

# MSPA MS Meeting

September 13, 2017 (8:45 am - 10:08 am)

## Welcome and Happy New Year Resolutions

Alli Deeter, MS Co-President

Alli welcomed the parents to a new school year with “Happy New Year” hats and horns. She proposed that we rebrand the MSPA the M-SPA, so it would be more relaxing and energizing. She thanked the hospitality committee for the lattes and the food. She talked about her excitement over the new building, the new families, and the adorable new sixth graders.

Alli has three new year’s resolutions: 1) to “choose happy” by making the effort to notice the good things and be grateful for the Menlo family; 2) to be present in the moment because middle school is “just right” when your kids are open to new things but not overwhelmed yet; and 3) to have fun, by rolling out the new “random acts of fun” program for the kids with one unexpected special snack and another activity (both are secret so don’t tell your child).

### [US Parent Vote on VP Co-President Elect Proposal](#)

The Proposal has been posted on the website for a few weeks. It is also printed on the meeting agenda. The Proposal was to elect the Co-Presidents a year before their terms start so that they have a year to shadow the current Co-Presidents. The US parents have already voted yes on it. Mary Pinkus moved to change the terms of the US and MS MSPA Co-Presidents; Allison Chao seconded the motion. The MS parents voted unanimously to change the terms of the US and MS MSPA Co-Presidents.

We will vote on a slate of nominees at the next meeting on 11/3/2017; it is a joint meeting with the MS. If you are interested in being MSPA president, please nominate yourself. Or, please nominate someone you think would be good.

## Back to School Reflections

Than Healy, Head of School

The school year is off to a great start. The 6th graders are enthusiastic; they “like everything!” The new cafeteria is working well, making between 150-300 pizzas per day. The new MS faculty are fantastic.

Because the school year has started with no bumps, Than is nervous that parent expectations will be set too high. There will always be bumps at Menlo because we are working with people. People need time and space to get things right, to learn and recalibrate. Because it is so

expensive in Silicon Valley, it is hard to hire faculty. We have to grow our own, which requires giving them some time and space to understand the expectations at Menlo.

Moreover, insisting on perfection from a teacher right away also sends the wrong message to your child. Eleven-to-thirteen-year-olds are inept at most things, so they need to know that they have the time and space to work at things before being expected to be great at them.

## Familiar Faces

### La Vina Lowery, Middle School Director

La Vina reminded the parents to attend their child's grade's Parent Education Night. There, Katherine Peterson will talk about human skills and child development; Frankie Machado will talk about academic learning; and the advocates will talk about character development, the "Habits of the Heart and Mind." All meetings will be from 6-7:30 on the following dates:

- 9/26--6th grade
- 11/14--7th grade
- 10/24--8th grade

### Marisa LaValette, Middle School Community Service Learning Coordinator

This year we will have a week-long program in community service learning, called Knights in the Community. It will run from 4/2-4/6. There will be early dismissal at 12:30 or 1 on 4/6 to kick off spring break.

The week-long format worked well last year for the following reasons:

- It provided predictability in academic scheduling because there are no classes that week
- It allows for in-depth exploration
- It provides time for reflection
- It showcases Menlo's commitment to CSL to the students, parents and community

We made a couple of changes, like moving it to the week before spring break and adding back in PE blocks so that there are four PE blocks during the week.

The grade-level themes will remain the same:

- 6th grade: Work in the community (local community garden)
- 7th grade: Leadership (have buddies in a local school and take them to a museum)
- 8th grade: Community caring (beach cleaning, LifeMoves plus one additional organization)

Email Marisa if you would like to get involved. It is a substantial commitment, and you would need to make all the meetings.

### David Mugglebee, Middle School Drama Teacher

The fall musical is *Aladdin Jr.* It has a small cast of 36 and some crew members. It's not too late to sign up for crew. *Alice in Wonderland* is the winter play. And, the spring musical will be a 6th-12th production of *Oliver* with the MS kids acting as the orphans and Fagin's crew. Normally, the MS does two plays and one musical. This year is different because of the all-school musical.

For most kids, drama at Menlo will be primarily a social experience; those children will not go on to pursue theater. For a few, it will be their major activity. For all of them, they will learn how to collaborate, to be part of something bigger. Towards that end, David is not too interested in straightening out the lines in a dance number. He wants to push kids to become more involved and have a voice.

The parents are also welcome to participate in the drama program and be part of something bigger. He advocated for a new performing arts center.

David explained how Menlo handles the conflict between Menlo sports teams and the play. Before Tech Week, if a child has a game and rehearsal on the same day, the child should go to their game. During Tech Week, the child needs to come to rehearsal. If the child has a major sports conflict, like a tournament, during Tech Week, David and Joe talk to the child to help him or her prioritize which activity is more important to them. David works to find featured roles for the dancers.

Apart from Tech Week, the commitment for *Oliver* will be the same as a regular MS play (except for any featured roles, like *Oliver* and the Artful Dodger). During Tech Week, the MS kids will need to practice with the US kids at night.

In a MS play, the child is only called for rehearsal if he or she is in the scene being worked on. A child with a significant role would be called 3-4 times per week.

### Joe McDonald, Middle School Athletic Director

With Menlo sports, we want joy and life lessons, like resilience, more than wins. Joe made three points:

1. You can park in the Valparaiso or Cartan lots, but not in the Wunderlich lot. You will be towed.
2. If your child comes home upset from a practice or game, wait 24 hours before contacting the coach or the school. Often, the issue will dissipate in that time.
3. That being said, if it remains a problem, please reach out to the coach or Joe early. Don't let things fester for a long time.

## Flik 101

Mima Takemoto, Middle School Assistant Director, and Tony Lapolla, Dean of Students

Menlo started looking for a new food service provider about two years ago. Flik, which only works with independent schools, was the clear favorite because it:

- Uses fresh, natural ingredients
- Cooks healthy food from scratch
- Is careful about food allergies, using a separate set of pots and pans

Middle school lunch starts at 11:15, which is early. Servers give the kids the hot food; they can always ask for more or go back as many times as they want. The kids serve themselves salad and sandwiches. Dessert is served about two times per week. In addition to lunch, Flik offers a hot and cold breakfast from 7:30 until 8:15. It also offers after-school snacks from 3:15 until 4:00. They have smoothies and are expanding to offer sandwiches in addition to typical snack foods.

At the end of every day, Tony has a briefing with Flik to work out any kinks. The President of the company has come three times already this year.

Parents can come try the food. Please contact Mima, so that she knows you are coming. Avoid 11:40 to 12:00, when the lines are long.

Menlo is thinking of other ways to use FLIK, such as moving Community Cooks to the cafeteria and integrating food preparation into the science curriculum.

## Introduction of the New Middle School Teachers and Administrators

La Vina Lowery, Middle School Director

La Vina introduced the new faculty for the MS.

Katherine Peterson: She is the new MS counselor and teaches Human Skills. She is a Menlo alum. She has worked as a counselor for the last 15 years in the Bay Area. She loves the middle school age because they are eager and ask so many questions.

Angela Curotto-Pierson: She is Courtney Chandler's substitute for dance. She went to NYC to dance for ten years, first at NYU. She loves middle schoolers because they are not afraid to try things. Please come see the kids perform.

Pat Neary: He is the substitute for art. He is working with the 6th graders on printmaking and with the 7th and 8th graders on drawing, painting and sculpture. This is his 6th year of teaching. He came from Sacred Heart where he did digital media. He loves middle schoolers because they are not worried about getting into college or getting a job.

Mike Kulbieda: He is teaching computer science and robotics. He came from the International School of the Peninsula. His whole family is at Menlo; his wife teaches at the US, and his kids are in child care. He appreciates Menlo because each child can get what he or she needs here.

Bobbie Lynn Monroe: She is teaching 7th-grade science. She came from Dubai. She loves teaching middle school because the kids are passionate about everything and learn by doing. Menlo feels nurturing for both the kids and her; she will be able to grow here as well.

Kevin Campion: He will be teaching 7th-grade math. He came from Redwood City public schools. He came to Menlo because of the abundant resources that allow teachers to go outside the textbook to teach.

Becky Phillips: She will be teaching 6th-grade English. This is her 14th year of teaching, and she came from the International School of Vienna. She liked that Menlo cares about making better people.

Joannu Chu, 6th Grade Math Teacher and Co-Director of M-BEST Program

Yesterday, M-BEST had a presentation by a group of Menlo girls who had participated in the MAGIC program, which pairs girls with mentors in coding. They spoke about the projects they did over the summer. M-BEST is the Menlo organization devoted to encouraging girls, in particular, in STEM.

Dave Hill, Middle School Science Department Chair and Director of the Middle School Robotics Club

Menlo is in the process of developing a space dedicated to the middle school in the Whitaker Lab. The Robotics Club is taking off with triple the number of kids, including many more girls, and two teams.

## Brief Announcements

Mary Pinkus, Liz Weingart, Paige Curtain and Christina Hoffman, Parent Co-Chairs of the Valpo Fun Run

The Valpo Fun Run is Sunday, September 17th at 9 am. This year it's a color run. It benefits the Peninsula Bridge program. Menlo hosts it with Sacred Heart so we can make connections with our next-door neighbors, as well as our broader neighbors in the Bridge program. You don't need to run; it's just a great community-building event.

Alison Leupold, Parent Chair of the Annual Fund

Last year, we raised \$3.9M with close to 100% participation from the community. The money the Annual Fund raises is used in the current year as part of the operating budget; it provides the “margin of excellence” at Menlo. Our goal this year, as it has been for the last several years, is to raise 10% of Menlo’s annual operating budget through the Annual Fund. It will kick off at the beginning of October and will end at the end of November. You will be contacted by parent volunteers, so please respond to them as they are volunteering their time.

It is a personal decision what each family donates to the Annual Fund; please only contribute what is comfortable for your family. The Annual Fund raises \$4800 per student. If you can cover the cost of each of your children, please do. If you have the means to cover the cost of other children whose families cannot afford it, we would appreciate your generosity. One hundred percent participation is the biggest goal.

Darcy Leschly making an announcement for Shop 4 Menlo Parent Chair, Lisa Keyhani

Please visit the Shop 4 Menlo page on the Menlo website. There, you can bookmark the link to Amazon that automatically raises money for Menlo. Another way is through eScript; remember to update your credit cards. Finally, tell Kepler’s that you are from Menlo, and they will donate 10% of your purchase to the school. Lisa Keyani can walk you through the process.