



Welcome!

Morning Brew! - March 10, 2026



Our Values

Menlo School is a values-driven institution that holds its members to high ideals. Our values guide everything we do, shaping both who we are as a community and who our students are becoming.

Together, We Value...

A Joyful Learning Environment That Is Engaging, Challenging, and Supportive

Together, we inspire transformative learning experiences that spark wonder and love of learning. We stretch and empower our students to explore broadly, question deeply, think critically, and grow in competence, confidence, and curiosity.

A Culture of Kindness, Trust, and Belonging

Together, we nurture a culture where all feel welcomed, included, and valued. We collaborate and communicate respectfully and productively and honor diverse backgrounds, identities, and ideas by engaging with curiosity, care, and compassion.

A Commitment to Ethical Behavior and Purposes Larger Than Ourselves

Together, we embody integrity, empathy, and courage. We act with humility and grace and contribute to the betterment of our school, our community, and the world.

A Caring Community Centered around Connection, Growth, and Well-Being

Together, we cultivate a community where students thrive through meaningful relationships with their teachers, coaches, and peers and an aligned school-family partnership. We collectively strengthen their minds, bodies, and hearts and entrust them to take progressively more responsibility for themselves and their education.

This is what Knights do!

We strive to live these values in all areas of the School, and they are manifested through our [Middle School Habits](#), our [Upper School Honor Code](#), and our [School-Family Partnership](#).

Menlo Middle School

Habits of Heart and Mind

SELF-AWARENESS

Recognizing emotions, tendencies, actions, and reactions within myself.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Acting with integrity and moral values.

KINDNESS

Showing thoughtful and compassionate behavior towards others, regardless of the relationship and without expecting anything in return.

EMPATHY

Understanding and honoring another's emotions and point of view.

CURIOSITY

Exploring and questioning the world beyond myself.

RESILIENCE

Recovering and growing from challenges.



Shanel Daines

Social Sciences

Social Sciences Updates

THE HOME STRETCH



- **IMPACT** projects for 6-8 grades
- Social Sciences capstone project: Students transform classroom learning into community-led initiatives that drive real-world, positive change.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD



- Cody Carefoot will be returning from paternity leave after Spring Break
- Shanel Daines is departing Menlo; the search for our next team member is in full swing.

MS Academic Reminder

Trimester 3: The Path to Mastery & Independence

THE JOURNEY TO MASTERY



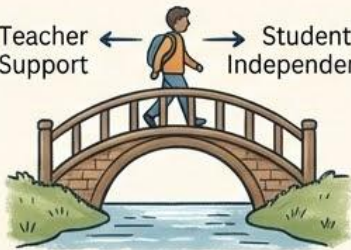
Year long grades reflect cumulative progress.

'Mastery' of skills is built over time through multiple opportunities to practice.



TRANSITION & INDEPENDENCE

Teacher Support ← Student Independence



Shift from guided support to self-directed learning.

GRADE-LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

6th & 7th Grade



Student-driven retakes/revisions allowed.

8th Grade



No retakes/revisions. Preparing for high school rigor.



GOAL: Prepare every student for success in the next grade up.





Jacqueline Stark

6th Grade Advocacy

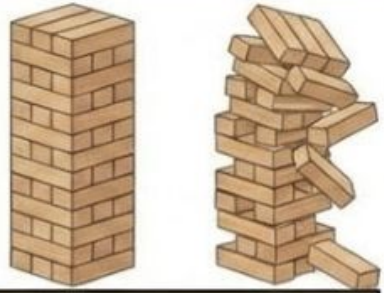


6th Grade Advocacy: Shoring Up Our Foundations

Values Sticker Project



Habit Foundations



Building Strong Habits vs. Unstable Foundations

Service Learning



Sustainability
April 20-24: Eco-Action Week
May 6th: Beach Clean Up Field Trip

Middle School Assembly
Feb 25: Hearts Project

Mark Your Calendars
May 15th: Student Led Conferences



Weixin Shi

World Language



World Language Classroom Moments





Hands-On Learning





World Language Field Trips

on - Heritage Spanish



Mission - Spanish 7



Legion of Honor - French 8



Legion of Honor - Latin



Maura Smith

English

HOW MANY BOOKS HAS
EACH GRADE READ
FROM SUMMER
THROUGH THE END OF JANUARY?



8th Grade

1402

7th Grade

1726

6th Grade

2284

Taj
Brandon
Class of 2030

Kaitlyn
Ng
Class of 2030

Noah
Lochbaum
Class of 2030

Aya
Tripp
Class of 2030

Sloane
Satvat
Class of 2030

Tamsin
Egleson
Class of 2031

Bingo-Card Blackout Hall of Fame

Ella
Panchula
Class of 2031

Kendall
Cook
Class of 2031

Helen
Belanger
Class of 2031

Audrey
Schroeder
Class of 2031

BINGO-CARD BLACKOUT, *SO FAR*

- ✓ 5 students in 7th grade
(29 books)
- ✓ 3 student in 8th grade
(33 books)
 - "The Road to DC"
 - "Favorite book of a Menlo Teacher"
 - "PBS Great American Read"

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MIDDLE-SCHOOL ENGLISH

- ✓ **6th:** Students compared two winners from the *NY Times* Open Letter Contest, evaluating ethos, pathos, and logos, in preparation for writing their own Open Letter about something they wish would change in the world.
- ✓ **7th:** In the introduction to our poetry unit, students played with the power of line breaks and stanza breaks and learned the difference between anaphora and parallelism, among other often confused literary devices.
- ✓ **8th:** Students revised one of their many 100-word story drafts, experimenting with sentence structure, fragments, imagery, and more precise verbs before pruning it down to exactly 100 words, realizing the impact of small language choices.

SECOND ANNUAL 100-WORD STORY CONTEST



- ✓ This year **four** students from each grade will be selected to share their creations at the May 19th assembly

HIRING A NEW 6TH-GRADE ENGLISH TEACHER

- ✓ Sadly, Kanako Sumi is moving to L.A. to be closer to her parents and in-laws
- ✓ We are bringing in candidates for demo lessons and interviews
- ✓ Part of the application included a writing sample!





Bobbi Lynn Monroe

Science

Science

4th year together!



NSTA Conference



Science Literacy



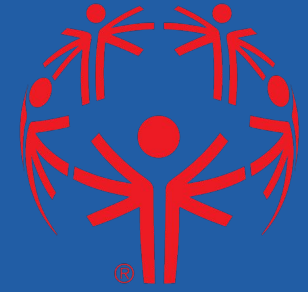
Science



Service Learning



MEALS **on** WHEELS



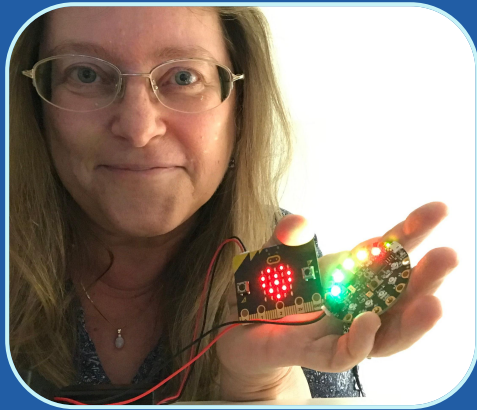
***Special
Olympics***



SECOND HARVEST
of SILICON VALLEY

Mary Kiang & Tiffany Liu

Design Engineering & Computer Science



“Creative problem solving through collaboration.”

6 years

Vibe Coding Hackathon!

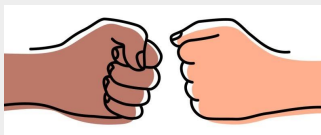
Design Engineering & Computer Science



AI Literate * AI Ethical * AI Innovative

Questions they are asking while working with AI

"Do I need to create my data set with **different skin colors** for my trained model to work for everyone?"



"How large a data set is necessary to have **accurate output**?"

"**Who** gets to decide if output is **biased** or not?"



"Who is **responsible** if an AI 'driverless' car gets in an accident?"



"What happens to all the information I input into different AI's? What are they doing with **my data**?"



Allison Houghton

8th Grade



8th Grade Moments





Important dates

- **Wednesday, March 18th** - 8th Grade Service Learning Fair
- **Tuesday, March 24th** - Crossing Campus (Note: new date)
- **Tuesday, May 12th** - Upper School Welcome Event
- **Monday, June 1st** - Promotion Rehearsal
- **Tuesday, June 2nd** - Promotion and 8th grade dance





Promotion Updates

- You will be receiving an email soon about promotion logistics
- Tuesday, June 2nd at 9 am
- We ask students to dress for the occasion
 - Nice dress, skirt and blouse, dressy slacks, coat and tie
 - Nice shoes that they can walk in
 - Colors are welcome and encouraged.
- There will be an application process for promotions speakers later this trimester





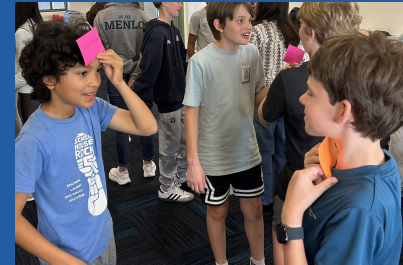
Michael Giardi

8th Grade Advocacy

8th Grade Advocacy



Leadership: “In the past jobs were about muscles, now they're about brains, but in future they'll be about the heart.” - Dame Minouche Shafik



Channing Ian Olivia

  **CLANDESTINE**  

"The Emoji Story"

- ★ **The Prompt:** Describe your best day of school ever! (Real or imagined)
- ★ **The Task:** With your group, "write" the story using only 10 emojis. As a group, you must agree on every emoji used.
- ★ **Share out:** Once your group has completed their sentence, find another group that is ready and guess the meaning of one another's sentence.

Service



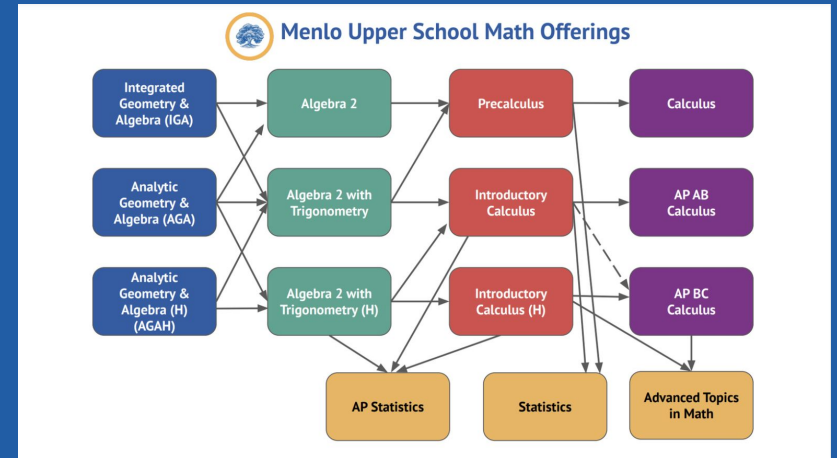
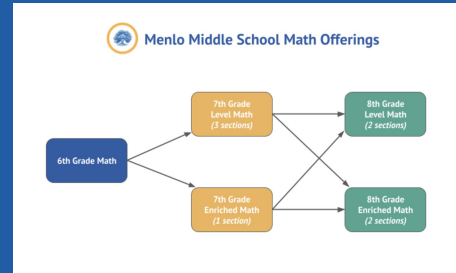
Service: “Primary purpose of charity is to elevate the relationship between giver and receiver.” - Rabbi Maimonides



Math Placement



- Foundation over fast tracking
- Habits
- Passion





Katherine Palmer

Creative Arts

Upcoming Creative Arts Events



March 9th- Kick-off Parent/ Company Meeting for *Dear Edwina*-Spring Musical (25 students in acting roles and 7 student tech volunteers)

March 18th - US Instrumental and Vocal Concert including the MS Choir 7:00-8:30

March 27th-28th-All School Dance Concert: *Seeing Life Through Color*

April 26th- Global Expo

April 27th-May 1st- Creative Arts Week- 4/29 Art Show with MS artists

May 1-May 3- US Musical: *Legally Blonde*

May 15- May 17- MS Musical: *Dear Edwina*

May 21- MS Spring Concert



Events of Creative Arts Week



- Special scheduling that lets students mix and collaborate across classes. Novelty and Freshness
- Guest artists visiting to share new artistic approaches.
- Hands-on experiences: Silk-Screening, Soul Line Dancing, and Bhangra, Bucket Drumming
- Special Arts Assembly featuring BATS Improv and a workshop with BATS educators
- Outdoor creative projects including chalk murals and Cyanotypes





Frankie Machado

Learning Specialist

Parent Support With Screen Time



An Evolutionary Mismatch

"We are wired for survival in a world of scarcity" 🧠

— Dr. Anna Lembke

THEN (Scarcity):

- Hard to find food 🗡️🍓
- Limited entertainment 🎮
- Occasional social interaction
- Rewards were rare 🍀



NOW (Abundance):

- Unlimited videos, games, content 📺🎮
- 24/7 entertainment access 🕒
- Constant notifications 🔔
- 🍷🍔 Food delivery services
- Rewards everywhere, instantly 🎁👑

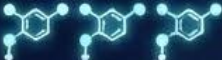




Our Brains: Still stuck in “scarcity mode”




Why THIS Matters for YOUR Brain Right Now

Your Brain at Age 12-15:

GAS PEDAL (Dopamine System):

- Releases up to **4X MORE** dopamine than adult brains 
- You can feel joy and excitement more intensely 
- Amazing capacity for learning and connection 

BRAKES (Prefrontal Cortex):

- Still developing (won't be done until ~age 25) 
- Helps with judgment and impulse control 
- Currently: weaker than your reward system 

The Combo: Powerful gas pedal + weak brakes = vulnerability to intense rewards



Strategies to Retrain Your Reward System

Good News: Your brain is incredibly **TEACHABLE!**



1 The 30-Day Reset
(Start with 1 day or 1 week)



Break the cycle,
reset sensitivity.

2 Create Friction



Make bad habits
harder to do.

3 Build New
Pathways



Practice new,
healthy habits.

4 The Cue
Awareness Trick



Notice the trigger,
change the action.

5 Real Connection
Over Digital Connection






Prioritize face-to-
face interaction.




Consistent practice strengthens these new pathways,
making healthy choices easier over time. You got this!

Self-Advocacy and Report Cards

Ways to encourage:

-  **Zoom out:** acknowledge the awkwardness/discomfort
-  **Reappraise:** It's worth the effort
-  **Reassure:** the awkward feeling will pass, and you will see the benefits over time

Report Card Tips:

-  Start by celebrating growth and areas of strength
-  Find 1-2 major themes to focus on third trimester
-  Encourage your child to talk with their teachers about that specific skill



Kaila Uniacke

7th Grade Advocacy, Human Skills

Wellness Week 3/30-4/2



Monday



Challenge Success survey - followed by recess games hosted by Student Council.

Tuesday



**Intuitive Eating with Jamie Hegg.
Yoga Stations on the quad.**

Wednesday



**Dino & Digital Wellbeing. Parent session to follow.
Art Therapy on the quad.**

Thursday



Jasper Farm's Therapy Animals!

Values & Virtues



Top Strengths We See in This Group



Love

Love – Students value relationships and caring for others



Gratitude

Gratitude – Appreciation for people and experiences



Curiosity

Curiosity – A desire to explore ideas and ask questions



Teamwork

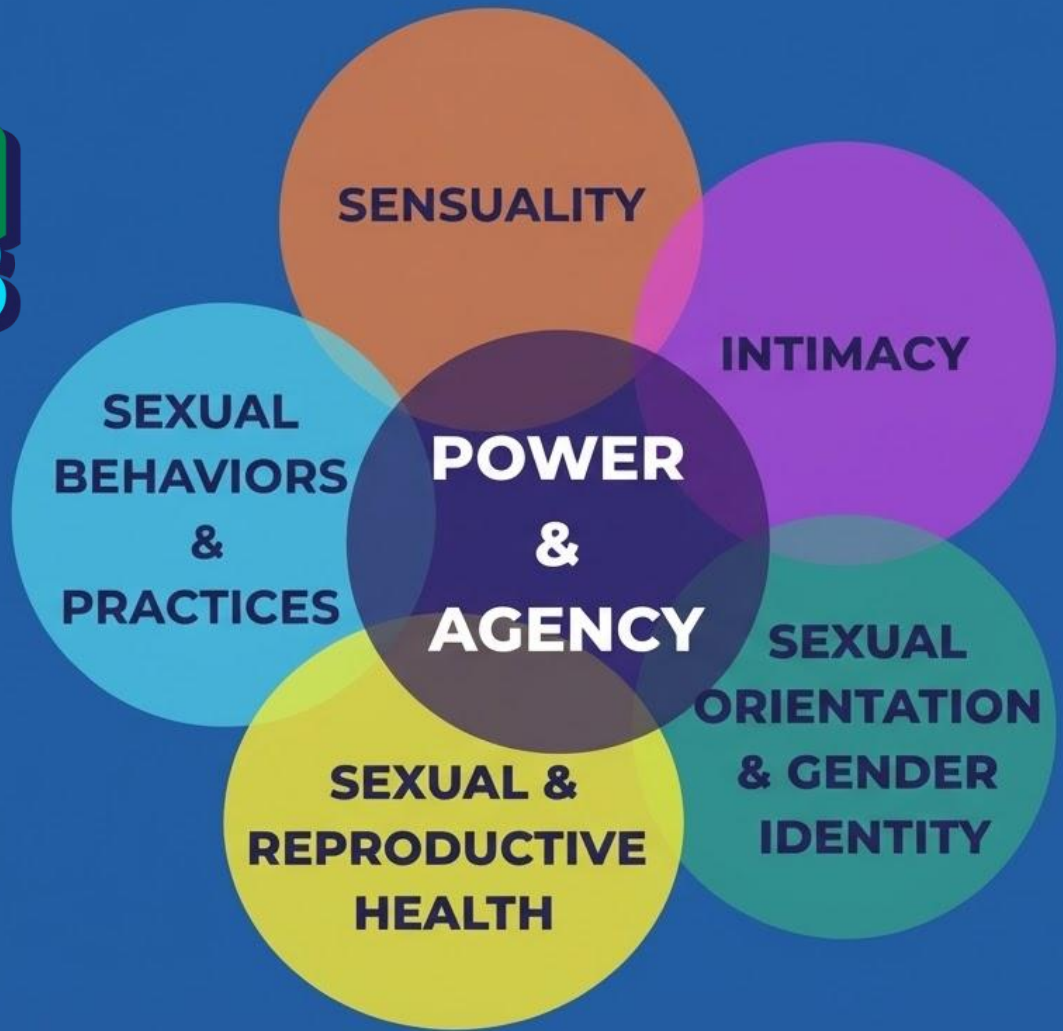
Teamwork – Ability to collaborate and support peers



Hope

Hope – Optimism and belief in positive outcomes

that HEALTH class





Lauren Fendrick

Middle School Athletic Director



SPRING ATHLETICS



Winter II has concluded–Spring Sports Start today!

- Winter II Student Survey (deadline today)
- Winter II Uniform Return (past due)

Spring Sports: Volleyball, Baseball, Boys Lacrosse, Track, Tennis, Water Polo

Track (4/17, 4/24, 5/1) and Golf (4/27) are open to students with prior experience so be on the lookout for an email about those.



GAME SCHEDULES/TRANSPORTATION



Game Schedules: will be posted online soon.

Attendance/Transportation: Google Form will be sent via email to students after evaluations are complete!



MUDITA



Vicarious joy & the ability to find genuine happiness in the success of others.





Carmen Borbón

Director of Institutional Belonging

Miriam Magaña

Director of Family Support

6th Grade Mentorship Group Updates

Purpose:

Think more deeply about what it means to lead with authenticity through group discussions, activities, and personal reflections. Each student has unique strengths, perspectives and power to make positive impacts in our community and beyond.

Meetings:

1x month (5 meetings)



6th Grade Mentorship Group

Updates

Survey findings:

- Enjoy interactive activities and games
- Build sessions into the schedule to avoid P.E. conflict
- Organic conversations help promote deeper and more meaningful learning
- Explore other leadership perspectives/topics together

Goals moving forward:

- Find space(s) to best accommodate large group discussions
- Align with other departments on what each groups *needs* are around growth and empathy



Family Support and Engagement



- Help families navigate school and community resources
- Provide translation and interpretation
- Support parent affinity groups and opportunities for connection
- Partner with school teams to support families and strengthen systems of support



Recent Community Gatherings



6th Grade BIPOC Dinner



7th Grade BIPOC Dinner



LatinX & Polynesian Parent Affinity
Group Welcome & Resources

See you at the 8th grade BIPOC Dinner on April 14th!



Mike Kulbieda

Technology

The New Normal: Parent as “Tech Director”



- *Helping your child(ren) balance their digital lives.*
- *Tools that can help*
 - *Apple Screen Time*
 - *Google Family Link*
 - *Custodio*
- *Reach out: mkulbieda@menloschool.org*



Thank You!