

From the
DEAN OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
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Teachers as Lifelong Learners

The end of the school year is a wonderful time for reflection, not just for students but also for teachers. Great teachers never feel they are truly “done.” As successful as our students have been and as fulfilling as our classes have been, at the end of the year we often feel we could have done more, done better, done differently.

And we look ahead to all the improvements and changes we will implement next year to make our classes even more engaging for our students.

A wonderful thing about Menlo is the way teachers are supported in the career-long quest to improve our craft. Through its commitment to providing opportunities that deepen professional growth, Menlo encourages us to remain up to date in our disciplines, to be broadly knowledgeable about the field of education, and to create innovative programs. Though most of this energy takes place behind the scenes, all teachers participate in ongoing professional development throughout the year, working toward individual goals, department goals, and school-wide goals.



Individually, teachers write self-reflections each year and set goals for future professional development. Each undergoes a formal review every four years. Faculty also connect to professional communities beyond Menlo by attending regional and national conferences for educators, the NAIS People of Color Conference, or workshops and conferences on educational technology, brain research, learning differences, service learning, and their subject areas.

Faculty members also grow by sharing their expertise. Several Upper School teachers serve as AP exam readers or train AP teachers. Members of the Language and Tech departments presented in Hawaii, Napa and China on language teaching and technology. Typically, a dozen or more Menlo faculty present at the biennial teaching conference of our Northern California peer schools. And some Menlo teachers have served as outside curriculum consultants to peer schools.

Much work goes on at the department level, as well. Each department reviews its curriculum on a cyclical basis, including visiting peer schools to glean new ideas and best practices and inviting outside educators as consultants. The department uses this research to create program goals and implement new initiatives. During the summer,

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many teachers work collaboratively, and frequently cross-discipline, on curricular enhancements. Teachers in World History, Spanish, Math, and English have worked to align curriculum and assessments. Last summer, three Middle School faculty members collaborated to integrate computer programming, science, and art to teach evolution. And in development are a number of new interdisciplinary electives, including ones combining neuroscience and electronics, art and engineering, and philosophy and art history.

Menlo has several school-wide goals—technology, inclusivity, and social and emotional learning, to name a few—and faculty contribute to these through professional development.

Our talented Instructional Technology department provides superb training and support in new technologies, and we even have a Menlo Genius Bar, where students are available to help peers and teachers. Many of us have experimented with “flipped classrooms,” and several departments continue to expand opportunities for blended learning by creating online tutorials. Many Menlo teachers produce their own digital texts, creating materials that are dynamic, interactive, adaptable, and more nimbly updated than traditional textbooks.

Inclusivity is an important Menlo priority. This year, Menlo connected to the national SEED (Seeking Educational Equity through Diversity) program. Led by two Menlo teachers trained in facilitation skills, about 20 colleagues have met monthly to educate themselves



about multicultural and inclusive pedagogy. Through the Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity committee this year, several faculty and parents explored questions related to gender, religion, and learning diversity at Menlo. Building our skills in cultural competency will be the focus of our August faculty retreat and a theme we will return to throughout the year.



A host of other school-wide goals are explored in faculty in-service days, which provide extended time to burnish our skills as teachers and advocates. Sometimes our focus is on the broader, human experience of our students, for example, the social and emotional dimensions of learning, or ways to cultivate a more inclusive school environment. Other times, our focus is pedagogical: design thinking, assessment practices, or curriculum design. This summer, teachers will participate in a workshop led by Menlo’s Academic Support Coordinators focusing on learning diversity and how to create environments that successfully support a wide range of learners.

What draws such talented, driven, curious people to a career in teaching? I believe it is a combination of two passions. One is the deep sense of fulfillment that comes from helping young people develop their unique talents and abilities. The other is our own love of learning and a desire to remain immersed in the “life of the mind” that characterizes vibrant academic environments such as Menlo. So next time you run into Menlo teachers on or off campus, ask us what we’re learning, how our teaching is evolving this year, or what we’re reading. I think you’ll be impressed.

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KnightLine is published in .pdf form on the Menlo School website each month, with an email alert including a link sent to all parents. For questions, please contact Alex Perez, Director of Communications, via email at alex.perez@menloschool.org or by calling 650.330.2001 ext. 2330.

