



APRIL 16, 2025

10
YEARS OF TOWER



UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
OF MILWAUKEE



Welcome to our celebration of 10 years of Tower Projects at USM! Eighty students in 12th, 8th, and 4th grade have been working for months to identify, research, and complete a project based on a topic of their choosing. Today is the culmination of their efforts.

See below for the schedule of student presentations, with specific locations listed throughout this program, and we hope you can join us for the celebration in the Marion and Verne Read Gymnasium starting at 5 p.m.

Schedule of Events

Noon to 3 p.m. - 8th Grade Presentations

Location: Middle School Makerspace

1 to 3 p.m. - 12th Grade Presentations

Locations: See page 4

5 to 5:50 p.m. - Tower Project reception and 10-year celebration

Marion and Verne Read Gymnasium in the Lower School

6 to 7:30 p.m. - 4th Grade Presentations

Locations: See pages 6 and 7

6-6:40 p.m.

Introduction and Session 1 in LS Classrooms

Passing time: Guests are invited to switch rooms to see a second round of presentations

6:45-7:15 p.m.

Session 2 in same LS Classrooms

What is Tower Project?

Tower Project is a student-centered, teacher-mentored experiential learning program that encourages students to pursue their own interests and take their learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Participants in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades work on developing, researching, and creating a Tower Project on a topic of their choice for an entire academic term or longer.

They meet with teachers, members of the USM community, mentors, and local experts who help them define and refine their topic, conduct research, create presentations, and stay on track throughout the duration of the project. By the end of the project, they have developed and deepened their confidence and competence in a wide variety of skills.

When did it start?

In 2013, USM formed a committee to implement a capstone experience at USM as part of the school's strategic plan. After extensive research and planning, a core group of four USM teachers: Laura Blanchet, 4th grade teacher; Kate Gay, Upper School English teacher; and former USM English teachers Laurie Schleicher and Rebecca Schwartz, officially launched the first year of Tower Projects in fall of 2014.

Why is it important?

"This is the time in every student's school career where they get to decide what's important for them to learn and study," said Blanchet. "This project really gives them the opportunity to decide what they're interested in knowing more about."

As a result of their work, students gain academic skills such as research, writing (both academic and reflective), critical thinking, analysis and synthesis, and project creation. They also gain confidence and abilities in public speaking, problem solving, time management, relationship building, risk taking, and more, all in a supportive and encouraging environment.

"Tower Project engenders in students the sense of agency that they're the ones who are motivated by their topic," said Gay. "They're the ones driving their learning. The learning is deeper. We said from the very beginning that we hoped the Tower Project would be the hardest thing students ever did, but it would be the best thing they ever did."

"I'm very grateful for my experience doing the Tower Project. I believe it was the final push I needed to pursue animation. And now thanks to it, I'm working as an animator at a game studio!"

-Annie Filali '17



Upper School Presentation Schedule

	Mellows Hall	Library Reading Room	Board Room	Virginia Henes Young Theatre	Kohl Conference Room
Session One: 1-1:30 p.m.	Aubrey Jayne: "The Preservation of Filipino Culture"	Eva Barth: "Commodification of Celebrities"	Kennedy Hanni: "The Education of a Sustainable Diet"	Amelia Otjen: "Creating a Transcript Distinction for the Arts at USM"	Annie Norman: "The Connection of Mental Health and Physical Health Struggles in Female Athletes"
Session Two: 1:35-2:05 p.m.	Raya El-Hajjar: "The Art of the Novel"	Sasha Lew: "Representation in Children's Media"	Halimah Shittu: "Dream Interpretation"	Tatiana Marich: "Sustainability in the Fashion Industry"	Madelyn Hernandez: "Overcoming Barriers to Improve Mental Health"
Session Three: 2:10-2:40 p.m.	Zaara Bonilla: "The Effect of Social Media on the Childhood and Adolescence Experience"	Adriana Banda: "A Study of Diverse Characters in Film"		Avana Kelly: "How Media Impacts Youth/ Gen Z Political Decisions"	Tommaso Pantalei: "How Language Influences Identity"
Session Four: 2:45-3:15 p.m.	Alex Chen: "The Connection Between Music and Emotion"			Beckett Stratton: "Voting Rights and Gerrymandering"	Lizzy Thurow: "Technology's Role in Relation to the World of Business"

"Getting to participate in a Tower project was a really formative part of my experience at USM. I enjoyed it so much that I actually ended up going on to do bird research in undergrad and for my master's program. It's really neat that USM continues to provide such a unique opportunity for students to explore their passions outside of the traditional classroom experience."

-Cole Wilson '18



8th Grade Tower Projects

Sophie Kouklin

Kouklin designed a laboratory experiment to analyze the type and quantity of impurities that develop during crystal formation. In her presentation, she will outline the structure of her experiment and explore the practical applications of piezoelectricity.

Aidan McCormick

McCormick has been exploring the essential components of a self-sustaining ecosystem. His immersive, museum-style exhibit will showcase these elements and explain their roles in maintaining balance within an ecosystem.

Ewan McGrath

While the game focuses on basketball, McGrath's presentation will immerse players in a 'game room' setting inspired by the aesthetics of the 1980s.



“It’s funny—I’ve been thinking about how my Tower Project has really informed my artistic career now. My post-grad life has involved lots of independent theater/film projects, for which I’ve done so many jobs aside from acting. And, I’ve also been working on lots of playwriting, which is the only aspect I didn’t have time/resources to explore in my Tower Project. I would love to see what the next gen of projects look like and be an example that these projects can help one define and develop their career!”

-Madeline McNichols '18

4th Grade Tower Projects

Room	Students	Topic
L325 Moderator: Gina Bongiorno	Caden Landry	Penguins
	Eleanor Zenga	Pompeii
	Marion Brent	Barbie
	Mirabelle Bojarski	Endangered species
	Musaab Khan	World Cup ball technology
L322 Moderator: Kelley Sovol	Tobias Mathews	Beyblades
	Mysha Bello	Nigeria
	Everett Segerdahl	History of Porsche
	Jack Dobre	Potawatomi tribe
	Aubree Gude	Children stars
L320 Moderator: Lisa Anderson	Teddy Deitch	Connor McDavid
	Scarlett West	Taylor Swift
	Ruth Creswell	Manatees
	Marshall Williams	Green Bay Packers
	JJ McGaver	History of Canada
L316 Moderator: Leann Erickson	Isaac Bruce	Magic
	Shylah Qusba	AI holograms
	Maya Drame	Crystals
	Julian Finseth	Tesla and Electric Vehicles
	Callum McCartin	Northern Ireland
L222 Moderator: Sarah Koehn	Spencer Polachowski	Titanic
	Poppy Ramirez	Olympic swimming
	Chloe Kasprzak	Titanic
	Caspian White	Capybaras
	Hugh Handler	Sea glass
L104 Moderator: Patti Ptak	Ava LaMontagna	Mollusca Phylum
	Prem Shah	History of Porsche
	Teddy Krohm	Angkor Wat/UNESCO
	Max Venditti	Hypercars
	Lilou Oplinger	Egyptian history

4th Grade Tower Projects con't.

Room	Students	Topic
L220 Moderator: Amy Hand	Finn Strains	Basketball through the years
	Henry Seiler	Capybaras
	Dylan Lantz	Artificial Intelligence
	Samuel Belin	Rap music genre
L216 Moderator: Elle Rodriguez	Caleb Goodman	Modern architectural design
	Hillary Dwamena	Modern architecture
	Cam Duncan	Spinosaurus
	James Polston	Giganotosaurus
	Amelia Buzzolini	Horses
L215 Moderator: Elina Kats	Emma Lemieux	Canadian food
	Sofia Sahajpal	Organs (liver and kidney)
	Jonas Moeser	Lebron James
	Londyn Baumgart	Pottery
	Bennett Christian	Patrick Mahomes
L125 Moderator: Cindy Stott	Grace Kiechle	Olympics History and Athletes
	Raina Rieck	Olympics
	Audrey Silber	Fashion through the decades
	Dylan Shneyder	Space
	Jonathan Klein	Whales
L116 Moderator: Renee Weber	Mason Chase	LEGO
	Max Chase	T-rex
	Liddy Jackson	Paris architecture (landmarks)
	Leah Groth	Blitz evacuees (WWII)
	Finley Merrick	Mako sharks
L115 Moderator: Mike Tauscher	Roarke Anderson	Minecraft
	Wilson Seltrecht	The Stanley Cup (NHL)
	Jace Getz	Renewable energy
	Luke Lauritzen	Italy
	Troy Haughton	LEGO

Thank you!

Many individuals make Tower Projects possible. Thank you to the mentors who guide and support the students, as well as the teachers who lead the Tower Projects and provide further expertise and encouragement. In addition, thank you to parents and caregivers for trusting in the process!

“It makes me happy to look back on, and think of so many students engaging with, the joy and growth that comes from asking and answering complex questions.”

-Lily Wilson '16

