

NEWS



NOTES

VOLUME 191

SUMMER 2025



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF PENINSULA SCHOOL!

WELCOME TO PENINSULA SCHOOL'S Centennial Year! Peninsula was founded in 1925, and this year we have been celebrating our beloved school's biggest milestone yet: turning 100! We've been delighted to share this with our current school community and our alumni community as well.

In the Spring of 2024, the school assembled a Centennial Committee. We had ten members who brainstormed different ideas of how to celebrate our school, and

each member took on a lead role to bring these ideas to life. Our Centennial Kickoff happened in February: on the 100th Day of School! We've since celebrated at our Community Party/Auction, Spring Fair, and had lots of activities on campus, from tree decorating to a Centennial Play.

Read on for more details!

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A NOTE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

THE NUMBER 23 HOLDS A UNIQUE PLACE in both cultural and mathematical significance. Most famously, it was worn by Michael Jordan, widely regarded as the greatest men's basketball player of all time. Jordan's association with the number 23 elevated its status, making it iconic not only in sports but in American culture. However, the significance of 23 extends far beyond the world of sports. Mathematically, it is a prime number, divisible only by 1 and itself.

The number 23 has also become the subject of intrigue through the so-called "23 Enigma." Popularized by books, films, and conspiracy theories, the enigma suggests that the number 23 appears with an unusual frequency in various contexts, often with an air of mystery or hidden meaning. From Star Wars to mathematics, from pop culture to cryptic symbols, the number 23 has been imbued with an air of mystique, inviting people to search for a greater purpose or truth behind its repetition.

As I reflect on my first year as the 23rd Head of Peninsula School, I am constantly reminded of the multifaceted nature of this number. Much like the number 23 itself, my role has been defined by a complex interplay of tradition, change, and the community's values. Just as the number has different meanings in various contexts, so too has my experience been shaped by the diverse perspectives of the students, staff, parents, alumni, grandparents, and other community members I've had the privilege of engaging with.

Over the past year, I have immersed myself in listening. I have had the opportunity to engage in countless one-on-one

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Students enjoyed birthday cupcakes for Peninsula on the 100th Day of School.



K-1 Students after they performed at the Staff/Student Community Gathering celebration!



Preschoolers in Blue count to 100 on the 100th Day of School!

100 YEARS OF PENINSULA!

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THE CENTENNIAL KICKOFF: CELEBRATING THE 100TH DAY OF SCHOOL!

On Monday, February 10th, Peninsula celebrated the 100th Day of School, and this year that doubled as the kickoff to our Centennial Celebrations! Led by Math Specialist Andrea Parkes, our K-1 to 8th Grade classes gathered at the end of the school day in the Playspace to celebrate this milestone together. Our Rainbow and Sunshine classes led the school in a song counting to 100, followed by everyone singing Happy Birthday to Peninsula! Afterwards, students were treated to cupcakes, while staff enjoyed a delicious cake designed to look like the Big Building, made by Class of 2024 alum Hanna. While our Preschool students weren't able to join in the schoolwide festivities, they made sure to mark the special day by counting fingers on 10 students to get to 100. It was the perfect way to start our Centennial Celebrations with our students and staff.

PENINSULA INTO THE FUTURE: 100 YEARS AND BEYOND

In March, we hosted the Centennial Community Party, with the return of the Auction! The theme was *Peninsula Into the Future: 100 Years and Beyond*, and people ran with it in their creative attire and decor at the venue. Parents, caregivers, staff, and beloved members of our wider community came together to raise money for the school that we love.

Our wonderful event coordinators, Ali Berlin, Moira McNamara, and Hayley Bakken brought this event to life, including spearheading the Auction component, which hadn't been done in six years. We had incredible offerings, from beautiful handmade ceramic bowls to Golden State tickets (Valkyries and Warriors!) to ten pound bars of chocolate, plus some fun parties for folks to sign up for. In addition, we came together in our Raise Your Paddle initiative to raise funds for flexible tuition.

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Staff enjoyed the Centennial Cake, baked by Hanna ('24) on the 100th Day of School.



David Duveneck gives the keynote speech at the Annual Community Party & Auction.



The Class of 2025 joined the festivities at the Community Party & Auction.

100 YEARS OF PENINSULA!

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In addition to a wonderful night of socializing, we were joined by a special guest speaker, David Duveneck, grandson of Peninsula's founders Josephine and Frank Duveneck. David shared his memories of his grandparents and of his time at the school with our community. We were honored to have him there to be able to share his words and memories with us.

As always, the 8th graders in the Class of 2025 joined the festivities as the only kids who can attend the event! This is their foray into being part of the alumni and adult community at Peninsula, and it was a joy to be able to introduce them on stage and have them join us for the evening. A huge congratulations to them as they head out into the world post-Peninsula.

It was an evening of connection, fun, and coming together to raise money for Peninsula!



Our youngest friends were ready to celebrate Peninsula's Centennial!



Performers from San Francisco's own Circus Bella added fun to the Spring Fair Celebration!

THE FAIR OF THE CENTURY

On the first Sunday in May, we celebrated an extra special Centennial Spring Fair! This year's Fair had longtime favorites as well as some special features. Strawberry Shortcake was enjoyed, plenty of live music, a brand new School Timeline was displayed (more on that later!), and a performing act from San Francisco's own Circus Bella came to entertain. In the afternoon, we came together to sing Happy Birthday to Peninsula and eat cake!

We rejoiced in having alumni come back, with graduation years ranging from 1948 (yes, really!) to 2024. Alumni gathered from far and wide to come together with their classes for their reunion years (and some non-reunion years; the Class of 1991 had nine people attend, three of whom came from out of state!). People were able to share memories of their time as students here as they reconnected with classmates, former teachers, and beloved places on campus during the festivities.

So many Peninsula community members came out to join us, and we were so happy to welcome everyone back to campus! Thank you for taking the time to celebrate, reconnect, and enjoy a delightfully warm Fair Day with us. We have so much gratitude for all of our parents, caregivers, staff, and wider community members who stepped in to volunteer their time at the Fair. The Spring Fair is an event that brings out the best of Peninsula; our community reunites, builds new connections, and spends the day coming together with the common thruline of Peninsula. Each and every person who participated in the Fair made it possible for us to honor this 100 year milestone in such a big, wonderful, Peninsula fashion!

CENTENNIAL FEATURES

This year's Spring Fair featured two special components for Peninsula's 100 Year Anniversary: A Centennial Play, and a brand new Historical Display covering a Century of Peninsula School.

The 100 Year Curse: The Centennial Play

One of our incredible features at the Spring Fair this year was a play that was written, designed, and performed by students in the Middle School. In the brainstorming period for the Centennial Committee, alumna Laurie Friedman ('62) brought forward the idea of doing a school play, fondly remembering doing school plays when she was a student here. Laurie spoke with Weaving Specialist Alexandra Griffin ('07) who then offered a Choice class to see if students were interested in bringing this idea to life. An intrepid group of six Middle Schoolers signed up for the first Choice to research Peninsula's history and write a storyline for the play, and it took off from there! In subsequent Choice class sessions, a variety of students signed up for the production components that appealed to them, including designing the sets, casting, and rehearsing. Together, these students brought this play to life in four performances, with the finale taking place at the Spring Fair!

The play followed a group of students who, while preparing for the Spring Fair, discover the resident ghost Mrs. Coleman in the basement. A terrible curse has been placed on Peninsula, which takes shape in the form of a building inspector attempting to shut down the school at different points throughout its history. Mrs. Coleman sends the students on a time traveling journey, and along the way, they meet prominent figures such as Josephine Duveneck and Woody Nichols. They witness the protests to save the Big Building after a failed fire inspection in the 60s, and their last stop is 1974, where we see Peninsula students pool the money they earn as extras in *Escape to Witch Mountain* to hire their volunteer PE teacher to a permanent position (a true story!). In working together, they see and experience 100 years of Peninsula's values, and in the end, they break the curse!



Students are faced with meeting with Mrs. Coleman in the 100 Year Curse Centennial Play.

This production was unique for a Peninsula play in that it brought students together from all four Middle School classes in order to bring it to fruition. It was truly a collaborative effort with months of work put in across grade levels, and weeks of rehearsals between Choice ending and the Spring Fair performance! The flexibility, compromise, tenacity, and creativity of Peninsula students was on full display during this process, and the result was an alumni and student collaboration for the ages.

The Peninsula School Historical Display

Back in 2005, longtime parent and Spring Fair coordinator Ellen Wilkinson created a Peninsula School Timeline to mark the school's 80th Anniversary. She collaborated with alum parent, former head teacher, and Archivist Florrie Forrest (Staff member: 1971-2011) to gather and distill the stories of Peninsula through photos and interviews. Each year, the Timeline was brought out of the school archives and displayed for Spring Fair attendees to admire, enjoy, learn from, and reflect on their connections to Peninsula's rich history.

As we approached Peninsula's milestone anniversary, Ellen – now an alum parent and former board member – joined the Centennial Committee knowing that she wanted her primary contribution to be a refreshed school timeline. The result? A historical Centennial Display that encapsulates the core themes of a Peninsula education for the past century.

Knowing what an undertaking this would be, Ellen conducted fresh interviews of former staff and alumnae and put together a team that included alum ('71) and former Weaving Teacher Barbie Paulsen (Staff member: 1990-2018), former Librarian and Program Support Director Misha Merrill (Staff member: 1989-2023), and Florrie Forrest for their knowledge, experience, and deep understanding of Peninsula, as well as the patience to spend countless hours researching Peninsula's origins and sifting through thousands of photos and other archival material. Alumni Cole Quinn ('12) also played a pivotal role in mining the best photos from the original Timeline.

While the original idea was to simply update the Timeline, it became clear that the 20-year gap since the 80th anniversary display had



Barbie, Ellen, Florrie, and Misha pose with some of the Historical Display panels.

grown too wide. As time went on, current Peninsula students no longer knew the people on the most recent panels, and there wasn't room for more recent material. The team pivoted to a more enduring solution that can withstand the test of time: an incredible 12 panel display (a 13th panel plus compelling supplementary materials are coming!), with each board highlighting a defining theme that's made Peninsula a uniquely special place in progressive education for over a century. Themes include the origins of the school, creativity & the whole child, camping as classroom, freedom & responsibility, social justice & advocacy, and different forms of creative expression that we see every day on campus (just to name a few!).

From all of us at Peninsula School, we would like to say a huge thank you to Ellen, Barbie, Misha, Florrie, and Cole! This display was a labor of love and devotion to our school, and encapsulates the timeless qualities of progressive education at Peninsula. Alumni felt that they could see their own memories reflected back as they engaged with each panel, perhaps connecting dots of the philosophy behind their experiences. We are so grateful that this display can withstand the test of time, and look forward to it being enjoyed by fairgoers for decades to come!

VISITING AUTHOR MAGGIE TOKUDA-HALL INSPIRES STUDENTS OF PENINSULA SCHOOL

THIS SPRING, PENINSULA WAS PLEASED TO WELCOME Oakland-based author Maggie Tokuda-Hall who gave inspiring and enthralling talks to students across the school. Over a day packed with events, Tokuda-Hall gave three presentations that catered to different age groups. Though her talks varied quite dramatically, Tokuda-Hall's consistent message for all of Peninsula's students was to trust their voices: that their ideas and experiences are both valued and important to share.

In addition to speaking with students in these scheduled sessions, Tokuda-Hall had a lunch with Middle School students, and took a tour of Peninsula's campus with our Librarian Margot, getting to know our school and community.

For the younger group of students (Rainbow, Sunshine, Oak, and Pine classes), Tokuda-Hall shared the process of being a writer through her book *Also an Octopus*. After reading aloud her delightful story, Tokuda-Hall explained how she came up with the idea, how children's books get greenlit by publishers, and how long that process tends to take. Students and teachers alike were surprised to learn that it can take five years after a book is written for an author to see their finished book on bookstore shelves – for our younger students who attended this talk, that's a lifetime! What perseverance authors must have! Throughout it all, Tokuda-Hall emphasized that she values her voice as an author, and the importance of making her own choices. Tokuda-Hall then worked with the students to write a story as a group, all generated by the kids! It was a collaborative effort and the end result was a whimsical story featuring a main character named Tina the Turtle. The students were left with a clear message that they too can be authors. The children's excitement was palpable when Tokuda-Hall finished and she was swarmed by autograph-seekers.

For our 4th through 6th grade students, Tokuda-Hall read her book *Love in the Library*, a picturebook aimed at older children which tells the true story of how her grandparents met and fell in love in a Japanese Internment Camp during World War II. She thoughtfully framed her talk about this dark period in US History in an age appropriate way for 10-12 year olds, with an emphasis on the remarkable light that is love even within such terrible conditions. Tokuda-Hall took questions from students about her grandparents and their experience, and shared about her decision to turn down a lucrative offer from a publishing company that would have censored important historical information in her book. Tokuda-Hall spoke eloquently about this moment and why it did not align with her values. This time, the students were left with a strong message about the validation of an author's voice and a family's truth.

When it came time for 7th and 8th grade presentation, Tokuda-Hall spoke extensively about being a founding member of *Authors*

Against Book Bans (AABB), an organization actively battling the trend of book banning that has been happening across the country in recent years. Their mission is to "unequivocally support the availability of diverse voices on our library shelves, in our schools, and in our culture. We pledge to band together against the oppression of literature,

to speak when our voices are silenced, to go where our bodies are needed, and to fight as one to ensure this freedom." For this presentation, Tokuda-Hall shared a map of states where books are banned most frequently, and was able to show some positive changes that have happened in the fight against book banning as different organizations (including AABB) have worked to change legislation across all 50 states. While the progress can feel slow, Tokuda-Hall emphasized that a determined group can make a difference in fighting injustice. Tokuda-Hall concluded her talk by encouraging our oldest students to become activists and stand



Maggie Tokuda-Hall is a co-founder of Authors Against Book Bans.



Lower Schoolers work on a collaborative story with Tokuda-Hall.

up for what they believe in, reminding our students that their voices matter and they have agency in this world. In keeping with Peninsula's Principles of Progressive Education, Tokuda-Hall's inspiring talks were one step along the path towards engaging our students as active members of our diverse democratic community. Maggie Tokuda-Hall is an author our students will long remember!

INTRODUCING NEW STAFF

AYESHA SUMBAL

This year we welcomed Ayesha Sumbal, M.Ed (she/her) into the role of Director of Instruction and Belonging at Peninsula School. This was an initiative brought by the previous strategic plan and we are so excited to have someone who will oversee the program from Preschool-8th Grade and also ensure that we have systems and structures in place to support a sense of belonging within our community. Ayesha has worked closely with the Strategic Working Group (Johanna, Anne, Bailey, Beth, and Michele) and Programmatic Team (Betty, Jesse, and Rasha) in understanding the current context of Peninsula School and how to continue in our journey of delivering a cohesive and responsive progressive school curriculum that centers belonging. She is enjoying her time in the community and wants to express gratitude for the warm welcome.

Ayesha has brought on new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging initiatives and celebrations, in addition to the ones we have done for many years! In November, she brought the Ruby Bridges Walk to Peninsula, and has begun facilitating school assemblies focused on inclusion across campus. She enjoys when students are able to stop into her office to play with the many interesting objects she has available and let her know how their day is going. On the Instruction side, she has collaborated deeply with the Programmatic Team and greater staff to better document our school's program via learning progressions, adequately ensuring we are sharing pertinent information about students via student information share documents, and ensuring space is made to discuss our camping program so that we can ensure it is scaffolded in a way that supports student love of camping. She was also heavily involved in creating a pathway to have a discussion about how parents/guardians interact with the generation of the parent/caregiver norms document. This was done via collaboration with the incredibly dedicated POP (People of Peninsula) leadership team.

Ayesha came to Peninsula from the Kirby School, where she was the Assistant Head of DEI and Student Life. Prior to being in administration, she spent 15 years in the classroom teaching across the country, beginning in her home state of Michigan. She spent time in Arizona, Chicago and abroad in Shanghai, China before making the move to California. She loves to joke about how she is realizing her Midwestern dream of moving to California. She enjoys the incredible weather with this perspective on a daily basis, and is so excited to be back at a PK-8th grade progressive school.



Ayesha Sumbal, Director of Instruction & Belonging

Ayesha wanted to be a teacher since as long as she can remember, due to the incredible teachers she had growing up in Michigan, as an English language learner, raised by Pakistani immigrant parents. She can often be seen on campus, chatting with students and community members. Ayesha has spent about half of her career in education teaching in public schools, and the other half in independent schools. She began to realize her passion and connection to more progressive pedagogies, including project based

learning when she taught at an International Baccalaureate school in Shanghai, China. She also worked at an I.B. school in Chicago, Illinois and was part of conversations that led to a historic desegregation initiative. She was the founding 3rd and 4th grade teacher at Bennett Day School in Chicago, where she fell in love with the pursuit towards an education that John Dewey and bell hooks had written and envisioned.

Social justice work has always been at the heart of Ayesha's time as a human and educator. She is excited by Peninsula School's history of commitment to social justice work, and feels excited about how Peninsula School can better realize its mission, vision and values while centering belonging for our students, staff and parent/caregiver community.

Outside of work, Ayesha enjoys riding her bike, visiting the ocean, walking adventures, going to new bookstores in new places. In her second year at Peninsula, her favorite things so far have been (in no particular order): spending time in classrooms getting to know the program, students and staff, hosting the Living Room Dialogue/Jewish and Palestinian group for the 8th graders and their families, Ruby Bridges Walk Day, overhearing students from my office learning more about diverse humans via the Big Building scavenger hunt activities (Black Excellence and Awesome Arab Americans were the two we got to this year! More to come next year!), the monthly student/staff community gatherings – it was very fun for me to share about what belonging means to me when I led the March 19th gathering (and see the progression of how we worked as a K-8th grade community to be together in such a format), Holi with Sunshine/Rainbowland and generally getting to spend my workday in a place where the kids are generally kind, curious and happy to be at school. Ayesha looks forward to growing alongside community members for years to come.

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INTRODUCING

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ANNE FONG

Please welcome Anne Fong to the Peninsula School Community! Anne joined us in March as the school's new Director of Development and Communications. She is an experienced advancement professional with a strong background in fundraising, alumni relations, and community engagement. With over a decade of experience in independent schools, she has successfully led fundraising campaigns, strengthened alumni networks, and fostered meaningful connections between schools and their communities.

Anne is deeply passionate about educational equity and empowerment. She currently serves on the board of the Peninsula College Fund, an organization dedicated to supporting low-income, first-generation college students in their journey to graduation and career success. Anne is also committed to amplifying Asian voices and fostering inclusive environments where all individuals feel valued and heard.

Her broad expertise in community building, event management, and strategic partnerships positions her well to drive meaningful engagement and contribute to the growth and success of the organization she serves.

There's so much to love about Peninsula School, but what stands out most to Anne is how children are trusted to be themselves, encouraged to explore, make choices, and take responsibility in ways that feel both freeing and grounding. The school's core values come to life daily in how teachers engage with students, how the community supports one another, and how learning stretches beyond the classroom. She draws endless inspiration from the campus, where nature is not just a backdrop, but a teacher as well. Most of all, Anne treasures how lifelong connections take root here – especially when alums, former parents, and past staff return to the Development Office, still deeply connected to the Peninsula community.



Anne Fong, Director of Development & Communications

Outside of her professional life, Anne enjoys traveling, exploring new culinary experiences, and spending quality time with her friends and family. An avid Sharks fan, she was thrilled to discover a fellow fan on her team. She finds joy in building meaningful connections, whether through her work or personal life, and is always inspired by the stories and experiences of those around her.

GERRY FORTAIN

We are excited to welcome Gerry Fortain to our Middle School team as the 6th Grade Head Teacher and Middle School Math Specialist! Gerry comes to us with extensive teaching experience, having worked as a math teacher at Mid-Peninsula High School, as well as in a school specializing in serving students with learning differences. Gerry has a BA in Chemistry from the University at Buffalo, and prior to teaching held a number of jobs, including environmental chemistry, polymers, and food sciences (working with cheese!).

Gerry has jumped into the Middle School teaching team as the structure of that



Gerry Fortain, 6th Grade Head Teacher & Middle School Math Specialist

program has been adjusted. He teaches math across all classrooms, working with students in our 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades to prepare them for their math lives going forward.

After his first year at Peninsula, Gerry's favorite things about being here are that students love coming to school, the way they are involved in decision making, and seeing how

they rise to the occasion when given lots of responsibility and freedom.

Outside of work, Gerry enjoys hanging out with his dog Bruce, rooting for his hometown Buffalo Bills, going backpacking, making art, and playing lots of music.



Stephanie Lima, Sunshine Class Teacher

STEPHANIE LIMA

We are pleased to welcome Stephanie Lima, our new Sunshine class teacher, to Peninsula! This past year, Stephanie stepped into one of our K-1 Classrooms, bringing a love for learning, fun, and the outdoors to the class. Stephanie grew up in São Paulo, Brazil, where she previously lived and specialized in Bilingual Education. Prior to becoming a teacher, she was an architect! She has fit right into the Peninsula community and campus as a result. Stephanie has joined associate teacher Jahanna Tafari and they've been a wonderful teaching team to our Sunshine class students.

Stephanie has been great at facilitating a strong classroom community with students by emphasizing social-emotional development. Every week, Sunshine Class would participate in Friendship Tuesdays, where students' names are shuffled and pulled to spend snack and playtime with a classmate they don't usually play with, creating a more connected classroom community and flexibility among students. Stephanie has also been great about her classroom being a community for families as well! Parents were invited into the classroom periodically to read a story from a beloved book, engage in gardening projects, or share cultural celebrations their family partakes in.

We are so thrilled to have Stephanie here at Peninsula, and cannot wait to see what the future holds!

FAREWELL

COLLEEN MCPEEK

We wish Colleen McPeek the best as she moves on to her next chapter! Colleen has a long history with Peninsula School: her three kids all went to Peninsula, she volunteered as the Parent Events Coordinator and the Spring Fair Coordinator for multiple years, served on the Board, was an Assistant Teacher in the mid-2000s in Nursery Blue, Gail's, and was a frequent substitute in Josie's class. She came back to Peninsula in 2018 as a head teacher, and over the last six years taught both K-1 and 1-2 classes. During her time as a head teacher, Colleen was a staff appointed Board Member for 3 years, her second stint after the early 2000s.

Colleen brought a passion for education to her classroom every day, and cared deeply for each of her students by leading her classroom with love. For the entirety of her teaching career, Colleen has shared this sentiment at every Fall parent meeting: "My true passion was for every child in my class to see themselves as readers, writers, and mathematicians and to know in their hearts that they were loved and mattered." She honored each students' individuality by helping them find ways to tell their own stories. Her class carried on the tradition of celebrating the 100th Day of School with crowns and a parade, and uniquely celebrated Santa Lucia Day each year. Her dog Taxi was a staple in the classroom; as a certified therapy dog, Taxi was able to bring calm when kids needed a minute to themselves. We miss Colleen and Taxi, and wish them the best on their next endeavor!

DAMIEN KARDOKAS JOHANSON

A huge thank you to Damien Kardokas Johanson who spent 12 years as a wonderful member of Peninsula's staff, in addition to many years spent as a Summer Program teacher! Damien began his teaching journey at Peninsula in our Summer Program, where he taught many different types of art-focused classes for several years before becoming an Upper School Assistant Teacher in 2013, spending two years in 6th grade, then three years in 8th. In 2018, Damien became the Swing Teacher, getting the opportunity to

work with students across all four classrooms in the Upper School.

As Swing Teacher, Damien supported classes with specific units throughout the year, taught 7th grade math, oversaw organization of the Choice Program, helped students to navigate the high school application and decision process, and guided 8th grade classes through the creation of the yearbook. Each year, he organized the Grad Forum for high



Colleen McPeek



Damien Kardokas Johanson

school alums to come and talk about their experience coming out of Peninsula, and

remains a beloved and important touchstone for our alums through their high school years and beyond.

Damien's creativity and enthusiasm were pillars of many Upper School students' (and staff!) experiences. He saw students for who they were and engaged in conversations on their individual interests. On any given day, someone walking through Upper School during free time would hear Damien talking with students on any topic. This variety of interests was reflected in the many different roles he held during his time here: Damien co-created Think Ink, a printmaking staple in our Summer Program, and introduced the much beloved Art Show that happens every summer; he was the 7th & 8th grade basketball coach and coordinator for those teams; he sponsored student clubs such as Art Club and Green Team; he also supported Upper School theatre performances, particularly with audio-visual production. Damien also took on the less glamorous parts of the job, like organizing and facilitating Upper School meetings, and sitting on the school's Calendar Committee to work on school year timing and logistics for many years.

Damien approached teaching as a two-way path; it wasn't only about what he could teach students, but he also deeply valued what he could learn from them as well. As a colleague, Damien was a thoughtful and creative teacher who could fit in seamlessly with any teaching team and class as needed, and his partnership was invaluable. He went on nearly all Upper School camping trips, taught creative Choice classes, and helped Peninsula students become the best versions of themselves. We miss him and wish him the best in his next endeavors!

LIZ PANG

We'd like to say a huge thank you to Liz Pang ('13) for her years as a Peninsula School teacher! Liz came to teach at Peninsula in 2020; during the pandemic year, she assisted in both Colleen's and Melissa's classrooms, all while finishing her final year of college over zoom. In 2021, she joined the Upper School

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FAREWELL

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as an Assistant Teacher in Christy's 6th Grade classroom. When a vacancy opened up for the 8th Grade Head Teacher role in the Summer of 2022, Liz stepped in to become the 8th grade head teacher for two years.

As the 8th Grade teacher, Liz taught students in their final year at Peninsula School, preparing them both academically and social-emotionally for the next chapter of their lives. She led students through the many units of 8th grade, plus the addition of high school applications, creating a fun and engaging learning environment. She saw each student for who they were as individuals, working with their strengths and guiding them through their challenges. As Peninsula students prepare to go into the wider world, Liz created space for them to continue finding and developing their voices by digging into learning about issues that truly mattered to them. One of the many examples of this was the 8th Grade *Art of Protest* unit. The class studied current and historical social issues, then worked together in groups to portray what they were learning through powerful, thoughtful, engaging art installations that the entire school was invited to come and view. She handled navigating these heavy issues with grace and support for her students as they engaged with their learning. From her love for art to her extensive experience with both playing and coaching sports, Liz was a teacher who students could talk with about any topic. She was willing to add things that adapted her curriculum to students' interests; last year, a student brought in button quail eggs that were taken care of and hatched in the classroom, giving the opportunity for the rest of the class to learn about this topic. We are so grateful for her time as a Peninsula teacher, and it is with heartfelt gratitude that we wish Liz the best on her next chapter!



Liz Pang

MONICA ERVITI

Thank you to Monica Erviti for 9 years of teaching at Peninsula! Monica came to Peninsula through Hidden Villa, and began as the 5th grade Assistant Teacher in 2015. During her time as an AT, she went through the Bay Area Teacher Training Institute, and became the 5th Grade Head Teacher in the Fall of 2017, while also taking on one of the 8th grade math classes in her time here. Monica was a calm and compassionate teacher who met each student where they were in their educational and life journey. She focused on supporting students academically and with social-emotional skills. Among many incredible things she did as the 5th grade head teacher, a few years ago the California Maps Project moved from the 6th Grade Curriculum to the 5th Grade Curriculum, which she wove into her school year with ease that made it seem like it had been a 5th Grade unit all along. Monica loves



Monica Erviti

the outdoors and was a perfect fit for leading camping trips, sharing her joy for spending time in nature with her classes each year. Additionally, she co-taught the Backpacking Choice with Christy, teaching kids how to

make fire, cook backpacking meals, and wilderness first aid basics, which culminated in a backpacking trip. In addition to her work with students, Monica was an integral part of our staff team; during her time here, she sat on the Staff Advisory Group, giving input on behalf of the Upper School team. In her last year here, she sat on the Programmatic Team, where she was pivotal in helping to develop Peninsula's Portrait of a Graduate in collaboration with Peninsula's staff. We miss Monica and her presence every day, and wish her all the best on her next adventure!



Ryan Helton

RYAN HELTON

After five and a half years, our former Director of Development & Communications Ryan Helton has moved on to his next adventure. Ryan was an integral part of Peninsula, both as an administrator and as a community member. He jumped in right away, co-leading the 2019 Auction in his first four months on staff. During his time here, Ryan helped to usher in two of the largest gifts the school has received to date, and oversaw fundraising through the pandemic, helping the school get back into events after Covid. In addition to his Development work, Ryan enthusiastically jumped in to work with students when he could. He offered multiple Choice classes like pasta making, the history of drag, and Magic the Gathering. He went camping with our Upper School in the Fall and Spring, further building connections

with students who don't always get to know the Big Building staff. Lastly, Ryan co-facilitated Peninsula's Rainbow Alliance, creating a designated space for students to share experiences, talk through issues they may have seen in the news, and did an annual fundraiser for an LGBTQ+ Organization of their choosing. Ryan's warm and welcoming presence was felt at every event, where he was there early and stayed through the end to support parents and staff. We wish Ryan the best on his future endeavors!

TERRA MILLER

Our deepest gratitude and warmest wishes go to Terra Miller, Peninsula School staff member for more than thirty years. Throughout her time here, Terra held a number of roles; early ones included Assistant Teacher in both Lower and Upper School, Swing Teacher, and Head Teacher. In 2001, she took on the role of Summer Program Director, where, for sixteen years, she saw to the creation of fabulous Peninsula summer experiences for hundreds of students and young staff. Also in 2001, after the retirement of long-time Art Specialist Teacher and dear friend, Pat English, Terra was able to bring her Art training and experience as teacher in Peninsula's Art Room, where she continued through the Spring of 2024. As a staff member, Terra contributed on countless committees and gave her time to support multiple classes' camping programs by going out on these important trips twice a year for three decades. She served numerous terms on Peninsula's Board of Directors and the Finance Committee during her extensive tenure as a dedicated and actively contributing Peninsula community member. Terra is a parent of four alumni: Norina ('97), Lee ('00), Cole ('03), and Dale ('05), and is a current grandparent.



Longtime colleague, Christy Utter, shares...
I don't think I would have become a teacher if I hadn't been mentored by Terra at the beginning of my career, when she was the 7th-grade teacher and I was an assistant teacher in the Upper School. Terra saw in me what I didn't yet see in myself, and she has been my encourager and wise thought partner ever since. She has been my right-hand on almost 20 class camping trips, delighting

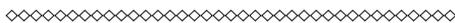


Terra Miller

with me in our students' growth and their goodness to one another.

I learned so much over the years by watching Terra teach: as an Art teacher, she would build upon projects each year, helping students develop and deepen their use of different materials and techniques, supporting them in increasingly complex and abstract thinking. Terra would show a demonstration of the project, but she was so mindful to keep her talking brief and to get the students into the real work of being artists. It was okay if they didn't know everything before they started!

Terra treated students as the real artists they are: she designed open-ended projects where each student's piece was unique and a reflection of their choices (so unlike my own art instruction in grade school, in which I was shown an example and encouraged to aim to make mine look like the teacher's!). Terra worked hard to make class times feel playful and spacious, holding enough time so that students could get deep into their work without being rushed, so that they could make a mess, make mistakes, and focus on the process rather than the product. In my 20 years of teaching, I have not encountered another teacher with such a passion for helping students develop their own voices, as artists and as individuals.



Current Art Specialist Teacher, Ayla Miller, shared the position with Terra for eleven years, from 2013 to 2024. Here are a few

of Ayla's words of wisdom about Terra's Peninsula legacy:

One main thing I've learned from Terra is to be vigilant, to pay careful attention. Details. It turns out that this stuff is really important! Not just for a project to "work", but for it to be an experience for children that makes them feel successful, see themselves as artists, have agency in their process, and allow them to explore and understand a concept through Art. Those details, and the specifics of how you do them, are essential for a project to truly be child-focused, or in creating a space where children are trusted: Doing progressive education. This careful attention, this vigilance and attention to detail, is one of Terra's superpowers.

So why be vigilant at all? What's the big deal? Is it to make sure everything goes perfectly? Is it that the project all comes out looking good? No, Terra is vigilant to prevent unintended consequences. She guards against doing something that ultimately would take away from our purpose – why we're here and who we serve – children.



Terra cherishes all the positive connections and deep bonds she and her family hold with other students, parents, and colleagues. The result of many years of working together, growing together, and playing together, she deeply values these relationships with so many extraordinary people, new and old, near, far, and multi-generational, in the vast Peninsula community.

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

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and group meetings, in which I continue to learn how special Peninsula School is. One of the most striking aspects of my time has been understanding the delicate balance between preserving traditions and embracing the necessity for evolution and change. There is a palpable sense of nostalgia for what Peninsula has been – an institution that has long valued social emotional learning, and a child-centered approach to education.

At the same time, there is a deep desire to thoughtfully evolve Peninsula into its next iteration – one that balances its history with the ever-changing demands of the

world around us. In this delicate balance, I have come to appreciate that Peninsula is a community that values freedom with responsibility and choice. The school's commitment to offering choice to students, while also instilling a sense of responsibility, has been one of its greatest strengths. It is this emphasis on thoughtful decision-making, paired with an unwavering desire to foster a safe, nurturing, and vibrant learning environment, that defines the heart of Peninsula.

As your 23rd Head of School, I have witnessed firsthand how powerful it can be to listen – to hear the hopes, dreams, concerns,

and desires of those who make up this community. The number 23 represents the idea of partnership, collaboration, and the search for deeper meaning. It reminds me that my role is not to impose a singular vision but to guide this community in a direction that honors both the past and the future, blending tradition with innovation. In the coming months, I will continue the journey of deep listening, to continue learning from this vibrant community, and to work together to create the next chapter of Peninsula's story – a chapter that builds on its history while embracing the possibilities of tomorrow.



Johanna & Ayesha participated in the traditional Go Kart Race to end their first year on staff!

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