTS Yearbook Moment



Lily Green during her 8th grade year at MTS

Filmmaking – was taught by Cynthia Lowen, a professor and successful filmmaker who produced the Netflix documentary, "Bully." Thanks to making strong connections with classmates and successfully obtaining funding through a Colorado College Documentary Exploration Grant, Lily Green and her fellow filmmakers were able to produce a short

documentary film about a Cuban surfer and environmental activist named Yaya Guerrero. This compelling film captures the unique spirit of Yaya and her work at the Cuban National Aquarium in educating Cubans about the impact of ocean pollution and the need to take action as a community to tackle this serious problem.

In addition to "Yaya," Lily Green has produced a number of other short films spanning topics from land use in Colorado, the witches of Salem, Massachusetts, women's barrel racing, and gender identity and bathroom safety in schools. What Green loves is the intersection of entertainment and educational causes – tapping into these small worlds,

gaining insight into different characters and cultures, and exploring a wide range of emotions in ways that inspires her to learn more or change something in her own life and potentially those of others. Her current project at Finish Line Features is a documentary called "\$avvy," which explores why it is critical for women to be educated on and take control of their personal finances.

YAYA was just accepted as an Official Selection of the 2021 Durango Independent Film Festival and their REEL learning program, which will allow teachers to share films directly with their classrooms as they navigate distance learning. Gerry Guarriello, Language Arts Teacher, has already been sharing the video as a Spanish & environmental learning tool with our 7th and 8th grade students.

Like many MTS alums, Lily is taking action. You can see her upcoming work on the screen soon.



Movie poster for "Yaya."

ALUMNI PROFILE

THE MAKING OF AN ADMISSIONS TOUR VIDEO

TARA CURTIN '20



The pandemic has greatly changed our admissions season.

Practically overnight, we needed to completely revamp how to show off our amazing school to prospective families without having them on campus in person on traditional school tours. The solution? Create a fun and authentic admissions tour video led by one of our most recent alumni. Tara Curtin '20 was up for the task and rose to the occasion in spades. Tara attended MTS for nine years starting in Kindergarten and was truly a star throughout her time at the school, whether it was on stage as the lead in a play, on the volleyball court, or participating as an elected student council member. We connected with Tara after the production to find out what the experience of giving a virtual tour was like.

MTS Yearbook Moment



Tara Curtin during her 1st grade year at MTS

Q: Can you talk a little bit about what the process was like as you were preparing for the video production?

A: I really enjoyed the process of preparing for the tour. I took a long trip down memory lane, visiting my old yearbooks and even some of my old assignments! I felt extremely reminiscent of the time I spent at Mount Tam, and I felt so fortunate to share my own little anecdotes from being on campus. One of the first things I did was create a list of all the things I wanted to mention in the video. I was excited because I had a lot of freedom when it came to sharing my experiences inside the classrooms so I really wanted to highlight some of the most important parts of being at MTS. To prepare, I even pulled out some of my old after-school Speech Class notes hoping to get some encouragement and old advice from Debra, my impromptu teacher.

Q: How was the experience of leading the tour different from roles you performed at MTS?

A: I really enjoyed the video production because I had a chance to make it my own. The Performing Arts program at Mount Tam was always a place of comfort away from any stress I was feeling because it was a positive outlet for me to channel all of my emotions into something different, like a character or a role. This 'role' in the production was an opportunity to be me! I was not necessarily used to it, but I really enjoyed being my authentic self on-screen contrasting from in the various plays and concerts where I was invested in playing somebody else.

Q: Were there any moments during the recording that were particularly fun or surprising?

A: I found it super fun being on campus again. Visiting the place where I practically lived from age 5-13 after being gone for months was exciting, and I was happy to be there. The field was one of my favorite places

on campus so being there specifically made me really cheerful and of course, brought back so many memories. I also found it really fun being in a professional work environment. I liked working with directors and producers and had only been a part of something like that a couple of times previously.



The crew made the experience a lot more fun than expected, and I really enjoyed working with them!

Q: Were there any moments that you found challenging?

A: Something that was challenging was coming up with the correct words to say on camera. I had written down beforehand specific things that I had wanted to bring up, but overall the video was pretty impromptu (so that it wouldn't look extremely rehearsed). Although I've had practice with an impromptu speech and making up things on the fly, sometimes it was hard for me to bring up the correct things while filming as I'm usually used to memorizing things from a script. There were a couple of times where we would retake a classroom scene three or four times because my words would get jumbled or I'd leave something out. And then, of course, I was pretty nervous. I've gotten used to cameras by now because of my acting and modeling through my talent agency but that combined with the speaking

got me a little confused at times. But the crew was super kind and made me feel comfortable with my wording!

Q: Was there anything that you thought of after the production, that you wished you could have shared?

A: Something I wished I could've

brought up was the teachers. The dedication of the MTS faculty is nothing like I've ever seen before, even at my current high school. Teachers are invested in your lives, academic and social. They look out for you in every situation no matter what and display qualities of what it's like to be a caring teacher, and I have so much gratitude for them. I also wish I had mentioned something about the clubs! Although a more recent addition to the MTS schedule, club days were some of my favorite mornings. Whether it be cooking and learning about our bodies' health or playing card games, clubs were definitely a highlight of my schedule.



SCAN to watch the admission video

INTRODUCING NICK WILSEY

New Head of Middle School



NICK WILSEY JOINED MOUNT TAMALPAIS SCHOOL IN JULY 2020 AS OUR HEAD OF MIDDLE SCHOOL. Despite the unexpected challenge of navigating a global pandemic in his first year at MTS, Nick dove headfirst into his new role, immediately demonstrating his innovation, flexibility, and ability to roll with the ever evolving landscape that this school year presented. “I have to admit that from measuring the distance between desks this summer to handing out spit collection tests last Friday, it’s not been exactly what I expected,” Nick relates. Though COVID has been a focus this year, Nick is already seizing the opportunity to make continued improvements to the middle school program.

Nick has a robust understanding of excellence in middle school education and is eager to “respect the MTS traditions while helping further realize the Middle School’s potential.” Whether teaching social studies or math, Nick is a curricular leader. He has led curriculum reviews, been a department chair and grade level coordinator, and innovated his practice with project-based learning units showcased to parents and the Board of Trustees. Nick’s facility with numbers has also made him an invaluable resource in analyzing ERB and other student data.



Nick loves much of what he’s seen so far this year. Even with the masks and social distancing, he is impressed in the way that the MTS middle school students frequently say hello to and know lower school students by name. He has noticed middle school students walk by adults, say hello, ask how they are doing, and show that they are genuinely interested in the answer. “These may seem like small things, but they’re significant, not common at all schools, and show the strength of the community even during this challenging pandemic,” Nick observes.

Academically, he is happy to see our teachers bringing real world applications to their subjects into the classroom. For example, in science, Toni Brand is working on DNA and proteins to be able to study and investigate COVID vaccines. Jennifer Adams is bringing data science into her 7th grade math class through social media usage figures, and Marianne has hosted the Mill Valley Library Archivist on Zoom, to talk about how redlining played a role in drawing Marin’s town borders.

While Nick sees many great things happening in the middle school already, he does see areas for improvement. He’s looking forward to strengthening the advisory program, by making it more consistent, intentionally focused, and mission aligned with community building. He sees the opportunity to add signature events to each grade in the middle school and for more cross-curricular projects with collaboration between subject areas and teachers.



Nick is also excited to promote even more “struggle in the classroom.” These struggles are the moments when teachers provide authentic, engaging challenges and give students the time and resources to work their way through the challenge. With even more of these moments, the school will be even better at realizing the words of our mission: “MTS students will be prepared for their future while remaining young at heart.”

Nick holds a degree in economics from UC Berkeley and a Master of Arts in Social Studies Education from New York University. Prior to MTS, he spent twelve years teaching fifth to eighth-grade students first in New York City Public Schools, then Pace Academy in Atlanta and then at the Hamlin School in San Francisco.

NEW FACES

First Impressions from their First Year at MTS

MARIANNE KABIR

7th & 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher

I'm delighted by the joy and creativity of my students working together - the way they support each other and are silly together.



ISAAC JACOBS-GOMES

6th Grade Humanities Teacher

I am continuously blown away by the kindness, empathy, and humor of MTS students, teachers, and families.



ERYKAH LOPEZ

Associate Teacher

The number one thing that makes me want to go into work every morning are the students. They are so lively and excited to learn every day.



AISLINN MARTIN

Associate Teacher

I love Morning Meeting with the Kindergarteners and hearing their creative answers to our morning questions.



GRAHAM ABBEY

Associate Teacher

I'm continually surprised by the talent, strength, and capabilities of my students.



AURORA JEFFREY

Associate Teacher

Everyone I meet loves what they're doing and has a ton of knowledge to offer as I start my teaching career!



ARIEL LEVIN

COVID Coordinator

I feel inspired seeing the happiness of the students and passion from the teachers that make this year still feel "normal" despite the health and safety precautions that have been taken.



OMAR PANIAGUA

Custodian

I love the joy and friendship of everyone at MTS.

AFRICOBRA

FEATURED VISUAL ART



Finn, 7th Grade

Middle School Students, Action-Oriented Artwork inspired by the AfriCOBRA Collective

Evy Packer and Tyler Bewley, the Visual Arts team at MTS, were excited to bring DEI into action through their art curriculum this year. The middle school students started the year in distance learning, and they wanted the students to think about the MTS community and how to engage in building community both while in distance learning and

at school. In order to get the students started, Evy and Tyler introduced them to the AfriCOBRA collective, an art movement based out of Chicago that was included in the exhibition: “Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power 1963-1983” recently shown at the De Young and that the students had seen on a field trip last year. In the works

on exhibit, the artists used text, color, and pattern to celebrate Black Identity and promote a society that upholds humanity. Evy and Tyler asked the students to each think about what community means personally to them and in so doing to develop a bank of words around these ideas of community that resonate in a meaningful way. They were

then asked, while referencing the compositions from the AfriCOBRA movement and thinking about the year’s theme of Action, to create geometric compositions using those words in a pattern with complementary colors.



Emma, 8th Grade



Lucy, 8th Grade



Zoe, 8th Grade



Henry, 7th Grade



Yasmin, 8th Grade

CLASS NOTES

1990

Bryan Bordon
After living in Los Angeles for 10 years, we moved back to Marin a few years ago and are loving being close to family and good friends. I currently live in Tiburon with my wife, Susan and two boys Jonah (10) and Talyn (7) and work as an attorney for Film Finance, Inc.

2004



Allie Stallone
I will always remember the incredible hard work and production that went into the spring musicals, our 8th-grade rendition of “My Fair Lady” was truly spectacular. I have so enjoyed my time on the Board so far and being an active participant on the Development Committee and the Committee on Community. This year, I’m looking forward to helping build alumni outreach through digital events and social networking.

Pictured above in Kindergarten with MTS Class of ‘05 alum, Victoria Student.

2011



Aislinn Martin
One of the most exciting aspects of working at MTS is being able to work alongside the same teachers who taught me as a student 10 years ago. It speaks volumes to the dedication and commitment of teachers at MTS that I am able to once again learn from the same teachers who raised and educated me during the most formative years of my life.

I currently work with my kindergarten teacher Whitney O’Keefe, in the same classroom where I learned to read and write. I’ve been able to join classes with Elliot Hayne, my first grade teacher and observe how he uses the same engaging tactics that allow students to creatively and confidently read and write.

As an MTS student, some of my favorite memories include creating my own archaeological digs in Nancy Tracy’s class, designing science experiments with Eric Kielich and exploring Yosemite on outdoor ed field trips with my classmates. I am grateful to be a part of the MTS community, which inspires me to be curious and think creatively in the classroom.

2012

Makena House
I recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I studied Journalism and Graphic Design. After four years of Midwest winters, I was ready to return home to the Bay Area, where I completed a UX/UI design internship at a startup in San Francisco. I recently accepted a full-time position on the Marketing Team at Serena & Lily in Sausalito.



2018

Alex Orum
I am a junior at The Branson School. I’m on the Mountain Bike Team and involved in theater. I’ve also helped with admissions and tutor kids in the community.

As I begin the college process, I have been thinking about my last couple years at MTS. It’s incredible to me that even now, in my junior year of high school, there is still more I can learn from that time. What’s really been guiding me recently is the self-reliance I developed there. Quarantine has made it much harder for me to stay on top of my work. As I struggled with forming good work habits and motivating myself while beginning to learn from home in

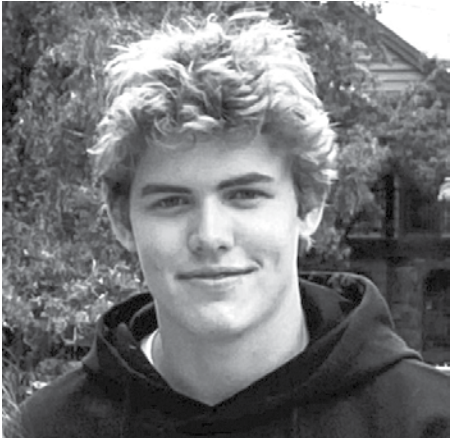
March of 2020, I remembered a similar struggle in 7th grade. Work was getting harder, assignments were getting longer, and I was running up against the same kind of problems I am now. MTS really emphasizes self-motivation and organization. Those don’t always come naturally to me. I have to work at them. I am incredibly grateful for the supportive yet challenging environment MTS afforded me. I was able to learn those skills in middle school, which has been invaluable for me now.



Recently the college process has been ramping up for me. I’m doing virtual tours and attending Zoom panels. It is, admittedly, incredibly difficult to go through this process without being able to do real, in-person tours. It’s harder to make an impression with admissions workers, and it’s harder to know what exactly I’m looking for. Again, I am looking back on my time at MTS for guidance. Now more than ever, I am using what

may be the single most important skill I learned there: Self-Advocacy. Having such an intimate learning environment allowed me to really develop that ability. Having trouble in math? Email your teacher. Need an extension? Ask. These things may seem simple, but they aren’t always easy. MTS emphasized self-advocacy constantly. When a new semester begins, it’s what I learned at MTS that compels me to email my new teachers and make a good impression. When I’m struggling with an assignment, it’s the practice MTS gave me that makes me confident enough to ask for help. Now, as the college process continues and I am about to begin connecting with admissions offices, I am positive that the skills I developed at MTS will continue to serve me, to make me my own best advocate.

Kyle McTamaney
In December 2020, in the middle of the global pandemic, I started a food drive in Hawaii as I was learning more about food insecurity on the islands. My family has been visiting Hawaii for over 12 years, so I decided I would contact all of our family



and friends and the response was overwhelming. I raised a couple thousand dollars in a week, and we were able to donate over 1,000 pounds of food to the Hawaii Food Basket. They were so grateful. The need is ongoing, so I intend on doing this every six months and helping as much as I can.

2020/2021



Ian Hashim (‘20) and Aaron Hashim (‘21)
MTS alumni brothers, Ian (‘20) and Aaron (‘21) took action this year with their 10 Ringgit Project and raised an amazing RM30,000+ in Malaysia for the underprivileged during the pandemic. The boys hatched the idea “10 Ringgit” (a ringgit is the basic monetary unit in Malaysia) thinking that would be an amount that their school mates could afford to donate from their allowances. They posted the project on Instagram and within 24 hours had reached their target goal of RM1,000. The project was more successful than they imagined, and they raised more than their original goal. Proceeds went to two different non-profit organizations in Malaysia. Read more about their project in the Malaysian publication, Tatler.



TELL US WHAT YOU'RE UP TO!
Email alumni@mttam.org or visit mttam.org/alumni

MILESTONES Thank you to our passionate and dedicated staff!

5 YEARS



ANDREW DAVIS
Head of School



LISA LEVIN
Librarian



AMY PEARSON
Director of Admissions
& Marketing



MIMI VAN SON
Director of Development

10 YEARS



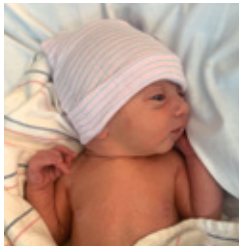
DJ THISTLE
2nd Grade Homeroom
Math Teacher

20 YEARS



ROSIE NICOLINI
Director of Operations
& Facilities

NEW BABIES Welcome to the MTS community!



ELYSE RHODES
Born February 11, 2021
Talia Rhodes, 5th Grade
Homeroom & Humanities



TRUMAN MARCOM
Born December 31, 2020
Trevor Marcom,
Performing Arts



LILIAN ESSER
Born October 15, 2019
Julia Esser, Kindergarten



LUKE MARKOVICH
Born September 20, 2019
Aileen Markovich,
2nd Grade Humanities &
Kevin Markovich, Math



JOEY THISTLE
Born June 11, 2019
DJ Thistle, 2nd Grade Homeroom,
Lower School Math

“
I am incredibly grateful for
the lessons of resilience,
selflessness, and ingenuity that the
MTS faculty has given us this year.

*Despite the difficulty and devastation that kept
most schools closed or in hybrid mode, MTS has continued to make
learning joyful and in person!”*
—— Nancy Bernstein, Parent of Holly ‘22 and Ginger ‘21, MTS Board Chair

”

MTS
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Students were photographed individually in a COVID-safe manner.

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