Welcome by MSPA US Co-President, Devon Gold

Devon welcomed everyone back to school, on behalf of Co-President Christina Tudor and MSPA Council.

‘WE ARE MENLO’ theme for the school year includes as as parents. We, as parents are engaged, supportive, enthusiastic and inclusive. Menlo offers so many ways to engage in school life -- find ways to connect, grow, support one another and the school. At Menlo you can create your own space, find your own thing, you can make connections and you can make it YOUR Menlo.

We also encourage you to be present -- it’s the best way to form relationships and connections, so thank you for being here today. To thank you for being present, we'll be holding a “must be present to win” raffle at each MSPA meeting. Today’s prize is reserved back to school night VIP parking.

Than Healy, Head of School: Back to School Updates

Welcome back, I’ve missed seeing everyone. Great to have the kids back. I want to share this message I said to the kids on Day 1. Then I’d like help with two things. Before doing so, some quick observations:

- This year is off to a strong start. Our seniors are providing a tremendous leadership tone for the start of the year. They have been very welcoming to our freshman. Many seniors showed up for training before school (it was voluntary) and it was heartening to see.
- New faculty are great - when I randomly ask students on the campus ‘who are you liking?’, many students give me names of new faculty.
- Finally, our construction is going well - on time and on budget.

1. Message Shared with Student Body:

Student Council has a new theme of three words: presence, purpose and prospective. Jackson Randall asked me to speak to the student body about purpose. I spoke about someone in his life who had done more to instruct me about purpose than anyone else. I then told the kids they should have a purpose or passion. Most think of these as related to college admissions. and what they will include on applications and it is daunting.
Most 16 year olds are not thinking big ideas and how to give to others. They typically think about food, dating, sports etc. When someone tells a teenager that they should have big purpose, it puts pressure on them. It is age appropriate to NOT know purpose or passion at this moment in time. As parents we need to be careful with messaging. Encourage our children to practice new things, try new things, but it is ok to not know right now what is your passion.

I think there is an aspect of purpose which is often under communicated. Students feeling like they need to find purpose which is a function of time. Hard part of purpose is sacrifice that needs to be made for you to live with purpose. I want them to start thinking about it. “What would you give up to support your purpose?” Our world sends message ‘get mine now’, but we should change that to ‘what would you give up for your passion or your purpose?’.

I told them I see a lot of sacrifices made on this campus. I acknowledged to them that all students made some sort of sacrifice to be here - here with the rigorous academics which often means giving up other things. Some students have to leave their neighborhood and neighborhood friends to come here, these are all sacrifices.

I want our community to think of sacrifice and service as something larger than yourself. We want our students wrestling with this stuff and thinking about it.

2. Than’s two asks of the Parent Community:

   A. Our Transportation Director, Kevin Connor will speak later about traffic - we need your help. We are bumping up against our limits. We have a role as school to help environmentally too. Please listen and help as you can.

   B. WE ARE MENLO: This theme has been 3 years in the making. Kids love it here because of the culture that has been established. Our goal is to teach your kids so they have a different life - they are better people when they leave then when they started. That is what we are shooting for. As such Menlo makes the following commitments to families and in return we hope you'll commit to us as well.

MENLO COMMITS TO PARENTS

- We believe giving challenges that require students to struggle a bit with is a good thing - it is good to stretch and bump up against challenge.
- We commit to fostering a joyful learning environment.
- We aim to teach character.
- We commit to teach students self-advocacy by communicating frequently that we believe in them and telling them they are strong enough to do this.
• We nurture a partnership with our families. Parenting is hard, heavy loads to carry in the world with school shootings and such. Menlo is here to work with you.
• We provide opportunities for feedback and parent education.

PARENTS NEED TO COMMIT
• We are a community, we need you to empower your students the same way the school does. Let your kids advocate for themselves. They are capable, let them be empowered to do things themselves. And please engage productively.
  *Hold each other to these expectations* Please step up with each other, in parking lot conversations and meetings remember these commitments.

Over the summer when Menlo debuted WE ARE MENLO in brochure sent to all families. Here is what is missing from brochure:

• Don't expect instant excellence. We will get there, but sometimes it takes time.
• Don't expect perfection. It is ok that it isn’t perfect. We are a mortal place and we are working on it.
• Don’t expect a particular college at the end of four years here. We don’t have that control. Our kids do great, we don’t promise outcome and we can’t.
• Don’t perpetuate that really juicy rumor. Make a tangible difference by stopping the rumors. Protect the culture as fiercely as our administration does.

John Schafer, US Director
Great start to our school year.

Introduction of New Upper School Faculty/Staff:

Elias Solano, Modern World and US History
From Los Angeles. Loves to travel, been to 6 continents. It has been a great experience teaching and he finds Menlo students to be all extremely bright. Looking forward to a great year.

Abby Tieck, English and Modern World History
Originally from Iowa and lived in Chicago before coming here. 'I'm working on getting all your AP students to not be so anxious'. Excited to be here.

Jay Bush, English (9th and 10th)
Moved to California this summer from NY grad school at Teachers College, Columbia University. Previously taught at boarding school in New England. Really enjoying being at Menlo. If you or students have questions, please ask.
Oscar King IV, English, AP and Honors Lit
Came from LA. It has been fantastic, students are bright and friendly.

Rachel Blumenthal, 9th and 10th English
Previously taught college in Midwest in Indiana and Chicago. Menlo
Students are amazing - they are incredibly kind. Thrilled to be here and to
be working with them.

Lena Pressesky, English 9th and 10th
Made a big move from MA Highschool. Happy to be here. Kids are
awesome, generous and come ready to participate. They have been very
welcoming.

Joel Colom-Mena, Spanish
Originally from Spain, Came to Menlo after 10 years teaching Spanish at
Northwestern University. Kids are awesome, looking forward to a great
year.

John Norris, Academic Support in Math and Science.
Originally from Atlanta but been in Palo Alto for 16 years. Previously
owned a tutoring company. This place moves fast academically. Please
encourage students to come to Academic Support, especially if your child
participated in the kick-start program.

Kristin Jurgens, College Counseling
Filling in for staff on maternity leave.
Worked in Boston at both Tufts and Boston College in Admissions.
Moved to Bay area to work at SHP as college counselor and then Director
of College Counseling. Retired in 2018 to have a baby 16 months ago.
Excited to be here.

Roger Zamora, Associate Director of Admissions, Student Life:
Associate Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for Family
Support
I am back! I had transitioned away from Menlo last Spring. Quickly
realized Menlo is home. Working with students and parents here near to
my heart. Will work in admissions 50% of the time and 50% will work with
Office of Inclusion to be sure every family feels part of our community.

Sujata Ganpole, Algebra 2 and Geometry
16th year teaching
Masters from UC Berkeley in secondary math education
Just moved back to west coast after having taught on the East coast for the past 9 years. Very excited to be here at Menlo.

Zach Lichensderfer, Comp Sci and Math
Thrilled to be here. This is a homecoming bc grew up in Southern Cal. HUGE Dodgers fan.
I love teaching. I come from a family of teachers. I am excited and impressed and so happy to be here.

John cShafer - Shared how Menlo looks for new staff. Post nationally when there is an opening. When we identify candidate they come to campus and do demo class, interview with department, meet with some students, interview with full admin team - it is a full day.

We have found that the Menlo network finds us new staff, not headhunters. Ask of parents, please have antenna up - if you know people, please let us know.

Familiar Faces:
Beth Bishop
1. Introduces Vanessa Ortega, Associate Director of Admissions
Vanessa has been doing admissions in Bay Area for 15 years, most recently at College Prep School in Oakland. She has long admired Menlo from afar and is excited to be here and to help add new families that are ‘WE ARE MENLO’.

2. We have our first preview day on Sunday, September 22. We expect another big year for admissions. Please sign up and help. Program will begin at 1:00pm but we will open campus at noon so people can take self guided tours or take parent led tours. Hope is to reduce cluster of people arriving all at once.

Steven Minning, Creative Arts Director
Emma McGaragan, Penelope Penfold-Patterson and Griffin Thomas came to introduce the year ahead in arts at Menlo.
For more information contact Steven Minning for full line up.
steven.minning@menloschool.org

Earl Koblein, Athletic Director
Excited school back in session. Athletes working hard all summer. Some of the teams have been practicing since August 9. First games this coming weekend.
Last year we focused on bringing joy to athletic activities. This year we will continue that.
We have 21 sports at Menlo and we are successful. Last year included the following:
- 10 won league championships
• 4 won regional championships
• 1 State Championship - Girls Basketball
• 13/21 teams won scholastic championship, all 9 spring sports. (3.5 GPA)
• 10 League VIPs
• 31 students going off to play sports in college
• National girls soccer player of the year - Sophie Jones
• Positive Coaching Alliance Coach of The Year - George Chin
• Girls Tennis won 258 consecutive league play match
• Boys Tennis won 23th consecutive league match
• Boys water polo team kicked out of league bc too good. Now in WCL
• Boys lax was already in WCL

Fall sports underway. We have two new head coaches - Tony Hollands and Lara Reynolds, girls water polo
27 boys on Varsity Football this year
41 boys on JV including 35 freshmen

Homecoming - October 11 will have Friday Night Lights! First ever at Menlo.

Kevin Conner, Director of Sustainability
We have a strict traffic limit imposed by town of Atherton. If we can’t reduce the number of cars coming on to campus the penalty could be a forced reduction in enrollment.

Please commit to using a bus, train, bike or walk - please spread word. Happy to speak with families individually. kevin.conner@menloschool.org

Menlo is planning to revamp reward program for kids who walk, bike or take the train to school.

Andy Kitt, US History
Has been a highschool teacher for 15 years and a parent for the same amount of time. Andy has been studying Emotional Intelligence. He will be offering a class on Emotional Intelligence to Menlo Parents on four consecutive evenings in October from 7-8:30pm. This is a chance to learn about adolescence development, share what works, talk about best practices and discuss troubleshooting. Check eNotes for link or contact Andy directly at andy.kitt@menloschool.org

Announcements

7th Annual Valpo Fun Run Committee: Christina, Paige, Rhonda and Christina
• Valpo Fun run is a community event supporting Peninsula Bridge. Fun event for a great cause
• Date - October 6 in Menlo Loop. 8:30am Reg, 9:00am start
• You do not have to run, you can walk or run. If 7 years of age or under you can ride a scooter or bike.
- Faculty and Peninsula Bridge families participate for free
- You can sign up online. Link will be in eNotes.
- Funds raised this year will support 420 Peninsula Bridge families.
- Prizes for first place winners and for best color and best costume

**Julie Floyd - Introduction as VP Equity, Inclusion and Diversity**
Excited about new role, please let me know if you’d like to help. julie.floyd@gmail.com

**Petra Silton, Co-Chair Menlo School Auction**
100% proceeds go to financial aid
Kick off meeting October 1
If you can’t come to the meeting but would like to help with auction please contact Petra at petrasilton@gmail.com.

Raffle tickets were handed out to everyone in attendance at this meeting. Devon pulled winning ticket and Sook Jung was the winner. Sook won reserved parking for back to school night for Menlo Upper School.

Meeting adjourned at 10:03am.