Building a Bridge

Introducing the New Fifth Grade Program

INSIDE
Images from the International Expo, innovative approaches to teaching and learning, an update on the new JK – 5 math program, scenes from the Middle School Talent Show and more!
The MICDS Upper School Choirs presented their annual Winter Masterworks Concert on December 8 in Mary Eliot Chapel. It was a spectacular evening of beautiful choral music. The MICDS Chamber Choir, Bella Voce Women’s Choir, Concert Women’s Choir and Men’s Choir were directed by faculty members Dana Self and Jason Roberts, and accompanied by a professional orchestra. Joining the singers for the evening performance was professional soprano soloist Danna Dockery-Anderson.

The choirs performed movements from some of the “biggest and best” in choral literature. The Masterworks highlighted included Mendelssohn’s “Elijah,” Haydn’s “The Creation,” Vivaldi’s “Gloria,” Rutter’s “Requiem” and Handel’s “Judas Maccabaeus.” For the closing piece, “The Hallelujah Chorus” from “Messiah,” audience members who wished to do so were invited to join the choir onstage.

“This exciting and complex literature has challenged our young singers and exposed them to a new realm of choral literature often left untouched at the high school level,” noted Choral Director Dana Self.

All MICDS students attended special assemblies on December 9 where highlights from the concert were performed. “It was thrilling to share these classical pieces with all students, from the youngest in Junior Kindergarten to the 12th grade. The concert showcased the depth of the fine arts program at MICDS and the tremendous talents of our students,” said Head of School Lisa Lyle.
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**ON THE COVER**

Fifth Graders Clare Nichols and Arden Lilly program their Lego robot to test the pulley system they designed for the Simple Machine Challenge.

PHOTO BY LINDA RIVARD

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**MICDS MISSION**

“More than ever our nation needs responsible men and women who can meet the challenges of this world with confidence and embrace all its people with compassion. The next generation must include those who think critically and resolve to stand for what is good and right. Our School cherishes academic rigor, encourages and praises meaningful individual achievement, and fosters virtue. Our independent education prepares young people for higher learning and for lives of purpose and service.”

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**MICDS MAGAZINE** is published twice a year, in the winter and summer. Unless otherwise noted, articles may be reprinted without permission with appropriate credit to MICDS Magazine, Mary Institute and Saint Louis Country Day School.

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**MICDS** is a publication of Mary Institute and Saint Louis Country Day School.

MEET NICOLE TRUEMAN
Dean of Students, Class of 2012; Upper School English and Drama Teacher; Middle School Cheer Coach

Nicole Trueman began her tenure at MICDS in 2002, teaching art and drama in the Middle School. She made the transition to the Upper School in 2009 to take on the role of Dean of Students for the Class of 2012.

This is her MICDS.

An unparalleled community
MICDS is an enormous family. We expect a lot from each other and ourselves. The support, respect, and rigor in our School are unrivaled.

First impressions
I'll never forget the day I arrived for my first interview. Cheerful students, who asked if I needed help and wished me luck, greeted me. I left that day knowing THIS was where I wanted to be.

The joys of being a Dean
I love the connections I’ve made helping and supporting students. Watching students grow, take risks, recover from failures, and celebrate achievements is a gift. I also feel lucky to work with an amazing team of adults. They go above and beyond the call of duty each day to turn difficulties into conquerable challenges and the great times into life-long memories.

A bittersweet Graduation Day
I’m in the unique position of having known most of the students since they were in Middle School. Traveling with them as their Dean for the last three years has been beyond rewarding. Every time we have a big “senior moment” (pond toss, de-stress days, the baby photo board, etc.), my heart hurts a bit at the thought of not seeing them next year. I’m going to miss each and every one of them. On graduation day, my goal is to get through the names without tearing up!

As you read through this issue of the MICDS Magazine, my guess is that you’ll find yourself saying, “Wow, I didn’t know we were doing that at MICDS!” I have to admit these words spring to my mind several times each week. As I’ve watched our faculty go about their work, one common trait seems to define their approach to getting it right for kids: they are intentional about the choices they make. Forward-thinking and innovative, they strive always to provide the best possible learning environment for their students.

When I was hired six years ago, the Board challenged me to, “take this very good school and make it a great school.” As our full community worked to craft the vision for what our School could become, the Strategic Plan 2009–2014 took shape and provided us with a road-map aligned with our mission. Far from gathering dust on a shelf, it has become our collective compass. It has become so internalized by members of our community that they simply go about their daily work in ways consistent with the ambitious trajectory that document maps out.

Whether it’s the 5th grade reboot or project-based learning, international exchanges or flipped classrooms, our teachers make it all possible as they strive to implement best-practice strategies that will mobilize their students as learners, deepen their engagement in the work at hand and open up a world of possibilities. This edition of our magazine provides ample evidence of the vital role filled by teachers: it is they who are making this a great school.
**INTRODUCING THE NEW AGE OF BIOSCIENCES**

**Roger N. Beachy delivers 2011 Harbison Lecture**

World-renowned biologist Dr. Roger N. Beachy delivered the 2011 Earle & Suzanne Siegel Harbison '45 Lecture on October 13 in Danforth Chapel. Dr. Beachy’s topic was “Feeding, Fueling & Clothing the World in the Face of Growing Population and Climate Change: What role will you have in making it happen?”

Dr. Beachy discussed advances and challenges in the field of plant science in the context of social responsibility and the challenges we face as a global community. He said to students, “How will you think about these challenges? Will you be part of the solution?” Dr. Beachy noted the following as key 21st century global challenges: Food Security, Food Safety, Nutrition and Health, Bioenergy and Biomaterials, and Climate Changes — all of which can be linked to the agricultural industry. He discussed ways to achieve a sustainable agricultural system, explaining, “Agriculture produces the ‘Four Fs’ — Food, Feed, Fiber and Fuels (biofuels and biomaterials). The innovations that can come in these fields are remarkable and absolutely critical for our future.”

“We are entering a new age of biosciences,” Dr. Beachy said in conclusion. “There are too few scientists and innovators to meet the challenges we will face, and many opportunities for discovery. There is a role for almost everyone in this room to play in our bioeconomy.”

Dr. Roger N. Beachy is the Founding President of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center and was appointed the first Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). He is an expert in plant virology and biotechnology of plants, and his work has included establishing principles for the genetic engineering of plants that make them resistant to viral diseases.

The Harbison Lecture is one of several endowed lecture series at MICDS. It was established and endowed in 1994 by Mr. and Mrs. Earle H. Harbison Jr. on the occasion of Mrs. Harbison’s 50th Class Reunion. This endowment funds an annual lecture for students at MICDS “featuring a prominent local, regional or national figure whose topic will support the mission and educational goals of the School.” Because the Harbison family strongly values the sciences, the School has historically chosen a prominent figure in the sciences to speak to Upper School students.
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
Upper and Middle School scholars earn recognition

UPPER SCHOOL ASSEMBLY CELEBRATES STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

A number of Upper School students were honored during a special assembly on October 3 for outstanding academic achievements. MICDS JK – 12 Science Department Chair Bob Shaw opened the assembly by recognizing eight students who participated in the 2011 STARS (Students and Teachers as Research Scientists) program this summer, conducting research alongside professional scientists. MICDS was pleased to earn the distinction of having more students than any other school chosen to participate in the 2011 STARS program. Three STARS participants, Gowri Kalugotla ‘12, Hayley Landman ‘13 and Tally Portnoi ‘13, received LMI Aerospace/D3 Technologies Award for Excellence in Research.

Director of College Counseling Andrea Brownstein announced that 12 members of the Class of 2012 have been named semifinalists in the National Merit Scholarship program. Students qualify as semifinalists based on scores achieved on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT). Only 16,000 of the 1.5 million students nationwide who took the test earn recognition as National Merit Semifinalists.

Head of Upper School Scott Small presented awards to students in grades 9 – 12 who achieved the highest grade point averages in their respective grade levels during the 2010 – 2011 academic year, and, as a result, earn the distinction of “Class Detur.” The “Class Detur” recognition traces its roots at our School back to the early days of St. Louis Country Day School, and is one of the oldest prizes ever presented at Harvard College.

To close the assembly, Head of School Lisa Lyle noted the School’s pride in the “spectacular accomplishments of its students.” She reminded all students, “We need each of you to step up and embrace the challenges you will face as you go out into the world with confidence, commitment and courage.”

Congratulations to everyone!

2011 STARS PARTICIPANTS
Gowri Kalugotla ’12
Hayley Landman ’13
Tally Portnoi ’13
Suyash Raj ’12
Harry Seo ’12
Tyler Stratton ’12
Luke Xing ’12
Casey Zuccarello ’13
*Dabin Choe ’12, who resumed her 2010 STARS research work this summer, also received recognition.

2012 NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SEMIFINALISTS
Dabin Choe
Sophia Critchfield-Jain
Ali Dalton
Jordan Evans
Myles Fountain
Zander Galluppi
Gowri Kalugotla
Katherine Lin
Harsha Nori
Omar Qayum
Mohamad Syed Ahmed
Madeline Townsley

2010-2011 CLASS DETURS
Class of 2012
Gowri Kalugotla
Class of 2013
Hayley Landman
Tally Portnoi
Christina Rouse
William Van Cleve
Class of 2014
Camille Bianco
Adrienne Brauch
Cassie Collins
Jack Finlay
Allie Meier
David O’Hara
Emma Posega Rappleye

Class of 2015
Tilman Bartelsmeyer
Maggie Carman
Annie Childress
Lynn Dankner
Dennis Grigoryan
Milly Judd
Emily Lee
Jonathan Lin
Christina MacAskill
Ben Matz
Jonathan Matz
Jacqueline Morey
Cameron Niemann
Achint Rai
Gigi Rill
William Schoenecker

“We need each of you to step up and embrace the challenges you will face as you go out into the world with confidence, commitment and courage.”

STARS participants: (Top left, front row, from left) Tally Portnoi, Gowri Kalugotla, Hayley Landman and Dabin Choe; (back row, from left) Casey Zuccarello, Suyash Raj, Tyler Stratton, Harry Seo and Luke Xing

2012 National Merit Semifinalists: (Below, front row, from left) Harsha Nori, Gowri Kalugotla, Ali Dalton, Dabin Choe, Jordan Evans, Mohamad Syed Ahmed and Madeline Townsley; (back row, from left) Zander Galluppi, Myles Fountain, Sophia Critchfield-Jain, Omar Qayum

Headliners
New program launches in April

In early April, MICDS will launch a campus-wide composting program as part of the School’s ongoing commitment to implementing sustainable practices. MICDS is partnering with Blue Skies Recycling to set up composting bins in all three school cafeterias. Sealed compost bins will be picked up three times per week and replaced with sanitized bins. “Blue Skies will deliver the bins to St. Louis Composting, where it will be broken down into nutrient-rich soil supplements and redistributed for consumer use,” says MICDS Apprentice Teacher Megan Adams.

Blue Skies representatives will work with the Sustainability Committee and students in all divisions, including the Upper School Environmental Club, to lead assemblies on the launch day in each division that explain what items are suitable for the compost bin and why composting is so helpful to the environment. “Our goal is to become a zero waste school,” explains JK – 12 Science Department Chair Bob Shaw. “This means that through a school-wide composting and single-stream recycling program, 90 percent of the school’s waste will not end up in a landfill.”

“Through a school-wide composting and single-stream recycling program, 90 percent of the school’s waste will not end up in a landfill.”

MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASS DETURS

In September, Middle School students who earned the distinction of “Class Detur” for achieving the highest grade point average in their respective grades were recognized during a special assembly. The Latin word “Detur” is translated as follows, “Let this reward be given for.” Middle School Head John Carpenter noted, “As a public celebration of academic excellence, this assembly is a formal declaration of the importance we attach here at MICDS to academic achievement, and to the firm belief that hard work and effort has its rewards.”

Thirty Middle School students were recognized for outstanding academic achievement during the 2010 – 2011 school year. “You have earned our School’s highest praise, and you are to be commended for your hard work, dedication, and the example you set for others in our School,” Mr. Carpenter said to the student honorees.

Congratulations to everyone.

Class of 2016
Taylor Baur
Edward Bearden
Bridget Condie
Harrison
Crichtfield-Jain
Madi Cupp-Enyard
Sarah Finlay
Joshua Levinson
Olivia Light
Elizabeth Love
Joe McAllister
Hannah Myers
Michael O’Keefe
Molly Pfefferkorn
Tyler Raclin
Bear Reisinger
John Rush
Mehreen Shaqat
Alexa Smith
Kara Zurlinden

Upper School Deturs:
(Below, front row, from left) Cameron Niemann, Achint Rai, Christina MacAskill, Milly O’Keefe, Gowan Kalugotla, Emily Lee, Jacqueline Momen, Gigi Rill, Camille Bianco, Allie Meier and Emma Posega Rappleye; (second row, from left) Hayley Landman, Tally Portnoi, Christina Rouse, Annie Childress, Lynn Dankner, Maggie Caman, Dennis Gregoryan, Benjamin Matz, Jack Finkas, Adrienne Brauch and David O’Hara; (third row, from left) William Van Cleve, Jonathan Lin, Jonathan Matz, William Schoenecker and Tilman Bartelsmeyer; (not pictured) Cassie Collins

Class of 2018
Blake Abel
Emilee Autry
Shannon Gould
Amanda Kalishman
Katie O’Hara
Alexandra Quiroga

Class of 2017
Nidhi Bhaskar
Rohit Chouhan
Alex Currylo
Andrew Krause
Annabel Warren
EXCHANGE PROGRAMS ENRICH STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCE
Delegations from China and France visit MICDS this fall

CHINESE EXCHANGE PROGRAM
October 4 – 13
MICDS welcomed 15 students and two faculty members from the Shanghai Foreign Language School (SFLS) to campus in October for a nine-day visit. During their stay in St. Louis, SFLS students attended classes and events with their MICDS host students and participated in field trips that included tours of Washington University and Saint Louis University as well as areas of interest in St. Louis. They also took a day trip to Hannibal, MO, to enjoy a Mississippi riverboat cruise. During a special welcome reception, SFLS students received informational packets and greeting cards that were created by MICDS Middle School Mandarin students. Fifteen MICDS students spent 10 days touring China in June 2011 to kick off this exchange program. MICDS student participants were: Cory Stine ’14, Cameron Gornet ’14, Sohil Desai ’13, Daniel Giuffra ’13, Christopher Gladden ’13, Kenyatta Asante ’13, Charles Halbeck ’13, Andy Klingsler ’12, Matthew Tao ’12, Ryan Lee ’12, Kelsie Augustin ’12, McCaig Dove ’13, Claire Ringenberg ’13, Katherine Fuszner ’13 and Annabelle Cella ’13.

FRENCH EXCHANGE PROGRAM
November 3 – 17
This fall marked the initial year of our School’s biennial exchange with its partner school in Caen, France — Institution Sainte Marie de Caen (ISMC). In November, 16 French students stayed with MICDS families and attended classes in the Upper School for two weeks. They also participated in field trips that included tours of St. Genevieve, excursions to the Missouri Botanical Garden, City Museum, Washington University, and the Fox Theatre for a performance of Billy Elliot.

“Hosting an exchange student from another country of the world really makes you realize how different our lives are from theirs,” said David Jones ’15. “Getting to know the French students made me want to learn more about not only the French language, but also their culture and what differences and similarities we share with them in our daily lives. The exchange was a great experience and it really helped me enhance my French-speaking skills.” Brendan Hart ’14 added, “Hosting and interacting with the French students brought interesting experiments through surprises and new friendships. It was an adventure.”

In March 2012, 15 MICDS students traveled with Head of School and former French teacher Lisa Lyle to France. Students began their trip with a three-day stay in Paris, where they took in the typical sites of the City of Lights, including Notre Dame, Saint-Chapelle, Sacré Coeur, Musée d’Orsay, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and shopping at the Champs-Elysées. They also attended classes for two weeks at ISMC and experienced the beauty and history of Normandy on school field trips.

MICDS students who participated in this exchange were: Andrew Militello ’15, Mary Carnal ’15, David Jones ’15, Adrienne Brauch ’14, Camille Bianco ’14, Allie Meier ’14, Steven Shearing ’14, Brendan Hart ’14, Courtney Trowbridge ’14, Olivia Polk ’14, Dennis Shultz ’13, Libby McKown ’13, Billy Van Cleve ’13, Anna Robson ’13 and Darby Hobbs ’13.

“Getting to know the French students made me want to learn more about... their culture and what differences and similarities we share with them in our daily lives.”

French students and their MICDS hosts pose for a group photo.
ADVENTURES ABROAD
Students and retired faculty participate in Swiss Semester

This fall, tenth graders Cassie Collins ’14, Elizabeth Robin ’14 and Jordan Taylor ’14 participated in Swiss Semester, a unique program of academic, personal and physical challenge designed for high school sophomores. Swiss Semester’s campus is located in Zermatt, Switzerland, a tiny village in the Swiss Alps located at the foot of the Matterhorn. As an added bonus, recently retired MICDS teachers Will Hansen and Dan Piquet were members of the 2011 Swiss Semester faculty, along with Margaret Mize Mathis ’45, a former Mary Institute math teacher.

During Swiss Semester, students took classes in English, math and foreign language, following the MICDS curriculum, in addition to geology, art and history. Their days were highly structured, including breakfast at 7:00 a.m., followed by morning classes and outdoor activities, including hiking, mountain biking, ice crevice climbing, skiing, rock climbing or on-site geology field studies. Following late afternoon classes and dinner, study halls gave students time to complete homework. They also adapted to three months without computers — all assignments were written and researched by hand. Weekends were spent taking trips to such places as Venice and Annecy, or experiencing helicopter assisted ascents of mountains and biking through the Swiss countryside.

Cassie Collins chose to participate in Swiss Semester because “it sounded like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and it turned out to be just that! I wanted to be independent and challenge myself.” She added, “Swiss Semester made me more open to trying new things and meeting new people. It helped me realize that I needed to make an effort to get to know different kinds of people because they really have a lot to offer.”

“I think the experience taught me how to balance time with friends with school work and physical work,” says Jordan Taylor. “Because it was a boarding school, I really learned how to live with other people, especially being considerate of their needs. It also gave me a global perspective; living in Europe, the news wasn’t always about the U.S., so I had the opportunity to learn about a lot of other countries.”

For Dan Piquet, who valued the ongoing personal and professional growth he experienced during his 25-year career at MICDS, teaching at Swiss Semester was the obvious next step. “Teaching English in the morning and late afternoons, and hiking in the Alps with students in the middle of the day, every day, could not have suited me better… And I loved the size — 40 students, 12 teachers, lots of opportunities to interact with students in and out of the classroom. From the daily hikes to weekend cycling trips to travel in France and Italy, we all became closer and closer as a community of learners, which, when you come right down to it, is what education is all about.”

Will Hansen felt that teaching in Swiss Semester enriched his life in many important ways. In addition to physical accomplishments, such as learning to ski and completing a 28-mile hike, he conquered psychological challenges, such as taking that first step backward off of a ledge to rappel down a vertical rock face — all with the encouragement of the students and fellow faculty. “I loved the sense of family that we often felt; the students appreciated the commitment of the teachers, and there were many times outside of the classroom when my students and I were like teammates encouraging each other.”

“The students appreciated the commitment of the teachers, and there were many times outside of the classroom when my students and I were like teammates encouraging each other.”

Elizabeth Robin offered the following when asked what advice she would give to a friend considering Swiss Semester, “Always push yourself as hard as you can and then a little harder — it is worth the effort. Be open and kind. At Swiss Semester your friends are your family and as long as you put in the effort they will love you for who you are no matter what.”
Upper and Lower School students enjoy many activities, including sharing stories, making crafts and playing games.

“COMPAÑEROS UNIDOS
Cross-divisional Spanish program builds community”

This fall, MICDS Spanish Teachers Rene Ashman and Soledad Jaramillo Villagomez launched Compañeros Unidos, a cross-divisional program benefitting bilingual and advanced Spanish speakers in both the Upper and Lower School. Upper School students work with Lower School students during traditional language classes and in an after-school program for enrichment through games, songs, art and books. MICDS parents are also invited to join in after-school activities. “We love watching children and families make connections,” Ashman says.

“Participating in this program has been an incredible opportunity. It showed me how important it is to stay connected with my culture,” adds Girija Hariprasad ’13. “We learn a lot from the Lower School students. They are not afraid to correct our Spanish, so I am also improving as a student in a fun environment where everyone is growing together.”

The program’s purpose is to develop pride and improve the four core language skills (reading, speaking, writing and listening) of Lower School heritage students, foster cross-divisional relationships and provide Upper School students with opportunities for community service and to use their Spanish skills.

“I have noticed improvement in speaking and listening comprehension skills in both the Upper and Lower School students,” says Villagomez. “This program provides an ideal setting for students to practice social and spontaneous conversation skills.”

“Team 5190 won the Think Award, which recognizes the team that best documents their design and build processes.”

The MICDS Upper School Robotics program sent two teams to the FIRST Tech Challenge State Championship Tournament in Rolla, MO, on February 25. This invitation-only tournament drew 36 teams from across Missouri. In the competition, each team began with the same box of parts and designed a robot that would accomplish a multitude of tasks, including autonomous movement. Judges scored points and awarded penalties depending upon the activities of the robots on the play field.

Team 5155, the Rambunctious Rambots, represented by Jaron Randle ’12, Adam Putnam ’12, Chris Brown ’12, and Sam Margulis ’12 (pictured above), finished in the top 20. Team 5190 finished the qualifying round of the tournament in third place, winning all five of their matches. They went on to win the first set of matches in the elimination round to proceed to the Finals, where they were defeated by Team 5085 of O’Fallon, IL. Team 5190 members included Brendan Hart ’14, Austin Kong ’13, and John Dunagan ’13, who drove the robot at the tournament; programmer Akili Hall ’13; and builders Matt Wolfe ’13, Bruce Olson ’13, Rohan Pradhan ’13, Kenyatta Asante ’13, Ellis Brown ’13 and Corey Stine ’14.

In addition to their fantastic on-field performance, Team 5190 won the Think Award, which recognizes the team that best documents their design and build processes in their engineering notebook. They were also named as a finalist for the Innovate Award, which is given for creative mechanical solutions to the game challenges. Furthermore, the coach for both teams, Upper School Science Teacher Michael Cowan, was one of three finalists for the Compass Award, which recognizes an outstanding coach or mentor.
SCIENCE SUPERSTARS

Students earn 22 awards at Science Olympiad

Congratulations to 34 MICDS Upper School students on their outstanding performance at the Regional Science Olympiad held February 4 at Lindenwood University. MICDS had two teams competing (out of a total of 13 from high schools throughout the region) and they captured 22 awards, including first place in Chem Lab, Helicopter, MicroMission, and Optics.

Students are selected for Science Olympiad through applications and test performance. They began preparing for competition in September, working with various members of the faculty to prepare for the events. The competition consists of 25 different events; some are written tests and some are building events, according to faculty sponsor Diane Henderson, Upper School Science.

Congratulations to the 34 students who represented MICDS:

12TH GRADE
Brandon Luan
Mohamad Syed-Ahmed
Zander Galluppi
Gowri Kalugotla
Katherine Lin
Steven Frank
Tyler Stratton
Adam Putnam
Zohair Ahmed
Dabin Choe
Harry Seo
Matt Tao
Connor Delaney
Luke Xing

11TH GRADE
Rachel Martin
Beth Ignatova
Tally Portnoi
Ben Gunning
Girija Hariprasad
Hayley Landman
Matt Wolfe
Austin Kong

10TH GRADE
Chandler Dalton
Jack Finlay
Brendan Hart
Preethi UmaShanker
Emma Posega Rappleye
Kristin Geczi
Mandy Zhang
Adrienne Brauch
Allie Meier
Lily Reisinger
Steve Staley

9TH GRADE
Foster Thompson

LEADING YOUTH IN CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Pope ’12 founds Great Rivers Land Trust Junior Board

DeAnna Pope ’12 presented at Rally 2011, the National Land Conservation Conference in Milwaukee, WI, in October. In 2009, she founded the Great Rivers Land Trust Junior Board in her hometown of Alton, IL, in an effort to engage high school students in the important work of land conservation and increase awareness of the Great Rivers Land Trust (GRLT). The Junior Board consists of 15 high school students who support the work of the GRLT, a nonprofit Alton-based organization dedicated to “preserving the scenic beauty of open spaces and protecting wildlife habitats for future generations.”

DeAnna was invited to Rally 2011 to offer advice on creating a junior board, share ideas on how youth can contribute to conservation efforts and give tips on using social media to raise awareness. She was the only high school student invited to be a presenter, and her session earned rave reviews, including, “This was easily one of the best presentations I have seen at this conference.”

In November, DeAnna also presented information about “Motivating and Engaging Youth in Environmental Endeavors” at The 2011 Youth Conservation Congress: Harvest for the World sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The experience was energizing. “I met so many passionate students who, like me, want to get high school kids outside and involved with the sustainability movement,” DeAnna says. “Once I learned the shocking statistic — the average high school students can recognize over 1000 corporate logos but can’t identify more than six species of trees — I became aware of not only my own environmental catalogue but also firmly resolute in changing that statistic for my hometown.”

The GRLT Junior Board has participated in a number of projects, including initiating Tree Planting Saturdays and an Invasive Species “Kill-Off Day,” attending educational programs at the Missouri Botanical Garden, and delivering PowerPoint presentations on “What is a Land Trust?” to local civic groups. If you’d like to learn more about their work, visit the GRLT Junior Board’s Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/pages/Great-Rivers-Land-Trust-Jr-Board/128072790626386.
SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD
Chouhan ’17 honored by USTA

Congratulations to Rohit Chouhan ’17, who was selected by the USTA (United States Tennis Association) Missouri Valley Awards Committee as the recipient of the 2011 Junior Sportsmanship Award - Boys 14. The Missouri Valley USTA district encompasses five states — Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa and Nebraska. Rohit was the Boys 14 sportsmanship recipient for the entire region. The award recognizes outstanding behavior on and off the court. He was honored during the USTA Missouri Valley Awards and Hall of Fame Luncheon on December 3.

HIGH HONOR
Portnoi ’13 honored for achievement in science

In February, Tally Portnoi ’13 was recognized by the University of Missouri-St. Louis College of Arts and Sciences as a recipient of the Dean’s Distinguished Achievement Award for Excellence in Science. This award recognizes the most outstanding junior-level science students enrolled in greater St. Louis metro area high schools. Tally was honored for her outstanding performance in science classes, her involvement in extracurricular science opportunities, including the Science Olympiad and the STARS (Students and Teachers as Research Scientists) summer program, as well as her leadership in the community.

FALL 2011
ALL-METRO HONORS
Ten MICDS athletes recognized

Congratulations to 10 MICDS student athletes who were named to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch All-Metro teams for fall sports.

The All-Metro teams are “an honors list of athletes from more than 200 area schools who performed the best in their respective sports,” according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Every season the teams are chosen by the sportswriters and staff at the Post, the Suburban Journals and STLhighschoolsports.com.

The following MICDS athletes were recognized as All-Metro team members and featured in the December 23 issue of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

Thomas Militello ’12, Jack Kurzu ’13, and Michael Scherer ’12 were all named to Football first team (offense); Jack Howell ’12 was named to the Football second team (offense) and Foster Bundy ’12 to the Football second team (defense).

Katherine Desloge ’12 was named to the first team in Girls Tennis.

Claire Townsley ’12 was named to the first team in Girls Tennis and Ellie Condie ’12 to the second team in Girls Golf.

Amos Bartelsmeyer ’13 was named to the second team in Boys Cross Country.

Campbell Torchin ’12 was named to the third team in Girls Golf.
CABINET MEMBER
Wright ’13 appointed to Congressional Youth Cabinet

Erin Wright ’13 has been appointed to the Missouri 1st District Congressional Youth Cabinet. She is one of just 48 area high school students chosen for this honor. Missouri Congressman William Lacy Clay (D) honored the new members at a special ceremony in October held in the historic Board of Aldermen chambers at St. Louis City Hall. The Congressional Youth Cabinet will advise Congressman Clay and his staff on key national and local issues that impact young people. This first of its kind effort in Missouri is an ongoing process that will provide top students with a path to become advocates for the issues that matter to them. Erin said of the honor, “I am very passionate about social justice, and am eager to learn more about how American politics work, and how I can make an impact on my community while still in high school.”

NATIONAL SIGNING DAY
12 seniors recognized

Twelve MICDS seniors were recognized during a ceremony honoring their athletic and academic achievements on February 1, national signing day.

First team All-Metro football player Michael Scherer signed his Division I Letter of Intent to play next fall at the University of Missouri. Senior swimmer Annie Goessling was also recognized for signing her letter to swim for the University of North Carolina.

Don Maurer, MICDS Director of Athletics, also introduced 10 additional seniors who have made or have received commitments to play collegiate athletics at their college or university of choice, including:

- Katherine Desloge – tennis / University of Richmond
- Todd Hearn – football / William Jewell College
- Jack Howell – football / Brown University
- Coby Klar – baseball / Grinnell College
- Sam Margulis – lacrosse / Trine University
- Thomas Militello – football / Dartmouth College
- Nick Rizzo – soccer / Colgate University
- Claire Townsley – field hockey / Washington & Lee University
- Nealey Wallis – diving / New York University
- AJ Washington – football / Drake University

“This is a special day. MICDS is honored to have 12 students who will play collegiate athletics at the school of their choice.”

“This first of its kind effort in Missouri is an ongoing process that will provide top students with a path to become advocates for the issues that matter to them.”
KEEPING FOOD SAFE
MICDS Hosts FIRST LEGO League Competition

The McDonnell Athletic Center was abuzz with activity as MICDS hosted the FIRST® LEGO® League regional qualifying competition on November 12 and 13. Up to 20 teams made up of students ages 9 – 14 from schools throughout the region (Missouri and Illinois) competed each day in the 2011 Food Factor Challenge: “Keeping Food Safe.” Two teams of MICDS students were among the five teams that advanced to the championship round.

The FIRST® LEGO® League program uses the LEGO MINDSTORMS® technology to help inspire young students to get excited about science and technology. Students build and program an autonomous robot to score points on a thematic playing surface and create an innovative solution to a problem as part of their research project. These two elements — the Robot Game and the Project — make up the yearly challenge.

The MICDS Rambots and Rambots 2 teams, composed of Middle School students, both performed well in the competition. The Rambots team won the Innovation and Strategy award as well as the Robot Performance award. The Rambots 2 team received the Gracious Professionalism award. Both teams scored among the top five teams advancing to the next round.

The team members included Sophia Puertas ‘19, Joshua Sutton ‘19, Alexander Huber ‘19, Niema Foroughi ‘17, Abi Lakshmanan ‘17, Clayton Pope ‘17, Jackson White ‘16, Nicholas LeNoir ‘17, Jack Baumstark ‘17, Raevyn Ferguson ‘19, and Harry Coovert ‘19. The two teams were coached by MICDS Science Teachers Nolan Clarke and Christy Moore.

INTRODUCING PROJECT PLAY
Goal is to raise funds for new playground at North Side School

In January, students in all three divisions were introduced to an exciting campus-wide community service project known as Project Play. The objective of Project Play is to involve all members of the MICDS community in an effort to raise funds for and subsequently construct a playground at North Side Community School. North Side is a neighborhood charter school that was founded in 2009 by Country Day alumni Ross Woolsey ’67 and John Grote ’67 and is located on North Euclid Avenue in the City of St. Louis. The school encompasses kindergarten through third grade and serves predominantly poor, urban, at-risk students.

MICDS students and faculty visit North Side regularly to read, do art projects and even host class parties for students. When a unique opportunity for high school students to plan and execute large-scale service projects presented itself, it was no surprise that MICDS students thought of helping their friends at North Side. The vision for Project Play originated during a day-long workshop for high school students and faculty sponsored by The Big Return, “a campaign created by the St. Louis community to leverage the power of local youth to create big change in the world” that is being piloted in St. Louis. Representatives from The Big Return provide resources to schools,
including fundraising and marketing tips and organizational guidelines, to help students execute their projects.

In November, faculty members Nancy Richardson (US German, Community Service Coordinator), Sujata Biswas (MS English, Community Service Coordinator) and Kyle Webb (student teacher, US Math) accompanied Michael Baker ’13, Kera Bussey-Sims ’14, Samantha Noda ’15 and Anna Robson ’13 to The Big Return’s inaugural summit for brainstorming and planning sessions. Since the workshop, Gabrielle Harris ’13 and Andrew Schaberg ’13 have joined the Project Play leadership team.

The fundraising goal for Project Play is $15,000, to cover the cost and construction of play equipment, maintenance and landscaping. In early June, a team of MICDS students, faculty, staff, parents and alumni volunteers will spend the day building the new playground.

**TURKEY TRAIN TOTALS**

**Annual collection provides meals for the area’s needy**

MICDS students, faculty and staff participated in the 8th Annual Turkey Train on November 21. Upper School families donated frozen turkeys, which were passed hand over hand from Founders Court to waiting Foodbank trucks at McDonnell Athletic Center. Middle and Lower School students collected and sorted non-perishable food items. The St. Louis Area Foodbank extended its thanks to MICDS for another successful Turkey Train, and reported that the 2011 donation included 7,907 pounds of turkey and 3,111 pounds of non-perishable food items which provided 8,814 meals for the area’s needy.

“**In early June, a team of MICDS students, faculty, staff, parents and alumni volunteers will spend the day building the new playground.”**

**The St. Louis Area Foodbank extended its thanks to MICDS for another successful Turkey Train, and reported that the 2011 donation included 7,907 pounds of turkey.”**

(Above, from left) Naomi Ferguson, Camille Curtis, Jackson Baker, Christian Garrett, Andrew Butler and Joe Condie prepare to sort canned goods.

(Above, from left) Kaleigh Riggs works on an art project with a North Side student.

**STRATEGIC PLAN - LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

(Facing page, top) Kaleigh Riggs works on an art project with a North Side student.

(Above, front row, from left) Samantha Noda, Kera Bussey-Sims, Anna Robson and Sujata Biswas; (back row, from left) Kyle Webb, Nancy Richardson and Michael Baker.
PEDAL THE CAUSE
MICDS community unites in the fight against cancer

BY BECKY FERBER ’12

Editor’s Note: The following article originally appeared in the October 8, 2011, issue of The Voice, the MICDS student newspaper.

For the second consecutive year, MICDS took part in St. Louis’s Pedal the Cause fundraiser for cancer research. The event included bike races for all different levels, ranging from 15 to 75 miles. In 2010, under the leadership of Blake Adamson ’14, a team of MICDS riders participated in the race against cancer. This year, the MICDS Ram Riders team was 110 riders strong and was supported by MICDS volunteers at a refueling station in C Lot. There, student, faculty and parent volunteers assisted riders, who could stop in for some water, use the restrooms or rest up for the remainder of the ride.

From 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., riders were greeted with cheers from over 30 eighth graders, the football team, the cheerleaders and a combination of other Upper School students and faculty. Lion’s Choice brought a trailer by to hand out coupons, and a hired DJ provided music.

“Seeing everyone at the fueling station was fantastic,” Adamson, a cancer survivor, said.

Jametria Wright ’12, senior and cheerleader, enjoyed being there as well. “There was a lot of positive energy,” she said. “The bikers needed a lot of support and cheering to get them through it.”

The scene was rowdy and fostered a great sense of community, Cathy Leitch, history teacher, added.

The number of bikers peaked at 10 a.m., with hundreds taking advantage of fruit, Cliff Bars, energy shots and chocolate energy candies. Volunteers were provided with their own stash of sandwiches, sodas and fruit.

“The fundraiser has helped raise awareness of our school as a caring and supportive group that is interested in supporting the larger St. Louis community.”

The MICDS Ram Riders were greeted with cheers as they pulled into the refueling station. While the majority of the riders were sophomores, every grade in the Upper School and faculty was represented as well.

Dr. Nancy Richardson, German teacher and head coordinator of Upper School community service, organized the event.

Not only did the fundraiser help raise awareness about fighting cancer, but it “has helped raise awareness of our school as a caring and supportive group that is interested in supporting the larger St. Louis community,” Richardson said.

Special thanks are extended to MICDS parent Melissa Wright — for organizing the team and getting the DJ and Lion’s Choice — and the volunteers and maintenance staff who made the day possible.

MICDS plans to participate in Pedal the Cause again next year, Richardson said.

The MICDS Rams Ride team raised $30,973 under Adamson’s captainship, and Pedal the Cause as a whole raised $1,224,646, according to Pedal the Cause’s website.

“Thanks to all who rode or volunteered,” Adamson said. “You guys left a significant impact on cancer funding and research.”
Giving

**GIVING THE GIFT OF LITERACY**

*Introducing the Imagination Library program*

MICDS continues to strengthen its strategic partnership with the United Way of Greater St. Louis by becoming the first organization in St. Louis County to sponsor Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, a program dedicated to guaranteeing access to books. Research indicates that the two most important factors which determine school-age literacy are a child’s regular exposure to reading aloud when under the age of five, and a child’s easy access to enough books at home. The United Way is eager to expand this program across St. Louis. MICDS will raise funds to register University City Children’s Center’s 164 students in the Imagination Library Program. Once registered, each child will receive a new book in the mail every month from infancy through age five. The cost to sponsor every child at the Center for the duration of the program is $5000 per year. The Imagination Library project builds upon the relationship MICDS has nurtured with University City Children’s Center through its participation in annual United Way Day of Caring community service projects.

Under the leadership of Assistant Head of School Jeff Suzik, the MICDS Parents Association is planning to launch this program in April. The United Way will provide database support, marketing materials and other resources as needed. “Participation in the Imagination Library project illustrates what educators refer to as the public purpose of a private school,” says Suzik. “Our School has always taken seriously its responsibility to give back in meaningful ways. The Imagination Library will significantly impact the families it serves and has the potential to bring our entire School community together as volunteers.”

**MICDS MADNESS**

*Young Alumni Spearhead Annual Fund Challenge*

The MICDS Young Alumni team kicked off another exciting Annual Fund Challenge for 2012! Our group of over 30 young alumni from the classes of 1993 – 2007 launched MICDS Madness — a 15-day giving extravaganza with a goal of 30% participation in the Annual Fund. The competition among classes was fierce and the results amazing! A total of 588 gifts were received bringing overall participation to 31% with the Class of 1994 taking the lead with 48%. The incentive for the winning class was the opportunity to present a beloved MICDS faculty member with the MICDS Young Alumni Participation Award. The Class of 1994 will vote soon and the award will be presented at a reception later in the spring.

Many young alumni gave to the Annual Fund this year in honor or in memory of their favorite teachers; those who made a difference and helped set them on their path for life. What a wonderful way to give back!

Many thanks to the following for their exceptional leadership with this initiative:

- Bob Koplar ’98
- Alex McMullin ’04
- Young Alumni Board Fundraising Co-Chairs
- Chip Hiemenz ’02
- Advisory Chair

Class Representatives
- Elliott Benoist ’01
- Steve Braeckel ’95
- Chris Brennan ’94
- Jack Burkhardt ’07
- Jamie Corley ’05
- James Dominick ’99
- Hillary Olk
- Dutcher ’97
- Tracy Gellman ’98
- Jeff Giles ’94
- Elizabeth Hailand ’07
- Lindsey Herzog ’07
- Chip Hiemenz ’02
- Jono Hiemenz ’05
- Victoria Caltagirone Iken ’94
- Steven Kofkoff ’03
- Emily Brady Koplar ’98
- Kevin Koplar ’07
- Sam Koplar ’99
- Matt Krieg ’03
- Margot Langsdorf ’01
- Sean McCarthy ’96
- Jake McDonald ’98
- Birch McMullin ’96
- Brian Mueller ’00
- Tee Noland ’95
- Alex Reed ’00
- Molly Rhodes ’03
- Nathan Riner ’99
- Hillary Bean Schumaker ’97
- Hana Tepper Taylor ’95
- Ted Watt ’06

"Many young alumni gave in honor or in memory of their favorite teachers; those who made a difference and helped set them on their path for life."
George H. Erker ’39 shares his story

George Erker’s advice to the MICDS Class of 2012 is, “Ambition. Determination. And I mean, determination. And a lot of hard work.” Erker has always been ambitious, determined, really determined, and worked very hard. Erker came to Country Day in the spring of his sophomore year, after convincing his mother that he wanted to attend a more academically challenging school. He met with Headmaster Robert H. B. Thompson and was quickly enrolled. Erker loves the School because of the phenomenal education he received, and the caliber of teachers. The camaraderie he experienced was life-changing.

After Country Day, Erker attended Princeton University, having received the Princeton Club of St. Louis Scholarship. In 1942, he served two tours as a World War II patrol bomber pilot in the Pacific. While in the Pacific, Erker began to explore the world of investment, leading to a 66-year (and still going) career with what is now Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. Since 1946, Erker has built a career as a broker and continues to truly enjoy his work, stating that he “feels like this is more of a hobby and it gives him satisfaction to be helping his customers with their financial problems.”

Erker is connected to MICDS as an alumnus, parent of alumni, past MI and CDS Board Chair (served simultaneously), and lifelong supporter. He feels grateful for the education that he and his children and step-children received. His loyalty led him to include MICDS in his estate plans by establishing a charitable trust, joining a group of 220 members of the MICDS Eliot & Thompson Society. Members of the Eliot & Thompson Society have informed MICDS that they have placed the School in their estate plans by either inclusion in their wills or revocable trusts, or by participating in one of several income-generating annuities or charitable trusts.

If you have already provided for the School in your will or estate plans and would like to be recognized as a member of the Eliot & Thompson Society, or should you wish to be an unpublished, anonymous member, please contact Amy Rhodes, Director of Major and Planned Gifts, at 314-995-7382 or arhodes@micds.org.

LIFELONG LOYALTY

MYTH: My gift to the Annual Fund is too small to make a difference.

REALITY: Your gifts will add up to define the MICDS experience. In addition to supporting faculty salaries and benefits, following are some examples of how your gift will make a difference.

$100 – Five books for the Middle School library
$250 – Purchase tickets for the entire 5th grade to attend the Young People’s Concert by the St. Louis Symphony at Powell Hall
$500 – Provide four Flip Video™ cameras to be used by students for multimedia projects
$1,000 – Provide a year’s supply of clay for the Middle School art studio
$2,000 – Support the history and geography databases used by all three divisions for research
$3,000 – Support our Upper School’s Model United Nations program
$5,000 – Support the entire JK – 12 Community Service budget
$10,000 – Support one full season of Troubadours productions
$20,000 – Support the entire Lower School library budget

Your gift will directly impact students and advance our mission in this academic year. Make your gift today at micds.org!

MYTHBUSTERS

How your gifts impact students

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$500 – Provide four Flip Video™ cameras to be used by students for multimedia projects

BE BOLD: LEAVE A LEGACY

Support MICDS through a CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST

WHAT ARE CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUSTS?

With charitable remainder trusts, you can receive income each year for the rest of your life from assets you give to the trust you create. Your income can be either variable or a fixed amount. After your lifetime, the balance in the trust goes to the charities of your choice.

There are two types of Charitable Remainder Trusts:

| The annuity trust pays you, each year, the same dollar amount you choose at the start. Your payments stay the same, regardless of fluctuations in trust investments. |
| The unitrust pays you, each year, a variable amount based on a fixed percentage of the fair market value of the trust assets. The amount of your payments is re-determined annually. If the value of the trust increases, so do your payments. If the value decreases, however, so will your payments. |

BENEFITS OF A CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST

| Potential to increase your income from the gifted assets |
| Immediate charitable income tax deduction for a portion of the gift to the trust |
| Potential for significant capital gains tax avoidance |

WE CAN HELP WITHOUT OBLIGATION

Please contact Amy Rhodes, Director of Major and Planned Gifts, at 314-995-7382 or arhodes@micds.org with questions about establishing a Charitable Remainder Trust for the benefit to yourself and MICDS.

Visit micds.org/giving/estateplanning for more information.
HONORS

This winter Middle School Drama Teacher Charlotte Dougherty was featured in Panera Bread commercials airing on radio stations in St. Louis, Chicago, Washington, DC, and a number of cities along the East Coast. She was contacted by Panera executives to record the commercial after she completed a customer survey at a Panera restaurant.

Middle School History Teacher Mark DuVall is the author of a biographical paper that has been selected for publication by the University of Georgia Press in Louisiana Women: Their Lives and Times, Volume II, a compilation of essays by educators across the country. DuVall traveled to Philadelphia in December to conduct additional research for this paper at the Haverford and Swarthmore College archives. DuVall’s paper is titled Phoebe Hunter and the Female Orphan Society of New Orleans, 1760 – 1844. It originated from his recently-completed master’s thesis, titled The New Orleans Female Orphan Society: Labor, Education, and Americanization, 1817 – 1833.

Upper School History Teacher Cathy Leitch is the author of “A Decade Later: Teaching 9/11 Causes and Responses,” published in the Winter 2012 online edition of NAIS’ Independent School magazine. Leitch was invited to write the article following an interview she gave to Education Week earlier in the fall. MICDS is one of the few high schools in the country to offer a history course dedicated to 9/11.

Upper School Choral Director Dana Self is one of six choir directors in the United States invited to participate in the first ever Distinguished Concerts International Emerging Conductor Mentoring Program in New York City, titled “The Complete Conductor: Orchestral Conducting for the Choral Director.” The program will take place in May 2012. DCINY is the performance company who handled the MICDS Choirs’ New York performance in 2011 at Lincoln Center. DCINY’s conductor-in-residence, Dr. Rick Weymuth, recommended Self for this prestigious program.

Congratulations to Lower School PE Teacher and Varsity Track Coach Jim Lohr, who was selected as the 2010 – 2011 Missouri State Track & Field Coach of the Year by the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSHA). Lohr led the Varsity Girls’ Track Team to its first state championship in May 2011.

Upper School Choral Director Dana Self is one of six choir directors in the United States invited to participate in the first ever Distinguished Concerts International Emerging Conductor Mentoring Program in New York City, titled “The Complete Conductor: Orchestral Conducting for the Choral Director.” The program will take place in May 2012. DCINY is the performance company who handled the MICDS Choirs’ New York performance in 2011 at Lincoln Center. DCINY’s conductor-in-residence, Dr. Rick Weymuth, recommended Self for this prestigious program.

Congratulations to Anne (MS World Languages) and Colleen Williamson (US McCulloch Library), whose band, The Lulus, was named Best Folk Band of 2011 by the St. Louis Riverfront Times in its annual “Best of St. Louis” issue.
“During the conference, Wyman discussed the challenges that educators face in translating academic research into practice, especially when evaluating and implementing new technology tools.”

MODELING LIFELONG LEARNING

Professional development experiences

TECHNOLOGY & THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Director of Technology Tom Wyman was a presenter at the “Applying Cognitive Psychology to Enhance Educational Practice” conference sponsored by Washington University’s Henry L. Roediger III, Ph.D., Department of Psychology. During the conference, Wyman discussed the challenges that educators face in translating academic research into practice, especially when evaluating and implementing new technology tools. His purpose was to provide a practitioner’s perspective, especially focusing on the use of technology in educational enhancements and interventions. “This was an excellent conference where the discussions focused on techniques, tools, and applied research that have a positive impact in the classroom environment from the primary grades through the university level,” he said.

100 BEST BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Lower School Homeroom Teachers Jenn Gillis (SK) and Donna Waters (4th grade) attended “The 100 Best Books for Children and How to Use Them in Your Program” conference led by Anita Silvey, an educator, editor and children’s book publisher who travels the country offering workshops for teachers, librarians and parents. During the conference, Silvey emphasized the importance of encouraging young writers to persevere in their work, noting that Kate DiCamillo, author of Because of Winn-Dixie, was rejected 300 times before her first book was published. “This is a perfect story to share with students during Writing Workshop when we discuss the importance of revising their writing to make it the best it can be,” notes Waters. Gillis adds, “Anita reminded us that people don’t always remember the authors of their favorite books but they ALWAYS remember the person who put that book in their hands. It was a wonderful reinforcement that the job we as educators do is long-lasting and invaluable.”

DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENT & GRADING SEMINAR

Math Teachers Chris Ludbrook (US) and Chris Muskopf (US/MS) attended a seminar on “Differentiated Assessment & Grading” led by Rick Wormeli, author of a number of books focusing on differentiation. Wormeli’s approach focuses on grades as a measure of mastery of objectives. It is his belief that an academic grade should only reflect this mastery, and should not include such variables as homework completion or class participation. Data suggests that removing these variables from an academic grade and reporting them independently actually results in improvements in all areas reported. Ludbrook reports that the seminar “was a great opportunity to critically examine something [grading] that we do every day as teachers. Having the opportunity to discuss practices with fellow educators and challenge one another’s positions makes it clear that ‘because that’s what we’ve always done’ is not a sufficient student-centered approach.”

SOCRATIC SEMINAR WORKSHOP

Upper School Teachers Changa Bey (History) and Dan Sadicario (English) received firsthand experience as participants in a Socratic Seminar during a workshop in February. They practiced Socratic Questioning Strategies, learned the fundamentals of writing Opening Questions, participated in and led Socratic Seminars with colleagues, and discovered how Socratic Seminars align with local, state, and national educational standards. Educators use Socratic Seminars to teach and encourage students how to engage in dialogue rather than debate in the classroom.

Dan Sadicario believes that Socratic Seminars are an important tool teachers can employ to prepare students to meet the challenges of the ever-changing 21st century world. “Socratic Seminars seem like an ideal tool to nurture 21st century citizens because they teach students to work together and give them a forum to expand their minds through the exploration of ideas and the sharing of opinions,” he says. Changa Bey agrees, adding, “The Socratic Seminar works very well with respect to the critical thinking and effective discourse I strive to bring to my classes.”

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CONFERENCE

Upper School English Department Chair Lynn Mittler attended The 13th Annual Social Enterprise Conference, which is presented by Harvard Business School and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. The Conference, which is entirely student-run, is one of the world’s leading forums to engage in dialogue, debate, and expression around social enterprise. Social enterprise is one of the four primary strands of the Global Action
Project, a course designed by Mittler that made its debut in the fall of 2011 at MICDS. “When we were teaching the Sudan Project the past few years, we always felt that we fell short on the advocacy piece. We could inform people about what was going on in Darfur and the surrounding refugee camps, but really offered no course of action for people to take. That is why the Sudan Project was re-imagined into the Global Action Project,” Mittler explains.

The conference provided opportunities to learn about many more projects being conducted around the world. Mittler attended an intense Bootcamp for the Acumen Fund to learn how they determine what deals they fund. “This will allow me to help our students structure their business plans with awareness of things like proof of concept, scalability, operational model, revenue model and service model. They simulated questions that real investors would ask of a social entrepreneur,” she explains. In addition, a workshop about design thinking demonstrated a process that will help Mittler guide her students through their early brainstorming stages and design processes. “The most rewarding and reassuring part of the conference was when I shared with people who I was and why I was there,” she says. “So many folks were truly surprised and impressed that social enterprise was being taught on a high school level.” See page 34 for more information on the Global Action Project.

2012 MIDWEST EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

MICDS faculty members Rene Ashman (US World Languages), Lily Childs (US World Languages) and Jeff Horwitz (2nd Grade Homeroom) were among the presenters at the 2012 Midwest Education Technology Conference (METC) held in mid-February.

Ashman and Childs were co-presenters of “A Collaborative Approach to a World Languages Classroom.” Their session included an exploration of the benefits of a collaborative approach to learning a language and an introduction to the technology tools available to help teachers make this transition. Ashman and Childs also shared practical game resources for building vocabulary, improving aural comprehension and furthering communication skills.

Jeff Horwitz led two sessions during the conference. The first, “Book Talks 2.0: Exploring VoiceThread for Literature Circles,” demonstrated how Book Talks 2.0 engages students in about books and transforms the classroom into a community of readers. He instructed participants on how to use VoiceThread as a collaborative tool for digital age “book talks.” His second session was “Project-Based Learning in the Elementary Classroom,” which outlined strategies for the effective implementation of project-based learning in the classroom and provided examples of projects for participants.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

This fall, Nolan Clarke (MS Science) and Nicole Trueman (US Dean, English and Drama) were accepted as participants in The Sanford N. McDonnell Leadership Academy in Character Education (LACE) program, a year-long professional development experience offered by the University of Missouri-St. Louis. LACE provides participants with the knowledge base, resources and skills to implement comprehensive character education throughout their school community. As participants, Clarke and Trueman attend sessions once per month to work on assignments that will be used to inform the work of our School’s Leadership Task Force, which is developing a JK – 12 leadership program.

“Character education is at the forefront of topics we cover, with the idea that solid and intentional character development may lead to the development of good leaders.”

“A Collaborative Approach to a World Languages Classroom” Their session included an exploration of the benefits of a collaborative approach to learning a language and an introduction to the technology tools available to help teachers make this transition. Ashman and Childs also shared practical game resources for building vocabulary, improving aural comprehension and furthering communication skills.

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PASSPORT TO ADVENTURE

International Expo celebrates the MICDS community

The first ever MICDS International Expo, presented by the Student International Council and the Parents Association group, Cultures Within, took place on November 3. The event honored and celebrated the growing cultural diversity of our School through a truly spectacular event designed for all ages.

The event kicked-off with a rousing variety of International Expo performances in Mary Eliot Chapel by students, parents and a few special guests. Expo visitors were treated to an impressive display of dance performances representing a variety of cultural styles (Russian, Bollywood, tango and Bangladesh) and a classical Indian vocal. Performers from the International Shaolin Wushu Center wowed the audience with an amazing Kung Fu demonstration.

Expo guests then traveled the world by visiting 31 different international booths celebrating the various cultures MICDS families represent. They learned about other cultures and traditions through educational displays, interactive activities, artifacts, cultural dress and food tastings. Students and guests were provided a passport valid for “a lifetime of worldwide learning,” and were eligible to earn prizes by obtaining the answers to questions in each country visited.

“From the performances of dances and martial arts from around the world to each country’s booth, we were all simply dazzled by the beauty, information, tastes and smells,” commented Head of School Lisa Lyle. “At each table there was so much to learn and experience.”

“We all learned about the heritage of those whom we interact with every day, and I loved seeing the excitement and pride of the families and students as they shared information and treats from their home countries,” she continued. “Coming to better appreciate the many Cultures Within MICDS better prepares us to eagerly engage with those beyond our campus, and to demonstrate compassion for all the world’s people, as our mission demands. We all felt greater appreciation for our community as we traveled the world to experience more fully the global mosaic that is MICDS. I can’t wait until next year!”

The Expo was the result of months of planning and preparation of a dedicated group of MICDS parents and students, led by Expo Chairperson Victoria Wroten, who was assisted by co-chairs Nootan Pradhan and Angela Martin. International Programs Director and World Languages Teacher Erin Hamill was the Expo’s faculty sponsor.
1. Luke Xing ‘12 at the South Korean booth.

2. (From left) Hannah White ’16, MICDS Parent Kim Jones and Nubby Pfefferkorn ’16 work at the prize table.

3. (From left) Bear Reisinger ’16, Will McMahon ’16 and Austin Saunders ’16 visit the exhibit on Bosnia.

4. (From left) Kate Barnes ’16 receives a passport stamp from Suyoon Lee ’12. Dabin Choe ’12 is pictured in background.

5. Yukako Ito ’13 (at right) teaches Shaimaa Said ’13 how to use chopsticks.

6. (From left) Zach Bukrotnaber ’16, Samantha Noda ’15 and John Rush ’16 greeted guests arriving for the performances in Eliot Chapel.

7. World Languages Teacher Jim Llufrio with Bergen Farttung ‘14 (at left) and Nicki Werner ’14.

8. (From left) Lauren Jackson ’15, Amina Zuna ’15, MICDS Parent Hasima Zuna, Chloe Stallion ’15 and Lauren Button ’15 staffed the exhibit on Bosnia.

9. (From left) MICDS Parents Nootan Pradhan, Laxmi Reddy and Seema Chouhan model clothing from their native India.

10. Expo Chair and MICDS Parent Vicky Wroten (front row, far right) leads a demonstration of the Brazilian dance, “la bomba.” (From left) Troiare Moore ’12, Jordan Shivers ’12, Sophie Crizfeld-Jain ’12, World Languages Teacher Ilene Shultz, Vicky Wroten and Lucy Lloyd ’12.
Introducing the new Fifth Grade Program

BY JOHN CARPENTER
HEAD OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Think back if you can to your first day of Middle School. What images come to mind? If you are like most people, the memory of middle school is hazy at best, but what likely stands out is some combination of excitement, uncertainty, awkwardness and confusion: new classmates and teachers, new hallways and lunchrooms to navigate, new locker combinations to remember (a big deal if you’ve never had a locker before!), new schedules, and a sea of new names, faces, expectations and routines.

For incoming 5th graders in particular, coming from the safe and predictable confines of a self-contained lower school classroom, the jump to middle school can seem overwhelming. Gone is the ‘walled garden’ experience of a main homeroom teacher and a highly fluid schedule and curriculum. Instead, our middle schoolers now move in a departmental landscape with complex schedules and constant travel to different classrooms and teachers, each with his or her own particular teaching styles and routines. Given all this, many new middle schoolers simply find themselves hoping that they won’t get lost on their first day! Finally, there is the abrupt realization for our new 5th graders that they are no longer the “kings of the hill,” but instead back down at the bottom looking up at the older middle schoolers towering above them. Even for MICDS students, the short step from the Lower School (JK – 4) to the Middle School (5 – 8) next door can seem like a chasm. As teachers, what can we do to bridge this gap and help them cross over safely to the other side?

At MICDS, we have spent the better part of this past year tackling this very question. Starting in the Winter of 2011, our 5th Grade Team embarked on a series of program revisions that have led to remarkable changes in how we think about, organize and work with our youngest Middle School students. The result? A completely “new and improved” 5th Grade Program is in place, which represents the very best in contemporary middle school thinking and is already proving to be transformative in the daily work of our teachers and students.
The recent changes to our 5th Grade Program began with a simple but profound question: Should the 5th graders stay in the Middle School, or would they be better served as Lower School students in the culminating year of a JK – 5 program? This is not a new question in the history of MICDS, given that most middle schools around the country begin either at 6th or 7th grade. As single gender institutions, however, entrance to both CDS and MI historically began in 5th grade, and this model has governed our divisional configuration ever since, with the Lower School serving as a feeder school to these two institutions. The merger of the two schools in 1992 opened up opportunities to rethink the overall structure of MICDS at various points, including periodic reexamination of the proper placement of 5th grade.

To this end, Head of School Lisa Lyle formed an Enrollment Model Committee in the Fall of 2010 to reexamine the “5th Grade Question” both in light of the developmental needs of this age group and the larger admissions and marketplace forces in the greater St. Louis area. This committee interviewed dozens of teachers to gain their perspective on the success and challenges of our students in recent years in making the leap from Lower to Middle School. From these conversations
elements considered sacred to the modern middle school movement: flexibility in scheduling of classes; team teaching (a core group of teachers from different disciplines who work exclusively with all students at one grade level); interdisciplinary units (where part or all of the entire team teaches on the same general topic from the perspective of different disciplines) designed around various hands-on projects and activities; opportunities for student teaming and collaboration; a strong focus on study skills and general organization; and a strong advisory program. Also included in this ‘wish list’ were several newer elements that reflect more recent 21st century trends — differentiated teaching according to individual student learning styles, interests and ability; project-based learning, with its emphasis on real-world problem solving and collaborative open-ended solutions; a heightened focus on technology and digital citizenship; emphases on leadership, school citizenship and community service; and a host of whole-class initiatives and activities to create signature experiences that build strong class identity and esprit de corps among students.

Before we could move forward, we knew we needed to take a step back and more fully educate ourselves about our 5th graders’ Beasley foundation. Fully three-quarters of MICDS 5th graders come from the Lower School, yet historically the two divisional programs have not been linked as strongly as they should. Revising the 5th Grade Program offered the perfect opportunity for 4th and 5th grade teachers to come together to better ask questions and test assumptions about each other’s programs. These conversations allowed the 5th Grade Team to understand how they could tweak the program to best leverage the Beasley students’ Lower School foundation, while helping the 4th grade teachers better anticipate how to prepare their current students for the next year. Inspired by

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an overwhelming consensus emerged: that the 5th Grade Program should remain in the Middle School, but that faculty had an obligation to consider what changes could be made to better support our youngest Middle School students.

BACK TO THE Drawing Board

With the continued placement of the 5th grade in Middle School now decided, the teaching team eagerly set to work designing a “new and improved” program that would more intentionally address the transitional needs of our youngest middle schoolers. Two basic imperatives drove their thinking: one, that this new 5th grade “bridge” program needed to include recognizable elements from each division; and two, that this program needed to lay a rock-solid foundation for all that would follow in the next three years of the Middle School Program.

The process that they followed proved critical to the shaping of the final program itself. The teachers began by articulating their vision of the “ideal” 5th Grade Program. Their wish list included many of the core elements considered sacred to the modern middle school movement: flexibility in scheduling of classes; team teaching (a core group of teachers from different disciplines who work exclusively with all students at one grade level); interdisciplinary units (where part or all of the entire team teaches on the same general topic from the perspective of different disciplines) designed around various hands-on projects and activities; opportunities for student teaming and collaboration; a strong focus on study skills and general organization; and a strong advisory program. Also included in this ‘wish list’ were several newer elements that reflect more recent 21st century trends — differentiated teaching according to individual student learning styles, interests and ability; project-based learning, with its emphasis on real-world problem solving and collaborative open-ended solutions; a heightened focus on technology and digital citizenship; emphases on leadership, school citizenship and community service; and a host of whole-class initiatives and activities to create signature experiences that build strong class identity and esprit de corps among students.

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these meetings, the team then drafted an official Mission Statement — the “5th Grade Statement of Purpose” — as a charter to refer to in months ahead. With this vision in hand, the teaching team engaged in a series of ‘deep dive’ retreats during the late Winter and Spring of 2011 to hammer out the various elements of this new program. What follows is a basic summary of each of the main strands of the new 5th Grade Program.

A “PURE” 5th Grade Team Model

Central to the success of the new 5th Grade Program is the creation of a core group of teachers from each discipline who work exclusively with 5th grade students. The importance of this “pure” grade level teaching model cannot be overestimated. For team teaching to work, it is vital that the individual teachers on the team have an opportunity to come together frequently for grade level meetings that focus both on the needs of individual students and larger issues of curriculum and instruction. Freed from cross-grade level teaching assignments and responsibilities, 5th grade teachers can now devote their full time and energies to creating interdisciplinary units and activities that fully leverage each other’s disciplines. The core 5th grade subject teachers also serve as advisors as well, allowing them to tightly coordinate various advisory, class and co-curricular activities. While it is possible to achieve this kind of synergy with cross-grade teachers, this ideal is rarely achieved given the practical competing realities of a cross-grade level teacher’s busy school day. The 5th Grade Team’s experience the first half of this year confirms that teaming has a positive impact not only on the curriculum and program, but also on the professional lives of teachers as well. “The creativity and collegiality among our teaching team is a real joy,” notes Math Teacher Lisa Huxley.

TEAM MEETINGS AND Academic Lab

A pure grade level team and common schedule also creates an even more crucial ingredient: time itself. Aside from the talent of its faculty, the most precious resources in any school are the time and space teachers have to come together to plan and coordinate shared lessons and activities. In the new 5th Grade Model, our teachers can now meet four times every Six Day Cycle for a full 45 minute common planning period.

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FROM HOMEROOM to Home Base

Taking the best of both worlds, the structure of the 5th graders’ day blends the Lower School’s homeroom model and the Middle School’s Gender Responsive Teaching model. Finally, we have retained the Lower School homeroom model in how 5th graders travel together — students are each divided into two single-gender sections, and travel as a cohort throughout the day to their various core academic subjects. (Unlike the Lower School, however, we separate our Middle School students into single gender groups in core classes, reflecting the larger Gender Responsive Teaching model of our Middle School Program.) At other times of the day, however — in P.E., arts classes, lunch, recess, and whole class meetings and activities — our 5th graders come together to mix with each other more freely, thus balancing the stability of the cohort structure with opportunities for individual students to interact with their entire class.

The 5th grade spends the majority of its day in a central location — its “home base” is the upper level of Shoenberg Hall, a place intimately familiar to our ‘senior’ Beasley students as the location of their 4th grade home-rooms. As the crossroads between Lower and Middle School, this neighborhood offers a familiar launching pad to our Middle School and helps to cement the bridge between the Lower and Middle School divisions.

TECHNOLOGY: 1:1 NETBOOKS, TECH SKILLS and Digital Citizenship

Technology is a huge part of our students’ learning experience at MICDS, and in this respect, the revised 5th Grade Program received a big boost. Thanks to the vision of Middle School Coordinator of Instructional Technology Pat Woessner and the generous support of Bob and Jane Spoehr-Tschudy ’56, the Middle School launched a new 5th Grade 1:1 Netbook Program by purchasing Lenovo ThinkPad netbooks for students to use in class this fall. These netbooks travel with students throughout the day and have quickly become an integral part of their classroom experience. Previously, 5th graders used laptop carts which proved to be much more cumbersome to manage. Teachers needed to reserve carts in advance, and valuable instruction time was lost due to set-up and break-down. Now that each student carries a personal Lenovo ThinkPad netbook, the teachers are able to integrate technology seamlessly into their lessons to create a much more authentic and fluid learning experience. Although 5th graders don’t take their netbooks home at the end of the day (a decision governed by the concern that they may not be developmentally ready for this responsibility), we are already anticipating providing controlled take-home opportunities for 5th graders as the year progresses.

As predicted, these netbooks have greatly enhanced our teachers’ and students’ daily classroom experience. For example, Jennifer Schuckman used LEGO® MIND-
STORMS® NXT Software to introduce legos/robotics into the science curriculum this fall. She explains, “Each student was able to learn programming at his or her own pace, save and access program files day-to-day, and download and test their work. The repetition, flexibility, and mastery aspect really gave me the freedom to differentiate while supporting the goals of our class as a whole. Each section was even able to program a ‘Robot Flash Mob Dance’ and perform it to music!” Schuckman adds, “The netbooks have become an integral part of our students’ day and have changed how I plan and teach my course.”

Fifth Grade Dean and Spanish Teacher Christine Mayer is equally enthusiastic. “Having the netbooks gives the students many more opportunities to use Spanish on a daily basis,” she says. “As an example, the students use the netbooks to blog in class. First, as a writing exercise, they compose letters about themselves to their ‘amigo secreto’ (‘secret friend’) and post them on the class blog. Then, they record these letters as a speaking exercise for others to read and listen to. Finally, they leave written comments about each other’s work. Without the netbooks, this learning experience would be much more isolated and not as comprehensive. Having the netbooks for projects like this builds on all areas of proficiency and allows for individual growth, peer collaboration, and better mastery of language.”

The new netbooks are being incorporated into the other core academic subjects as well. In math, Lisa Huxley’s students use an interactive web-tutoring program called ALEKS to extend their understanding of basic mathematical computation in class and while doing homework. Kathleen Armstrong’s English students are writing book review blogs and producing book trailers which require the use of images, while in geography class, Mike Fitzgerald creates a ‘flat classroom’ environment that encourages students to communicate directly with students in other countries while accessing a world of information at their fingertips. And in all classes, students have been able to use the netbooks for simple day-to-day class activities and assignments, for video viewing, to download and submit homework assignments, and to do web-based research. As a result of this investment, our students now have daily opportunities to access rich content and information, publish original work, and collaborate with other students both within the classroom and across the globe. Finally, these rich technology-based lessons are supported by a formal Tech Skills curriculum that is delivered by Geography Teacher Mike Fitzgerald.

Starting with an introduction to the netbooks’ functions, applications and basic electronic housekeeping, Fitzgerald then introduces a different program, application or discrete tech skill as projects in his and other classes unfold — basic Word documents, wikis, blogs, digital imaging and video, search functions, Excel spreadsheets, etc. — which the rest of the 5th Grade Team then integrates into their curriculum. This last piece is crucial, as it gives our students opportunities to practice and apply these discrete technology skills directly in each of their classes, thus demonstrating the practical value and utility of these acquired skills. Not surprisingly, most of the students take to these new tools quickly, reflecting the comfort and facility with which this new generation of digital natives embraces technology. This Tech Skills strand also includes important elements of digital citizenship — digital etiquette; copyright and plagiarism; cyberbullying, online privacy and safety, etc. — reflecting our School’s firm belief that we have a responsibility to teach our students to be sophisticated, responsible and ethical users of technology.

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STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Study Skills

The saying “organization is half the battle” could well have been coined with the middle school student in mind. As with technology, the new 5th Grade Program includes a formal study skills curriculum that supplements our core academic subjects. Delivered by Jennifer Schuckman, this Study Skills program introduces 5th graders to a comprehensive list of academic and
organizational skills and strategies that they are encouraged to apply in each of their classes — everything from note taking, reading comprehension and time and materials management, to a host of specific test preparation strategies and techniques designed to foster confidence and success. Middle School Learning Specialist Mead Ploszay also partners with Schuckman to introduce 5th graders to basic concepts around learning and executive function. For 5th graders, “learning how to learn” is an essential part of the challenge of Middle School. The study skills program helps take some of the mystery out of this learning, and gives our students the tools and confidence to succeed through Middle School and beyond.

ADVISORY AND Whole Class Activities

In addition to providing an enriched curriculum that targets the developmental needs of young adolescents, it is vital that middle schools also provide structures and supports that serve the important social and emotional needs of its students. Modern brain science confirms the age-old wisdom that when it comes to authentic learning, head and heart go hand-in-hand. Indeed, our students bring their whole selves into the classroom each day, making their academic success highly dependent on these other affective needs also being met.

Given this, we knew that we needed to pay special attention to this piece of the new 5th Grade Program. Class Dean Christine Mayer and Advisors Kathleen Armstrong, Mike Fitzgerald, Lisa Huxley, Nick Mennenke, Jason Roberts and Jennifer Schuckman began by researching best practices for effective advisory programs and selecting a model that clearly delineates the advisor’s dual role in meeting both the academic and non-academic or personal needs of advisees, both as individuals and as a collective group. Advisory and Class Meeting time are reserved to explore important developmental issues of friendship, citizenship and character, as well as participate in leadership and community service activities. As cheerleader, counselor, confidant and coach, our advisors also serve as strong advocates for their advisees within the grade level team setting as well as a primary liaison between home and school.

Finally, the advisory program offers 5th graders a vital feeling of membership within a small group and the opportunity to develop close, trusting family-like relationships under the watchful eye and assurance of a caring adult.

In designing the advisory part of the program the 5th Grade Team also wanted continuity with the groundwork laid by the Lower School with their implementation of The Responsive Classroom® approach that emphasizes the integration of social and academic learning. “The whole team read The First Six Weeks of School, and adapted ideas and activities outlined in the book to work within our model,” explains Lisa Huxley. “Advisories were based on Morning Meetings, during which students practiced social skills through greetings and group activities designed to build a sense of community.” Students ate lunch by advisory, with suggested topics for discussion that encouraged everyone to participate in conversations. Similarly, recesses were carefully structured with games that were fun and challenging without being overly competitive so that no one felt left out.

An informal poll of fifth graders yielded the unanimous verdict that the advisory program is indeed a big hit. “Advisory is a time when we can relax, have fun and be ourselves,” says John Patchett ’19. “I think it’s great that we have the time to really get to know the other kids in our advisory and we always have our advisors available to talk to whenever we need them,” adds Joshua Sutton ’19.

This focus on creating healthy community norms also extends to our work with the 5th Grade Class as a whole. As the newest members of our division, it is vital that students learn the larger values and expectations that govern the Middle School, beginning with the Honor Code and its emphasis on trust, respect, honor, and responsibility, and extending to a larger understanding of accountability and what it means to be a healthy contributor to a collective community. Class Meetings also offer Middle School Counselor Kara Friedman a vehicle to proactively address various social issues that may arise in the course of the year with the 5th grade class.
MICDS Parents Pallavi and Vimal Anand recognize noticeable differences between their fifth grade son’s current experience and the transition their older children experienced. “Our son has started taking responsibility for his work much earlier than his siblings did at this stage. It is clear to us that the teachers are not only focusing on the curriculum comprehension but also on handing out the right tools for students to successfully manage this transition. We see that the fifth grade program is preparing our son for both long- and short-term success.”

LOOKING FORWARD TO
The Road Ahead

Given all of this careful planning, it was with great anticipation that the 5th Grade Team greeted the arrival of their students on the first day of school. Would all of the hard work and planning come to fruition, and would the 5th graders’ experience match the promise that the new program offered?

Eight months later, we couldn’t be more pleased. While the first year of Middle School will always be a rite of passage, we feel confident that our 5th graders have successfully made the leap to Middle School and are ready to enjoy all that their next three years of Middle School have to offer. Academically, our 5th graders find themselves engaged in a rich, hands-on program of active exploratory learning that feeds students’ innate curiosity and fosters deep personal connections and understanding. Socially and emotionally, they find themselves surrounded by caring adults who recognize their specific developmental needs and the unique challenges they face during this important first Middle School year. As a class, our 5th graders now have a much better understanding both of the expectations we have for them and the opportunities they have as a class to come together and leave their mark on their Middle School community.

Yet we are also mindful that much hard work still needs to be done. As encouraging as this first year has been, we know that the full potential of this new 5th Grade Program will only be realized in the fullness of time. We are confident that this program will continue to evolve and greatly enhance the 5th graders’ experience. “This program is successful because it was created by teachers who are dedicated to doing what is best for their students,” says Christine Mayer. “Implementing this new program has given us as teachers the opportunity to model what we ask students to do every day — trying new things, taking risks, learning from mistakes and challenging ourselves to keep improving.” As such, the 5th Grade Team will continue to meet in formal retreats throughout the year to carefully review its progress and identify potential areas of improvement for next year. The 5th Grade Team has committed to planning an ambitious end-of-the-year on-campus overnight event that will incorporate all of the main disciplines as a culminating learning experience for students. They have also committed to meeting again with the 4th Grade Team to share their early results and further explore how they can partner to help our students successfully bridge our Lower and Middle School divisions. Finally, we are actively exploring the implications that the new 5th Grade Program has for our 6th Grade Program and beyond. While full details still need to be determined, we are certain that next year’s 6th grade will include a netbook program as part of an integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum that captures much of the spirit and strength of the new 5th Grade Model.

Yet if the future will always be uncertain, one thing is perfectly clear: the new 5th Grade Program represents a major step forward for the MICDS Middle School Program, one that will continue to inform our work on behalf of Middle School students at each grade level for years to come. By focusing more intentionally on our incoming 5th graders’ specific needs, we have succeeded in laying a stronger foundation that will support our students at each step of their Middle School journey and beyond. And last but not least, what started as an effort to better serve our 5th grade students has ended up serving the larger strategic interests of the School as a whole. The elements we’ve built into the new program allow us to more clearly demonstrate our Middle School’s value-added proposition to current and prospective families, and better distinguish MICDS in the competitive marketplace among St. Louis area independent schools. This happy marriage is no accident, but rather a direct product of the School’s Mission Statement to “prepare young people for higher learning and for lives of purpose and service” and to educate “responsible men and women who can meet the challenges of this world with confidence and embrace all its people with compassion.”

We are proud of the role that our new 5th Grade Program plays in helping us realize this vision. Interested in learning more? Drop by or call to arrange a visit and see for yourself!
Intentional use of technology leads to innovation in the classroom.

It’s not uncommon for families to be curious about the ways that the technology-rich learning environment at MICDS might benefit their children. In the many classes I routinely visit I see the profound impact that best-practice use of educational technologies has had and can say, without a doubt, that technology significantly enhances our students’ experiences with learning. Across the three divisions, our teachers not only expose students to a wide array of Web 2.0 tools, they then instruct them in how to use them most effectively in their academic work. Classroom presentations are more meaningful, research is broadened and deepened, and collaboration with experts from around the world — almost impossible in the past — is made not only possible but easy when students have learned to harness the power of the technologies our School places at their fingertips.

Guided by their tech-savvy teachers, MICDS students grow increasingly confident in their skills, developing into nimble, creative thinkers as well as discerning critics of the many technological options which they have available to them, both here at school and in the wider world. The 21st century, as social commentator Daniel Pink has reminded us, calls for the development of a “whole new mind,” one facile with processing increasingly complex problems and data sets and then, in turn, presenting solutions in provocative and compelling ways. Our intentional use of technology is helping students to do just that — and more — at MICDS today.

One notable example of the impact that thoughtful technological integration has had on learning is the recent adoption, in several Upper School mathematics courses, of the “flipped classroom.” Innovative educators across the country have been experimenting with the idea for a few years now. Most notable has been the work of the not-for-profit...
online learning site, Khan Academy, which pledges to offer a high quality education to “anyone, anywhere” through its database of nearly 3,000 free “micro-lectures” currently accessible on YouTube.

The concept, when applied to individual classrooms and specific groups of students is even more intriguing: teachers videotape themselves delivering short, content-rich lectures (usually no more than five to ten minutes in length). These lectures are then assigned as homework, and students download and view them before the next class meeting. Karl Fisch, a technology coordinator and teacher in Denver, CO, (coincidentally also a guest presenter at MICDS’ annual Summer Teacher Institute in 2010) puts it best when discussing his own successful use of “flipping.” It “allows us,” Fisch says, “to work on what we used to do as homework when I’m there to help students and they’re there to help each other.”

And to be honest, it’s an idea that really is as simple as that. Instead of devoting precious classroom time to teacher-centered lectures involving little to no interpersonal interaction, “flipped” teachers are freed up to workshop with students, guiding them — both individually as well as in small groups — through activities that they previously would have been expected to do at home on their own, with little aid or assistance. “When you do a standard lecture in class,” Fisch says, “the students go home to do the problems (and) some of them are lost. They spend a whole lot of time being frustrated and, even worse, doing it wrong.” Flipping lecture and practice makes in-class time more dynamic, more interactive, and, in the end, far more impactful.

Successful “flipping,” of course, depends on all students having reliable, ubiquitous access to the online files and other learning tools, something that our 1:1 laptop computing environment ensures. When I am approached by prospective parents who have questions about technology (in particular ones related to our laptop initiative in grades 7 – 12), I often wonder if their concerns boil down to whether or not MICDS kids are “constantly behind computer screens.” It’s easy to imagine scenarios in which technology might get in the way of the human interactivity that we see as emblematic of more “traditional” classrooms. Compellingly, though, in flipped classrooms students are actually behind their screens less. Technology, in this case, allows for more hours — not fewer — of direct, personal engagement between both teachers and students, and students and students. “That’s the power of flipping,” says Daniel Pink. “It melts calcified thinking and leads to solutions that are simple to envision and to implement.” Who would’ve thought that technology could be credited with protecting — not threatening — the real-time connections and interactions between students and their teachers? But it does, brilliantly. And I’ve seen it in action, right here at MICDS.
environment at MICDS, teachers and students had all of the tools necessary to adopt the flipped classroom at their fingertips.

The rationale behind “flipping” a classroom can be likened to an athletic practice, Ludbrook explains. Athletes do not study the playbook during practice and then go home to practice the plays by themselves—they study plays at home and run them as a team. “In a flipped classroom, students become familiar with core concepts at home and come to class prepared to apply their knowledge in a variety of interactive activities, when they can learn from the teacher as well as their classmates,” he says. “The result is a much deeper exploration of course content during class time.”

Current brain research supports the flipped classroom strategy as an effective teaching and learning method. “In his book *How the Brain Learns*, Dr. David Sousa shares research indicating that students’ brains are most active during the first 20 minutes of class time—as a result, teachers must maximize how this time is used. In a flipped classroom, students are using this critical time to apply knowledge gained the previous night to solve progressively more complex problems,” explains Upper School Coordinator of Instructional Technology Elizabeth Helfant, who offered support to Ludbrook and Webb as they began preparing lessons for home viewing.

What tools are available to assist teachers in preparing flipped classroom lessons? In October 2011, MICDS math teachers participated in an NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) workshop to receive training on Sophia, an interactive social teaching and learning tool that launched in March 2011 and has grown exponentially in popularity among teachers and students around the world. Sophia is ideally suited to support flipped classrooms.

The material on Sophia is organized by “learning packets,” which are brief tutorials focused around a specific learning objective. Teachers and students can create packets using virtually any type of media, including text, images, slideshows, video and audio. Students can interact with one another from their homes as they complete assignments, posting questions that arise as they work. “The kids love it,” reports Ludbrook. “They are naturally comfortable using it because its interface is similar to Twitter and Facebook.”

With six months of experience to reflect upon, Ludbrook describes his flipped classroom as “an evolving process that we are constantly fine-tuning.” Lesson plans require a great deal of preparation time and forethought. Planning video content, recording it and uploading it initially took a great deal of time and organization. “Videotaped lessons must be concise and clear,” Ludbrook notes, adding that the payoff is well worth the effort because all students receive the exact same information. Students can then learn at their own pace—with video segments archived, they can watch the lessons as many or as few times as they need to understand a concept. An added bonus is that parents who wish to take an active role in helping their children with homework or test preparation now have the ability to watch the videos and learn about the concepts covered in class.

Ludbrook and Webb created a number of original lessons using Sophia, and also found useful pre-produced tutorials at Khan Academy (khanacademy.org) an extensive online resource containing multimedia tutorials on every academic subject.

What does Ludbrook’s Integrated Math flipped classroom look like? Students are briefly introduced to the next day’s topic at the end of class. Their homework includes watching a short video that highlights the most important parts of the lesson. The video may be a screencast, during which the teacher demonstrates how to solve a problem while providing voice-over commentary. The students answer questions or solve very basic problems, and are provided with an answer key to ensure they have a solid comprehension of the concept. The next day, the class briefly discusses the concepts covered the previous night and then begins working on progressively more difficult problems. As they are working, they can check answer keys that are posted around the room. This encourages students to monitor their work and identify their errors. “The emphasis during these in-class exercises is on students developing learning and problem-solving
strategies that work for them,” says Ludbrook. To balance the flipped classroom work, students are still assessed using traditional “pencil and paper” homework assignments as well as quizzes and tests.

During class time, students engage in a variety of learning activities. For example, they might organize the different types of quadrilaterals in a graphic organizer, a learning tool that allows students to use charts, graphs or other visual images to explain a concept. Students might also access a learning packet on Sophia on quadrilaterals, in which they can click on a particular quadrilateral and link to a website that lets them manipulate the shape and really come to understand it. “Graphic organizers are useful because they help students physically arrange and segment information in ways that help them remember it,” explains Ludbrook.

The flipped classroom structure gives teachers the flexibility to differentiate in-class work according to students’ needs. When given the option of organizing themselves to tackle problems based on the previous night’s assignment, students may choose how they wish to work. Some work independently, while others work in pairs or small groups. Ludbrook moves between groups, taking on a “coaching role” with the ability to address individual needs as they arise. This is critical to a student’s progress. “When a problem can be addressed immediately, students are less likely to get frustrated and more likely to gain confidence and skills necessary to attack more difficult problems,” he says. For Webb, “The introduction of the flipped classroom into my teaching opened a door to differentiated instruction that I did not know was possible. Instead of standing in front of the classroom sharing notes and example problems, I found myself moving around the classroom giving my students on-one-one help as they needed it. I gained a much better understanding of where my students were in their learning.”

Ludbrook and Webb were so pleased with the students’ performance and positive feedback that they began flipping the Integrated Math I class in October. The benefits of the flipped classroom approach quickly became evident.

Because students are able to listen to the “lecture” as many (or as few) times as they as they like, there is less frustration in the classroom — students learn at their appropriate pace. In addition, “The homework is meaningful because students need it to progress the next day, and it is ‘doable’ since most assignments can be completed in a short period of time each night,” says Ludbrook. More importantly, he adds, the students don’t get hung up on the first problem. “Getting stuck results in wasted time as students practice incorrect processes or deal with frustration, which makes them dislike the subject matter. Either scenario is detrimental to the learning process.”

For Kera Busey-Sims ’14, the flexibility to view a lesson multiple times is helpful. “I learn best when I can repeat things,” she says. “If I don’t understand what I learned the night before, I can prepare my questions in advance and reinforce exactly what I need to know the next day. The flipped classroom seems effective and efficient to me.”

Ludbrook has observed that students seem well-acclimated to the flipped classroom approach, noting, “When they are comfortable, they are more likely to enjoy class and more likely to learn.” Liz Lewis ’14 appreciates the opportunity to get her questions answered immediately while doing in class work. “I like that I can watch lessons at home, and if I am confused I can come to school and ask questions while doing my work in class. It’s so frustrating when I am at home and confused on the first problem and can’t continue doing the work.”

Student feedback on the flipped classroom has been so encouraging that Ludbrook plans to continue using this approach, modifying it as needed to suit students. Additional math and science classes are also experimenting with the flipped classroom, in large part because teachers have the necessary resources and training to do so. “The needs of students today require us to keep inventing how we teach and what we know about teaching and learning,” explains Elizabeth Helfant when asked to describe the faculty’s commitment to professional development and innovation. “At MICDS the faculty spends as much time learning about teaching as they do actually teaching.”

Leaders in education have labeled the flipped classroom a “next practice” in teaching, as opposed to a “best practice” — at least for now. There is not yet enough data available to categorize the flipped classroom as a “best practice.” In his Harvard Business Review online column, “Best Practices Only Get You So Far,” author C.K. Prahalad extols the value of “next practices,” commenting, “Next practices are all about innovation: imagining what the future will look like; identifying the mega-opportunities that will arise; and building capabilities to capitalize on them.”

At MICDS, teachers and students are armed with the technological toolkits they need to create a learning environment in which opportunities for just this sort of innovation are indeed limitless.
During the past decade, as educators across the country have identified the skills necessary for students to acquire in order to succeed in our fast-paced global society, an instructional model known as project-based learning (PBL) has grown in popularity. While incorporating projects into the curriculum is nothing new, the elements that define PBL distinguish it as an especially effective way to train students to become critical thinkers and creative problem solvers.

In the simplest of terms, project-based learning is a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning that is designed to engage students in a collaborative, in-depth investigation of authentic, or “real world” problems. The project design methodology developed by The Buck Institute for Education outlines the following characteristics of project-based learning: a driving question or challenge that inspires a need to know...
The second grade class visited the Butterfly House during its tour of St. Louis in December.

The Global Action Project
Inspiring students to change the world

This fall, The Global Action Project, a new year-long elective course designed by Upper School English Department Chair Lynn Mittler, made its debut. The course evolved from the Sudan Project, “which raised awareness about what was going on in Darfur but offered no course of action for people to take,” Mittler explains. “The Global Action Project incorporates this critical advocacy piece.” The course challenges students to become social entrepreneurs, and weaves the elements of social awareness, leadership, business principles, documentary filmmaking, public speaking and leadership throughout three trimesters, culminating in students designing and publicly sharing social enterprises with a board of adults from within the MICDS community.

The social enterprises designed by Global Action Project students have one overarching requirement — they must offer solutions to the driving question, “How can individuals effect sustainable change in the world?” In order to respond to this core challenge (the foundational element of PBL), students began by focusing on the first theme of the course — personal awareness. They chose one of four summer reading books, The Bookseller of Kabul, Sold, The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind or A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, and wrote blogs to promote self-reflection, text analysis, examining of interests, and searching for passions. Following this self-exploration, students created mini-documentaries exploring an issue they found compelling. Subjects included gangs in St. Louis, the revitalization of North St. Louis, depression, segregation in St. Louis and guide dogs in St. Louis.

Using the course’s core texts, Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide (Kristof and WuDunn), How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas (Bornstein) and The Blue Sweater (Novogratz) as guides, students transitioned to an exploration of global issues (fulfilling PBL’s “need to know” element) by researching and evaluating current efforts underway to improve the world. They considered individuals who are striving to effect change, and why or why not they were successful, as well as failed projects. The students’ primary assignment for this portion of the course was to research and evaluate their favorite charity. As students evaluated charities, they discussed the difference between social enterprise and aid. According to Kristof and WuDunn, “Aid workers function in the context of an aid bureaucracy, while social entrepreneurs create their own context by starting a new organization, company or movement to address a social problem in a creative way.”

“Students’ abilities to acquire new understanding are enhanced when they are ‘connected to meaningful problem-solving activities, and when students are helped to understand why, when, and how those facts and skills are relevant’.”
“Students became systems analysts, identifying what was not working and deciding how they could become innovators who discover the steps to be taken to solve these problems.”

Throughout the process, students engaged in ongoing dialogue (PBL’s inquiry process) to examine the question of sustainability. “We discussed that sustainable change means building capacity rather than dependency,” Mittler says. “Students became systems analysts, identifying what was not working and deciding how they could become innovators who discover the steps to be taken to solve these problems.” True to the structure of PBL, students were given decision-making power throughout the course — choosing topics and direction for their projects, and setting deadlines along the way. Corthay Schock ’12 appreciated this added responsibility, noting, “I think this approach makes us more invested in what we are studying and allows for more creativity — the sky is the limit!” She continues, “I think the most important things I have learned so far are not only the different challenges facing the world, but tools to find solutions whether through a business or a documentary. An effort can always be made to help solve a seemingly destitute problem.”

The structure of the course, with its focus shifting outward from an individual to a global perspective, was also meaningful for students. Yulkendy Valdez ’13 explains, “Global Action Project has helped me define and pinpoint exactly where my passion lies and the resources to implement it globally. With each project, there is a breakthrough; the process of making documentaries and creating social ventures allows the opportunity to target one’s own weaknesses and develop more strengths in a team setting. Overall, this incredible class has impacted me not only on an intellectual spectrum, but on a personal scale because on a everyday basis I am challenged not just to think but to act.”

While The Global Action Project clearly addresses elements of the MICDS Mission Statement, it also ties in perfectly to the Strategic Plan’s tenet of Leadership and Community Engagement. “These students are asked to be leaders of their groups, but also leaders in the world’s response to the problems that face humanity on a global scale,” Mittler explains.

In preparation for their final project, students learned what it means to be a social entrepreneur. Ashoka, a global organization that invests in social enterprises, defines social entrepreneurs as “individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing problems” (ashoka.org). Social entrepreneurs apply business strategies to directly address social needs through products or services, otherwise known as social enterprises. The final project charged students to design a social enterprise that will effect change, and address the questions: How will it be sustainable? What problems do you anticipate? How will you sell others on your idea — both those who support you and those who may need you? Projects currently under design address such social issues as domestic violence, underprivileged teens, poverty in Africa, homelessness, and children of brothel workers in India. Student teams are required to write an academic paper that includes research and their business plans, as well as prepare a public presentation which will take place in May at the conclusion of the course.

For Mittler, The Global Action Project represents her first foray into project-based learning. The experience has been exhilarating and just a bit nerve-wracking. “It is a definite step outside the comfort zone, for everyone in the class, because our time is not as structured,” she says. “It is clear that allowing students to have more choice in how they go about their work has given them a strong sense of ownership. They are enjoying exploring causes they are passionate about — and are also learning valuable lessons about meeting deadlines.”

“I cannot wait to teach this course again,” she continues. “I am so fortunate to teach a class that combines my passion for literature, global issues and filmmaking. It ties perfectly to a directive I learned as a Peace Corps volunteer — go back and educate. The optimism that motivates all teachers is centered on the belief that we can still inspire kids to make a difference — this has certainly been true with The Global Action Project.”

Bringing People Together
Second graders find creative ways to contribute to their community

The instructional methods and objectives of project-based learning are appealing to teachers because they can be implemented in developmentally appropriate ways. Children in every grade level of the Beasley Lower School engage in project-based learning throughout the year. “We strive to be student-centered in everything we do,” explains Lower School Head Janet McMillion. “Project-based learning is an effective vehicle to offer differentiated learning experiences and provide opportunities for in-depth exploration of the curriculum in real-life situations.”

In second grade, the year-long focus is on the concept of community. Teachers Jeff Horwitz, Amy Lamb and Kristen Kaiser engage students in projects that help them answer the driving question, “What brings people together?”
During the class’s study of St. Louis, the goal is to help students understand that cities and landmarks are shared places and they have significance to the city’s inhabitants. This fall, second graders enjoyed a unique opportunity to partner with The St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission (CVC) in an activity that proved to be a perfect project-based learning experience.

In November, students went through an extended process of inquiry in response to a challenge given to them by the CVC to create a “kid generated tour” for the explorestlouis.com website, under the “St. Louis for Kids” section. Representatives from the CVC asked students to create a day-long tour of St. Louis that was creative, entertaining and informative of St. Louis’ landmarks. Students worked in small groups to research library and online resources, develop a detailed list of facts about their chosen landmark, a persuasive paragraph explaining why it is appealing to visitors, and an entertaining and informative presentation about the tour stop. Destinations featured in the presentations included the Gateway Arch, City Museum, the Butterfly House, Powell Symphony Hall, Sheldon Concert Hall and the Jewel Box.

The teachers took on the role of project managers for this task, which proved both challenging and worthwhile. Project-based learning encourages teachers to place more trust in the abilities of their students. “Instead of telling them what to do, we need to ask questions that guide them to the answers they need,” explains Amy Lamb. As a result, she adds, “we see the amazing things these students are capable of achieving.”

Second graders were enthusiastic about the project from the beginning. “I liked when we made phone calls because I was speaking to someone that I did not know and I had to practice what I was going to say,” said one student. Another student added, “I like that we tried our hardest to make something really big and we did!”

“Students possess an inherent motivation to do their best,” says Jeff Horwitz. “This project was challenging for everyone for different reasons. The kids had to practice ‘real world’ skills such as interviewing, taking notes, telephone etiquette, functioning as a group member, and interviewing adults, in order to be successful.” A bonus of working in teams is the self-awareness students gain from the experience. “Kids learn to recognize the strengths they bring to the table as a team member as well as the areas where they need to improve,” explains Kristen Kaiser.

In addition to practicing the skills needed to successfully complete the project, students also learned valuable lessons about goal setting, organization and time management. They were required to look at a calendar and set deadlines for various phases of their project by working backward from the established completion date. “We believe project-based learning for second graders is about the journey — giving the kids work that inspires growth and change, as well as critical opportunities to learn from setbacks,” explains Lamb.

On December 8, CVC executives visited MICDS to hear the presentations. As a follow-up, they developed a tour for the class based on the presentations, which students enjoyed on December 13. In a letter to MICDS, the executives from CVC reported that the Explore St. Louis clients were thrilled with the students’ work, adding, “They all did such a fantastic job — we are so amazed at their talents!”

Second graders are currently at work on a civic responsibility project that continues their study of community. Following discussion about the importance of how members of a community have a responsibility to give back to that community, students were charged with the task of creating an organization that serves the community, taking action on a specific need that is important to them, and creating a fictional story that shares their passion for the need they are addressing. They are tackling such issues as teenage smoking, endangered animals, forest fires, fire safety, taking care of pets, experiments on animals, tobacco use, steroid use, littering, and tornado safety. They have proudly represented their classroom community to people, from students, to faculty, to parents, and to the outside community.

In a letter to Lower School Head Janet McMillion, second grade parent Ravi Bhoothanath, who accompanied students to install cigarette holders in the smoking area at Charter Communications Headquarters, praised the civic responsibility project, noting, “It was truly amazing to see the MICDS kids in action. They knew the purpose of the project, and the change it can bring to our community. They were articulate, confident, polite, answered all questions and their pride of ownership of this project come through with flying colors. I think there is no better way of learning such things other than from a real life project, and no better example of living the MICDS Mission of ‘preparing young people for higher learning and for lives of purpose and service’.”

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**STRATEGIC PLAN—GREAT TEACHING & LEARNING**

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ICDS hosted its first-ever Middle School Diversity Leadership Conference in November. Erica Moore, Director of Diversity, and John Carpenter, Head of Middle School, along with a group of committed MICDS Middle School students spent over three months in intensive planning sessions to make this conference a reality. They were guided in their planning by Randolph Carter, director of the Washington, DC-based Eastern Educational Resource Collaborative (East Ed). The mission of East Ed is “to serve as a resource to schools and agencies and support the establishment of equitable, anti-bias, multicultural environments.” (www.easted.org/about/mission.cfm)

The agency assists schools in developing programs and training opportunities that facilitate meaningful dialogue between members of a community.

On November 17, MICDS hosted 175 students from 10 different area public, private and parochial schools for a multi-school conference. A group of 15 MICDS 7th and 8th grade students participated as delegates. On November 18, the MICDS delegates took on leadership roles, using the training they received on the first day of the conference to facilitate a follow-up day of similar activities and experiences designed for the entire MICDS 7th and 8th grade student body.

“The conference gave students from various schools and backgrounds the opportunity to come together to talk about what makes us alike, different and wonderful,” Moore explained. “It takes a special effort to create opportunities for dialogue and understanding, to empower kids to feel good about who they are and stand up for others.”

“The topic of diversity is so important because it applies to almost everything,” added Bridget Condie ’16, an MICDS student delegate. “Whether it is where you live, your skin color, your religion or culture, or how you speak, it is everywhere in your life. The diversity conference really opened my eyes.”

The multi-school conference agenda consisted of an opening session, during which Head of School Lisa Lyle offered words of welcome. “We come together today as individuals with many differences and our own unique ways of navigating the world, and we come to this vitally important work worthy of the opportunity to be who we are without fear,” she said. “It is my hope that this shared time together will help us more deeply participate in our communities as our very best selves.”

An interactive theatre presentation by Metro Theatre of St. Louis, workshops, small group discussions, school group discussions and planning, open mic reporting and a closing session completed the day’s agenda. An “Ups/Downs Workshop,” featuring 40 questions related to identity (“stand up if you have brown eyes”) served as an ice-breaker for participants and helped illustrate the many similarities among audience members. The Metro Theatre presentation addressed the topic of bullying, and was followed by a group discussion which challenged students to think about what they would do if they witnessed bullying at school, and how they might play a role in decreasing bullying at school. There was also sufficient time set aside for the students from various schools to get to know one another.

“We placed a deliberate emphasis on leadership,” Moore continued. “Students from each school served as facilitators during the conference. They were trained prior to the event, and then asked to help lead the charge in the diversity work at their own schools, but not without support,” explains Moore. “Faculty members attending with their students participated in their own workshop to discuss what the students were experiencing, but most importantly how they could support and further the students’ work in their own schools.”

“It takes a special effort to create opportunities for dialogue and understanding, to empower kids to feel good about who they are and stand up for others.”
Training for the MICDS student delegates focused on practicing skills required for leading effective discussions, including eye contact, posture, community norms, and time awareness. Condie immediately realized the impact of her experience as a delegate. “I learned that I can lead a discussion and that I can connect with people whom I have just met. I believe that these are very important skills for life,” she said.

The Middle School dedicated a full day of workshops and break-out discussions for the 7th and 8th grade in order to fully explore how issues of difference and inclusion impact our own Middle School community.

“Along with making our Middle School more welcoming and inclusive, this initiative offered our student facilitators the opportunity to build their leadership and capacity as part of our larger goal of growing today’s students into tomorrow’s leaders,” explained Middle School Head John Carpenter. “Just as importantly, we devoted this time for our Middle School faculty to come together to learn how to better seize teachable moments as they present themselves in our classrooms and hallways in order to support these important conversations.”

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THE MAGIC BEHIND THE MATH

How Math in Focus™ challenges students

One of our second grade students was attending a family birthday party for his aunt recently with children ranging in age from five to 16 years old. While getting the cake ready, it became apparent that there were not nearly enough candles to represent the birthday number. The boy’s grandmother had an idea. She put different colored candles on the cake, each color representing a different quantity, and then asked all the children to see if they could figure out the number the candles stood for. Our Beasley boy was the first to shout his answer, “42!” and proceeded to tell what number each color represented. When asked how he figured it out, his mom said, “It must be that Math in Focus™.” How would you have solved the candle question?

This story illustrates some of the strengths of the Math in Focus™ approach to mathematical teaching and learning. When students are able to understand number relationships, fluently compute, understand visual imagery of symbols that represent numbers, and apply their math understanding in real life situations, then their math learning works for them. Following a year-long process that involved research on mathematics best practices and the development of Exit Goals for each grade level, it became clear that a new program was necessary to better align with the Lower School math curriculum objectives. We chose Math In Focus: The Singapore Approach™.

As we have transitioned to Math in Focus™, we have come to appreciate some key differences in curriculum emphasis and content. The study of numbers and operations is accelerated relative to other math programs because students receive such a strong mathematical foundation in the early years. Problem solving and model drawing also begin early, developing in students an ability to create visual representations of mathematical scenarios (progressing from concrete to pictorial to abstract representations). Mental math strategies such as estimating or deconstructing numbers into simpler forms for quick computation are taught with more emphasis. A fundamental understanding of number and number relationships is stressed from the earliest years, and we are already seeing the impact of this practice.

Although these differences require teachers to build bridges between what the students bring mathematically and where they need to go, there is an important aspect of the Math In Focus™ structure that gives us the space to do that. “Singapore Math devotes more time to fewer topics ... slowing down the learning process gives students a solid math foundation upon which to build increasingly complex skills, and makes it less likely they will forget and have to be retaught the same thing in later years.”

Students show their understanding of a concept when they can draw on prior knowledge and apply it both in problem solving and as they learn new concepts. Taking the time to learn in depth, with lots of opportunities to practice and apply the learning through real world problem solving, allows for our students to feel confident and competent in their math skills.

Recently, fourth graders were asked to write a paragraph about how they were feeling about the math program. Here are some of our favorite responses:

“This program is a little challenging, but when you figure it out, it is fun!”

“I like how they make you review a lot and kind of plant it in your brain.”

“I think America might be one of the top places in math now.”

This first year of implementation highlights so clearly that expert teachers are the key to good learning, and these are the teachers at Beasley. Through participation in ongoing training, exhaustive study and collaboration, our teachers have moved students to Math in Focus™. They have built on prior instruction and worked across grade levels to guarantee that no steps are missed.

It’s what I see when I go into classrooms during math that is the most exciting. I see both teachers and students modeling a positive, inquiry-based approach to problem solving at a high level. I see students having at their fingertips tools and strategies to use math to solve problems. I observe students who are developing an understanding of the many ways numbers are related and are organized in relation to 10. I hear conversations where students are sharing their thinking about why their strategy works over another. In a third grade classroom, the debate over which bar model to use, a “compare” or a “part/part/whole” was wonderful. Here is the “pictorial” (at right) example of a problem created and then solved by a group of third graders. You can see it and others posted in the hallway.

“Taking the time to learn in depth, with lots of opportunities to practice and apply the learning through real world problem solving, allows for our students to feel confident and competent in their math skills.”

**Note:**

PHOTO FINISH

ROCKIN’ THE RED CARPET

Middle School hosts 5th Annual Oscars Talent Show

A highlight of the winter months in the Middle School is the annual Talent Show, organized by the Middle School Student Council. Mary Eliot Chapel underwent a transformation that included the addition of a red carpet, festive balloon towers, and audience members dressed in formal “Oscar-worthy” attire. This year’s lineup of talent included singers, dancers and musicians, who received thunderous applause for their performances. Student Council representatives served as emcees, introducing acts and announcing the “best dressed” boy and girl from each grade.

Middle School faculty members even got into the act, dancing to “Footloose” while the judges deliberated. This year’s winner was 7th grader Caroline Dong ’17, a pianist who played Chopin’s “Fantasie Impromptu.”

Sujata Biswas, faculty sponsor of the Middle School Student Council, said of the event, “STUCO members spent countless hours planning this special day. Members of the student community are always willing to come forward to help with the execution of the vision their friends in Student Council have come up with, and faculty also lend their support as performers and stagehands. It is always heartwarming to see the camaraderie that flourishes in the Middle School community.”

Congratulations to everyone who played a role in producing a truly spectacular and unforgettable show!
UP, UP AND AWAY!
MICDS participates in Thanksgiving Day Parade

MICDS students, faculty, staff, alumni and parents revived a beloved tradition this fall by participating as volunteer balloon handlers in Downtown St. Louis’ Thanksgiving Day Parade on November 24. The MICDS crew was in charge of navigating “Skating Santa” through the parade route.