SPRING 2025

MARET



4 | Hidden in Plain Sight
A brief glimpse into Maret's material culture

12 | Lessons in Writing
What is important in the age of AI?

PLUS
42 Alumni Connections
46 Distinguished Alumni

MARET

Dennis Bisgaard, *Head of School*
Carolyn Law, *Director of Communications*
Zaw Lyn, *Associate Director of Communications*
Sally Dunkelberger, *Director of Development*
Dana Tignor ’99, *Director of Alumni Giving and Programs*
Annie Farquhar, *Director of Admission*
Patrick Scott, *Director of Middle School Admission and Social Media*

Photography:
Zaw Lyn (lead photographer), Freed Photography, Susie Shaffer, Maret faculty, students, parents, alumni, and friends

Design:
Lilly Pereira, *aldeia.design*

Board of Trustees 2024–2025
Leigh Comas, *President*
Michael Kirshbaum ’94, *Vice President*
Alifia Doriwala, *Treasurer*
Vadim Nikitine, *Secretary*
Aakash Thakkar, *Assistant Secretary*
Sylvia Davis White, *Assistant Secretary*
Ron Allen ’06, *Alumni Council Representative*
Bikram Bakshi
Dennis Bisgaard, *Head of School*
Susan Bosland
Lionel Brown
Lisa Brown
David Burton
Richard Bynum
Laura DeBonis
Erica Farhat ’98
Steve Farina
Marisa Flowers
Sherlonda Goode-Jones
David Hall
Rick Juneja
Kara Kochan, *Maret Parents Association Representative*
Heidi Kong
McLean Quinn
Lisa Palmer
Lex Sant
Tricia Primrose Wallace
Rachel Moore Weller

Alumni Council 2024–2025
Ron Allen ’06, *President*
Avonda Fogan ’12, *Alumni Fund Chair*
Christina Kalaviritinos ’72, *1960s & 1970s Decade Vice President*
Camilla David ’63, *1960s & 1970s Decade Vice President*
Marissa Griffith ’86, *1980s Decade VP*
RaLee Cook ’91, *1990s Decade VP*
Chris McCloskey ’04, *2000s Decade VP*
Randolph Adams ’95
Cyrus Beschloss ’15
Abby Bonder Bluestone ’99
Courtney Bolden ’13
Kristin Burka ’85
Ben Butler ’10
Alexander DeLeon ’06
Miles Fawcett ’88
Channing Foster ’11
Stephen Hayes ’06
Masako Ikegami ’01
William Leibner ’06
Ingrid Lund ’96
Kendra Mitchell ’08
Anna Pietrantonio ’10
Drew Reid ’13
Becca Rutkoff ’03
Alexis Serfaty ’98
Sarah Sloan ’07
Justin Wasfy ’01
Tia Watkins ’11
Sasha Zients ’13

Maret School stands firmly behind the principle that the admission of students, the employment of faculty, the orientation of programs, and the governance of the school be open to all who are qualified regardless of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or creed. We believe that this principle is both firmly grounded in the spirit of American democracy and in keeping with the civil responsibilities of an independent school.





Head's Greeting

DENNIS BISGAARD



SPRING IS my absolute favorite time of the year. After the colder, darker, winter months, it gives a boost of positive energy. Given the current state of the world, we all need doses of positivity, of goodwill, of community, of care. Fortunately, one can find joy at Maret every single day. I often find it in the small moments of school life, as well as in the milestone moments.

The stories in this issue of the magazine remind me of the ways our students learn and grow—little by little, often without realizing it, tucking away little gems of knowledge each day. They build their scientific knowledge one experiment at a time; put words together into sentences, then into stories and songs; express empathy, make new friends, and engage with the broader community; create wondrous art and share it with us; compete in sports, sometimes winning, sometimes losing.

Teachers are there each step of the way—not only to offer expert guidance, but to celebrate small victories that might otherwise go unnoticed. When the learning gets tough, they are there to offer inspiration and support.

During spring, I conduct exit interviews with seniors. I love hearing directly from our students about their experiences. Recently, three seniors who are friends decided to come to the interview together. One started in kindergarten, one in sixth grade, and one in ninth grade. They raved about their teachers, their close relationships, and the incredible courses they had taken. They spoke about highlights and lowlights, they offered suggestions, but mostly they extended gratitude for their experience. With both confidence and humility, they knew they were well prepared for college.

New seeds have been planted, cultivated, and watered. I have great faith in our seniors as positive change agents who will help shape a better future while honoring the past and their experiences at Maret. Please enjoy the spring magazine and the stories that breathe life into our community's life lessons.



Cover Illustration:
Maria Carluccio

Daily Maret CATCH US ONLINE

MARCH 20.
Maret had two athletes competing in March Madness! Congrats to Teo Rice '19 of Yale and Page Greenburg '22 of George Mason. Go Frogs!





APRIL 14.
Third graders made the most of a mini-golf-themed field trip for math class. They putted their way around around the East Potomac course and also measured distances and perimeters while taking note of special features so that they could design their own mini-golf experience!

APRIL 15.
Maret's college counseling team partnered with students and colleagues at GDS to host the 8th Annual HBCU Night in the theatre. The event kicked off with an incredible step show by members of the Divine 9 and included a powerful panel discussion with alumni who shared their experience and wisdom.





NOVEMBER 1.
The Woodley Leaves staff launched a new digital edition of the newspaper alongside its print edition. Now readers can choose how they want to consume their news. To access the newspaper online, just log in with your Maret portal credentials!

You can always find out what's happening at the pond by visiting us on social media. See you there, Frogs!



/ CONTENTS /

STORIES

6 Discover Your Calling Through Biotechnology
Students learn cutting-edge lab techniques in Doc White's popular class

12 Lessons in Writing
Lower School Reading and Learning Specialist Amy Sheridan Potts reveals what second grade writing instruction looks like in the age of AI.

20 Real Learning Real Impact
Community engagement sits at the heart of a purpose-filled education in Middle School.

26 A Case Study of Tangier Island
Upper school students study the role of religion and rising tides on this island community.

32 When Walls Talk
Exhibits spark conversations about art and ways of seeing.



IN EACH ISSUE

Just for Fun
4 Hidden in Plain Sight

The Big Picture
18 Director's Note

Spotlight On The Individual & Connectedness
38 Get to Know Coach Wilson

Alumni Connections
42 Alumni News
47 Class Notes
51 In Memoriam
52 From the Archives

Just for Fun

Hidden in Plain Sight

STORY BY
ROB ACHTMEYER
Fifth Grade Dean and Humanities Teacher

Traveling across campus, you might pass by one of these quirky campus treasures. Often overlooked, they provide enticing clues to Maret's past and present. Each piece echoes the dedication of our faculty and the stories of the students whose lives they have touched, encompassing more than a century of teaching and learning.



THE CALL TO COMMUNITY

In the Old Gym lobby in a small alcove next to the World Languages office, is a piece of Maret history dating back to the school's campus at 2118 Kalorama Road, today the home of the Algerian Embassy. The original school bell was brought to Woodley when Maret moved its campus in 1952. Over the years, the bell fell into disrepair when its toll became unnecessary to gather students in the morning. However, in 1994, upon the retirement of Head of School Peter Sturtevant, the Facilities Department took up the challenge to rehabilitate the bell in Sturtevant's honor. While the bell's peal may have fallen silent, it remains one of the few artifacts connecting Maret's two DC campuses and is a reminder of the call to community that students have heard for more than 100 years.



A MUMMY AMONG US

What child doesn't love learning that mummification involved removing a pharaoh's brain through the nose? In fourth grade, students explore ancient civilizations—a time when heroes and armies faced monsters, gods, and goddesses. As students delve into Cleopatra, Anubis, and Ra, teacher Kathy Richardson decorates her classroom with papyrus, sphinx images, and a life-sized sarcophagus. In 2010, the Performing Arts Department built it for *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, and it housed Allie Leonard '16 during the second act. Former teacher and set-designer Bob Ferguson needed to ensure an actor could breathe inside without overheating under the lights. Susan Leonard, Allie's mom, "insisted they drill breathing holes into the sarcophagus because staying alive enhances the theatrical experience," recalls Richardson. "Back when the whole project was still in its blueprint stage, Bob and Rachel Gayer, the show's director, came to me asking about sarcophagi. Little did they know I'd become smitten with the final product." With fanfare, the sarcophagus arrives in Richardson's room each year. Former fourth-grade teacher Will Nisbitt once hid inside, surprising Mrs. Richardson's class and proving that the air holes still function.



FOREST HILLS BEACON

The trophy case in the middle school hallway displays many academic awards; however, a small, glitter-covered lighthouse with a note stands out: "To Maret School, thank you for shining the light on the residents of the Methodist Home of DC." From 2012-2016, fifth graders participated in community engagement activities at three retirement homes—including the Methodist Home, now the Forest Hills Senior Home. They performed concerts and shared science, math, and history projects with the residents. "We loved the partnership with Maret's students," reflects Forest Hills Program Organizer Janell Miller. "They brought joy and energy to our residents. The kids were such shining stars that they lit up the room, probably the reason the lighthouse was chosen." The lighthouse, a gift to the students during their first year of service at the Methodist Home, represents the enduring spirit of Maret's community engagement.



A RELIC OF GAMES GONE BY

Maret's game days were once a frantic scramble, recall coaches Mike Engelberg and Antoine Williams. Free periods vanished as they raced to DC fields to paint lines on the fields for upcoming games. The non-regulation-sized field at Duke Ellington presented unique challenges. "There is a spot of gold paint on the bricks, and that is where I would center the 50-yard line," Coach Engelberg remembers. "We always had to tell the refs to avoid relying on the field markers since the yardage markers were slightly off." Maret's field striper, a relic of a bygone era, will soon be retired. The new Barrett Fields will mercifully spare future coaches the off-campus dash and the pressure of prepping unconventional playing surfaces. Go Frogs!

WRITTEN IN STONE



The story of the carved stone face greeting visitors on the second floor of Woodley began nearly 30 years ago with art teacher Cindy Hutnyan and Carl Sukenik '96. Sukenik recalls, "In high school, I made a point to take an art class every semester. And while I wasn't a naturally talented artist, I enjoyed the process of making art and the opportunity to use a different part of my brain. My art periods were always towards the end of the day, typically after my hardcore academic classes and before baseball practice." Hutnyan remembers Sukenik as "a talented art student with a good sense of form, design, and craft." Sukenik originally envisioned a Roman bust but shifted to a head in the style of Easter Island carvings "Ms. Hutnyan was always so interested in our process and outcome. She provided artistic and technical guidance, but she never presented it as the answer. It was always just one possible approach of which there could have been many." The resulting sculpture became part of Maret's permanent collection. Sukenik reflects, "I think it's important and poetic that there's a sculpture in the office that was made by a student 30 years ago who wasn't naturally gifted at art but was given wonderful guidance by a teacher, the latitude to make mistakes by the institution, and a sense of grit from his parents to keep working and make something good."

LEAVE YOUR MARK

After the 2003 campus fire and subsequent renovation, the new art rooms were painted a fresh, clean white. They were calling out for creativity. "Students would finish their project, and they didn't have enough time to start something new before the unit changed, so they would start drawing on the pillar," recalls teacher Carlotta Hester '86. There is a long history of adorning the walls of the school—as the many murals throughout the campus attest—but this pillar is a testament to a more spontaneous creative spark. The pillar is adorned with pictures, designs, and signatures from years of middle school students who have left their mark on the school. The practice has slowly ebbed as the height of the blank space far exceeds the reach of most young arms, which begs the question: what will be the next art pillar at Maret?



WHEN PIGS FLY

Physics isn't usually associated with the impossible, like flying pigs. It's a science dedicated to understanding nature and the properties of matter and energy. However, in the Maret physics lab, pigs do fly. As science teacher Jennifer Groppe explains, "The flying pigs are used to study circular motion. Students measure the speed of the pig using two methods and calculate the percent difference between the two values. And what better to help visualize circular motion than an animal that would never fly in reality?" But why, one might ask, do we salute what is known to be impossible? Groppe continues, "Learning should be joyful, and a flying pig is fun!"



IN BIOTECHNOLOGY: TECHNIQUES AND APPLICATIONS, UPPER SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN CUTTING-EDGE LABORATORY TECHNIQUES AND THE SKILLS REQUIRED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL BENCH SCIENTIST

Discovering Your Calling Through Bio-tech



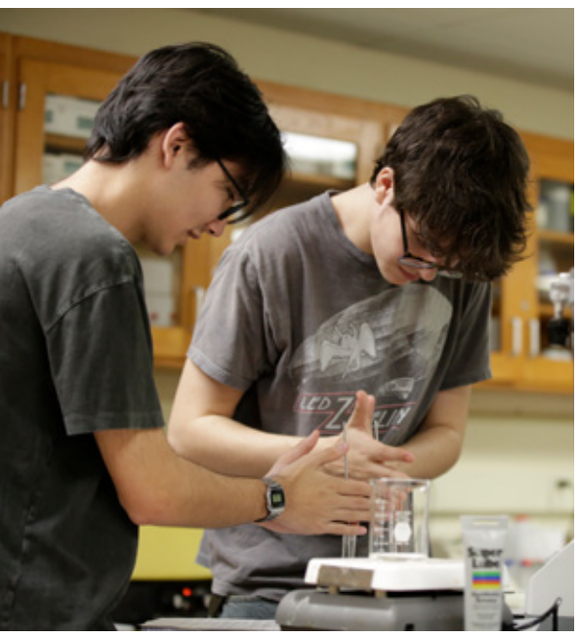
Students purify green fluorescent protein from bacteria, which must be done under UV light.



nology

STORY BY
SARAH VALENTE, P '05, '10

"You would be surprised how many young people don't see themselves as scientists until they immerse themselves in lab work. Suddenly, they discover that there is much more to being a scientist than acing book learning. Top-notch lab skills open doors many students have never considered."



Above: Students prepare to streak bacteria on a Petri dish. Opposite: Doc White demonstrates how to use an inoculating loop, which helps spread bacteria on a Petri dish as thinly as possible. The goal is to ensure colonies remain separate and that they contain clones of the original bacterium.

When a student starts to see a possible science career in their future, Glenn (Doc) White feels special satisfaction.

White has taught at Maret for 16 years. Over that time, he has seen numerous students enroll in his course with some trepidation. He has observed that their attitudes change dramatically over the course of the semester-long class as they acquire the ability to function, confidently, efficiently, accurately, and imaginatively in the laboratory setting.

When White arrived at Maret, the Biotechnology: Techniques and Applications course was already on offer; it had been originated years earlier by science team member Dr. Kerry O'Brien. White, a seasoned researcher, brought his lab-intense perspective to the class, making modifications over several semesters before settling on the format for this cutting-edge course now being offered.

Among the elements that set the Maret's biotechnology class apart is the fact that it is not taught like a traditional high school science class with a lecture/lab/test structure. According to White, "I envisioned our class would focus on lab smarts. You can be the strongest book-smart science student, but if you can't get viable results in the lab, you are not going to be a bench scientist." This class challenges students to prove that they can get serious work done, not just in theory, but more importantly at the bench.

When White began teaching this class, enrollment was low, attracting six or fewer upper school students each fall semester. He is grateful to Maret for believing in the class while he worked to expand its reach. "I give Maret tremendous credit for offering a class of this nature—so atypical for a non-STEM high school—and for supporting it even when the enrollment was small." Concerned that support could eventually fade, White called upon his last class of four students to encourage others to register for the following year. "Boy, did they do a great job," he reflects, "We wound up with 18 kids the following semester!" The class is currently capped at 12 students per section but has grown to three sections per fall semester. This number allows White to give the level of personal guidance and oversight the course demands.

Students who take White's class may find themselves considering a career in the sciences for the first time. It is not, however, White's goal to nudge them in that direction. "I can point out options or pathways of study they may not have considered. But I do that with a gentle touch. It's not my place to channel a young person in a particular direction. After all, it's their life." That said, White naturally takes pleasure in watching students reevaluate the sciences as a post-Maret option, based on the advanced skills and deep aptitude they acquire in this immersive laboratory experience.





Advanced Techniques

Because lab-centered classes like this are exceedingly rare at the high school level (it is a format that is not compatible with most high school schedules), White's students have a leg up when applying for competitive summer internships. In fact, Maret's biochemistry curriculum mimics the sought-after internship program offered by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Notes alum Richard Fuisz '13 "It's always hard to say what parts of your life will have the most impact, but Doc White's biotech class, in retrospect, was massively impactful. The hands-on experience I got in that class gave me a small but meaningful advantage in getting into labs in college. I already had experience holding pipettes and working with some of the most common types of lab procedures. Familiarity with biotechnology eased my introduction to bioengineering coursework; much of my initial hands-on lab work at Stanford overlapped with experiences I had in Doc White's class."

Over the course of seven lab cycles, seniors explore the many techniques used in biotechnology. They develop an understanding of how these techniques are used in scientific research while performing lab-focused projects centered around DNA and proteins. They extract, clone, and analyze DNA and proteins, amplify their own DNA using the polymerase chain reaction, and conduct forensic analysis of crime-scene DNA. They also learn to use specific software to help with biomedical research.

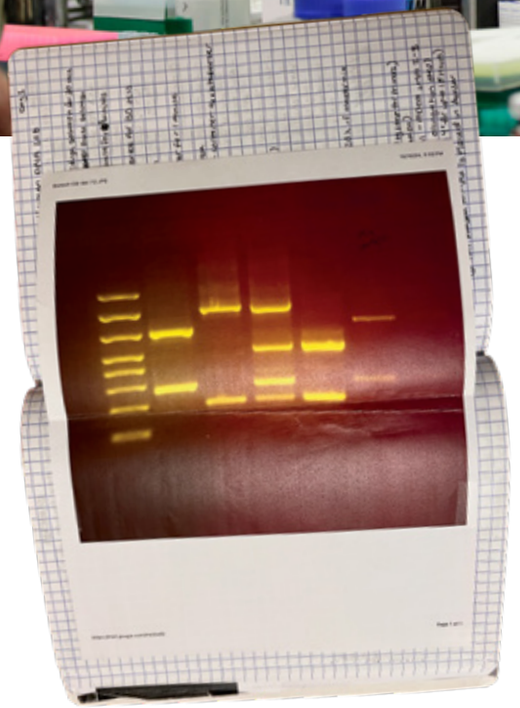
A year of upper school biology is the only prerequisite for the class. White kicks off each lab cycle with a review of the biology on which the project depends. The focus then moves to the laboratory, where for several days, students conduct their work to complete the lab. Every unit ends with a class-wide debrief of the results. Students learn to function independently in the laboratory with minimal scaffolding. They are also expected to maintain a detailed lab notebook throughout the term. To close the semester, students choose a final research project and give an oral presentation of the results.

CSI: Maret!

For this specific lab cycle, White's class becomes a DNA forensics lab. Kits purchased online provide five biological samples for a simulated DNA profiling lab. One sample is designated as coming from the crime scene and four from suspects. Working in teams of five, each student tests a sample to see if there is a match. This forensics test uses the Polymerase Chain Reaction* (PCR) to amplify the amounts of DNA obtained from the crime scene and from the suspects. After the PCR amplification, the samples are analyzed on an agarose gel to see if any of the suspects' DNA matches that found at the crime scene. This test is one of multiple DNA forensics tests currently used by law enforcement in the US.

During the debrief, students look at all the data collected to determine which





Left: **A student prepares to introduce pGLO plasmid (containing the GFP gene) into bacteria. The bacteria will then synthesize protein.** **Opposite:** **Purified GFP bacteria glows green under ultraviolet light.**

Above: **This page from a student's lab book shows primary data comparing DNA samples from the CSI lab. The DNA is visualized using SYBR™ Safe DNA Gel Stain and blue light. One of the four suspect samples shown matches the one taken from the crime scene. Another sample was purposefully contaminated to demonstrate the susceptibility of this technique to contamination.**

suspect's DNA matches that found at the crime scene. After that, the students research the Innocence Project's website to determine the demographics of Americans exonerated through DNA evidence. Founded in 1992, the Innocence Project is a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted individuals through DNA testing and other scientific advancements. It's an eye-opening experience when the class realizes how many wrongly accused people have been exonerated thanks to DNA.

Mini Me?

Successful results are not guaranteed by the second PCR-based biotechnology project. In this lab, students attempt to use PCR to clone a specific region of human chromosome 16. This region, the PV92 locusis intergenic and may contain an inheritable element known as an Alu transposon.

This small piece of "jumping DNA" has been in the primate genome for approximately 65 million years. Its biological significance remains a subject of interest as it is not entirely clear. What is known, however, is that it is inherited from parents in classical Mendelian genetics fashion, and so an individual may be alu+/+, alu+/-, or alu-/-. The 34 students in the three recent sections of White's class enjoyed a collective 70% success rate. Despite the challenges of this lab, students who managed a successful cloning were naturally thrilled. "Success with this lab demands exceptional focus and exacting attention to the instructions," observes White.

Silence, Please.

Perhaps the most trail-blazing lab conducted in White's class involves editing an active bacteria gene.

In 2020, two women scientists, Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna, were awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for discovering one of gene technology's sharpest tools: the CRISPR-Cas9 genetic scissors. CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Palindromic Repeats) -Cas9 is a gene-editing technology that makes it possible to turn on or off genes in cells and organisms quickly and with relative ease.

Using the CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technique, students attempt to turn off—silence—an integral bacterial gene known as the lacZ gene. When the lacZ gene is active, it codes for the beta-galactosidase enzyme which catalyzes a chemical reaction that produces a blue product. The bacteria turn blue and are easily visible by eye. When effectively silenced, the chemical reaction does not occur, and the bacteria are their natural cream color.

*Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is a laboratory technique for rapidly producing (amplifying) millions to billions of copies of a specific segment of DNA, which can then be studied in greater detail.



This recent discovery has unparalleled implications for healthcare and is being studied for its potential to help manage or even cure some cancers, as well as cystic fibrosis, HIV-AIDS, sickle cell anemia, and more.

Rigorous and Relevant

Science department chair, Reyna Pratt, is a committed advocate of the biotechnology class. "It is quite unusual for a school to offer access to these kinds of advanced equipment and experiments. It offers students a hands-on experience unlike any other class, and it enables them to become well-versed in current scientific issues, such as gene editing, in a way that goes deeper than any lecture class could, especially for this age group." Pratt points to the technique of micropipetting, where students learn to work with microliter amounts of liquids, a technique used in many university labs. She also remarks on the advanced applications the students use, such as the purification of proteins, which mimics how insulin and human growth hormones, for example, are produced for medicinal purposes.

Inspiring, rigorous, and relevant to current science beyond the classroom, Doc White's biotechnology class offers students unique opportunities to challenge themselves and explore the possibilities of lab science.

BEYOND MARET



ALEYAH LEWIS '23

Capitalizing on Biotech Experience

2023 Maret graduate Aleyah Lewis has always been interested in science. She credits the work she did in White's class for preparing her for her undergraduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as for two consecutive summer internships at the National Institute of Aging, under the aegis of NIH. Not only did her experience in biotechnology at Maret give her the confidence to navigate the hypercompetitive application and interview processes, but she also feels Maret's advanced biotech course gave her an advantage over peers when it came to tackling challenging lab work. "I had unique experiences like working with micropipettes and running PCR tests, which most recent high school graduates and many college undergrads don't have walking into the lab." Aleyah is using her interests and experiences to fuel her double major in health and society and premed. "At Maret, I was working with PCR gels prepared by Doc White. Now I am making PCR gels myself, feeling comfortable and self-assured," she remarks.

DEVELOPING PLANNING SKILLS

LESSONS IN WRITING

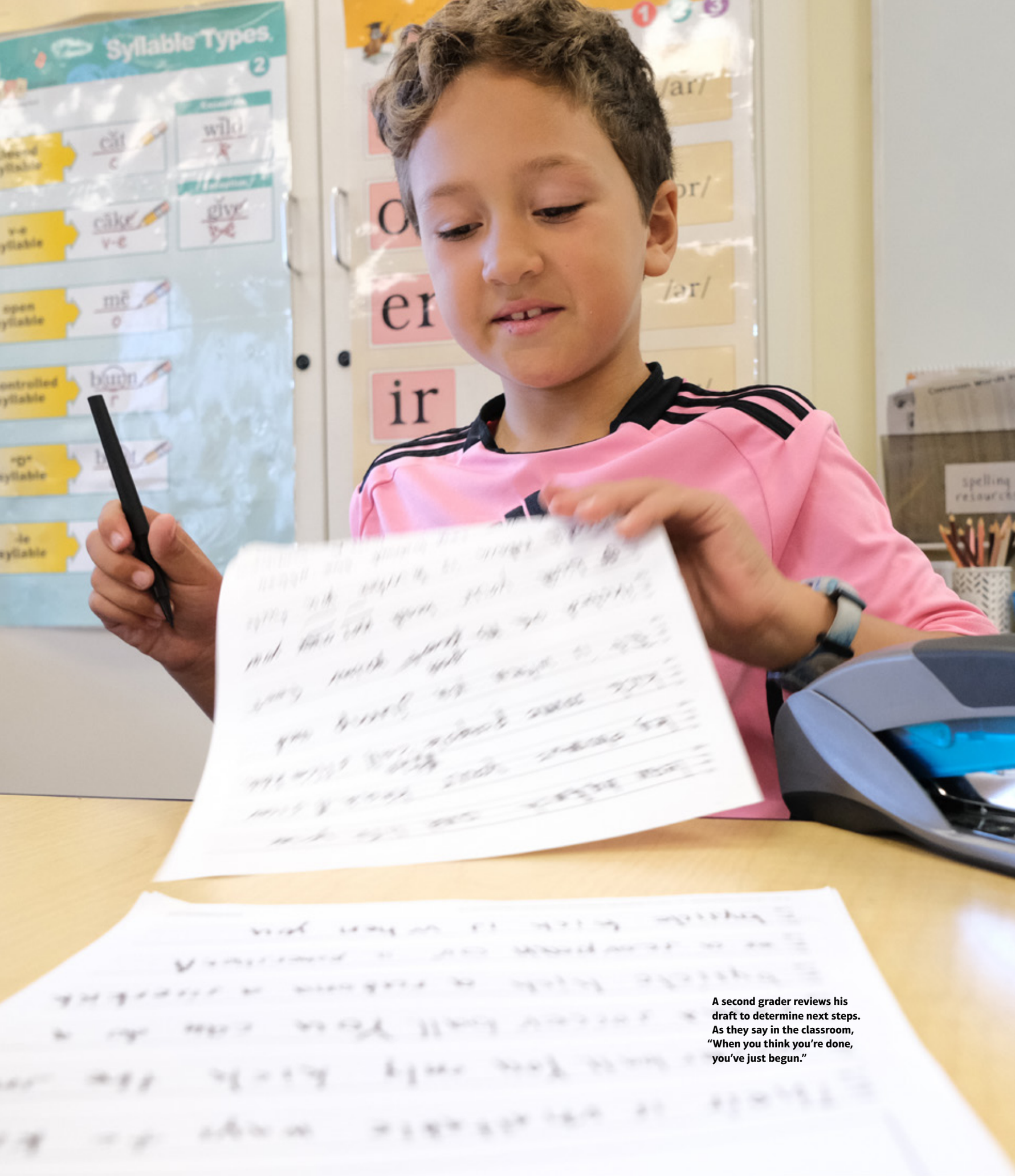
KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

STORY BY
AMY SHERIDAN POTTS,
Lower School Reading and Learning Specialist

Artificial intelligence is reshaping many aspects of our lives, including how we write. With simple prompts, writers of all skill levels can use programs like ChatGPT or Gemini to synthesize information and generate written content at lightning speed. Although far from perfect, AI's efficiency guarantees it as a mainstay of future communication. Rapid advances in technology promise it will improve over time.

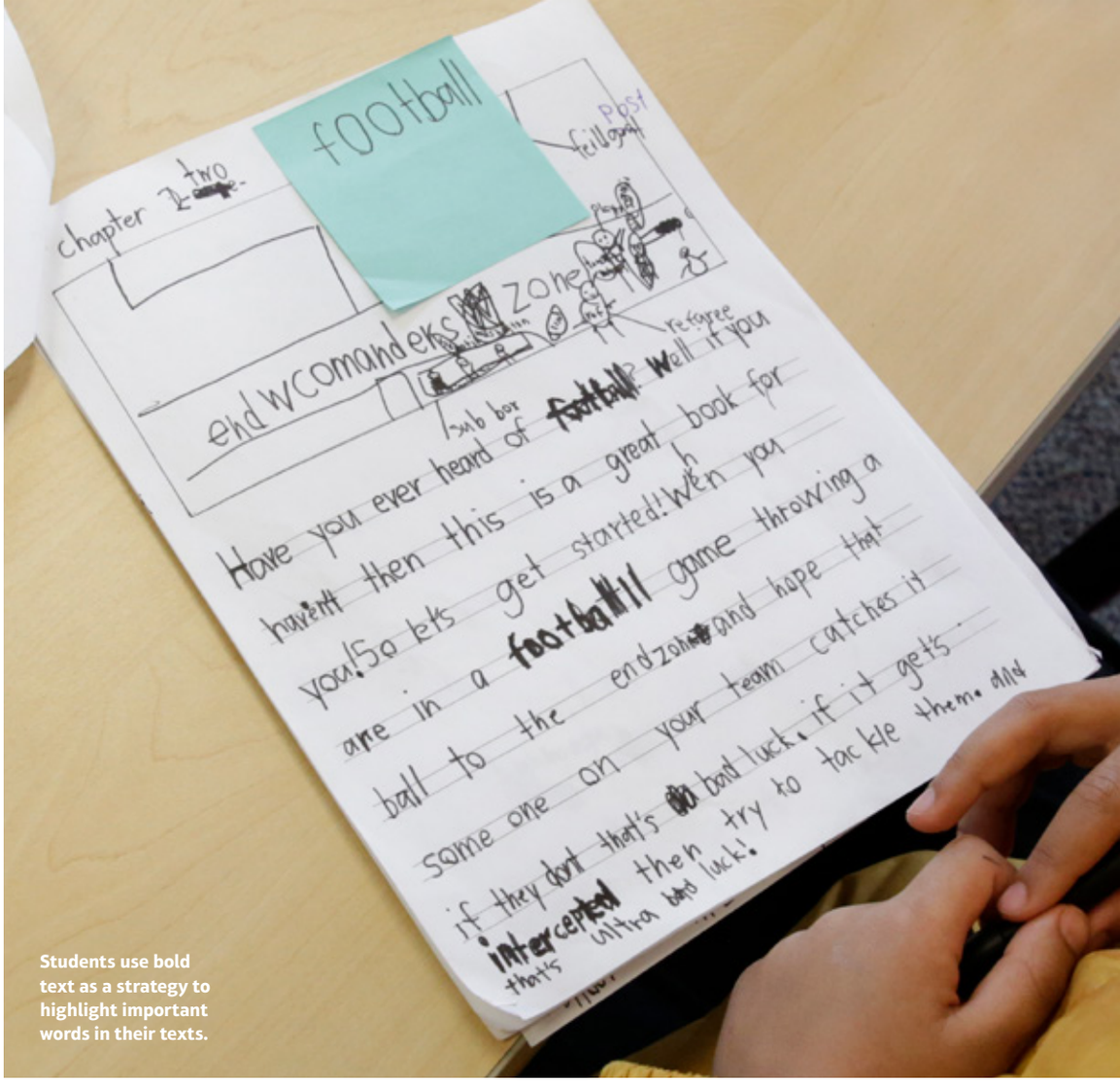
WORKING TOGETHER

Unable to create new ideas or bring a unique perspective to existing ones, AI's impact on creative forms like the novel, poetry, and drama will most likely continue to have limits. However, its ability to summarize research, organize information, and quickly find content for elaboration make it a potentially useful tool for many other forms of writing. This raises questions about the future of nonfiction writing and how we teach nonfiction writing to young children.



A second grader reviews his draft to determine next steps. As they say in the classroom, "When you think you're done, you've just begun."

A peek inside Maret's lower school shows that explicit nonfiction writing instruction prepares students to become strong writers and thinkers who will one day be capable of evaluating AI-formulated text to ensure it matches their intention, audience, and ideas. It also teaches children important lessons that extend beyond the writing classroom. As students work through the writing process in their nonfiction writing units, they learn how to organize their thinking, connect and communicate with others, and persevere through challenging tasks.



Students use bold text as a strategy to highlight important words in their texts.

LESSON #1

"A GOAL WITHOUT A PLAN IS JUST A WISH"

There's a buzz of excitement in Amanda Amaral's second grade classroom. Her students have just learned that they will be writing a second book for their nonfiction writing unit, and this time their book will contain chapters and a table of contents! The prospect of writing books that more closely resemble the books they read in and outside of class appeals to these new-to-chapter-book readers.

In preparation for this work, today's writing lesson focuses on breaking a topic into subtopics. Amaral projects the cover of an engaging informational text about volcanoes onto the white board and invites the class to share smaller topics related to volcanoes. As their ideas pour out, the children work together to determine which subtopics are weighty enough for a chapter and which are better as details within a chapter. When Amaral opens to the book's table of contents, her students are pleased to see many of the subtopics they named.

Next, Amaral instructs each student to think of a topic from their expert list that can be divided into at least three subtopics. These lists, generated at the start of the unit, contain topics students know and care a lot about. They range from tennis to Serbian food. Amaral gives her students a few minutes to think before she gives her next direction: "Writers, turn to your partner and share your subtopics. You can list them across your fingers. Help each other! Make sure your partner has enough to say about each subtopic to turn it into a chapter."

The students shift their positions on the carpet and quickly assemble into pairs. As partners listen and offer feedback, their books begin to take shape. Later, at their tables, students jot their chapter titles on Post-it notes and think about how best to order their chapters. They arrange and rearrange their sticky notes on the top of the pages in their blank writing booklets until they have found their book's form.

Developing Planning Skills

In each grade of the Lower School, students experience similar lessons within the four to five writing units they are taught each year. They learn how to write in a variety of genres including narrative, informational, opinion, and essay writing. In each unit, they receive explicit instruction in the writing process: how to generate ideas, plan, draft, revise, and edit their writing. At different ages and stages of development, children are more ready for instruction in one aspect of the writing process over another.

For second graders, whose executive functioning skills are still forming, making a plan is hard. Yet, generally speaking, these seven- and eight-year-olds love order, dislike open-ended assignments, have perfectionistic tendencies, and value their end products. Teaching the planning phase of writing allows them to create the structure they crave, helps them work through the writing process with greater focus, prevents them from too many false starts, and guarantees a finished product of which they can be proud.

Writing conferences reinforce these planning skills. At least once a week each

HOOKING THE READER



Writing partners give each other feedback after a lesson on how to interest your reader at the start of a new chapter.

student meets with their teacher for a one-on-one check-in on their writing progress. The conference follows a predictable format. It begins with the teacher asking the student what they're working on that day and, regardless of their answer, the follow-up question, "What's your plan?"

One day, before sending her students back to their tables to continue their work, Amaral projects a quote from writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: "A goal without a plan is just a wish."

Through exercises and reminders like these, the second graders are learning a valuable life lesson: planning helps when you are faced with large or complex tasks. With time and practice, planning will become habit for them and a skill that they can carry with them throughout their academic career and beyond. Whether it's running for student council, tackling a personal fitness goal, or navigating the college admissions process—they'll know that their goal will be more attainable, the process will be smoother, and their outcome will be better with a plan!

LESSON #2
KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

After the second graders plan and draft at least two nonfiction chapter books from their expert list, they are asked to choose one of their books to revise and edit with an audience in mind. In this case, their audience will be a kindergarten buddy.

Their teachers know that sharing their books with the kindergartners will motivate the second graders to do their best work. The teachers also know that writing for a younger audience will require the second graders to think hard about their topics and how best to explain them. They will need to hook their reader to gain their interest in a topic they may or may not be familiar with and use descriptive language to help their reader picture new ideas. They will also need to use and explain topic-specific vocabulary and present information in an engaging and easy-to-understand way. Their next series of writing lessons will teach students these skills.

Second graders are at an age where they are more capable of this higher-level work. Most seven- and eight-year-olds have entered what developmental psychologist Jean Piaget named the concrete operational stage of development. One of the hallmarks of this stage is decentering. Children become less egocentric and better able to think about things the way others see them. The second graders will need to think about how they can appeal to their kindergarten audience. Of course, seven- and eight-year-olds are still very self-centered, so encouraging them to think about why their topic matters to them helps them to see why their topic might matter to someone else.

Hooking the Reader

The second graders gather on the rug once again. This time it is for a lesson on writing an introduction that hooks your reader. Amaral begins her lesson by asking the class the purpose of an introduction. Sperry's hand shoots up. "It's a chapter at the beginning of a book that welcomes you in," she explains. Sperry understands that a good writer considers and connects with their reader. From here, the students learn a variety of strategies to, in Willa's words, "welcome their reader in."

Next door, in Clara Utz's second grade classroom, students are learning to hook their readers by introducing their topic with a question. Utz projects the introduction to the book *If You like Robots, Then You Should Be…* by May Nakamura and shows her students how the author begins her first chapter with a question. Utz then rewrites the introduction to her own nonfiction book about ice cream to model this strategy. The students easily apply the questioning strategy, but Utz quickly notices that many of their introductions are flat: *Do you like soccer? If so, read this book. Where is Stowe? Stowe is a place in Vermont. Have you ever cooked before? You will love it.*

She interrupts the children and brings their attention back to the robot book. They look more closely at the introduction for ideas and inspiration. When they go back to revise their introductions a second time, many follow their questions with



Teacher Amanda Amaral and a student hold a writing conference.

an interesting fact that communicates the importance of their topic. Hendrix and Shira found success with this strategy in their books about the ocean and space.

Do you like to play in the water?
The ocean has lots of water.
The ocean is a body of water that covers 71 % of the earth.
This book will teach you all about the ocean.

Have you ever seen the stars?
The stars are part of space.
Space is a big place that goes on forever.
There are more stars in space than grains of sand.

Guiding the Reader

In another lesson, students are guided by Utz to identify important vocabulary words related to their topic. They revisit the robot book to see how the author explains the meaning of key words by including definitions and examples. Students use their black flair pens to make their expert words bold and add them to glossaries—just one of many features they will include in their books.

Others like chapter titles, headings, diagrams, charts, maps, illustrations, and captions are second nature to the second graders. In their reading lessons, they have been studying the important role text features play in organizing and conveying ideas and information. They have practiced reading the whole page, not just the lines of text, and identifying how authors use text features to reinforce key concepts and ideas.

Visual elements are not new to second graders. Like many lower school students, they devour graphic novels. The graphic novel format has become so popular that many genres, including nonfiction, now contain graphic elements. In fact, many of the informational books that the second graders have been reading in class are bursting with visual elements. These graphics allow the reader to absorb content more easily and reflect the kinds of image-heavy texts that are most common in today's digital age.

The second graders are quick to incorporate the features they see in their nonfiction example texts—catchy alliterative titles and headings, pullout fact boxes, and speech bubbles highlighting an important concept. They know what helps them to stay engaged when reading and suspect that these text features will appeal to their younger classmates too.



Skills and Applications

As second graders write for their kindergarten audience, they not only strengthen their nonfiction writing skills but also learn important lessons about communication in general. Having a hook, for example, is not just an effective way to start a book chapter but a great way to engage a peer in conversation at the lunch table or on the playground.

Second graders are also learning that word choice is important. Rather than launch into a conversation assuming that the person you are talking with knows your topic, taking a step back to consider their experience and background knowledge, and providing explanation and examples when necessary, will make for a more productive conversation.

Finally, children learn that tone matters. Just like in life, your tone in writing should match your audience and objective.

These communication skills have endless applications: explaining the rules of a game to a friend, helping a younger sibling with their homework, navigating a conflict with a peer. Thoughtful consideration of tone leads to more productive outcomes and fewer hurt feelings. Writing is great practice in effective communication.

LESSON #3

NOTHING GOOD COMES EASY

"You think it's going to be easy, and then it's not." Ophelia states as she struggles to transfer to paper the ideas that came so easily when discussing them with her writing partner.

Truer words could not be spoken. Writing is hard for writers of all ages, but especially challenging when the skills it requires are just being developed. In her book, *The Knowledge Gap*, education writer Natalie Wexler writes about the high cognitive load that writing demands and describes the discrete subskills it involves on both a large and small scale.

At the macro level, students need to figure out what to say, how to organize

their ideas, and what details and evidence to include in support of those ideas. At the micro level, students must apply a myriad of foundational writing skills, from the motor skills involved with handwriting to decisions about word choice, syntax, and grammar.

The fact that these processes are all happening simultaneously can be overwhelming for young writers. Writing about topics they care about helps make this difficult task easier.

The Role of Choice

Choice is a key component of each lower school writing unit. Students are taught how to write in a particular genre, not to an assigned topic. Although they won't always have a choice in what they write as they move on from the Lower School, being able to select their topics at this critical time of skill building leads to greater investment in their work and greater ownership over the process.

Malia, for example, takes pride in writing her book about fishing. Jacob and Graham have bonded over their passion for soccer. Azai is discovering that writing about video games, which are only allowed on weekends, is the second best thing to playing them. Gabriel is full of facts about dinosaurs and now has a place to share them. And Ali Nico is celebrating his Moroccan heritage by teaching others about the geography, food, and sports of his father's native land. The excitement these second graders feel for their writing topics is palpable and helps buoy them through the challenges.

And there are challenges. Around the room others are feeling Ophelia's frustration. Hendrix has just realized that most of his chapters are about the beach but his topic is the ocean, and Shira is trying to keep her audience in mind as she writes her book about space but wonders how you explain the atmosphere to a kindergartener?

Teachers and Tools to Help

Luckily, these writers have help. Each student will meet with their teacher during the week for a brief but important writing conference. These conferences take place at the students' tables with the teachers usually kneeling next to them to highlight something commendable and also find a place that needs some work. In Shira's case, it's explaining an abstract idea in a concrete way.

Utz points to a sentence at the bottom of Shira's page and suggests that this might be a good start to an explanation of the atmosphere.

"The atmosphere is like a bubble around the earth," the sentence reads.

Utz suggests Shira move that sentence to the beginning of her chapter and then expand on it. Energized by this idea, Shira races to the supply station at the front of the room and returns with scissors and tape. She cuts this sentence out and tapes it to the top of her page—a second grade version of cut and paste. With some guidance from Utz, Shira elaborates on this sentence so that her reader can begin the chapter with a better understanding of this key concept.

Sometimes teacher guidance takes the form of pointing a writer to a tool in the room that they can use independently. Their tools include a wall of words that second graders use frequently in their writing but tend to misspell, posters with the phonics patterns they have learned thus far, and charts that remind them of the skills and strategies they have honed throughout the unit. Several students have laminated note cards on their desk that their teacher has created to remind them of individual goals.

A Community of Writers

In addition to their teachers, second grade writers also have each other to help them through the writing process. They turn and talk with their writing partners regularly during lessons, rehearse their thinking before drafting, give feedback for revising, and work through editing checklists searching for capitalization errors, misspelled words, and missing punctuation.

The class as a whole is also there to offer support and encouragement. Students are familiar with each others' pieces from the daily sharing that happens as part of each lesson and are enthusiastic about offering advice. After Shira found success with her chapter, she eagerly helped one of her tablemates reorder her sentences. The small class size and predictable sequence of each writing session creates a familiar structure and a feeling of belonging. End-of-unit celebrations, in which students share their final published work with one another further this sense of a writing community.

One morning Hendrix approaches his teacher to tell her he has finished his book. She congratulates him on this accomplishment and asks him how he feels about it.

"Sad," he replies. His response attracts the attention of a group of nearby students, who, like his teacher, seem both surprised and concerned.

"Why are you sad?" Utz asks.

"Because I don't get to work on my book anymore."

There is a collective sigh of relief, and the children smile. Utz assures Hendrix that there's always another book to write.



Lessons Learned

As they cycle through the steps of the writing process, second graders are learning what it means to be a writer and what it takes to do hard things. They are learning that writing is a big undertaking but also that big tasks can be broken down into smaller chunks. They are learning that it can feel frustrating when you can't figure out what to say or how to say it, but that in times of frustration you can look to friends for support and experts for advice and inspiration. Finally, they are learning that feedback can be hard to take but also that if you take it, your work almost always improves.

The Big Picture

Director's Note

When I first read the musical script of *Freaky Friday*, I found myself laughing as I fondly remembered the movie. Then, I put on the original cast recording with Tony Award-winning composer Tom Kitt's music and totally fell in love with the show. The music is complex with gorgeous melodies, a perfect venue for a story full of humor and heart. The show tells the tale of a family in transition—one that has recovered from deep loss. The mother and daughter develop over the course of this one day due to their magical swap of perspectives to find a new meaning of family. How cool would it be to actually walk in the shoes of your child or parent to see what life is really like on the "other side"? We all can learn from these themes of empathy and understanding. I just finished reading Adam Grant's *Think Again*, which notes the power of questioning our opinions and rethinking beliefs, while opening our minds to those with differing perspectives. As we educate our young people in this complicated world, these are important lessons; ones grounded in the need for more respect, acceptance, and love.

—Director of Theater and Drama Progams Eser Ozdeger




ACE.
SOIL CONE



Students prepare community garden beds for spring planting.

STORY BY BY
LESLEY YOUNGE,
Humanities Teacher

REAL LEARNING, REAL IMPACT

BUILDING A STRONG, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

COMMUNITY

TWO OF MARET'S CORE VALUES celebrate the individual and connectedness. Throughout a student's time here, they are asked to consider how their unique skills and interests can be of service to the wider community. This spirit of interconnectedness drives Maret's community engagement program and sits at the heart of a purpose-filled education, especially in Middle School.



The middle school years are a particularly ripe time for sowing the seeds of service. As adolescents notice the world outside of themselves and their friends, they start to identify issues in the world that they care about. Meanwhile, their skills are advancing, they are growing more independent, and they have more to offer service providers.

Carolyn Bottelier '09, currently serves as Director of Community Engagement, a role that helped draw her back to the Pond. She explains, "Our current vision in Middle School is each grade level focuses on a particular issue that is locally visible. There's a foundational lesson with historical context and vocabulary to establish a general understanding of why the issue has come to be. And then we introduce a partner organization who comes in and talks about their mission." With that partnership at the center, students learn to take many different forms of action. There is a role for everyone, and everyone can do their part.

EXPLORING THE WEB OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS

The term community engagement reflects the expansion of programming previously known as community service and service learning. More than a semantic change, this language reflects shifts in the approach that educators are taking to avoid what Bottelier calls "the harmfulness of volunteerism." Older models viewed service activities as separate from the academic program. The motivation was largely altruism and giving back from one's place of privilege out of obligation rather than connection.

Community engagement models see service as an integral part of a twenty-first-century education and the way we raise citizens who actively contribute to the places where they live and work. Starting in kindergarten, students at Maret are encouraged to look beyond themselves and recognize their roles in the broader community. Each grade level of the Lower School chooses a social problem to study and partners with organizations like A Wider Circle, Children's National Hospital, and Humane Rescue Alliance. With the partner's mission in mind, classes plan projects that support their programming. Through these experiences, our youngest learners widen their lens and deepen their awareness of the work communities need to do in order to care for everyone.

When students get to Middle School, curricular and community connections continue to grow. Fifth graders plant and tend the new community garden space located on the terrace while learning about food justice with organizations like GreenScheme at The Well At Oxon Run, a community farm and wellness space in Ward 8. In sixth grade, students continue to explore the natural world by visiting Rock Creek Park, Tregaron, and local watershed areas. As they conduct scientific analyses of the water and

species in the watershed, collect acorns for planting, or remove trash and invasive species, they are experiencing the bonds between humans, creatures, and natural resources.

Fifth Grade Dean Rob Achtmeyer sees community engagement as "pivotal in fulfilling Maret School's mission" because it fosters "a sense of responsibility, empathy, and awareness of the world."

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING AND ACTION

Maret's community engagement program builds intentional, two-way relationships in which non-profit staff bring their expertise and co-lead activities. The goal is to cultivate lasting connections between students, faculty, and local nonprofit leaders, all working together to tackle social issues in the area.

Year after year, divisions and grades recommit to their partners and become trusted allies in fulfilling their mission. These experiences can be cyclical as well. During middle school ISW or a senior project, students might return to work with a partner they first encountered in Lower School, building on past experiences and deepening their level of participation. These trusted partnerships provide a supportive yet challenging environment for students to practice building community, learning from both successes and setbacks, and growing in empathy.

In Middle School, each grade has a specific community partner whose mission drives two months of exploration both on and off campus during a weekly Flex period. What do these partnerships and periods of dedicated community engagement look like? This past winter, the entire seventh grade class filed into the theater to meet their new partners in learning and community action. Taking the stage were team members from ReACT DC who were there to launch the seventh grade community engagement unit supporting newly arrived refugees from Afghanistan, as well as Central and South America. Some of the staff on stage were refugees themselves and now in a position to help others.

"It was important to invite the organization's staff in to help teach our students because they



Left: Students collect acorns for the Potomac Conservancy seed saver project. Right: Students become citizen scientists and conduct water quality and habitat health assessments in Rock Creek Park with Jeff Chandler of Nature Forward.

are the experts and they have the answers," says Seventh Grade Dean Jua Fluellen. "That's what makes the experience authentic—hearing people's actual stories." This partnership aligns well with the seventh grade humanities curriculum, which covers world geography, history, and current events in history class, while exploring the theme of belonging and exclusion in English class. The whole grade reads *Refugee* by Alan Gratz and *Butterfly Yellow* by Thanhhà Lại, stories that feature refugee protagonists.

These connections to other parts of the academic program are important. The eighth grade focus on equity in early childhood education is a good example, as students partner with Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Learning Center. After hearing from Mazique staff about the center's work to support families, eighth graders learn about the importance of early literacy and how to read to young children. Then, they visit the Head Start program in small groups and put those strategies into action.

To deepen her student's connection to their area of focus, Eighth Grade Dean Kara Kling





"I think the concept of **community engagement** is fundamental to Maret's mission, and our Community Engagement curriculum is an important part of that, but isn't—and shouldn't be—the extent of it."

EIGHTH GRADE DEAN KARA KLING

ACTION

organized spring book clubs centered on the genre "school stories," novels in which the school setting functions almost like a character in the book. Kling reflects, "I think the concept of community engagement is fundamental to Maret's mission, and our Community Engagement curriculum is an important part of that, but isn't—and shouldn't be—the extent of it. The artists and speakers who present at assemblies, the field trips that we take to local institutions are all an important part of our engagement with the community, as are internal programs such as the eighth grade's Halloween carnival for the Lower School, the upper school peer tutors, and the like."

This year, there was also an opportunity to expand the Middle School's partnership with An Open Book Foundation, which brings authors, illustrators, and books to underserved schools. Last year, Maret helped AOB bring author-illustrator LeUyen Pham to Washington, DC. After Pham's visit to Maret, which included an assembly and art workshops, she went to two other schools in the area. The Middle School raised money to buy her books for those partner schools.



In April, Executive Director Heidi Powell came to campus to help eighth graders learn how AOB matches schools with authors and illustrators who will inspire their particular population. In groups, they sorted through picture books thinking about which students at which schools would be excited to read a particular story. These kinds of experiences add layers to a topic like educational equity. Students can see the broader landscape of organizations working on early literacy, each doing their part, and they can find more ways into the work.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTION

Reflection is a key part of any experiential learning activity and particularly those related to community engagement. Students need time to process the experience, integrate the skills gained, and prepare for next steps. Along the way students learn about themselves. "It's one thing to learn about this problem," says Bottelier, and "it's another thing to understand how do I fit into this, what is my role? What can I do going forward to either further educate others or continue to take action on my own?"

These are important questions because there are plenty of chances to get more involved in issues of interest once students enter the Upper School. Of middle school programming, Bottelier explains, "Not every student is going to connect with their assigned topic. Then, the goal is just for this to

Left: Students learn about matching books with schools from An Open Book Foundation during the literacy speaker series. Right: Students collect family supplies for the REACT DC Women's Program.

become a model of how they can engage with an issue. Look at the activities and conversations we are having and think about how it would apply to something that you feel very passionate about."

Community Engagement Day, Intensive Study Week (ISW), Senior Projects, and the required 60 hours of service (15 hours per year) to graduate are all opportunities for students to further engage in issues of interest in the Upper School. Those coming from middle school at Maret have a strong model for how to make those experiences meaningful and a long list of potential partners.

AN ONGOING EFFORT

Because communities and social issues are dynamic, the work to create a relevant and responsive engagement program is always evolving. The challenge is to create a structure that can accommodate changes in personnel, resources, partners, student interests, and issues of focus. "It's very fluid," says Bottelier. "The needs change from year to year, which is also a challenge, because when we want to establish a curriculum, we want it to be replicable, but the nature of this work is not that."

Bottelier says another big challenge is that many of the partner organizations are small with just a few staff members. Sometimes the demand for service experiences is higher than an organization's need. Funding is always welcome so philanthropic activities are a good start, but providing a balance with more experiential learning is key. As a DC-based school, riding the local and national political tides can also be a factor.

The sincere hope is that the community engagement experience at Maret is just the start, and that each student feels an authentic sense of connection and commitment to the social issues they have studied, the partnerships they have developed, and the work they have been a part of. The sum of all of these experiences can be a deep sense of care, an ability to see the bigger picture, and a desire to build community. These are skills students can take with them wherever they go next. The world will always need compassionate people who can connect and collaborate with others to make it a better place for all.

Many Different Ways to Help

Maret students learn the benefits and limitations of various ways to support our partners.

DIRECT ACTION is any activity that immediately addresses the needs of a community. It provides a sense of immediate accomplishment. The impact of the work and connections with the people being helped can be seen right away. However, it often requires a significant time commitment and may not address the root causes of a problem. *Example:* Maret eighth graders read to children at the Mazique Parent Child Center in support of the early literacy programs.

INDIRECT ACTION involves supporting an organization or cause without directly interacting with the beneficiaries. It is about working behind the scenes to facilitate the work of others. Indirect action is more flexible in terms of time commitment, but the impact of indirect action may not be immediately visible. *Example:* Maret sixth graders organize a bake sale to raise money for Baby 2 Baby, which will distribute essential supplies to victims of the fires in Los Angeles.

ADVOCACY focuses on changing the systems that create the problems in the first place. It's about raising awareness and influencing decision-makers. It can lead to systemic change and address the root causes of problems. It can also be a long and challenging process, and it can become frustrating to navigate communication and bureaucratic hurdles. *Example:* The seventh grade at Maret writes letters to DC City Council members in support of funding and housing for recently arrived refugees.

KEY PARTNERS

ReACT DC was founded in September 2021 by professional military spouses and veterans with backgrounds in law, intelligence operations, military service, education, and nonprofit work to assist Afghan allies after the fall of Kabul. In a short amount of time, they have set up several systems of support, including resettlement help, job assistance, and a women's program.

GreenScheme is focused on raising environmental awareness and empowering communities to make sustainable choices through education and hands-on initiatives, particularly by promoting urban gardening and healthy eating practices in underserved areas. They host our field trips to The Well at Oxon Run, DC Greens' one-acre community farm and wellness space. The Well at Oxon Run welcomes all community members to work in the soil, celebrate, and share experiences together.

The Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Learning Center is a child development center that assists parents in developing skills, obtaining knowledge, and becoming responsible advocates for their children's growth and development. Parents receive valuable tools that lead them and their families to complete self-sufficiency. It was the first infant center in DC and among the first to serve children with special needs. They also pioneered a Head Start program with a medical clinic as a result of a 20-year partnership with Howard University Hospital Pediatric Residency Program.

A CASE STUDY OF

Tangier Island



UPPER SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE RELIGION, POWER, AND SOCIAL CHANGE ELECTIVE CONSIDER THE FATE OF TANGIER ISLAND AND THE ROLES THAT RELIGION, DIALOGUE, AND EMPATHY PLAY IN FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE RISING TIDES AND THE ISLAND'S SHRINKING LANDMASS.

STORY BY
LINDA JOHNSON,
Former faculty



PHOTO: NNEHRING/ISTOCK



Left: Harbor, Tangier Island. right: Students examine key passages from Earl Swift's book, *Chesapeake Requiem*, to better understand how religion shapes the ways in which islanders view natural disasters.

Just 90 miles southeast of Maret, nestled among the bucolic shores of the Chesapeake Bay, sits Tangier Island. The 425 residents of this small, remote island are a tight-knit, hardworking, religious community, with a long history and families with roots that go back generations.

For hundreds of years, long before the arrival of Europeans, the island was thought to have been a fishing ground for several Algonquian-speaking indigenous tribes. It wasn't until late in the eighteenth century that the first permanent Anglo-American settler named John Crockett made his home there. Today, quite a few of the residents still carry the name Crockett, as well as other surnames of those first families, and many still adhere to a form of Methodism that was founded at that time.

On modern-day Tangier, islanders call on James "Ooker" Eskridge, their mayor since 2007, for representation, largely because he personifies much of their deeply held culture, values, and beliefs. He is also an extraordinarily astute and experienced commercial crabber, and along with his fellow watermen, has maintained the island's reputation as the best blue crab hotspot on the planet.

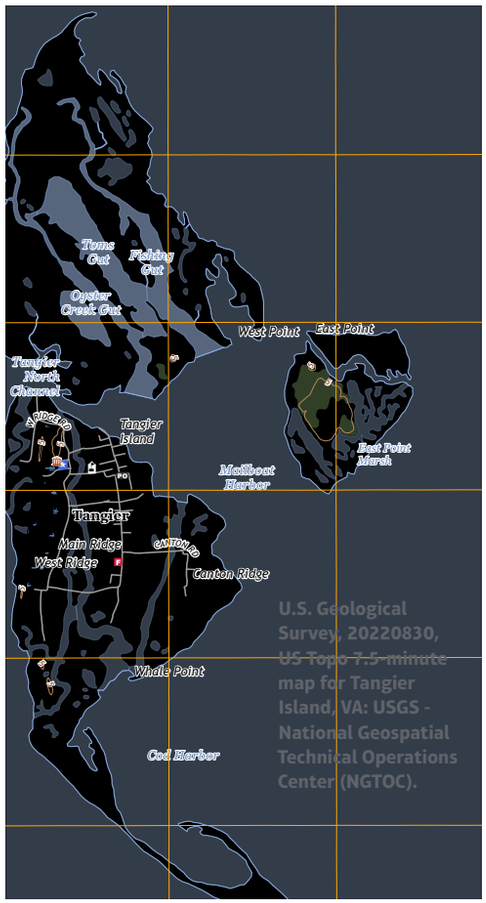
But the island is also in the spotlight for another reason. Over the past several decades, close to two-thirds of Tangier's landmass has been lost to the tides. Most everyone agrees that if this trajectory continues unabated, it all but guarantees that the whole of Tangier will be underwater in less than 25 years. But what should be done to save the island? It's a complex problem, especially when a majority of the residents, whose deeply held religious beliefs inform their viewpoint, heartily disagree with climate scientists about the cause of the impending disappearance of their home.

FRAMING QUESTIONS

At Al Gore's 2017 climate crisis town hall, Mayor Eskridge explains, "I'm not a scientist, but I'm a keen observer. And if sea level rise is occurring, why am I not seeing signs of it?" A sentiment he still holds today, attributing the phenomenon to erosion rather than climate change.

PHOTO: NICOLE R. YOUNG/SHUTTERSTOCK





> **“Despite differences, all people have hopes and desires and need patience and compassion. We are not going to solve problems if we focus on differences. We need to find common ground.”**
>
> **— HUMANITIES TEACHER KURT PRESCOTT**

“And unless we got a sea wall,” he continues, “we will lose our island. But back to the question, why am I not seeing signs of the sea level rise?”

Students in the upper school Religion, Power, and Social Change elective also have important questions: How can we collaborate with people to solve problems when we may have radically different beliefs and life experiences? What role does religion play in causing and solving societal problems? If we were in a position to help the people of Tangier Island, how should we go about doing that?

With multiple degrees in religious studies and more than 10 years of experience in independent schools, teacher Kurt Prescott has designed a course to equip students with the tools required to help address the complicated issues that are embedded in problems like the one Tangier Island is facing. “Religious literacy is not only about facts and dates and core practices, it is about understanding how religion shapes the way people approach the world,” says Prescott. “Religion is a language, and if we don’t understand the language, then we miss a lot of what drives people.”

THE BROAD VIEW

Students begin the course by taking a step back for a broader view and considering more general but pertinent questions like: What is religion? and How do people use religion to express underlying beliefs and values? The history of the major world religions, as well as American religion from colonial to more recent times, comes into play.

Students are asked to operate within three main premises that accentuate the complexity of religious study—first, religions evolve over time; second, they are internally diverse; and third, they are embedded in culture. Students write papers to assess the merits of essays that proclaim wide-ranging opinions about religion and culture. They also learn to express their own beliefs with freshly honed skills practiced through specific rubrics and a foundational framework.





The initial units of the course are carefully constructed. Prescott explains: "Part of keeping the classroom conducive to learning is separating out theology (devotional expression) from the study of religion. As soon as we bring statements that put forward some sort of truth about what a religion is or is not, or what constitutes a 'correct' form of a religious tradition, we are making a theological claim."

In the context of the Tangier Island case study, which comes later in the course, this means that students do not debate the version of Christianity practiced by the people who live there. Instead, they seek to understand the people's world view and what is possible in terms of moving forward to solve problems together.

DISCUSSION vs DEBATE vs DIALOGUE

Next, the meatier work of understanding the rules of engagement is introduced, as students delve into the differences between discussion, debate, and dialogue. Once these distinctions are grasped, they practice the art of dialogue with each other through a series of student-led Harkness discussions. Skills like finding places of agreement, discovering collective meaning, and validating others' experiences are emphasized.

By the end of the first semester, students start to realize the importance of bringing not just their brains, but their own feelings into the equation. Through classroom discussions, journaling, and other reflective activities, they take a good look at their own preconceptions and develop understanding across cultural divides. These exercises, along with the course's four proficiency goals (social agency, self-reflection, argumentation, and collaboration), help them build the confidence to move forward and engage with profoundly complex problems.

"This course offers an opportunity for students to become more empathetic in how they approach collaborative problem-solving," says Prescott. "Despite differences, all people have hopes and desires and need patience and compassion. We are not going to solve problems if we focus on differences. We need to find common ground."

On the impact of this course, Quinn DeFilippes '25 says, "The class did more than critique religion's historical impact; it also challenged my own skepticism. I realized that dismissing spirituality outright was as limiting as blindly accepting it. Through class discussions, I learned to appreciate the perspectives and motivations of religious practitioners, even if I did not share their beliefs."

A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR TANGIER ISLAND

The toolbox of resources with which students are now equipped has readied them for the deep dive ahead. But why ask juniors and seniors to grapple with complex and intense problems like climate change in the first place?

"The best sort of learning happens when relevance is self-evident." Prescott says. "I don't need to make an argument to students that the climate crisis is something



Left: Students use visual organizers to evaluate past efforts to connect with the Tangier community. These examples ultimately inform their own strategies for effective engagement. **Right:** In working to understand the complex dynamics on Tangier Island, students make regular use of anthropological thinkers, like Mary Douglas and Victor Turner, who are introduced earlier in the year.

> **“Through class discussions, I learned to appreciate the perspectives and motivations of relgious practitioners, even if I did not share their beliefs.”**
>
> — QUINN DEFILIPPES ’25

that the world should care about, which means we can focus directly on how to bring our new skill sets to the problem.”

The relevance of taking on serious issues that are occurring relatively close to home is not lost on students. In fact, a keener awareness of the challenges local communities are facing increases students’ ability to relate and engage with the people involved, and consequently, they are more likely to take action.

Prescott explains: “I’m a firm believer that there is a direct connection between a sense of place, belonging, and citizenship. This sense of place-based belonging strikes me as a critical component of building out a collective identity.”

With locality at the forefront, students examine a wealth of articles, videos, research papers, and excerpts from longer works—all illuminating the rich cultural heritage of their Tangier neighbors set against the looming demise of their beloved island. Students learn about efforts already underway to help avert this crisis. They consider advances made by people like Katharine Hayhoe, a Canadian climate scientist and evangelical Christian, who has worked with islanders and whose article, “How to Talk About Climate Change Across the Political Divide,” provides additional insight about constructive ways to forge unlikely alliances.

As they seek to evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches to engaging with communities around climate action, students are guided to consider the following questions: What is the strategy or approach to change? How do people feel about the approach? What behaviors and practices result from the approach?

Students are now ready for their assignment: An NGO has received money to help the people of Tangier address the effects of climate change. Students must create an engagement plan to guide the NGO in approaching the problem with the people who live on the island.

This final report is a persuasive essay in which they can apply the skills they have developed to help address this real-word crisis. Students start by determining the scope of their proposed solutions and then suggest ways the NGO could work with the community to achieve it. They offer recommendations for engagement that are thoughtful, well-researched, and efficacious. For example, some students have proposed building a substantial seawall around the island, not just to protect its shores, but because it directly addresses the problem no matter the cause, and it is at least a temporary solution supported by all the players involved. The seawall, they point out, has also become a symbol for common ground, demonstrating a sincere concern about a shared problem—an attribute that begins to build the trust so necessary in the work of climate advocacy.

While building critical problem-solving skills is at the center of this course, understanding more about the people of Tangier Island provides important lessons about the human condition. James Velasco ’26 reflects, “Even if you don’t agree with what they are saying, I respect their determination to keep their island and their religion alive.”

TOOLS OF ENGAGEMENT

No doubt, the Religion, Power, and Social Change course is a heavy lift, albeit a very rewarding one. Whether ruminating on a particularly difficult conundrum, adding a meaningful entry into a journal, exchanging controversial ideas with classmates, or surveying their own experiences and beliefs, students in this elective come away with new depths of understanding and the tools to actively empathize and engage with the human heart and its multitude of cultural and religious expressions.

STORY BY
CAROLYN LAW,
Director of Communications

WHEN WALLS TALK

AS THE VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT made plans to mark this spring's fiftieth All School Art Exhibition, they were thinking deeply about the purpose of exhibits, the many forms they can take, and the role they play in the development of artistic practice. They were also experimenting with new ways to use the walls of the school to engage students, our community, and the public.

There are now more opportunities than ever to view rotating installations of student art across Maret's campus throughout the year. From Woodley Gallery to the halls of the Lower School and two new exhibit spaces in the art hallway on the third floor of Talbott Hall, students and teachers are shaping conversations about art and ways of seeing. When art leaves the hands of the artist and goes up on a wall—who does it belong to? What is the process behind the art? and What is the role of the artist in society? are just a few of the questions animating these conversations.



>>
Second grade art reception







Metamorphosis **opened this spring in two locations on campus, the Woodley Gallery and the third floor gallery in Talbott Hall. The Art Seminar class shared work from three projects—*Layered Exploration, Something That Needs Fixing,* and *Figure Studies*.**

Center: Students stop to discuss *Metamorphosis* in Woodley Gallery.

Revealing the Learning Behind the Art

Woodley Gallery is one of the most public exhibition spaces on campus, with students, parents, and visitors passing through every day. While exhibits have been mounted in this historic space for years, the nature of the exhibits has evolved. Visual Arts Department Chair Cindy Santos Bravo describes the gallery's current function as "an educational space for the Visual Arts."

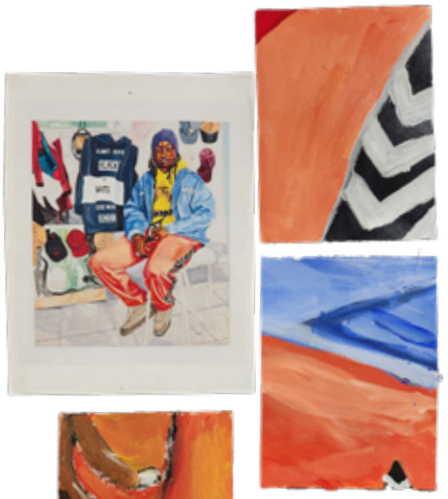
Teachers act as curators who reveal the learning behind the creativity. Not only do they carefully select and arrange the art, but they also incorporate wall text to explain assignments, highlight artistic processes, and share student statements to engage viewers. In these ways, "curation elevates the artists' voices," says Bravo.

Exhibitions as Events

In the Lower School, teacher Kali Haney has started a new tradition of hosting small art receptions in conjunction with exhibits. These celebratory events always feature refreshments to build anticipation and opportunities for the young artists to talk about their work with other students and faculty.

Interacting with viewers helps the artists understand that sharing their work and welcoming different perspectives are integral to the artistic process. And, when the viewers happen to be older students, these artists become even more serious and engaged: "They begin to think about themselves and their art in a whole new way," Haney says.





The installation process is often **collaborative**. It sparks conversations that give the art a whole new life and builds a sense of creative **community**.



This spring's Second Grade Art Reception included a unique interactive feature designed to spark conversations between artists and viewers. After engaging with the art, viewers could lift the works to discover hidden artist statements. Viewers were encouraged to ask artists about the creative processes behind the paintings and learned that the simple works involved intricate techniques while the more complicated-looking pieces were created with relative ease.

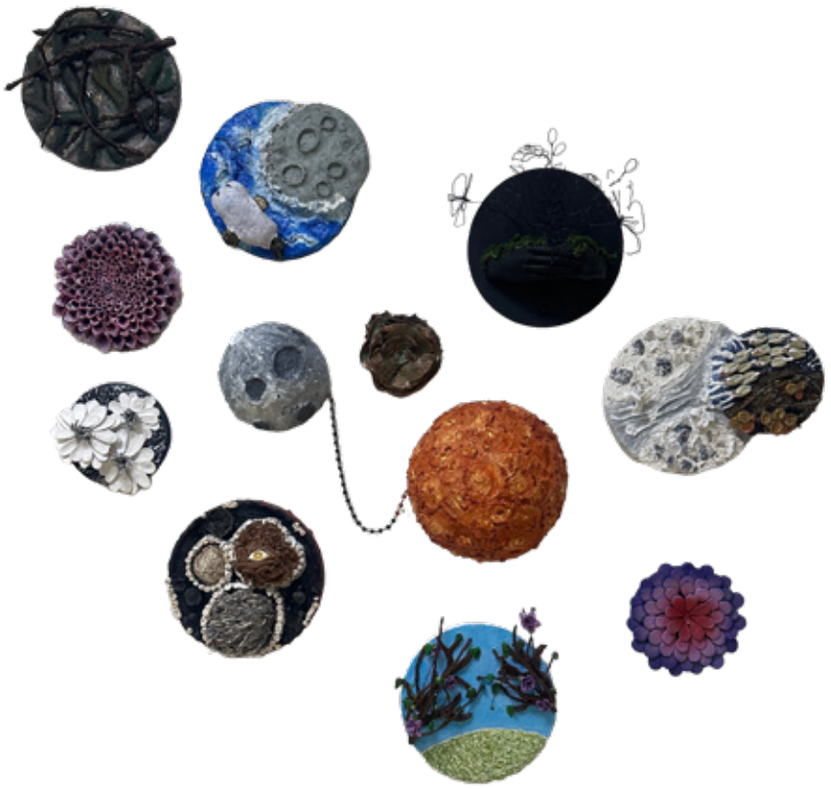
Exhibitions as Endings and Beginnings

The Velcro wall outside of the middle and upper school art studios simplifies the process of hanging artwork and is the perfect place for students to practice designing exhibits. It is easy for students to configure and reconfigure the art as they experiment with different approaches.

The shows that have emerged on this wall in the last two years are not only the culmination of students' work in the studio, they are also meaningful extensions of their artistic practice.

When mounting a show, they discover how to guide viewers by highlighting visual themes and incorporating instructive elements to aid in the interpretation of the art. The installation process is often collaborative. It sparks conversations that give the art a whole new life and builds a sense of creative community.

Above: Middle school students install their exhibit, *A Closer Look at Life*, which showcases their studies of work by Jordan Casteel.





Above: **Student-curated show, *Textures in Nature*, on the white wall.**

Below: ***Intertwined*** **by Shayna Newman '26, winner of the reEarth International Art Prize, Jury's Choice Award.**

Far right: ***The Tourist*** **by Rowan Liftik '27, winner of the reEarth International Prize, Jury's Choice Award.**



For example, this fall, fifth graders studied the work of Jordan Casteel, magnifying parts of her art in small painted studies. But the art lesson didn't end there. After students completed their studies, they exited the classroom and were given their next challenge—to create a cohesive exhibit displaying all 35 works on the Velcro wall. The task required the fifth graders to problem-solve and reflect on their own and others' art in new ways. Students discussed how they created their studies and discovered the visual connections that would help them arrange their pieces in a way that would speak to viewers. They decided to include examples of Casteel's work as references, and one of the classes tackled the challenging task of developing a title for the show: *A Closer Look at Life.*

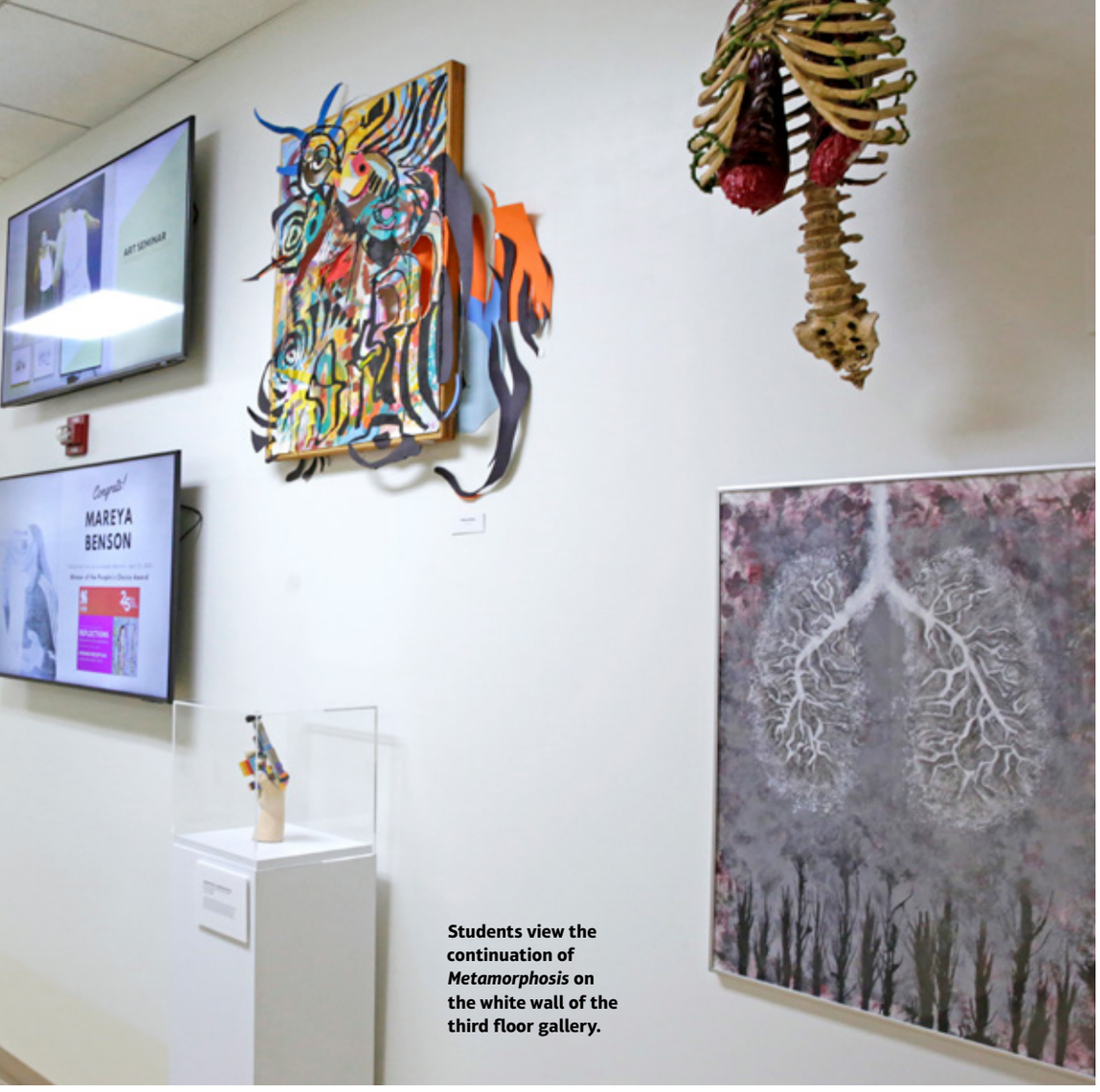
A Space to Experiment

The white wall outside the upper school art studio is the newest exhibition space on campus. "This wall is a little punk. It isn't about perfection; it is about experimenting with your voice," says Bravo. Students can show work in progress, test out presentation strategies, and curate their own shows. The white wall silences the noise around it and gives students the experience of working within a white cube. With ample space and two video monitors, it can be whatever the students need.

"Even though it's not a completely unrestricted space, I love the chance to work on curating it… deciding which pieces to put up and where to put them. It definitely gives a sense of agency, and having that creative control is super validating," says Rowan Liftik '27. "Additionally, I love the collaborative aspect of the space."

Students in the Art Seminar, Drawing and Painting, and Mixed Media classes mounted two simultaneous and very different shows on the white wall earlier this year. On one side of the wall, students in the three classes hung their figure drawings in a classic grid. Every day, teacher Carlotta Hester '86 would invite students to hang their favorite pieces, so the show was continually evolving. Many of the students were attempting figure drawing for the first time, so choosing a piece for display each day allowed them to define their own success and gain confidence as their skills developed.

Textures in Nature, a Mixed Media exhibit on the other side of the wall, showcased a collection of organically arranged, three-dimensional works. Students collaboratively designed the installation, figured out how to hang the various objects, and



Students view the continuation of *Metamorphosis* on the white wall of the third floor gallery.



wrote a statement to accompany the show. It was a more time-intensive process that required students to both plan carefully and learn on the fly in order to achieve their vision.

Beyond Maret

Encouraging students to share their work beyond the school community by applying to regional, national, and international art competitions is another way that the Visual Arts Department seeks to uplift student voices and help expand upper schoolers' understanding of what it means to be an artist. "External recognition feeds students' confidence," says Bravo, "and when students process what it feels like to receive that kind of feedback, it can be transformative."

For many years, Maret students have won awards from the National Society of Arts and Letters and earned regional and national honors in the Scholastic Art Awards competition. In the last two years, several students have had their work accepted into local juried exhibitions, and this March, two students entered the reEarth International Art Prize competition and won Jury's Choice Awards. This competition invites young artists to contribute to the global conversation on climate change and environmental sustainability with exhibits in Auckland and Venice.

Award winner Shayna Newman '26 reflects, "Most of my art focuses on nature and its relationship with human society, and I took this opportunity to help spread awareness about the importance of conservation. I see this as simply a small step to getting my voice and the voices of several others of my generation heard worldwide."

THE ALL SCHOOL ART EXHIBITION EVOLVES

The Visual Arts Department approached this year's golden anniversary All School Art Exhibition with renewed ambition. Planning started early, which allowed teachers to devise innovative ways to showcase student work and enrich the community's experience.

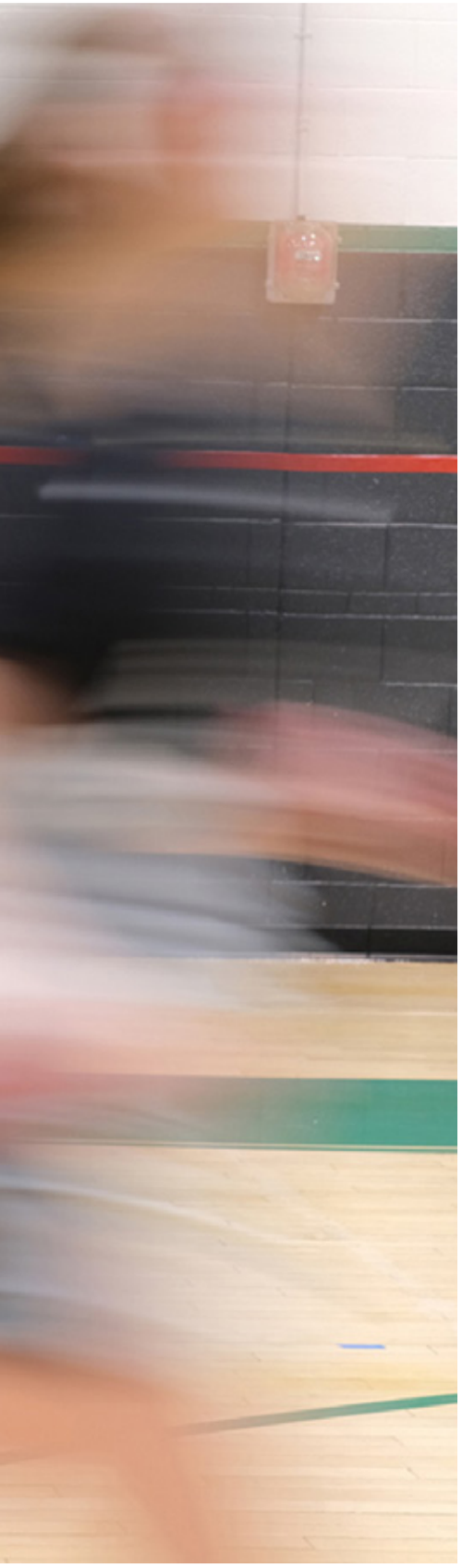
Teacher Maribeth Egan opted to project examples of her seventh graders' small-scale graffiti art on the walls of the gym foyer. The strategy dramatically increased the size and impact of the work while harkening back to OSMEGEOS, the Hirshhorn exhibit that inspired the unit. Reflecting on the relevance of ceramics to daily life, teacher Daniel Petrucci and his eighth grade ceramics class chose to exhibit pots and bowls in conjunction with posters educating viewers about food insecurity. And teacher Tom Raneses was so taken with his students' dynamic prints of koi that he decided to break from the grid to create a display that evoked a pond-like setting.



The exhibition opened on May 20 with a flourish. Visitors gathered to hear remarks from Department Chair Cindy Santos Bravo and were treated to an original song "Be the New Sound" written by Hadley Blackford '31 and performed by the middle school choir. When the doors to the gym opened, student docents from every division were on hand to engage viewers and help illuminate the amazing work on display.

Spotlight On THE INDIVIDUAL & CONNECTEDNESS





STORY BY
CAROLYN LAW,
Director of Communications

GET TO KNOW

Coach Wilson

Brooke Wilson loves being around sports. For her, it isn't just about the rush of competition or the thrill of winning. It's about the people you play with, becoming a team, and learning together. Yes, an edge-of-the-seat win with Maret fans roaring behind you is one the great rewards. So is helping a kindergartner learn to skip or throw a ball and then seeing that kindergartner join the varsity basketball team or perform in the school musical.

Since coming to Maret 10 years ago, Wilson has taught PE to students in nearly every grade and coached volleyball, basketball, lacrosse, softball, and track and field at various levels. Currently, her varsity coaching responsibilities include head coach of ISL basketball—which competes in one of the toughest high school leagues in the country—and track and field. In each case she has helped nurture athletes who have gone on to compete at the collegiate level.

"I would describe Coach Wilson's coaching style as understanding and personal," says Mareya Benson '25. "She meets you where you are." Building trusting relationships with her players is Wilson's starting point. "I think she does a great job of being a coach but also being somebody you can talk to," says Kennedy Austin '25.



Wilson cares about her players as people first. "She provides a safe space for kids to be themselves," says Athletic Director Monique Liddell. "Her steady sense of calm and ability to relate to so many different kids is remarkable." Wilson's care for her players is genuine, and they know it. During their free periods, they flock to her office to hang out.

On the court and on the track, Wilson knows athletes can be hard on themselves, so she tries to build their confidence. If one of her players is struggling, she'll pull them aside and work with them. At the same time, she is honest and direct when she needs to be: "I don't try to sugarcoat everything," says Wilson. "It is important to show athletes what it means to be accountable on a team and to help them see where they were, where they are now, and how they can continue to build on that."

Once she gets to know her players, she challenges them to push their limits. Austin was hesitant to play point guard, but Wilson saw something in her and had her practice





PE teacher, ninth grade advisor, coach, and colleague—Coach Wilson finds joy and purpose in all aspects of school life.

in the position. In the end it was the right move, deepening Austin's understanding of the game and benefiting her style of play. "[She] put me in a position for success even when I didn't necessarily want it," says Austin.

While frequently described as cool and collected, Coach Wilson has that competitive fire. Liddell says you can tell when she is getting worked up when the color starts to rise in her cheeks. And while she won't hesitate to challenge a ref on a bad call, you won't see her losing her head on the sidelines. Wins and losses matter, but Wilson has higher goals for her athletes: good teamwork, communication, and continuous improvement among them.

"After my races, I tend to get in my head a lot, and when I talk with [Coach Wilson], she helps me put things in perspective. I appreciate how she celebrates my accomplishments, no matter how small," says Benson.

Joy matters too. "Brooke is always smiling. She doesn't want the days to be filled with intense work without moments of laughter and joy," says Liddell. She definitely has a playful side. Subtle jokes, silly faces, and funny voices are all in her wheelhouse. Even her trademark sneaker collection and colorful socks reflect her lightheartedness. "She goofs around and plays with the kids a lot," notes fellow coach Janet Reed. "I think that's one of the reasons she is so loved by her players."

"I want to be able to reach as many students as I can one way or another," says Wilson. That means designing lesson and practice plans so that everyone finds success while feeling challenged. It means making sure she is present and available when a student really needs her. And it means imparting her love for all things sports-related.

When former athletic director Liz Hall interviewed Wilson in 2015, she saw not only a powerful and accomplished athlete but someone clearly "excited about the prospect of teaching…who could be a strong role model." A decade later Wilson has earned the well-deserved respect of players and colleagues alike, and she definitely sees herself teaching and coaching long term: "Each year, I find more little joys in coaching."





COACH WILSON Q&A

Hometown:
Washington, DC

Education:
BA, MA; The George Washington University

Who is the athlete or coach you admire most?
My former AAU and college assistant coach, Diane Richardson, who is now the head coach for Temple University women's basketball. She had a way of making everything seem bigger than basketball and stressed the importance of having certain intangibles on the court, but more importantly in life.

What is your favorite sport?
I'm appreciative of all sports. If I can't play it, I like to watch it.

What is your favorite team to watch?
The Washington Mystics for sure. The Washington Commanders easily. And the US Women's National Soccer Team. I also like to watch LeBron James, Serena Williams, and Simone Biles.

What is your idea of a perfect game?
There is no mistake-free game. Perfection has to come from within and knowing that you left everything on the field, court, or whatever your athletic domain may be.

Regional Events



NEW YORK CITY

NOVEMBER 19

Maret alumni, past parents, faculty, and friends gathered at The Empire Rooftop for a lively evening with Head of School Dennis Bisgaard, along with faculty and former faculty members Chris Appleby '80, Sally Dunkelberger, Vance Gage, Lynn Levinson, Eser Ozdeger, and Dana Tignor '99. With the NYC skyline as a backdrop, guests mingled over drinks and small bites, forging new cross-generational connections while rekindling friendships within their own class years.

Host Committee: Matthew Appleby '11, Sammy Appleby '14, Moeena Das '05, Gaby Hornig '08, Emma Kreisberg '19, Zack Kreisberg '18, Bronwyn Huggins '03, David Reiner '99, and Becca Rutkoff '03.









1. Back Row: **Bronwyn Huggins '03, Jessica Weiler '03, Allie Goodwin '03;** Front Row: **Becca Rutkoff '03, Nellie Thompson Kapur '03**

2. **Luke Pietrantonio '17, Julia Schroeder '16, Sam Halpert '16, Ariel Austin '16, Dennis Bisgaard, Sofie Pietrantonio '13**

3. **Matthew Appleby '11, Gaby Hornig '08**

4. **Wilson Tibbits '20, Eser Ozdeger**



1



3



CHICAGO

MARCH 19

Head of School Dennis Bisgaard and faculty members Tracey Hughes and Sally Dunkelberger welcomed members of the Maret community to The Dalcy for an intimate gathering. Snow, rain, and hail could not keep this incredible group away! The room buzzed with warmth and joyful energy all evening.

Host Committee: Courtney Bolden ’13, former faculty member Kelli Austin Clarkson, Elijah Parks ’19, Anna Pietrantonio ’10, and Brooke Smith ’03.



2

1. **Tracey Hughes, Leilani Fitzpatrick ’18, Halli Watts-Rich ’18**

2. **Jodi Torzewski ’87, Courtney Bolden ’13**

3. **Back Row: Adam Buresh ’02, Stuart Torzewski, Elijah Parks ’19; Middle: Dennis Bisgaard, Anna Pietrantonio, Kelli Austin Clarkson, Halli Watts-Rich ’18, Brooke Smith ’03, Donielle Lawson, Kristen Faust; Front Row: Tracey Hughes, Sally Dunkelberger, Jodi Torzewski ’87, Brittany Mendez ’17, Courtney Bolden ’13, Monica Bisgaard**



BOSTON

FEBRUARY 20

Buttermilk & Bourbon was the gathering place for a fantastic evening of conversation, laughter, and connection. Faculty members Lynn Levinson, Allie Levey, and Dana Tignor '99 welcomed a dynamic group of alumni representing the strength of the Boston-area Maret family. Guests enjoyed a delicious dinner while catching up with old friends and meeting new ones.

Host Committee: Jack Corby '18, Alex de Winter '91, Alex DeLeon '06, Natalie Hill '18, Kaija Knorr '89, Kimera Koff '88, Avery Lyn '21, Miles Reid '18, Nyla Saleh '00, and Barbara Van Dyke '66.





1. **Barbara Van Dyke '66, Kimera Koff '88**
2. **Ken Kaufman P '08, '12, Linda Kaufman P '08, '12, Kara Kaufman Fisher '08**

Alumni Council News

ACROSS DECADES AND DISTANCE

This year, the Alumni Council is 29 alums strong and spans seven decades—from the 1960s to the 2010s. With members across the country—from DC to New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco—our reach continues to grow. Who knows? Maybe one day, we'll have members from overseas!

What We're Doing

This year, the Alumni Council has continued its strong tradition of leadership, service, and support of the Alumni Fund. At each meeting members received updates from Head of School Dennis Bisgaard, who offered insights into school priorities and current initiatives. In the spring, the Council was joined by Visual Arts Department Chair Cindy Santos Bravo who spoke about innovations in the arts program.

A highlight of the year was planning Maret Connects, a new virtual career series designed by alumni, for alumni. Developed in partnership with Assistant Head for Student Life Lynn Levinson, Maret Connects will bring together graduates across industries and generations to share stories, professional insights, and candid reflections on life after Maret. The series will kick off in the summer of 2025.

Who's on the Council?

The Alumni Council is led by President Ron Allen '06 and Alumni Fund Chair Avonda Fogan '12. We are thrilled to welcome new members Alexander DeLeon '06 and Alexis Serfaty '98 to the Council. They join a dedicated team of officers and at-large members committed to keeping alumni connected and engaged.



Alexander DeLeon '06, Newton, MA
Analyst, Wellington Management
"There really is something so unique that connects all the classes to each other. Maintaining that connection keeps me inspired!"



Alexis Serfaty '98, Washington, DC
Director, Eurasia Group
"Having a daughter in the second grade at Maret and a son who is set to join the Kindergarten Cottage next year has provided a full-circle moment for me, and so I'm excited at the chance to give back and engage with the alumni community."

Want to Get Involved?

If you love Maret, want to help alumni stay connected, and care about supporting the Alumni Fund, let us know you're interested by filling out the Alumni Council Interest Form at www.maret.org/alumni.

Special Event

HEAD'S RECEPTION

JANUARY 9

Barrett Atrium was filled with great energy and warmth at this special reception hosted by Head of School Dennis Bisgaard. Throughout the evening, guests shared stories that spanned the decades and reflected on Maret's lasting impact. We loved seeing so many past parents in attendance with their alumni children and a wonderful turnout of Maret grandparents—a testament to the strong multigenerational connections within our school community. In his remarks, Mr. Bisgaard reminded guests that no matter how much time passes, Maret remains a place we can all call home









1. **Tara Zia '22, Bill Bravman, Mishal Powers '22, Faith Heffernan '22**
2. **Vance Gage, Ron Allen '06**
3. **Guests gather in Barrett Atrium to hear remarks from their host, Dennis Bisgaard**
4. **Tim Massad, Charlotte Hart P '21, '25, Avonda Fogan '12, Michelle Pourciau P '09**

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARET'S 2025 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

Stephen Belber '85 & Cyrus Beschloss '15



"What keeps me writing is the need to discern my beliefs, find an artful way to express them, and hope it connects with a few people out there. The fact that beliefs and connection evolve, keeps me at it."

—STEPHEN BELBER '85

STEPHEN BELBER '85 is an internationally recognized, critically acclaimed playwright, screenwriter, and director. His career has shaped cultural conversation and challenged audiences around the world to grapple with themes of justice, identity, and the complexities of the human experience. Across theater, film, and television, Belber has examined human behavior with empathy, intelligence, and urgency.

His narratives give voice to those at the margins and create space for uncomfortable but important questions. His acclaimed play *Tape* (also a Richard Linklater film now being remade in three countries) offers a probing look at truth, memory, and accountability; his work on *The Laramie Project* helped catalyze national dialogue on LGBTQ+ rights and hate crimes; and his script for the film O.G.—shot in a maximum security prison where the majority of actors were actual residents—examines criminal justice reform through intimate character portrayal. Collaborations with actors like Patrick Stewart, Jennifer Aniston, and Jeffrey Wright have deepened his reputation for crafting nuanced, emotionally resonant stories that leave a lasting impression. Most recently, Belber created and show-ran *The Madness*—starring Colman Domingo—which explores contemporary racial tensions, disinformation, and the power of political extremism. It became one of Netflix's most-watched shows of 2024.

He earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy from Trinity College and was a fellow in the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at Juilliard.

Over the years, Belber has volunteered his time and talents to connect with Maret students who are interested in storytelling. His extraordinary contributions to the arts and his continued engagement with our school community continue to inspire and uplift us.

CYRUS BESCHLOSS '15 is a nationally recognized media entrepreneur and data storyteller transforming how young people are represented in public discourse. He launched his first company, College Reaction, while an undergraduate, driven by a belief in the power of data to inform, humanize, and elevate. He built the first polling and insights platform focused on young people, ensuring their voices are heard and integrated into national conversations on politics, public health, and social change. College Reaction grew into Generation Lab, which Beschloss now heads as founder and CEO, to add sharper texture, deeper definition, and wider representation for young people in America.

Through his companies, Beschloss has conducted research for major media outlets, universities, and Fortune 500 companies—from CNBC to Stanford and the White House—to provide high-impact research on issues ranging from mental health and campus climate to elections and civic trust. His work has been featured on platforms including NBC, CNN, T*he New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Axios,* and beyond.

He holds a bachelor's degree in history from Williams College and a master's degree in journalism from Stanford University.

Beschloss's work models the kind of thoughtful leadership and principled engagement that Maret strives to instill in every student. A generous alum, he has served in a variety of volunteer capacities and will complete six years on the Alumni Council this year.



"Young people are not passive observers, but powerful participants in the major issues of our time."

— CYRUS BESCHLOSS '15



Class Notes

Stefanie Williams Christmas '02 is a Presidential Leadership Scholar this year.

Mark Perry '79 competed in the Maryland Senior Olympics cornhole tournament, winning the silver medal in singles and gold medal in doubles. He is now headed to the National Senior Olympics in Des Moines, IA.

After reconnecting at a Maret-in-LA event, **Rachel Andersson '02** and **Dominique DeLeon '00** are celebrating two years of working together on marketing campaigns for organizations in nonprofit and social justice spaces.

Christine van den Toorn '97 is the founder of Baghdad Business School and the Iraq Fund for Higher Education, which provides education and employment opportunities for Iraqi youth.

Andy Freedman '04 is writing film reviews for *Moment Magazine.*

Lewis T. Tait Jr. '78 started a new job as adjunct professor at the University of the District of Columbia.

1972

CHRISTINA KALAVRITINOS

Greetings, dear friends! We have lots of happy baby news in this issue! **Beth Lowenstein** welcomed her first grandchild, Mina Oestreicher, on November 22, 2024. Congratulations! Beth says that "watching her grow and smile is the best!"

Todd Knickel has wonderful grandparent news, too. Todd is happily trying to keep up with two-year-old granddaughter, Lainey, and twin grandsons, Hayes and Reid, born last summer. I know they'll keep you young, Todd!

Doug Smith is now a grandfather to two boys—Francis, who turns two in June, and Oliver, soon to be one. Doug, still enjoying life in Rabat, Morocco, and lots of traveling for fun, makes sure to plan some of those trips around visits with his grandsons!

It's great to be back in touch with **Lisa Oshins**, who also has happy news from her home in California. Yes, you guessed it! Lisa is loving retirement and spending time with her three-year-old grandson, Ezra!

Warmest congratulations to you and your families!

Last issue I mentioned the uniformly positive reports of retirement I keep hearing from you. No rocking chairs for the Class of '72! You're vigorously using that well-earned time and independent Maret spirit to explore, enjoy family and friends around the world, lend a helping hand in our communities, and tackle new challenges as lifetime learners.

Speaking of lifetime learners, **Lois Cooper** ever joyfully takes on new challenges (the more rigorous the better!) and writes:

"My husband, George, and I are happy and well. I have been involved in some old passions—reading, cooking for friends, exercising—but my recent one is my study of Modern Greek! My early inspirations for this came out of Maret—Christina, herself, and **Cosmos Demetriou**, as well as 'Madame' Thérèse Tsimberlides Madoui, our beloved French teacher. The Greek grammar book I found when I was a student at Maret sat on my bookshelf in the home I grew up in for decades, unopened. Now, during retirement, I have the time to devote to this most incredibly difficult and challenging language. As a lifelong language geek who taught French and Spanish at the university level, I thought that learning the language would be a piece of *karidopita* (a Greek cake). Wow, was I wrong!



Beth Lowenstein '72, is head over heels with her granddaughter, Mina.



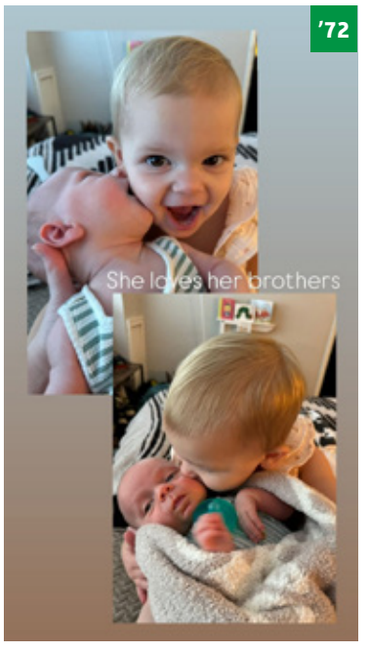
Lisa Oshins '72 with her son, Leland, and grandson, Ezra.



Lois Cooper '72 and her husband, George Marcus, on a recent trip to Chicago



Hara Viner '72 and Christina Kalavritinos '72 catching up



Happiness for Todd Knickel '72—twin grandsons and their big sister



Pilot turned flight instructor Keith Gordon '73 poses in front of his plane.



Doug McGregor '76 and his son Alex

Now, I am convinced that I'll be at this for the rest of my life. My own Greek teacher calls learning Greek an exercise in mental gymnastics. I'm up for that! Be in touch with me through Christina. I would love to hear your news!"

Lois, earlier in retirement you took on college-level statistics, and now Greek? You're amazing!

Adding to Lois's inspiration, **Nancy Fox Girolami**, a voracious reader, encourages us all to open our minds to new perspectives and worlds of imagination. Many thanks to Nancy for enthusiastically agreeing to take the lead on our book club—a fun new way to learn and stay in touch. Remember, friends, please feel free to Zoom in so we can spend time together, even if you haven't read the book. See you on your next trip to DC or in the book club!

Take good care, everyone!

1973

Keith Gordon writes: After a very long and exciting career as a pilot, I have recently retired. I crossed the United States countless times and circled the globe hundreds of times! Many adventures that were all memorable! All 50 states, most of Europe, Iceland, Greenland, our good neighbors to the north, to the south, and beyond. The land of the King's English, Asia, Israel, Jordan, and even Saudi Arabia. I'm not one to sit around, so I began a second career as a flight instructor training other captains in simulators in the aircraft I have flown over the years. I meet new pilots and run into old friends as they come through for continued training. I hope my classmates have been as lucky as me with their careers.

1976

Doug McGregor writes: It has been quite a while since I last shared my life on these pages, and true to form, I am late to the task, just hours before the deadline. Speaking of late to the task, some of you know our son, Alex, and maybe you saw his picture here, as a toddler. He is 20 now, and quite the handsome young man. He is a diesel pickup truck enthusiast. (Don't judge! he is the kinder, gentler type.) He works full time as a heavy equipment technician. Ellen and I are very proud of him. My work life has continued to be a bit chaotic. After two job losses, Porsche brought us to the Atlanta area. Five years later, that was over and not by my choice. Now, I work from home for Roush Industries, again in the vehicle/engine emissions compliance field. If you see an unfamiliar and cartoonish postal truck delivering mail, think of me because I helped make that happen! Yep, me and funny-looking vehicles seem to always find each other.



Lewis T. Tait Jr. '78 tackles a new teaching position.



Tym Schelling '80, Mike Zangwill '79, and Peter McAdams '80 reunited for a Washington Commanders playoff game watch party.



Mark Perry '79 shows off his silver medal win from the Maryland Senior Olympics cornhole tournament.



Frederick (Rick) Simmons '80, wife Rachel, and friends on a hike to Old Rag



Together Forever! Maret girls weekend in Littleton, MA, August 2024. Listing f rom left to right, top to bottom: Lorna Ashe '82, Deeda Hull Osgood '81, Suzanne Hilleary '79, Sidra Goff Michon '80, Lisa Ashe Jackson '78, Karen Ashe '77, Susan Monagan '79, Betsy Mueller '80, and Dana McEnroe Nuzzi '79

Beyond reunion parties, I have managed to keep in touch with various Maret Frogs, including **Jimmy White '75**, **Richard Atkins**, **Maryann Puglisi**, **Tom Greenburg,**

Evie Watts, Mino Vania '77, Doug Fieldhouse '77, Jon Thackery '75, Bob Ferguson, **Richard Fieldhouse,** and Ann Fieldhouse. I look forward to reconnecting with others; I miss you.

By the way, **Tom Greenburg** and his wife Elaine's Topanga, CA, neighborhood is very close to Pacific Palisades, and thankfully they and their home escaped the devastating fires. Love to you two, and love to you all!

1978

Lewis T. Tait Jr. writes: I started as a new adjunct professor at the University of the District of Columbia Community College in the Humanities and Criminology Department beginning in the fall of 2024 and the spring of 2025.

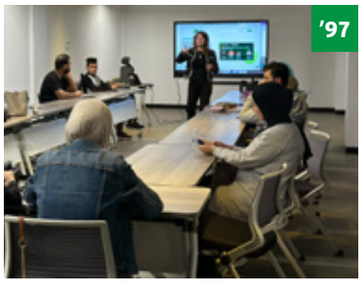
1979

MIKE ZANGWILL

Mark Perry competed in the Maryland Senior Olympics cornhole tournament in October. In the 60-64 age group, Mark won the silver medal in singles and gold medal in doubles. Mark is in the attached photo wearing a head wrap. Mark will be competing in the National Senior Olympics next summer in Des Moines, IA, playing cornhole in the Corn Capital! Mark is starting a cornhole league in Takoma, DC, and is looking for players. If you want to join Mark's DC Cornhole League, contact Mark at 202-321-1543.

1986

Marissa Griffith writes: After 34 years in California, my husband, Peter, and I have relocated to the East Coast to be closer to aging relatives. We will spend 2025 based in Annapolis, MD, before permanently moving to our Delaware beach-area vacation home after my planned retirement at the end of 2025. If your plans bring you to the Lewes-Rehoboth Beach-Dewey-Bethany area, let me know.



Christine van den Toorn '97 instructs her business class.



Members of the Class of 1999—Ben Lazarus, Shooter Starr, Steve Brown, and Phil Kowalczyk—traveled to Gainesville, FL, for an annual trip to the FLA-LSU game.



Ignacio Sagarminaga '00 on his wedding day in Seville, Spain



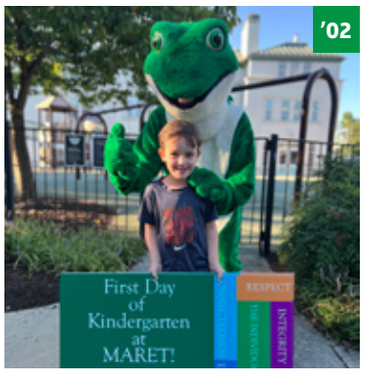
Charlotte Grassi '01 and loved ones at her wedding ceremony this past October in Georgetown

1993

Rachel Russell writes: Greetings from the Netherlands! This year, my family (my husband and two daughters, ages 9 and 12) moved to the Netherlands for a grand adventure. After five years leading Microsoft's flexible work program through COVID and beyond, I am now actively exploring and researching the future of work from my new home base in Europe. If anyone finds themselves in the area, please do reach out!



Kat Hannah '02 and friends on a scenic hike in San Francisco



Lochlan, son of Kat Hannah 02, eagerly begins his first day of kindergarten.



Vladimir Barash '02 admiring impressive landscapes during a trip to New Zealand

1997

Christine van den Toorn writes: I am still working in Iraq—I left my position at American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (where I was for a decade) five years ago to found Baghdad Business School, an English, business, and professional skills program. I also started a foundation, the Iraq Fund for Higher Education, to provide new education and employment opportunities for Iraqi youth. I am between DC, Sperryville, Baghdad, and Dubai.

2000

Ignacio Sagarminaga writes: I was married in September on my family's olive farm in Seville, Spain. My best man was **Colin Mathews**, who is now living in Australia with his wife and three kids, and my groomswoman was **Nyla Saleh,** who lives in Boston with her husband and two kids.

2002

LIZ OSIUS

The class of 2002 is happy to share the following news.

Vladimir Barash just got back from New Zealand! He saw lots of absolutely beautiful views, went to a bunch of the *Lord of the Rings* filming locations, and got to ride in a jet boat.

Rachel Andersson and **Dom DeLeon '00** just had their two-year work anniversary after reconnecting at a Maret-in-LA alumni event! Together, they have pulled off marketing strategies and campaigns for some awesome nonprofit and social justice clients, learned that they share

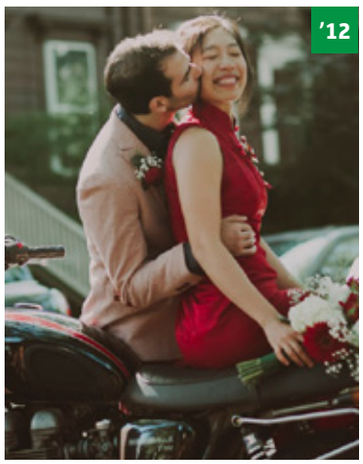
CLASS CORRESPONDENT



Emily Decker '05 and her husband Brennan with their newborn daughter, Caroline



Laura Flint '12 and her husband Tim outside their newly purchased home



Nick Francisci '12 and his wife on their wedding day

an office building with **Masako Ikegami '01,** and couldn't be more grateful to Maret for helping to make it happen! Finally, **Rachel** and her partner, Ben, celebrated their 10-year anniversary! Congratulations!

Stefanie Williams Christmas is honored to share that, following in **Evan Smith's '00** footsteps, she is a Presidential Leadership Scholar this year, joining leaders across industries to tackle challenges through insights from four presidential administrations.



Maret Class of 2011 classmates gather at Caroline Sealander Buchanan's wedding to Will Buchanan, St. Alban's Class of 2007, in June 2024 in Norfolk, CT. Pictured left to right are Hadi Khalil, Jordana Signer, Hannah Bredar, Caroline Buchanan, Sophie Schonfeld, Tia Watkins, Julia Thayer, Niki Gonçalves, and John Grandy.

Finally, **Kathryn Hannah** writes in to report she enjoyed a beautiful trip to San Francisco with Maret friends and is thrilled that her son, Lochlan, has joined the next generation of Maret students.

2004

Andy Freedman writes: I recently joined a new private practice as a therapist after several years of facilitating music therapy groups with children and adults. I have also been writing film reviews for *Moment Magazine* and taking my time to pursue writing interests. I have lived in Philadelphia for almost 14 years now.

2005

Emily Jones Decker writes: My family and I welcomed a second daughter, Caroline Ruth, early in the morning on Christmas Day 2024. Everyone is happy and healthy, and big sister, Charlotte (4.5 years old), loves having her new baby sister.

2008

SASHA TASKIER

On November 2, 2024, **Mallory Day McDonagh** passed peacefully with her husband, Christopher Peli, and mother, Michele McDonagh, by her side. Many of our 2008 classmates and their parents gathered to celebrate her life at the end of November. Mallory was an immensely talented designer, a loving wife and cat mom, a devoted daughter, and an amazing friend to so many of us. She was also an advocate for metastatic cancer research and worked to raise awareness and funds until her last days. It is with deep sadness and grief that we remember such a special person whose light was extinguished far too soon. If you'd like to honor Mal's memory, please consider making a donation to Metavivor, an organization dedicated to the support, research, and awareness of metastatic breast cancer.

2012

Nick Francisci writes: This September I got married! My wife, Cici, and I are planning to move out to western Massachusetts this spring. We hope to have a lovely garden and a washing machine that's not coin-operated. In other news, I am starting to get more seriously engaged in developing a video game, *Forum Mortuorum*, that I have been working on part-time these past two years.

Laura Flint writes: My husband and I bought our first house in Decatur, GA! We survived two immediate leaks and are ready for more emergency home improvements down the road.

IN MEMORIAM

The Maret community acknowledges the loss of alumni, parents of students and alumni, and faculty. (Please send notices to dtignor@maret.org)

ALUMNI

Edwin Jay Baum '21
Nina Cohen '65
Elizabeth Crawford '59
Earl Dudley '57
Cornelia L. Hyatt '53
Gordon Lattu '69
Mallory McDonagh '08
Karin W. Pedrick '63
Andre Ponsart '62

PARENTS OF ALUMNI

Brian Arling, parent of Elissa Dolina '95, Jeremy Arling '97, Tim Arling '03
Tom D. Fuchs, parent of Matthew Fuchs '16
Lauren R. Howard, parent of Gregory Howard '03
Robert Jeffers, parent of Susan Jeffers Shaughnessy '78 and grandparent of Emma Shaughnessy '14
Pamela H. Korbel, parent of Peter Korbel '00
Richard E. Maggin, parent of Austen Maggin '13
Carol Schaffer, parent of Tim Schaffer '89 and grandparent of Taylan Tunçata '16

FORMER FACULTY

Sally Collier, stepparent of Chris Appleby '80 and grandparent of Samuel Appleby '14, Robert Appleby '09, and Matthew Appleby '11

From the Archives



SPRING FLING 2015

The senior shaving cream fight is a Maret tradition that stretches as far back as anyone can remember, but its origins may be buried in time. Attempts to uncover the story through outreach to alumni and former faculty were unsuccessful, although former faculty member Kathy Sweeney Hammond reports, "It was alive and well when I came in 1979." If you know anything about the genesis of the shaving cream fight, we would love to know! Please contact the Communications Office at communications@maret.org.

A Lifetime of Opportunities

Including Maret as a Beneficiary

When you name Maret as a beneficiary you can carry your love of the school and faculty forward in an impactful and lasting way.



YOU'RE HIRED!
Employer Benefit & Retirement Plans

Simply name Maret as a beneficiary when you are enrolling or reenrolling in employer-offered life insurance policies, IRAs, and other retirement plans.



LOVED ONES FIRST!
Making a Bequest

Lifetime events such as marriage or new children are opportune times to create or update your will. Including Maret as a beneficiary, for a specific bequest or a percentage of your estate, allows you to care for your loved ones and Maret into the future.



YOUR PHILANTHROPIC IMPACT!
Donor Advised Funds and Trusts

When creating a donor advised fund or trust, you can plan for giving beyond your lifetime by naming Maret as beneficiary for the remaining assets.

MARET SCHOOL FUTURE FUND

Inspire others and let us know if you have included Maret as a beneficiary—at whatever stage in your life. We will add your name to our Future Fund list of those who have included the school in their long-term, estate-planning goals.

For more information, contact Director of Development Sally Dunkelberger at 202-939-8811, sdunkelberger@maret.org.

MARET

NOSCERE VIVERE EST TO LEARN IS TO LIVE

Maret School
3000 Cathedral Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008-3498
maret.org
alumni@maret.org

Address service requested

