MTS IN PRINT

SUMMER 2025

Phase 1 Renovations Complete



Conscientious Citizenship

The AI Revolution and the Habit of Critical Reasoning



MTS
IN PRINT

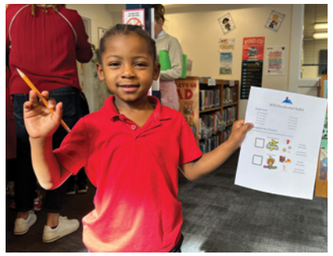
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“This present moment used to be the unimaginable future.

These words, shared by a keynote speaker at a conference I attended this March, stayed with me as I reflected on the stories in this year’s issue of *MTS In Print*.

At Mount Tamalpais School, we embrace change not as something to be feared but as something to be shaped. One year ago, I never imagined I would be writing this letter from my new office—once the lower school girls’ bathroom! Today, that space has transformed, just like so much of our campus. Students learn in new classrooms and gather in our stunning “Wash Hall,” with redwoods stretching across the ceiling and a Mount Tamalpais-shaped mirror reflecting their smiling faces. And, next year, middle school students will step into brand-new classrooms along the perimeter of the field, seamlessly connected to campus by an expanded garden.

While the present may once have seemed unimaginable, we have been preparing for it all along. Our *Into Action* Strategic Plan ensures that we meet change with purpose. This year, that purpose came to life in a range of ways—from our professional community leading a mock election (Party Animals vs. Savannah Bananas), reinforcing the Habits of Critical Reasoning and Conscientious Citizenship, to our eighth graders immersing themselves in LOST Week, a weeklong deep dive into experiential learning that embodies the Habit of Committed Exploration.

The conference where I first heard that quote focused on artificial intelligence and independent schools like MTS. AI is an “arrival” technology, not an “adoptive” one—we do not choose whether to engage with it; it is already here. At MTS, we are leaning in. I am working with our professional community to craft a vision, define best practices, and ensure our students develop the skills, ethics, and creativity needed to thrive in an AI-integrated world.





This present moment used to be the unimaginable future. The world our graduates will enter is equally uncertain. Yet the stories in this magazine—and the learning that unfolds daily on our campus—remind us that MTS is preparing students with the values, skills, and confidence they will need, no matter what that future holds.

Alumni and parents of alumni, we invite you to step into this future with us. Whether it has been one year or twenty since you last walked our hallways, you are always part of MTS. So much will feel new, yet the heart of MTS—our commitment to balancing rigorous learning with joyful discovery—remains unchanged. I look forward to welcoming you back.

With gratitude,



ANDREW DAVIS
Head of School

LIFE@MTS

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@MTSSCHOOL



Happy Halloween from the Pumpkin Patch!

Fifth graders had a blast learning about electrical circuits while creating colorful patterns in Trisha Cahill's STEM class.



Karla Gallardo and her son, Mateo, shared an Ecuadorian treat of Guagas de Pan or "Bread Babies," as part of their South American Día de los Difuntos (Day of the Deceased) tradition in October.



Below: Sixth grader, Brynn, encouraged the community to join for the Walk for Alopecia on Saturday, September 28 in Golden Gate Park. Brynn, who has alopecia, was named National Youth Ambassador for the walk and was interviewed on CBS news.



Kindergarten scientists explored the world of fabrics.



Our Mathletes had an outstanding season this year! The seventh grade team took first place overall in the County and the eighth grade team placed fourth. Congratulations to seventh grader, Summit, who achieved an extremely rare and impressive perfect 20 out of 20 for the season!



Eighth graders on a hike in Yosemite during Outdoor Ed.







Middle Photo Above Left: Over 40 MTS community members joined the Bionic Race in October, and many of our middle school students volunteered to help out at the water station. Congrats to our youngest students who ran the mile and 5K!

Fourth graders traveled on the "Gas Light" sailboat across the Bay for a field trip in the fall. The boat is a recently built replica of a late 1800s 72-foot schooner. Students actively participated in rigging sails, learned to use proper starboard and port sailing terminology, and navigated using a compass and the parallel rule tool.

Phase 1

Campus Renovations Complete

Mount Tamalpais School has reached a remarkable milestone with the completion of Phase 1 of the campus expansion, marking a significant step forward in our commitment to providing a learning environment that is safe, welcoming, and designed for 21st-century education. As we celebrate these exciting improvements, we also look ahead to the transformative changes coming this summer in Phase 2.

> “Hearing students interact with the team in the front office, running into current parents checking in at the front desk, and being more proximate to the classrooms and teachers has re-invigorated our connection to the program, the community, and the unmistakable joy that defines MTS.
>
> —Amy Pearson
> Director of Admissions & Marketing









A Campus Designed for Connection and Learning

The Phase 1 renovations, completed in August 2024, have reimagined and expanded key areas of our campus to better support students, faculty, and community. This effort aligns with our Habits of Excellence, particularly our commitment to “Teach in reimagined and expanded spaces that better support our program.”

A Welcoming New Entrance and Front Office

Among the most visible enhancements is the new, secure, and inviting front entrance to our main school building. Designed to embody the warmth and openness of our community, this entrance ensures that students, families, and visitors feel at home the moment they arrive. Just inside, a reconfigured front office provides a professional and inviting first impression, offering improved accessibility and a collaborative workspace for our administrative team. Families who are visiting for an admissions tour, event, or parent interview have easy access to the admissions team with the office now adjacent to the entrance. Faculty members also benefit from a renovated kitchen and work area, creating a hub for collaboration and informal connection during breaks and planning time.

Strengthening Safety Measures

The completion of Phase 1 also brings enhanced safety features to campus:

A Secure Arrival Gate	Located between the gym lobby and the tower building, the new gate ensures that all visitors check in at the front office and prevents students from inadvertently chasing a ball into the parking lot.
A Digital Badge System	Visitors now check in via a digital badge system that generates a name tag and runs a background check. Parents can also store their digital passes on Apple or Google Wallet, making for a seamless and secure check-in process.
Campus-Wide Intercom and Bell System	This system synchronizes clocks, supports smooth transitions, and replaces the traditional bell with a calming gong. More importantly, it enhances emergency communication across campus.

Classroom Upgrades: Space to Learn and Grow

Two new classrooms were created by reimagining existing spaces, allowing MTS to continue offering small class sizes, a key element of our program. These new learning environments are complemented by improved lighting and a modernized HVAC system, which enhances both comfort and energy efficiency for students and teachers.

The Innovative Wash Hall: A Transformational Space

One of the most exciting changes has been the transformation of the original 1950s lower school bathrooms into the ADA-compliant “Wash Hall,” a modern and innovative space that enhances privacy, wellness, and functionality for all students. Featuring individual floor-to-ceiling stalls, the Wash Hall also boasts a series of sinks beneath a striking mirror designed in the shape of Mount Tamalpais, with a redwood tree decal covering the ceiling above—a daily reflection of the natural beauty that surrounds us.

Beyond its sleek aesthetics, the Wash Hall prioritizes safety, hygiene, and inclusivity. Staff can easily monitor the space, which remains open for accessibility, and features warm water and automatic soap dispensers to help students practice good hygiene habits. The design also promotes a sense of community, with students of all ages and genders naturally engaging in conversations while washing their hands together.









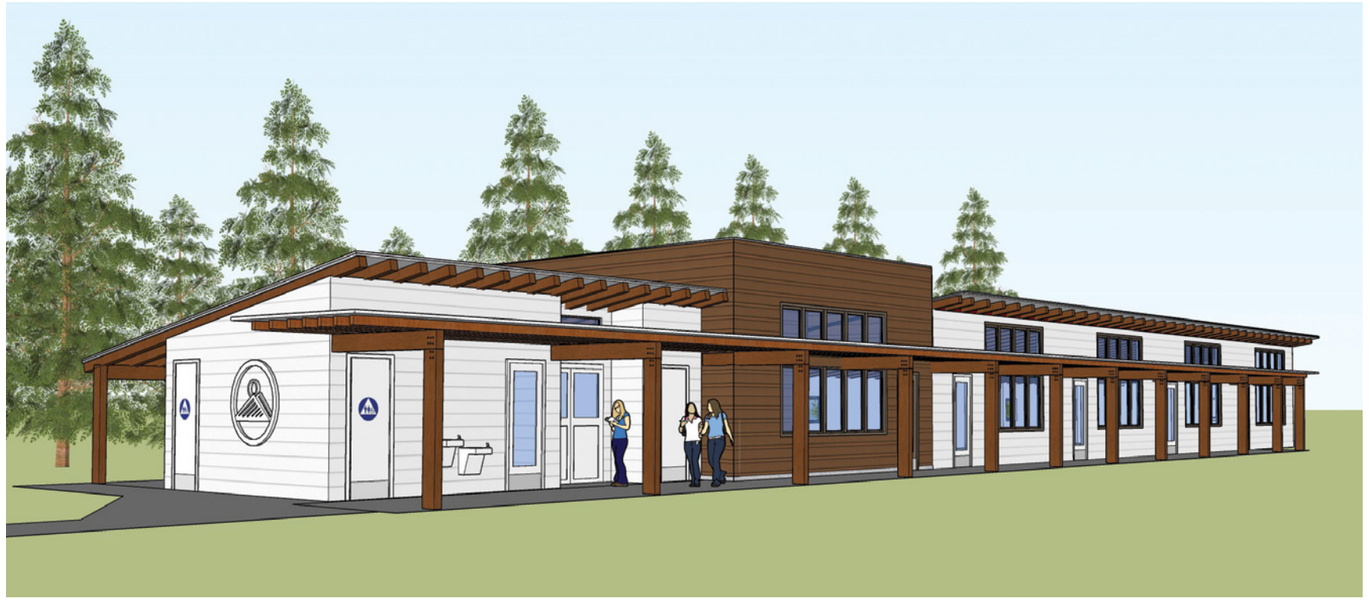
Phase 2

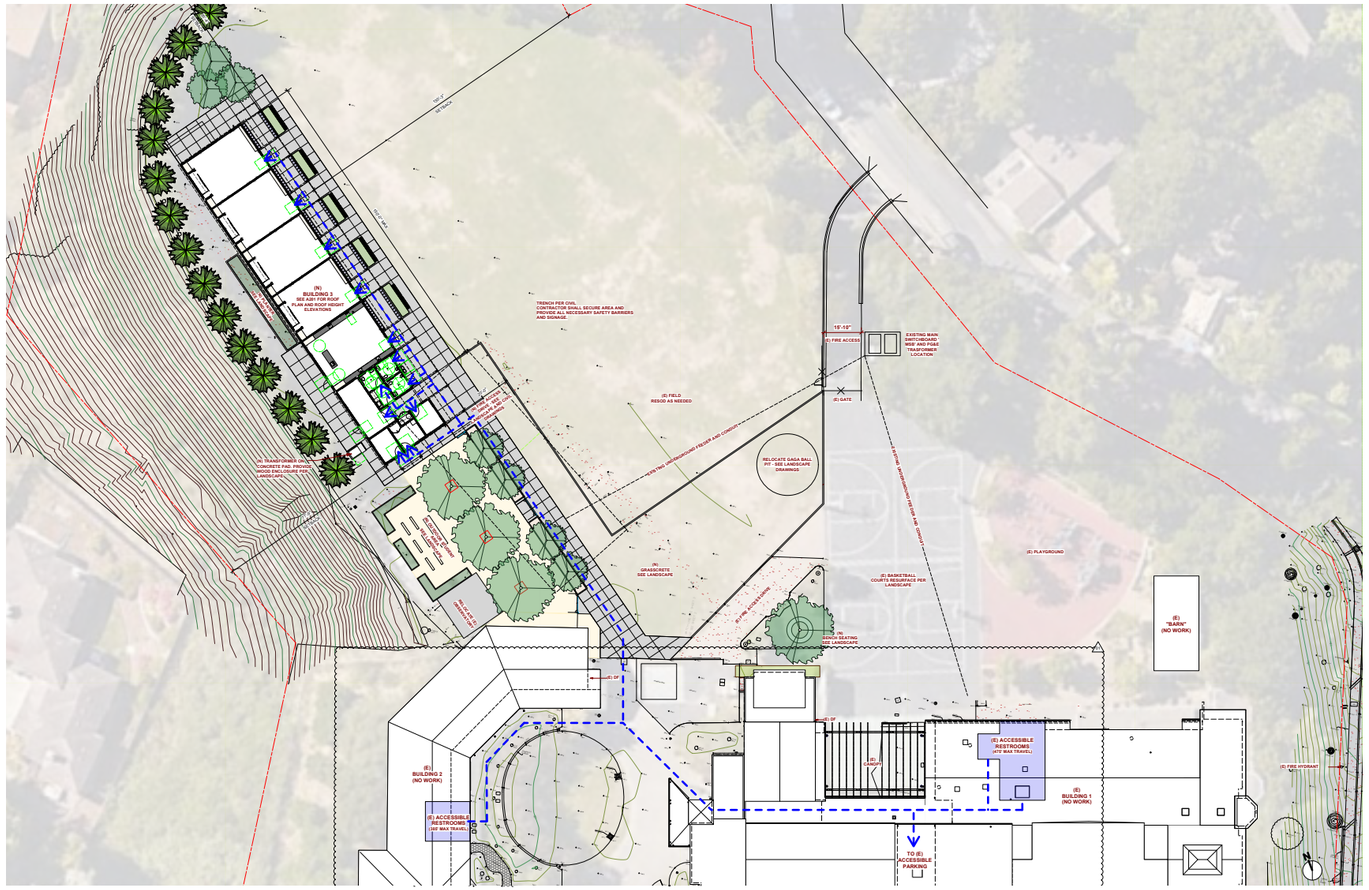
A New Middle School Building

As we celebrate these recent upgrades, we eagerly look forward to Phase 2, set to begin in June 2025. This phase will focus on constructing a state-of-the-art Middle School building, replacing the current portables with five new classrooms—including a dedicated science lab—as well as additional offices for the professional community.

Strategically positioned along the redwood trees on the western edge of the field, the new building will be situated on the field such that the direct sightline to the field and Mount Tam from the art room will be restored, reinforcing the connection between creativity and nature. Additionally, the revamped outdoor garden will provide new seating areas, creating an inviting space for students to gather.

These ambitious projects have been made possible through the generosity of our MTS community, who have already contributed over $7.7 million toward our $12 million goal in the *Into Action* Capital Campaign. With final permits and construction pricing secured, we are excited to break ground after graduation and expect significant progress by the start of the 2025-2026 school year.





A Campus for the Future

At MTS, we believe that learning is at its best when students and faculty thrive in thoughtfully designed spaces. These renovations are more than just an upgrade—they represent our ongoing commitment to fostering an environment where learning is revered, and education is joyful.

> **Our professional community, students, families, and program are strongly aligned with our mission statement. With the completion of phase two, our campus will similarly support serious learning that is seriously fun.**
>
> —Andrew Davis, Head of School

With every step forward, we are fulfilling our strategic vision to create a campus that inspires curiosity, supports well-being, and fosters a strong sense of belonging. We extend our deepest gratitude to the MTS community for making this transformation possible—and we can't wait to see what the future holds.

Pictured Above: An architectural rendering of the new middle school building design.

Left: Landscape site plans showing where the new building will be located on the field, along with the redesigned garden area.

THE MTS MOCK ELECTION

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

With the 2024 Presidential Election approaching last November, Mount Tamalpais School seized the opportunity to bring democracy to life for students. Led by Andrew Davis and a team of MTS teachers, the school-wide Mock Election was designed to deepen students' understanding of civic engagement while fostering the Habits of Critical Reasoning and Conscientious Citizenship, core elements of our *Into Action* Strategic Plan.

Through a dynamic, months-long process, students not only learned about the mechanics of a U.S. presidential election but also experienced firsthand the importance of voter registration, political platforms, and the electoral college system, all while having a lot of fun along the way.





"Teaching about the election in this polarized time felt daunting. We used our school's mission to use the election as an opportunity to grow as a school rather than something to get through. With an MTS Electoral College, voter registration, and student-led campaigns, there was serious learning—Learning is Revered. With a Vector costume and a pajama day free dress day theme on "Inauguration Day," there was serious fun—Education is Joyful.

—Andrew Davis, Head of School

THE TWO PARTIES

PARTY ANIMALS VS. SAVANNAH BANANAS

Under the leadership of eighth graders and fifth graders, two political parties emerged—Party Animals and Savannah Bananas—each with a student-driven platform.

PARTY ANIMALS' PLATFORM

A vote for the Party Animals meant students would enjoy a pumpkin pie snack, a pajama day spirit day, and, most notably, Head of School Andrew Davis dressing up as Vector from *Despicable Me*.

SAVANNAH BANANAS' PLATFORM

Voters in favor of Savannah Bananas would secure a chocolate chip cookie snack, a college sports spirit day, and the chance to see Andrew Davis as an Oompa Loompa from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

With these high-stakes incentives, the campaign season was competitive, with posters, buttons, and strategic outreach in full force.

Building the Election from the Ground Up

Over the course of the fall, students took on different roles in shaping and running the election. The process included creating a two-party system, developing campaign platforms, voter registration, polling, tallying results, and celebrating on our own "Inauguration Day."



Constructing the Electoral College

Behind the scenes, fifth graders in DJ Thistle's math class took on a critical role: designing the MTS Electoral College.

To mirror the U.S. electoral system with 538 electors, students developed an MTS version, allocating electoral votes to each grade level based on grade-level enrollment numbers. Most grades used a winner-takes-all model, while one grade followed a Maine-style split that assigned a portion of electors based on homeroom results. Even the Professional Community participated, receiving their own share of electoral votes.



Understanding the Voter's Role

A democracy functions only when its citizens participate, and at MTS, that meant every student and Professional Community member had to register to vote in order to cast a ballot.

Voter Registration

Lower school students registered online with the help of teachers, while middle schoolers had to take the extra step of finding time during their busy schedules to register—just like in a real election.

Polling and Predictions

In Robin Davis's first grade math class, students conducted an early voter poll, visiting their third and seventh grader buddy bear classes to ask about the issues most important to them. This activity helped students understand how polling influences campaigns and built on their math skills by counting by fives using tally voting as well as analyzing and interpreting data. Early results showed a trend: snacks and free dress days were top priorities across all grades, with pumpkin pie surging ahead in the polls.

The Big Day: Casting Ballots

On Election Day, excitement was in the air as students arrived at campus, ready to participate in a tradition that was both educational and fun.

- ✔ Each student and faculty member checked in at the voter registration table to confirm their eligibility before casting their ballot.
- ✔ Fifth graders served as election officials, collecting ballots in drop boxes and ensuring a fair and accurate count. They even signed a pledge to keep the results confidential until the big reveal.
- ✔ Just like actual voters, middle school students faced a unique challenge: they had to find time in their packed schedules to vote, underscoring the realities of civic engagement.

After a close and spirited campaign, the results were clear: the Party Animals emerged victorious, winning 100% of the electoral votes!





The Big Reveal and Inauguration Day

The final results were announced via a special video message from the fifth grade electoral vote counters and Andrew Davis himself, and which was broadcast across classrooms on November 6. The highlight? A hilarious Inauguration Day celebration on Friday, November 22, where students arrived at school in pajamas, enjoyed pumpkin pie at recess, and cheered as Andrew Davis made his much-anticipated debut in full Vector costume.

The Power of Hands-On Learning

Beyond the fun, the MTS Mock Election was a powerful, real-world experience in democracy. Every aspect—from registering to vote to engaging in conversations about campaign platforms—deepened students' understanding of the electoral process and the importance of civic participation.

Through the all-school MTS Mock Election, students didn't just learn about democracy; they practiced it. This experience, grounded in the MTS Habits of Excellence, ensures that students develop a deep sense of civic responsibility and an appreciation for critical reasoning—skills that will serve them well beyond their MTS career.





> While fun, our mock election was most impactful in that it helped students see how complicated the voting process is, how much their vote counts, and how important it is to stay informed.
>
> —Marianne Kabir
> Seventh and Eighth Grade Social Studies

EMBRACING THE AI HORIZON: Preparing MTS Students for a Dynamic Future

In exploring this deeply important emerging technology, Head of School Andrew Davis asked Google's NotebookLM to write an article for *In Print*, feeding it source materials such as the MTS strategic plan, previous issues of our magazines, and his working document of notes and inspiration from workshops and community discussions.

Printed below are the AI-generated article and Andrew's notes. Providing this sort of iterative feedback is one of the many ways we are starting to teach our students how to use AI to augment learning rather than automate learning.

Here is a first draft article from NotebookLM for the annual magazine, approximately 250 words, outlining MTS's approach to Artificial Intelligence:

Feels too generic. Can we start in media res with eighth grade students using a custom chatbot in social studies that continuously asks students to consider different perspectives by offering specific counterexamples? Against tariffs? Have you considered the importance of having certain industries in our country for national security?

As technology continues its rapid evolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a significant force shaping our world. At MTS, we are proactively embracing this "arrival technology", not with apprehension, but with a commitment to thoughtfully integrating it into our educational landscape.

Explain this. You can adopt ipads or other-adoptive technology. Generative AI has ARRIVED. We have to respond.

Our approach is deeply rooted in our mission where "Learning is Revered, and Education is Joyful," and guided by our Habits of Excellence: Committed Exploration, Critical Reasoning, Conscientious Citizenship, and Collective Wellness and Belonging. We believe that AI, when approached with intention, can be a powerful tool for enhancing learning and preparing our students for the future.

Too generic

It is really this one Habit of Excellence. Our priority is to "Ensure MTS students graduate with the critical thinking, writing, and mathematics skills needed to thrive in their future." Writing and math are going to change so much with AI. We need to uplift critical thinking.

It really is our professional community first and THEN students. We already have teachers pioneering early gen AI use cases and have plans to ensure a strong baseline proficiency for all adults on campus.

This was a key theme from our parents who work & invest in tech during our AI Salon conversations.

Central to our strategy is the development of AI literacy for both students and faculty. We are focused on equipping our community with the skills to critically understand, evaluate, and use AI systems and tools safely and effectively. This includes understanding AI's potential and limitations, recognizing issues of bias and ethics, and fostering responsible usage.

I used ChatGPT to find this quote from the first AI Salon: "So particularly when it comes to our kids—and our youngest kids—we really need to be vetting what we're putting in front of them and thinking about, okay, what could this do to them long term, socially?"

We are adding student conversations. It is really powerful to hear from our eighth graders. They talk about how they like hard learning and they don't want AI to make everything easy. We need to make sure that we preserve both the friction of learning AND our student's desire to work hard.

Through ongoing discussions and AI Salons involving faculty, parents, and experts, we are exploring how AI can augment learning rather than automate it, aligning with the principle of augmentation over automation. We are considering innovative pedagogical approaches, including AI-resistant and AI-assisted learning strategies, to ensure our students develop deep understanding and critical thinking skills.

This is what is so exciting. Just today I talked with Toni about how she is going to have students practice their science presentation to Gemini using audio then get feedback on improving the presentation. Such a great use case!

This is directly from our Habit of Collective Wellness. Highlight this strategic priority: "Support students and families in developing a productive, intentional, and healthy relationship with technology both on and off campus."

Our commitment extends to digital well-being, ensuring that technology, including AI, is used intentionally and supports a healthy relationship with the digital world. As MTS navigates this evolving landscape, our focus remains steadfast on fostering curiosity, critical thinking, ethical growth, and the enduring human connections that define the MTS experience. We are excited to embark on this journey, preparing our graduates to be informed, responsible, and successful citizens in an AI-driven world.

YES! This is so key! Emphasize. Can we make this the center of an even more powerful close to the article?

SCAN to read the significantly improved, revised article that NotebookLM created based on Andrew's feedback.

Annie

Leapin' Lizards! This year our fourth and fifth grade students performed in one of the world's most beloved musicals, "Annie" for the Winter Play in December. Memorable moments included the orphans singing "Hard Knock Life" with exuberant frustration, as well as Miss Hannigan, Rooster, and Lily and their rollicking rendition of "Easy Street."







Director's Note

Annie faced hardships of the Depression era. Through it all, she was able to maintain a cheerful outlook and a positive attitude in spite of great adversity. Through the ups and downs of our own lives, we often turn to the arts, not only for entertainment but also for comfort and security. Remember, “You’re never fully dressed without a smile!”

Directors
Lindsay Bercovitch & Trevor Marcom

Musical Director
Yunjin Kim

















“The sun'll come out tomorrow.



Beyond the Classroom

The LOST Week Experience

At Mount Tamalpais School, learning extends far beyond the classroom walls. For the past three years, our eighth grade students embark on an educational journey during LOST (Learning Outside the School Together) Week, engaging deeply with themes of government, social justice, and community engagement. This immersive experience aligns with the MTS Habit of Committed Exploration, particularly our commitment to "refine and expand opportunities for students to explore, including elective programs, immersive learning experiences, and off-campus community engagement."

A Transformational Journey

Each year, LOST Week explores a different theme, challenging students to step beyond their everyday experiences and examine critical societal issues. This year's theme—Food Insecurity, Farm Workers, and Immigration—took students across the Bay Area, offering firsthand experiences with these social justice issues. The week was filled with powerful conversations, hands-on service projects, and opportunities to see how interconnected these challenges are in our communities.

Service in Action

Students began their journey with a hands-on service project with the San Francisco Food Bank, working in both the heart of the Tenderloin district and in the Dogpatch neighborhood, distributing fresh produce to people facing food insecurity. The experience laid the foundation for understanding food access disparities and the vital role that organizations play in addressing hunger. Initial apprehensions gave way to powerful realizations: "They all ended up really loving it," said program leader and seventh and eighth grade social studies teacher Marianne Kabir. "They go in with fear, wondering if it's dangerous, but then they meet real people, and suddenly, it's not just 'the homeless'—it's individuals with stories."





Exploring Urban History and Economy

Taking the Larkspur Ferry to San Francisco, students embarked on a historical tour of the city's northern waterfront and North Beach neighborhoods. They explored labor history, the shipping industry, and the lesser-known economic forces that shaped the city before the rise of the tech industry. Students were surprised to learn that San Francisco was once a conservative, anti-labor city that brutally quashed liberal protesters.

Activism at Any Age

The group met with Seniors for Peace at the Redwoods Community Center in Mill Valley. This advocacy group demonstrates the many ways people can create change, from peaceful protests to letter-writing campaigns. Students saw firsthand that activism is accessible at any age.

> "My class trip to a food bank in the Tenderloin was an eye-opening experience. I had a great time interacting with a wide range of people that before this trip I might not have engaged with. I think it was an experience that everyone at MTS should get to take part in!
>
> —Eighth grader, Greta Levine-Prime



> “Working on the UC Davis farm was a really great experience. Even though it was raining, it showed us that farmers don’t stop, no matter the weather, and taught us a good work ethic. —Eighth grader, Layla Donalds

Government & Public Policy

Students explored how government policies and economic forces have shaped the Bay Area. Through a visit to the Sacramento State Capitol, they engaged in discussions with Representative Damon Connolly, learning about the intersections between public policy, the environment, and social equity.

Farm Workers and Immigration

A trip to a student-run farm at UC Davis allowed students to speak directly with farmworkers, gaining insight into the challenges they face. They learned about sustainable agriculture, food insecurity among college students, and the realities of farm labor. These experiences connected classroom discussions on the intersection of labor rights, economic policies, and food access to real-world perspectives.

Why LOST Week?

MTS believes that students need to learn that civic engagement starts at home at the local level. By focusing on local governance and social justice, students gain a firsthand understanding of how government and community organizations shape their own surroundings. “We want students to see that government isn’t just the White House—it’s their own community, their own city, their own state,” explains Marianne Kabir, MTS Social Studies Teacher and creator of the LOST Week program.

Students returned to campus with a deep sense of empowerment. Witnessing food insecurity up close, speaking with farm workers, and engaging with advocates for change, they realized that they have a role in shaping a more equitable world. With each LOST Week, MTS students help us better realize our Vision - a world in which Education Inspires Action.



Connecting Learning to the World

LOST Week served as not just an eye-opening experience, but a direct extension of our rigorous academic curriculum. Leading up to their week of exploration, students engaged in research projects that provided historical and social context for the issues they then witnessed firsthand. This year, their studies included topics such as:

- The impact of the creation of the interstate highway system on communities
- The role of state and local government in food accessibility
- The history and impact of the Bracero Program and contributions of farm workers in California
- The legacy of Richmond, CA and Chevron in having shaped environmental and social justice issues in the Bay Area
- The economic and social implications of the creation of California’s agricultural industry

This research prepared students to ask thoughtful questions and critically analyze what they saw, helping them bridge history, policy, and community realities.



Passion to Action

Inspiring Change Through Student-Led Projects

In Josue Camacho’s Passion to Action enrichment class, students explore how their personal interests can spark real-world impact. Rooted in the school’s vision—“We envision a world where Education Inspires Action”—the course empowers students to identify a passion and then design and launch a project around it. Whether raising awareness, starting a business, or leading peers, each student takes meaningful steps toward creating change.

One standout project is Anna Klimchalk’s Women’s Rights Club, which continues to meet weekly during lunch to explore topics such as gender equity, women’s history, and advocacy. With engaging discussions and peer-led activities, Anna hopes to educate and inspire others to become changemakers.

Other student projects include Thomas Gougion’s sports memorabilia business on eBay and Julian Kruger and Summit Kendall’s wildfire awareness presentation, now available to classrooms campus-wide. As these initiatives evolve beyond the classroom, Passion to Action exemplifies the power of student voice—and the possibilities that emerge when learning is fueled by purpose.

> “I started the Passion to Action club because I wanted to find a way to spread awareness about Women’s Rights. A group of third, fourth, and fifth graders meets with me every week, and we cover topics like voting rights, women in sports, and women entrepreneurs. I’ve loved it and hope the other kids have, too.
>
> —Eighth grader, Anna Klimchalk







Forces in Action

A Kindergarten Engineering Adventure





In this exciting five-week unit, kindergarten students embarked on a hands-on adventure into the world of forces. The grand finale? Designing their own pinball machines! But first, they had to master the basics of how and why things move.

Starting with the Basics: Forces in Action

STEM teacher Erin Rudsenske kicked off the unit by diving into the idea that objects at rest tend to stay at rest, but the key to getting things moving is force. Through interactive experiments, the kids explored two main forces: pushes and pulls. They discovered the magic of air pressure by blowing through straws to send pom-poms flying. Then, students set off a chain reaction of pushes with dominoes and had a blast pushing and pulling each other around in laundry baskets. The fun didn't stop there – the kids also created their own push-and-pull "pop-up" toys, which added a creative spin to their learning.

Strength and Direction: Mastering Forces

Next up was a challenge to change the strength and direction of a force. Students crafted paper-wrecking balls and used them to knock over a wall of cups, but with a twist – they had to avoid knocking over a "town" behind the wall. This introduced them to the idea of controlling forces to get the results they wanted.

Next, kindergartners tackled the concept of changing the direction of moving objects. Imagine a boulder rolling down a mountain toward a tiny town – it was up to the kids to figure out how to save the town. This exercise sparked plenty of problem-solving and showed them how forces can be redirected.

Simple Machines: A Peek into the Power of Physics

To prepare for the ultimate pinball machine design, students learned about two fundamental simple machines: inclined planes and levers. They experimented with cars and ramps to understand inclined planes, noticing how objects change speed when traveling up or down a ramp. The kids also got hands-on with levers, discovering that a little force can produce a big result.

Pinball Machines: A Creative Challenge

Now, it was time for the grand finale! Using everything they'd learned, the students designed and built their own pinball machines. Each student chose a unique theme for their machine, incorporating the forces and simple machines they had explored. Some students used inclined planes to send the ball flying, while others incorporated levers to launch the ball in exciting directions. The final creations were not only creative but also a testament to the power of hands-on learning.

Through this unit, kindergartners didn't just learn about forces – they lived them. They pushed, pulled, experimented, and created, all while developing a deeper understanding of how the world around them moves. These hands-on projects are a great way to spark curiosity and ignite a love for science.



Introducing Tanya Lemmon

Director of Inclusion

With a deep passion for fostering belonging and a wealth of experience in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, Tanya joins the MTS team with both expertise and enthusiasm.

From her first days on campus, Tanya has been focused on listening—learning from students, faculty, and families about the MTS community's strengths and opportunities for growth.

A longtime advocate for educational equity, Tanya has spent her career developing programs that support students of all backgrounds. In previous roles at other schools, she has led professional development initiatives for educators, spearheaded student affinity groups, and worked with colleagues to create more inclusive curricula and pedagogy. At MTS, she is building upon the school's ongoing efforts, ensuring that every student experiences a sense of belonging in the classroom and beyond.

One of Tanya's immediate goals is to create spaces where students feel comfortable sharing their perspectives. "When students feel safe to bring their whole selves to school, they thrive academically and socially," she explains. She is already working closely with faculty to integrate inclusive practices into daily learning, while also collaborating with parents and staff to build meaningful connections across the community.

> **"True inclusion isn't just about policies or programs; it's about ensuring that every individual feels valued, heard, and empowered from the classroom space to the larger community.**

Beyond her professional background, Tanya brings a warm, thoughtful presence to MTS. Whether engaging in deep conversations about identity or simply sharing a laugh with students during lunch, she is committed to building relationships that foster trust and understanding.

Tanya's arrival at MTS marks an exciting step forward in the school's commitment to inclusion and belonging. As she looks ahead, she is eager to continue learning from the MTS community while collaborating with the MTS board, administrative team, and Professional Community to bring the school's collective vision to life.

Tanya moved to Marin from the South Bay, where she was previously a middle school humanities teacher and DEI Director at Pinewood School. She lives with her husband, Gabriel Lemmon, the Upper School Director at San Domenico School. In her free time, Tanya loves wearing platform Crocs, feeling the warmth of the sunshine, reading about nutrition, and dialogging about politics and the meaning of life with her three siblings, parents, and two college-age children–honestly, anyone. She's a curious soul.

Please join us in welcoming Tanya Lemmon to MTS. We are excited to see the impact of her leadership and look forward to the many ways she will enrich our community.





> **"This work is never about one person—it's about all of us coming together to ensure that every student, with all they bring to the table, feels seen, supported, and celebrated.**

New Faces

First Impressions from their First Year

TANJA GUBSER
Sixth Grade Humanities Teacher



"One thing that has surprised me teaching at MTS is the juxtaposition of innocence and sophistication among the sixth graders. These are well-read, curious, hard-working young people who also play 'like children' at recess, who delight in each other's company, and for the most part have not embraced the 'jaded middle schooler' attitude. The focus at MTS on joyous learning and the near-universal community commitment to wait with social media does, in my opinion, have a huge impact on the development of these fantastic sixth graders. They are a joy to teach!"

PETER O'CONNELL
Seventh Grade English Teacher



"There is nothing quite like the energy I get strolling the campus hearing the excitement out on the field, in the gym, and in the classroom. My students have embraced and trusted my teaching from my first day on campus, which gives me excitement every day to get in the classroom and discover where the lessons and learning may turn."

STATE OF INCLUSION AND PEOPLE'S SUPPER:

We All Have a Story

"A big shout out to Tanya in working with families to put together such a great event. Events like this facilitate a great environment for our children – we get to know each other a little better and spend time with each other, and I got to learn a lot about people that I didn't know. Sometimes, we'll have our opinions about people without even knowing them, so I think it's great that you do such events, so we get to know people in depth."

—Dominque McDowell,
First Grade Parent

"It's more than just the food." In March 2025, we hosted the inaugural State of Inclusion and People's Supper parent event, an evening dedicated to fostering meaningful conversations and strengthening connections within our community. Organized by Director of Inclusion Tanya Lemmon, the event provided a space for parents to engage deeply with one another over a shared meal while exploring the school's ongoing efforts in inclusion, equity, and belonging.

The evening began with Tanya's presentation on the current state of inclusion at MTS, setting the stage for intentional conversations. Parents were then guided through a series of icebreaker questions before delving into more reflective prompts at their tables. Questions such as "What's a place that shaped who you are today?" and "What's something you wish more people understood about you?" encouraged participants to share personal experiences, fostering an atmosphere of openness and mutual understanding. As parents engaged in conversation over a delicious, catered meal, they found common ground in unexpected ways.

As the night came to a close, the warmth of shared stories and the power of authentic connection were palpable. The event served as a reminder that true inclusion is built not just through policies and programs, but through genuine human connection. With the overwhelming positive response from attendees, this gathering was just the beginning—MTS looks forward to creating more opportunities for our community to come together, listen, and grow.





"I'm grateful for the opportunity to attend the People's Supper event. I enjoyed learning diverse experiences and perspectives through storytelling from my MTS community. This event has made me feel more connected, included, and valued. Thank you!"

—Ramona Polk, First Grade Parent

"The importance of the People's Supper and similar events at MTS cannot be emphasized enough. Creating an environment for safe and honest dialogue is fundamental to not only our children's growth but also for our community and society at large. The way that Tanya and the MTS leadership are working to build trust and respect across complex topics is truly special."

—Lewis Hower, Kindergarten and Second Grade Parent

Commitment. Teamwork. Perseverance.

We are proud of our athletes for the hard work they put into practices, learning new strategies, and working together as a team. Thank you to our enthusiastic and dedicated coaches, who do such an outstanding job instructing, guiding, and mentoring our MTS players. Community support is a big part of our students' success!

Parents cheer on the sixth grade girls' volleyball team during a semi-final game.







Above: Eighth grader Adelia Murray during a fall cross country meet.

Right: Fifth grader Luciana del Balso drives toward the basket.



Left: Fifth grader Les Sollner moving the ball down the court.

Below: Sixth grader Kaia Lemaster competing in a cross country meet.







Middle Left: Congratulations to our sixth grade volleyball team, who won the championship this year!

Fifth grade volleyball champs celebrating their season win!

Eighth grader Ari Baker looking for a good pass.



Far Right: Fourth grade cross country team members at a Stinson Beach race.





Above: The seventh and eighth grade MVSC soccer team – with 13 MTS girls who helped lead the way – won the league championship this year.

Right: The seventh grade girls' basketball team with their championship trophies after winning the final game.





Left: Fourth grader Huck Davis playing during a season basketball game.

Below: Third grader Rosie Kovinsky competing in the long jump.



Third grader Genie Jenkins taking first place in the 400-meter run at a spring track and field meet at Terra Linda High School.







Middle: Seventh graders Thomas Gougion and Kai Hollander at a Flag Football game in the fall.

Fifth grader Inka Ronér taking her shot.



Seventh grade Cristina Guarriello going in for a layup.

A Storyteller's Journey

Kiyash Monsef '91



Award-winning author Kiyash Monsef, member of the Class of 1991, returned to campus in January to speak with middle school students about his path as a writer, offering insight into both his creative process and his personal journey. During his visit, Monsef read from his books — including the New York Times bestseller *Once There Was* and his latest release, *Bird of a Thousand Stories* — and led a collaborative storytelling session. He later met with eighth graders to answer questions about writing, identity, and the winding road to becoming an author.

Monsef's path to authorship was anything but linear. Though he has always been drawn to storytelling, he initially pursued film, studying it in college and going on to work in television and documentary production. Despite his success in those fields, he returned to writing, driven by a desire to tell the kinds of stories he felt were missing — ones that reflect his own experiences and heritage.

"Writing has the least friction — it's just you and the page."



from the MTS Archive

Eighth grade yearbook portrait and pictured with friends (top left)

ALUMNI PROFILE

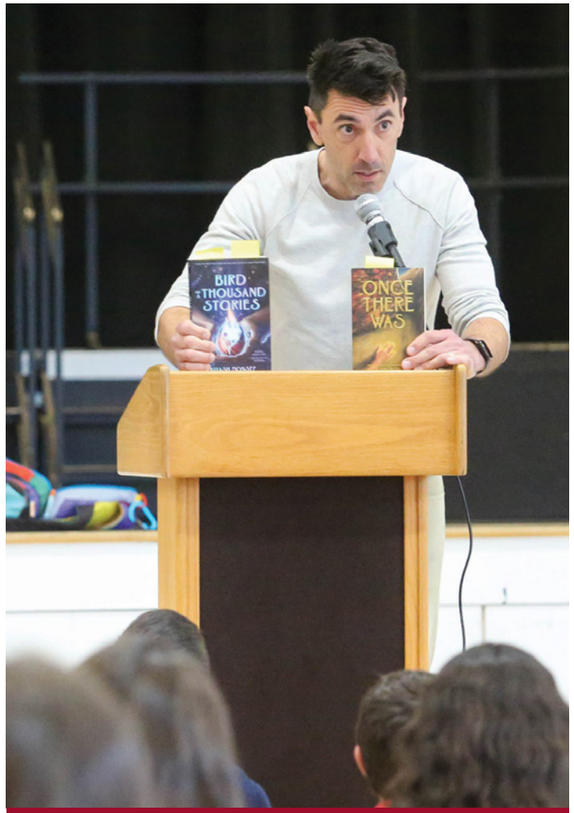
Born to an Iranian father and an American mother, Monsef grew up with a complex cultural identity. After meeting in the U.S. in the 1960s, his parents then lived in Iran and moved back to the U.S. in the late 1970s, following the Iranian Revolution. Reflecting on his upbringing, he describes the subtle discomfort of never fully fitting into either American or Iranian culture — a feeling familiar to many with mixed heritage. These themes now play a central role in his fiction, where his characters often navigate identity, belonging, and the spaces in between.

At MTS, Monsef developed his love for writing, frequently sharing stories with teacher Claudia Seiple. Though he once doubted he would complete a novel, *Once There Was* emerged from a collection of short stories that grew into something larger. He encourages students to read widely, write often, and follow the stories that resonate most with them — emphasizing that while luck plays a role, persistence and curiosity are equally important.

Monsef finds joy in the research and editing phases of writing. Research, he says, can transform a story, offering new perspectives and ideas. Editing, to him, is a craft of subtraction — like reducing a sauce until only the most flavorful elements remain. "Writing," he shared, "has the least friction — it's just you and the page."

Through it all, Monsef's passion for storytelling remains constant — a passion first sparked during his time at MTS.





To learn more about Kiyash and his work, visit Kiyash.com.



Birds *of* California

A Schoolwide Artistic Journey





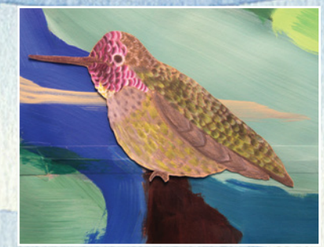
This fall, the visual arts department embarked on an all-school art project, culminating in an exhibition for Grandparents and Special Friends Day. Titled *Birds of California*, the exhibition transformed a school hallway into an immersive artistic journey, guiding viewers through the diverse habitats of native birds—from the coastal shores to the towering trees of the High Sierras.

Each student, from kindergarten through eighth grade, studied and depicted a bird from a specific region, developing age-appropriate artistic skills along the way. Younger students focused on small songbirds, while eighth graders captured the majesty of eagles, owls, and woodpeckers. The result was an impressive collective display, where individual works blended seamlessly into the larger vision.

Adding depth to the project, the middle school Art Enrichment class painted background panels inspired by the work of California artist Richard Diebenkorn, evoking the rich landscapes of his “Berkeley Period.” This integration of ornithology and art history made the project a true interdisciplinary success.

Rather than a traditional gallery of individual pieces, the exhibit became an experiential walk through California’s ecosystems, highlighting both artistic achievement and environmental appreciation. The *Birds of California* project was a testament to the power of collaborative creativity and the shared experience of learning through art.















A legacy of heart & art



A Tribute to Deborah Marcom's 30+ years at MTS

By Trevor Marcom '98
Performing Arts Teacher

How does one encapsulate Deborah's career at MTS in just a few paragraphs? I wrote a couple of rough drafts—what came out was good, but it didn't have enough heart. And, heart is what Deborah is all about.

Her work in the classroom has always been about so much more than performance—it's about transformation. Sincere moments on stage. Students digging deep, facing fears, and discovering confidence. That surprising spark that lights a lifelong flame of creative wonder. For generations of kids, Deborah has opened doors to a world of possibility. So many have taken something truly special with them—something they found within themselves through their time with her.

Deborah didn't take the traditional path. She left high school in the '60s to watch Jimi Hendrix light his guitar on fire and never went back. Against the odds, she carved out a dynamic career in professional theater—with a national tour, multiple leading roles with the trailblazing Nightfire Theater and Antenna Theater, and a feature on the cover of the Pink Section. She raised a family here in Marin, sending my two sisters and me to MTS. For over 30 years, her talent, passion, and collaborative spirit have been central to what makes the performing arts program at MTS so unique.

Deborah brought a level of authenticity and sophistication rarely seen in elementary and middle school programs. Her commitment to fostering creative confidence and her meticulous attention to detail elevated every classroom moment. In her iconic Scene Study class, students won the educational lottery. She never put anyone onstage who wasn't fully prepared. If that meant giving up her lunch breaks or staying late after school, she did it without hesitation. She also has an extraordinary gift for unlocking the heart of classical texts and guiding students to see their beauty. Every performance was crafted with care and polish, right down to the artistry of her props.

Under her leadership, the Margie Burke Speech Tournament became a showcase of excellence for over 30 years. Deborah turned public speaking and impromptu into an art—her students didn't just learn to speak, they learned to own a room. Her influence in the realm of delivering a monologue and developing original ideas under pressure has rippled outward, touching the lives and careers of countless students who carry Deborah's lessons of clarity, confidence, and preparation into the wider world.

And who could forget her Shakespeare and folktale lessons for the lower school? As "Aunt Mimi," in her make-believe castle with elves and baby dragons beneath the floorboards, she mesmerized young students, bringing centuries-old stories to life with warmth, humor, and magic.





"Of all of the teachers I met during my three years at MTS, Deb Marcom might have been the most passionate about her subject. She has worked tirelessly to keep the MTS speech program alive. I learned so much from participating in her dramatic interpretation, scene study, and impromptu speaking classes, and the Margie Burke Speech Tournament was one of the highlights of seventh and eighth grade [for] me. I hope she understands the long-lasting impact she has had on MTS and on her students."

—Maya Donalds '23



Deborah's legacy isn't just in the unforgettable main stage musicals she has helped direct with her incredible team for many years, or in the gold medals her students have earned in speech tournaments. It lives on in the voices, the confidence, and the spark she ignites in every student lucky enough to be taught by her.

Deborah is, and always will be, a master of her craft—a beloved cornerstone of MTS's creative soul.

"With four girls in three MTS classes within five years of each other, I can honestly say few MTS families had as much exposure to the wonder that is Deb Marcom. Deb was unfailingly a friend to both kids and parents alike, unbelievably patient and good-humored, and an incredible resource and instructor in the art of drama."

—The Ewald Family: Addie '10, Jessie '10, Ross '12, Katherine '14, Chase, and Charles











"Deborah, what a legacy you leave behind! You didn't just teach me how to speak. You taught me how to own a room, how to speak confidently, and through the Banana Formula, speak about truly anything! Thank you for the countless times you reminded us to slow down, speak clearly, and memorize our dramatic interpretation lines!"

—William Huguenin '21

CLASS NOTES

1991



Dana Ross Rogers returned to the Bay Area to host another Bionic Race at Crissy Field in San Francisco last October. Over 40 members of the MTS community joined in the races. In addition, once again her team visited MTS to run an adaptive sports clinic for students in every grade level. She's pictured with her colleague, a MTS middle schooler and MTS parent at Crissy Field.

Amy Andersen runs Linx Dating and has established herself as the premier matchmaker in Silicon Valley and beyond. She lives in Menlo Park with her husband, son, and two rescue dogs. In her free time, she loves working out, socializing, and is hoping to plan a reunion trip next summer (2026) with her MTS classmates.

1993

Samantha Celine Monge reports, “I am currently a French immersion preschool art teacher at Le Petit Jardin at the Mill Valley campus. We adore raising our children here in Mill Valley; Mike and I feel so fortunate. His generational biz is here. I no longer do flowers much, freelance on occasion, but am really a busy mom as well. Anthony is 13, Stella is 12, and Beatrice is 7. I keep in touch with many, many people in our class. Caught up with **Matt Hammond** on text the other day. Spoke to **Eric Kielich**, and we chatted for ages. I really enjoyed hearing about Clair’s job and move to Wisconsin soon. I also heard from **Winky Cherry** via message; she said Finneas is now driving her around! We all came from such an incredible community, and to feel it still is so heartwarming!”

1998

Jolieba Jackson Blount was in Marin temporarily this January and her son, Maurice, was briefly able to join the MTS 3rd grade class while they were here. Tragically, their house was affected by the fires in LA, and while we loved having them here, they decided to go back home to be back with their community and help rebuild. They are pictured here with third grade teachers Jennifer Adams and Maggie Karlson.



1999

John Morris writes, “I am still living in San Francisco and enjoyed returning to MTS this winter/spring to teach another Introduction to Voice-Over (VO) and Podcasting class to a stellar group of students in grades 6-8. I am also teaching VO online/in-person at Voice One in SF, online with Voice Trax West, and teaching individual sessions for kids, teens, and adults on Zoom. In addition, I am traveling nationally and internationally to events and appearances to meet *Toy Story, The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and *LEGO Island* fans! This year is the 30th anniversary of Toy Story's 1995 release and the 15th anniversary of Toy Story 3's 2010 release.”

2000

Meghan Horn reports, "living in Ann Arbor with my husband, 3 young daughters ages 1-4 yo and dog :) I work at the University of Michigan as a cardiothoracic anesthesiologist and the Director of Cardio-Obstetric Anesthesiology."

2002

Kevin Fugaro reports, “Moved to the suburbs of NYC with our son, Gavin, who is entering kindergarten next year. These days, life is full of kids soccer practices, art projects, and high stakes negotiations about candy. Enjoying work as a product designer at a climate technology company, Afresh, and still finding time to write and work on plays. Shout out to my 2002 class!”

2004

Brittany Friedman writes, “I’m living in CO with my husband (my high school sweetheart, he is a rheumatologist) and our three pups (a Goldendoodle, toy poodle, and standard poodle - our newest boy we adopted in May). I have been working as a pain psychologist for seven years in the Department of Veterans Affairs and have now launched a private practice called Highlands Health Psychology & Consulting focused on living a balanced, fulfilling life. (I can see clients in 42 states virtually so alumni are welcome to refer to or contact me!) I keep in touch with several fellow MTS alumni (**Liza Boles/Bales, Jessica Cohen, Zoe Feld, Kristen Stublarec, Patrick Phillips, Alex Freedman, Sydney Ford**), some are still my closest friends, and I love to see everyone thriving!

Zea Moscone shares, “Third baby, Rodes Hart McNally, born February 11, 2025 – joining big brother, Aven (2) and big sister, Larkin (3).”

2008



Morgan Kessell, who has been teaching in San Francisco and Marin public schools, met current MTS sixth grade humanities teacher, Tanja Gubser, at a conference last fall (pictured). They bonded over one of Morgan’s favorite MTS teachers, Mitch Bostian, who was one of Tanja’s mentors and favorite Heads of School when she worked at The Bentley School (where Mitch has been Head of School since 2010).

2017

Caitlin Bain writes, “Hello! I am currently a senior at University of Denver and I will be graduating in less than two months in June! I have my own studio apartment just five minutes from campus, and I have the best roommate ever: My cat! I've been skiing for the past few weekends, and unfortunately the season is over. However, recently I have been enjoying the warm weather and picnics at Washington Park, just an eight-minute drive from campus. Life is going well for me, the sun is shining, I am graduating, and hopefully I get to visit my family this summer since it has been quite awhile since I have last seen them. :)”

Elsa Pheif shares, “I am graduating this May from University of San Diego with a B.A. in Behavioral Neuroscience. Planning to stay in San Diego and do clinical work before applying to Medical School!”

2020



In the very small world department, **Eve Sarti** hiked Mount Kilimanjaro with the sister of current MTS third grade teacher Maggie Karlson!

Oliver Goldman shares, “Finishing my first year of college at Cornell, much colder than Mill Valley and very different. I am studying global and public health sciences on the premed track. Became an EMT and work for Cornell EMS and joined the Sigma Nu Fraternity. I am going to be back [in Marin] for the whole summer, working for Marin Search and Rescue and doing wet-lab research at Stanford. I miss Mill Valley and MTS. Funny story, I still use the exact same study method at Cornell that I learned with my teachers in middle school. I hope to come back and visit MTS soon!”

2021

Kailan Robinson shares, “One big update for me is that I’ve gotten into wingfoiling (kind of like a mix between kitesurfing and windsurfing) during high school. My dad first introduced me to it at the end of my freshman year and I thought I'd give it a try. The learning curve was really steep but over time, I got the hang of it and fell in love with the sport and the tight-knit community around it. I’ve taken up racing for the past two seasons, and earlier this August, I competed in the first-ever U.S. WingFoil Championships in San Francisco, where I placed second in the U-19 category and seventh overall.



More recently, I was selected for the SailGP Inspire program, which gave me the chance to wingfoil in front of thousands of spectators during the Grand Prix event in San Francisco. It was an amazing experience to represent the sport and share the excitement of wingfoiling with such a huge crowd!”

2022



We loved seeing **Joshua Guarriello** at the *Annie* performance this year. Joshua played Rooster when he was in fifth grade; he is pictured here with Alexander Sawyer, who played the role this year.

Maya Donald’s passion for the performing arts continues to shine beyond her time at MTS. She performed in *Guys and Dolls* at the Throckmorton Theater in November 2024 and in *Chicago* this past March. We're also grateful for her behind-the-scenes support of the recent MTS production of *Annie* in December.



Madison Marlin shares, “I’m currently attending school at San Domenico High School and recently took a service trip through my school to Costa Rica to help preserve turtle habitats and helped protect turtle eggs against poachers.”

Brooks McMillan wrote, “I currently attend Marin Academy where I see alumni **Tom Downie, Quinn McInerney, Lucy Robinson,** and **Serena Payne** nearly everyday. Apart from MTS classmates I see at my high school, I have also stayed well connected with **Harrison Seay, Bo Williams, Luke O'Connell**, and **Jack Pendergast**. I'm currently starting the college application process, and have been loving my time in high school. I have in the last two years found a passion for scuba diving and marine preservation, attending summer programs to research sharks in Fiji. My love for science stemmed from Toni's science class!”

2023

Congratulations to **Aiden Kirkley**, who pitched a perfect game for Tam High in April!

Julia Ulvestad reports, “I am currently attending Tamalpais High School as a sophomore, and loving it! I spend my time playing varsity women’s water polo in the fall and varsity women’s swimming in the spring, which I have been a part of for my two years at Tam already! I also play club water polo for SHAQ year round and have formed a close bond with my teammates. I was named MVP of my high school water polo team both freshman and sophomore years and was a part of MCAL All League both years. This year I was name co-player of the year for the Marin IJs and we got first in MCALS!! In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my school and sports friends, working at a cooking camp, volunteering teaching swim lessons, lifeguarding, and hanging out with my two sisters. I haven't seen many MTS alumni recently, but I'm hoping for an MTS grade reunion soon! I look forward to summer, upperclassman activities, and college! I miss MTS so much and hope to visit soon!!”

CLASS NOTES *continued*

2024



Leo Baehner, Cotes Pinckney, and **Jasper Smith** returned to MTS for a visit during their high school spring break in April. They are pictured here with MTS seventh & eighth grade social studies teacher, Marianne Kabir.

Henry Holbrook shares, "My family and I are starting a company. A brand new idea that has never been thought of. We are building a smart helmet based on my bike accident in late 8th grade that reminds you to buckle. It is currently patent pending and will launch a kickstarter this summer! I am also currently at Tam High."



Justus Kabir visited MTS in March to talk to students about his Muslim prayer practice during an all-school gather focused on Ramadan and Eid.

TELL US WHAT YOU'RE UP TO!

Email alumni@mttam.org or visit mttam.org/alumni



Alumni and current MTS Professional Community members gathered at Morella in the Marina in early February for a hosted happy hour. If you missed it, stay tuned for an invite to next year's, and make sure Nancy Kehoe in the Advancement Office has your current email address! (nkehoe@mttam.org).

MILESTONES Thank you to our passionate and dedicated professional community!

5 YEARS



MARIANNE KABIR
Social Studies Teacher



NICK WILSEY
Head of Middle School

15 YEARS



JULIA ESSER
STEM Teacher

25 YEARS



JEN BENNETT
PE Teacher

30 YEARS



CATHAL MURRY
PE Teacher
Athletics Director

35 YEARS



ELLIOT HAYNE
Humanities Teacher



MTS third graders created self-portraits in hot air balloons with colored pencil and tempera paint on paper.

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to the graduating class of 2025!

