**Values**

- **Tzedakah**
  giving to others
- **Tikun Olam**
  repairing the world
- **Gemilut Hasadim**
  doing good and kind deeds
- **Derech Eretz**
  having respect for all
- **Limud L’shma**
  learning for the sake of learning
- **Kehilah**
  community

**On the Cover**

1st Graders in Church Fork in Millcreek Canyon

**Coming Up**

**November**
- 2 High School Alumni Parent Panel
- 4 Middle School Dance and Parent Social, Dining Hall and Library
- 5 Daylight Saving Time ends
- 6 Fall Leaf Haul
- 7-8 Prospective Parent Visits, 9:00 - 11:00 A.M.
- 9 Parent Book Talk
- 10 Middle School Science Fair
- 13-14, Book Fair
- 14 5th Grade Water Symposium
- 16 Middle School Drama presents Much Ado About Nothing, 6:30 P.M.
- 20-24 Thanksgiving Break
- 26-27 2nd Trimester Begins

**December**
- 1 Brownies-in-a-Bag Assembly Day
- 7 4th Grade Drama presents Brighty of the Grand Canyon, 6:30 P.M.
- 8 4th Grade Drama presents Brighty of the Grand Canyon, 1:45 P.M.
- 15 Winter Program, 11:00 A.M., School Dismissed at 12:30 P.M.
- 19 January 1 Winter Break

**January**
- 2 Tuesday, Return to School for 2018
- 8-10 7th Grade OEE Group #1 Yurt Trip
- 11 Parent Association Meeting, 6:30 P.M.
- 15 No School for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 16 No School for Faculty In-Service Day
- 18 Prospective Parent Visits, 9:00 - 11:00 A.M.
- 25 WOW #1

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Our **Purpose** is to create individuals committed and able to repair the world. This universal purpose, Tikun Olam, is one we share with all who seek to better our world and the lives of all people.

Our **Mission** is to educate children and instill in our students a love of learning and the abilities to think critically, live ethically, and appreciate the value of each individual.

Our teaching and our community are grounded in the fundamental values found in the Jewish culture and shared by all who seek to better the world. We celebrate Jewish traditions and holidays and bring the values they represent to life in the ways we educate our children, build our community, govern our school, and utilize our resources.

Calling all alumni!

Once you’re a McGillis kid, you’re always a McGillis kid. Please send us updates about yourself. Does McGillis have your latest contact information? Please email us at alumni@mcgillisschool.org. We love to hear from you!
Why are you here? This is a question I asked those who attended the various Head of School Coffees this fall. In turn, you have asked me if my first month at McGillis was what I expected, if The School is true to what was described to me, or if it is consistent with my initial impressions. As I write this, I have hit my 100th day at The McGillis School (from my official July 1 start date), and during those first 100 days I discovered that we share many reasons why we are here. That is the ultimate indicator of the accuracy of my earliest impressions of McGillis: that each person is a caretaker of this community. With fresh eyes, I can honestly say there is something very unique about McGillis. People understand that The School will take care of their child, and in turn, parents are driven to care for The School.

To paraphrase one of our parents, “We came to McGillis because it offered our child the chance to be surrounded by beliefs and values that promote a love of learning and doing good deeds, all while challenging him academically in ways I couldn’t have imagined in my days as a student.” I came to McGillis for those very reasons myself. I sought a school that was firm in its beliefs and that promoted character and good students above all else, all while challenging the status quo educationally, incorporating new models of learning that will redefine what education should be now and into the future. My first 100 days have shown that such a place does exist, and I am so happy to be part of this community and work with you all to shape the future of The School.

What is the state of our school? In all, The School is operating well and in excellent condition. We have beautiful facilities, our enrollment is strong, and the number of inquiries continues to grow. We introduced mountain biking this fall (a nice addition to our athletics program), and of course, the lunch at McGillis is amazing. After all, lunch was the most hyped nice addition to our athletics program), and of course, the lunch.

What I’ve observed
My observations indicate that our students understand what is important to us as a school. I see them holding doors for one another and saying thank you when I hold a door open for them. I see students interacting in respectful and collaborative ways with teachers, understanding that teachers are their coaches and advocates and want them to be successful. I see students problem solving on the playground or outside the classroom when there is disagreement. I see friends treating to friends who were hurt, stung, or fell, and leading them to the office and offering support. I have seen numerous outdoor trips! The amount of field trips or outdoor trips that have taken place already during these opening months of school is astonishing. I witnessed students in nature at All fees Park, navigating the woods, playing near streams, organizing games in their five time, and sitting around a campfire. I see adults volunteering to assist on our trips. I see kids with their heads in open books, all the time—walking down the hallway reading, stepping out of their car at drop off reading, and sitting in the Dining Hall reading. I see that students are creating communities in their classrooms. I see language on the walls that indicate our values and attributes. I see academic language on the walls that promote thinking routines, growth mindsets, and classroom communities. I see community around the coffee pot each morning. I have observed a warm, inclusive, and welcoming place of learning.

What I’ve learned
I have observed that our teachers and students in classrooms using language of inquiry. “What makes you say that?” “Explain your thinking.” “Was that your intention?” Language is important in schools. It can invite a learner as a contributor, while providing safety and guidance. I have heard our teachers and students creating a culture of learning in their classrooms. I have heard students speak with deep respect towards their teachers, and witness them laughing and solving problems together.

I have heard our parents say that “McGillis feels like home to me,” and, “I can’t imagine another school for my child.” I hear a strong commitment and unwavering support from our families. I hear common threads about why they chose The School, and what makes them stay. I hear love, admiration, and pride as they describe how their children have developed at The School, and I hear sincere admiration and appreciation for the teachers who guide their children.

I have heard parents ask if we are challenging our students appropriately for their futures. I am happy to hear this question. We ask it ourselves as educators, and we adapt our practices and methodologies to be certain that we are creating an educational experience that is relevant and pushing our students to stretch themselves intellectually. I have heard parents seeking to understand more about our programs and where education is heading. Another healthy sign that our community is engaged and willing to be learners as well.

What I hope for our future
I have had numerous outlets to share more about my background, experiences, and educational beliefs. I have been fortunate to work in a variety of schools, and many great schools, that have helped me develop a purpose in my work. I believe education boil down to growing hearts and minds. We will always be learners, so first and foremost, let’s give our students experiences that allow them to pursue their interests, explore curricula, cultivate creativity, and find their flame for learning more. To do this, we should give up much of what we know about school and continue to imagine what school can look like. Much of this may still remain inside a brick and mortar building, but much of it will not. Let’s create opportunities for students to experience learning elsewhere, connect it to the real world, allow for them to be contributors and not just consumers, and ask them to design these experiences themselves. Let’s include others we wouldn’t traditionally consider partners in these exercises. Let’s find authentic audiences around the world to share our work, partner with local agencies to solve some of their most complex problems, invite parents to bring their expertise into the school, and create a community of learners.

I am so intrigued by the possibilities in RIPL. There are numerous opportunities we can leverage for our learners. I hope we can all see ourselves as researchers, innovators, players, and learners in this community. I hope we are a place where parents can learn from one another, lean on one another for support, and provide responses to The School that will benefit our young learners. I hope that we will continue to be about our values first and be leaders in ethics education in independent schools. I hope that as our programs grow, we stay true to the ethos of McGillis, an ethos of community, respect, doing good for others, and learning for the sake of learning. I hope that as we grow, and continue to welcome new members into our community each year, that we share the responsibility of teaching and demonstrating our values to one another.

There is a great sense of pride in who we are, what we grew from, and the multiple ways that growth has manifested amazing opportunities for our students. I give credit to the community for turning an ambitious vision into an incredible reality. This work has taken time, shared and collective effort, hard work, comfort in the unknown, confidence in others, and dedication towards a common goal. Our future will require the same. I feel fortunate to be a part of a community that understands what it takes and what it means to be progressive in our approach to educating our learners and knows the rewards we reap by doing so.

Let us all continue to be creators of new opportunities and not rest on our past successes, but discover new ways to grow our hearts and minds and share our values and our values with others.
Why It’s Right For Us
by Nicole and Nate Orgain, parents, classes of 2020 and 2022

What do you do when your 8-year-old comes to you and says, “Mom, I think I need to go to a different school?” At first I attributed this to the fleeting fancy of a child, but I knew her better than that. She outlined the reasons why the education that she was getting was not working and why a different atmosphere might be a better fit for her learning style. So we set about finding that option. It didn’t take long. McGillis had always been in our awareness, with friends and colleagues always talking up the experience. She visited Ms. Cassi’s third grade class and left that day really excited about learning again. It was then that we entered the McGillis community.

We have not looked back.

This is our third year at The McGillis School, and we have a deeper fondness for the school and the experience every year. We have two children, Quinn (6th grade) and Sawyer (4th grade).

Like many of you, our kids are very different from one another. Quinn is quiet and reserved, until you get to know her. She is in touch with the feelings of others and needs to feel close to her teachers. She would be lost in a classroom where the teacher did not notice a slightly puzzled look on her face and further question her understanding, or lack there-of. Sawyer is our extrovert. He can and will talk with anyone and everyone, and usually has an interesting story or fact to share. If you have heard him tell a story then you have also seen his eyebrows at work. He is not afraid to speak up but continues to practice the art of timing. I wondered about finding a school that could fit both personalities and support them equally but differently. We did.

In choosing a school, it was also our goal to find that unique blend of education, community, and that ‘home’ feeling. We wanted our kids to be nurtured and cared for, while also gently nudged and challenged. While academics are important to us, we also value educating the ‘whole child’. What good is reciting a fact if you cannot have a conversation with an adult? We wanted them to have an idea of the bigger world and how they might not only fit in, but add substance.

We have also appreciated each teacher that we have encountered. They have taken the time to not only really get to know our children, but also to appreciate their individual learning styles and personalities. I read the evaluations and understand that they really ‘know’ my child. I have heard the phrase ‘best teacher ever’ uttered in my house on more than one occasion. It is not hard to feel attached. From seeing familiar faces at school drop-off and pick-up, to hearing the regular feedback from their caring and intelligent teachers. From the many outdoor experiences teaching an appreciation for our natural world to important lessons in the classroom taught in interesting and challenging ways. I have experienced class plays, a water symposium, science fairs, a colonial trade expo, and a road simulator. I have attended lectures on parenting, electronics, natural history, and different learners like him. The award this year goes to a teacher who has won the hearts of colleagues and students alike during her years at McGillis. An incredible athlete herself, she understands the value of sport in teaching important life lessons. But more than that, she is, what I call a ‘culture-keeper’—someone who understands and brings to life The McGillis School mission every day. Wherever she is—in the classroom, or in the hallways—she brings with her a lively sense of humor and a contagious energy that lights up the room. But right underneath that humor lies a keen insight and an uncanny understanding of children and preteens. A middle-schooler at heart, she authentically connects with students and thoughtfully guides parents who seek her special brand of wisdom laced with humility. Perhaps it is because she has not lost sight of what it means both to be a parent and to be a kid. And boy do her students know it. At any given moment, she can be found surrounded by a gaggle of students vying for her attention and catching her up on the latest middle-school happenings. Making it look easy, she creates a calm, supportive, and safe environment, deftly facilitating difficult discussions that come with teaching middle school health—who would want that job? Truly a team player, she pitches in without hesitation. Often she will be the first to respond to a group email from a colleague asking someone—anyone—to take a duty (and now she can NEVER say no to one of those emails). It is not uncommon to find her working far beyond her defined responsibilities—assembling desks, cleaning her classroom (the MAC), mentoring colleagues, and, even spraying a nest of hornets while her health class looks on from a safe distance—modeling how we take care of our community, of course! Her impact on students reaches years back, as evidenced by a note from a recent alum, which included this: “I want you to know that you are an impactful person in my childhood and in my life beyond. Thank you for your care and work. There is something special about a coach that creates strong and meaningful bonds... [my] goal is not wealth or fame but to change the world in the way you are.” You are changing the world, one colleague, one parent, and one student at a time—and for that we thank you, Coach T.

A Middle Schooler at Heart
The Robert Norris Excellence in Education Award was established by his family to honor the free spirit, old soul, and kind heart that exemplified Robby Norris and to recognize one teacher each year at McGillis who understands and reaches out to creative and different learners like him. The award this year goes to a teacher who has won the hearts of colleagues and students alike during her years at McGillis. An incredible athlete herself, she understands the value of sport in teaching important life lessons. But more than that, she is, what I call a ‘culture-keeper’—someone who understands and brings to life The McGillis School mission every day. Wherever she is—in the classroom, or in the hallways—she brings with her a lively sense of humor and a contagious energy that lights up the room. But right underneath that humor lies a keen insight and an uncanny understanding of children and preteens. A middle-schooler at heart, she authentically connects with students and thoughtfully guides parents who seek her special brand of wisdom laced with humility. Perhaps it is because she has not lost sight of what it means both to be a parent and to be a kid. And boy do her students know it. At any given moment, she can be found surrounded by a gaggle of students vying for her attention and catching her up on the latest middle-school happenings. Making it look easy, she creates a calm, supportive, and safe environment, deftly facilitating difficult discussions that come with teaching middle school health—who would want that job? Truly a team player, she pitches in without hesitation. Often she will be the first to respond to a group email from a colleague asking someone—anyone—to take a duty (and now she can NEVER say no to one of those emails). It is not uncommon to find her working far beyond her defined responsibilities—assembling desks, cleaning her classroom (the MAC), mentoring colleagues, and, even spraying a nest of hornets while her health class looks on from a safe distance—modeling how we take care of our community, of course! Her impact on students reaches years back, as evidenced by a note from a recent alum, which included this: “I want you to know that you are an impactful person in my childhood and in my life beyond. Thank you for your care and work. There is something special about a coach that creates strong and meaningful bonds... [my] goal is not wealth or fame but to change the world in the way you are.” You are changing the world, one colleague, one parent, and one student at a time—and for that we thank you, Coach T.
Digital Manners and the Continental Divide by Melanie Battistone, Associate Head of School and School Psychologist

On a fall trip to Yellowstone National Park with my family, we stepped at a part of the Continental Divide located at Craig Pass between Old Faithful and West Thumb. Though the “continental divide” is familiar to me, I wanted to really understand how it played out in Yellowstone. What I learned was this: a drop of rain falling on one side of the boundary can end up in the Gulf of Mexico. To make it even more interesting, Craig Pass is a rare spot where the divide is flat enough to accommodate Isa Lake, which straddles the Continental Divide. Looking at Isa Lake it would seem that water on the west end naturally flows to the Pacific, but it doesn’t. And one would think water on the east end ends up in the Gulf of Mexico, but it doesn’t. In fact, the opposite is true. The west side drains into the Firehole River, goes on to the Missouri and finally, the Mississippi. On the eastern side, the water flows into Shoshone Lake, and then on to the Lewis, Snake, and Columbia rivers before it finds the Pacific Ocean.

So, what exactly does Isa Lake and the Continental Divide have to do with digital manners? I believe that for parents raising children in the digital age, it is difficult to know exactly where the flood of technology is taking us. Which end of the lake are we in, and where are we headed? Is technology a good thing? Is it a bad thing? Is it both? Is it neither? The watershed in which we and our children will end up is yet to be determined.

Until recently, amount of “screen time” was considered the best measure of “harm,” but our understanding has become quickly and increasingly more sophisticated. Now, in addition to “how much time?” we are asking “how is that time being used?” We know that the impact of technology use does not discriminate; it is felt by teens of every ethnic background, gender, and socioeconomic group. Jean Twenge is a professor of psychology and author of iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and What That Means for the Making of Adults. Twenge, who continued to study these effects, began to see that, for iGen, adolescence is contracted. Teens are leaving their homes less and staying in their rooms more. Teen pregnancies are dropping, because they are having less sex. Fewer kids are driving. Teen employment is down. The perception of being left out is heightened already (and because) adolescents actually see their friends less often, and due to technology they know much more about their peers and what they are doing. Isolation is driving up rates of depression. While homicide rates are dropping, tragically, the suicide rate among teens is increasing. Typical adolescent behaviors are not starting when they used to, rebellion is muted. In essence, iGen’s social life is isolative and devoid of essential face-to-face interactions at the very time when the critical developmental windows are open wide.

Recently, Jocelyn Gukeisen (Middle School Director) and I dialogued with a packed room of K-8 parents about the challenges of raising children in the digital age, grappling with the question of how to cultivate kind and thoughtful digital interactions in this complicated new frontier. Below are a few points that we shared:

Modeling While it doesn’t feel like our kids are always listening to us, they are always watching. Parents can model responsible digital behavior in a variety of ways. Where is our smartphone at key times? Where is it in the morning? At bedtime? When do our children need our full attention, and where is our phone at that time? Where does our phone go at night? Can we manage long periods of device free? Do we have our device with us when we are driving? When do our children need our full attention, and where is our phone at that time? Where does our phone go at night? Can we manage long periods of device free? Do we have our device with us when we are driving? When do we put the phone down and instead engage in a face-to-face conversation? Do we ask our children’s permission to take and post photos on social media sites?

Monitoring Suggestions in our discussion included device-free periods, routine family talks about technology, consistent evaluation of what is and isn’t working, and diligent monitoring of devices and their use. Are we allowing our children to be on devices while in the car? Are we missing out on the precious opportunity to talk and interact? How are we setting our children up for habits when they drive? Do we ask our children to guide us through their use of technology?

Musing It is too late?? Is it too late to take the smartphone back and to change behaviors that are reinforced in a powerful way, every day? Though it may be difficult, it is possible! There is a growing sense that parents can stave off the insidious creep of technology into family time. In fact, one initiative that was shared by a parent, Wait Until 8th (waituntil8th.org), empowers parents to delay the smartphone until 8th grade—imagine! Teaching digital communication with respect and boundaries means knowing when it is OK to banish screens and replace technology with new (actually old) behaviors such as nighttime conversations and time together. Ask: what real life experience is screen time replacing? And then begin to reclaim those formative, essential, and gratifying experiences together.

Quite simply, manners in the digital age are cultivated by putting the digital away and connecting with others, eye to eye. While it is an extraordinarily complicated challenge, its success lies in a commitment to our own increased awareness as parents, and in prioritizing relationships with our children so that they will learn to prioritize relationships. It is still not clear the watershed in which iGen will end up. On which coast will this generation find themselves? To return to the metaphor of Isa Lake, we are poised at the top of the divide. We can parent with purpose and work towards the healthy development of our children by choosing the watershed we want. East or west, Gulf or Pacific, we can choose to shape their future as we raise our children to be thoughtful, ethical, and purposeful in their commitment to better the world.
A Day in the Life of a Kindergartener

by Nichole Milliron, Kindergarten Teacher

Each morning, our kindergarteners bound into the classroom full of energy and an eagerness to begin. In their hearts they know they are readers, writers, artists, and friends...all the roles required to conquer the day! After greeting their teachers, our youngest learners are prompted to think and respond to a daily question. Ranging anywhere from their favorite color to how many teeth they have lost, the students are quick to answer and celebrate both their similarities and their differences. New friendships can bud from something as simple as a shared opinion on the Question of the Day.

After our Question of the Day, Kindergarten students are invited to engage in a center or two of their choice. A math game, an art project, and a journal writing may all be available on a given morning. Children enjoy helping one another and socializing as they add buttons to sorting mats, use white boards for free draw, or weigh a pumpkin after visiting a local pumpkin patch. Our classroom library is another cozy spot that is always open for enjoying a good book with a friend.

During calendar time, we come together, practice routines, and share stories on the rug. We take turns looking at and listening to

Sun wake up it’s time to start, yet another day. I wonder what your light will bring, what gifts will come our way.
Shine upon our circle, shine upon our day, shine upon our winding way!
- McGillis Kindergarten Morning Song

Kindergarten is an age where magic can happen at every turn. Addressing the questions that come to their minds can take lessons in a whole new direction, often one in which students are fully present because their passions are being tapped. Their lack of inhibition at this age creates space for new ideas and a surplus of energy with which to test their theories. Their honesty truly makes learning a collective experience. They take each other by the hand and bring one another along, which speaks to our ultimate goal of preparing students able to repair the world. A visitor recently asked them what they do in Kindergarten. Their response: “We read!” “We learn!” “We take care of eachother!”

Lunch is a big part of kindergarten life! For many, this is the first time they are making decisions for themselves about what to eat and how much to take. Answering the lovely kitchen staff as they try to dress our lunch trays is a process that takes time to run smoothly.

The salad bar takes its own practice. Students steady their trays while waiting in line to collect silverware and peer in at the daily choices. They learn to use tongs and control portions when serving up their fruits and veggies. Everyone is encouraged to give new foods a try and have a variety of color on the plate as they venture to a seat to begin eating. The milk machine and water cups end the process, all before we’ve even begun to think about how and where to clean up after ourselves (If you haven’t heard, Bridget and her staff make all this effort worthwhile! Please join us one day to see for yourselves). Our hard work is followed by much-deserved play. Rain or shine, our little ones can be heard yipping and howling from the playground. Their day is also balanced with the enrichment program where young musicians, athletes, and scientists are born. The kindergarteners participate in foreign language and are shown how to select books from our library. They learn about people whose lives look different than their own through Ethics and Cultures discussions.

Our day ends as it began, in a circle on the rug. We pause to reflect on our learning. We share appreciations with one another and give apologies when needed. In doing so, each day is honored and the promise of a fresh start is granted for tomorrow. It is sooner, rather than later, that children understand their welcomed place within the McGillis community. School becomes an extension of home and an expansion of their world - a place where they are known and valued, where they have purpose and opportunity. A place where their parents and teachers are ever-so-proud of their brave spirits and growing minds!
We lay in the grass, spread around a five-hundred square-foot area at the foot of the Tetons. When the sun dipped beneath the mountains to our west a few minutes before, the temperatures had dropped precipitously. It was worth bearing a bit of cold, though, and we had dressed for it; many of us wore four layers. We were very quiet. The trees, breeze, and animal sounds were louder than students or teachers. It was important that we be quiet. We’d practiced being completely silent, in fact, on the bus ride into the park. Then we heard what we’d come to hear: elk called back and forth, the sounds coming from sixty yards to our west and eighty yards to our east. It was worth bearing a bit of cold, though, and we had dressed for it; many of us wore four layers. We were very quiet. The trees, breeze, and animal sounds were louder than students or teachers. It was important that we be quiet. We’d practiced being completely silent, in fact, on the bus ride into the park. Then we heard what we’d come to hear: elk called back and forth, the sounds coming from sixty yards to our west and eighty yards to our east. After asking us about our experience, our instructor recorded the time, location, and number of the calls, demonstrating an aspect of the scientific process. The whole evening had been a lesson, from the dinnertime conversation about elk mating and migration patterns to the meditative observations and whispered conversations in the field that followed.

This – this was new.

For me in particular, having just joined the McGillis learning community, everything on the weeklong trip to the Teton Science Schools was new: these students, this faculty… and although the experience-driven teaching model was something I have always embraced, philosophically, I never had the opportunity to put it to practice as I did that week. So that opportunity was a new one, too. The new kids in the group were probably in the same boat as I. For the students who knew McGillis, its values, its community, and its ways of living and learning, this in-practice, up-front-and-personal way of learning was not new. However,}

**Come What May**

*A New Teacher’s Perspective*  
by Steve Capone, 6th Grade History Teacher
Acquiring Language
by Elícia Cárdenas, 7th and 8th Grade Spanish Teacher, and Andrea Schweitzer, 5th-8th Grade Spanish Teacher, Dallas, Texas

A visitor walking into a middle school Spanish class might be surprised to hear one student hooting like an owl while another talks like a dog. At first glance, the classroom doesn’t look (or sound) anything like a classroom, students are curled up on pillows with stuffed animals, or in the reading loft with novels. In Spanish. The next thing you know, they might be running across the room to vote on their favorite ice-cream flavor, or creating stories that incorporate student interests/lives. This is “story asking” wherein the teacher “co-creates a story, or read a text together.”

Teacher as Communication Partner

TPRS/TCI classrooms can appear to be teacher-centered because the teacher spends a majority of the time talking; however, this is not the case. The teacher is the students’ “communication partner” (or, just as parents taught their children to speak, the “language parent”) and is the one capable of delivering the most authentic and accurate language (input), as well as the one who is able to best gauge what elements of language are “in bounds” (100% comprehensible) based on knowledge of prior language already acquired.

TPRS/TCI classrooms do not use memorized dialogues or “partner activities.” Many teachers believe that forcing students to communicate with one another before they are ready to do so fosters a scenario of poor input (two people who do not speak the target language) and likely increases anxiety levels in students, which has been shown to raise the “affective filter” thereby preventing acquisition (affective filter is Krashen’s term for a mental block that students put up when motivation is low and anxiety is high, upon which language acquisition is impeded and/or rendered impossible). Opportunities for students to speak when they are ready are provided in a variety of compelling ways.

Personalization, Compelling Input, Collaborative Storytelling

One of the key skills to TPRS/TCI is personalization where the language content is created that is based on students’ interests/lives. This is done often via personal interviews or personalized Q&A and then incorporated into readings and stories. Another key skill for TPRS is “story asking” wherein the teacher uses high-frequency language to create stories that incorporate student suggestions. The personalized and compelling input not only keeps students engaged (they have a stake in the story), the vivid, co-created images create stronger neural links in the brain thereby moving more quickly from short-term learning to long-term memory acquisition.

Opportunities for students to speak when they are ready are provided in a variety of compelling ways.

Acquisition Based

Legacy methods of language teaching rely heavily on memorized rules and conjugations. Most teachers would agree that learning by doing and understanding is more effective. TPRS/TCI strives for language to be acquired in the most natural way possible, similar to the way children learn their first language. Students in a TPRS/TCI classroom are asked to monitor their own comprehension and signal when it breaks down.

For Everyone

TPRS/TCI makes language learning accessible to every student. After all, they are already fluent in one language! In these classrooms, faster processors are given more complex language tasks while slower processors are supported by a variety of tools to ensure their understanding. The result is that often students who have felt “left behind” in a traditional language class find themselves understanding the target language and getting support when they need it rather than feeling frustrated. Success breeds motivation and most students find success in language learning through TPRS/TCI.

Literacy as a Means of Acquisition

Reading comprehensible texts is a foundation for TPRS/TCI. This promotes an emphasis on reading for the sake of reading, not only to improve literacy skills, but, studies show, it can help to build language skills over time and motivated students can improve their own language acquisition at a faster pace.

Nationally Recognized Guiding Principle: Comprehensible Input

The national association of foreign language teaching (ACTFL) has recognized the importance of using the comprehensible target language in the classroom and recommend that teachers aim to stay in the target language (comprehensibly!) 90% of the time.
Learning at its Best
by Mary Kimball, Lower School Director

As part of our summer professional development, Lower School teachers read The New Art and Science of Teaching by Robert Marzano, which provides a framework for educating students. The research tells us there are three critical categories that guide our teaching: (1) students must receive feedback, (2) students must receive meaningful content instruction, and (3) students must feel connected to teachers.

One of our key goals in the Lower School this coming year is to provide effective feedback to students, which begins with clearly defined and communicated learning goals. The process of defining learning goals began last spring when grade level teams identified 8-12 priority standards for each core subject (reading, writing, and math). Based on these priority standards, teachers establish learning goals and then communicate them to students, often in the form of “I can …” statements.

This work leads us into the next phase which is to develop proficiency scales for each learning goal. Proficiency scales describe the progression of knowledge or skills students are expected to learn, and they provide a way for all students to access the knowledge or skills students are expected to learn, and they provide a way for all students to access the content being taught. Proficiency scales articulate clear learning goals and provide specific and constructive feedback to help students understand where they are in their learning progression and where they need to go to develop mastery.

Teachers are beginning to introduce learning goals and proficiency scales in their classrooms, in ways that are appropriate to their individual grades and teaching styles. While this remains a work in process throughout the year, we continue to collaborate with each other on best ways to implement these ideas, and we are excited to engage in this work. We look forward to sharing more details with our parent community in the future.

Outdoor Experience
by Natalie Kaplan, 3rd Grade Teacher

Some 3rd grade take-aways

“ I learned that it is easier to work together than apart because it is hard to make something alone.”

“I learned that with a group, you never have nothing to do.”

“I learned that you always bring 10 pairs of socks.”

“I learned what we can accomplish when we work together – nobody thought the bridge would work.”
McGillis Library Celebrates the Freedom to Read

Banned Books Contest

by Heather Novotny, Librarian

This year, Middle School students were invited to participate in a simple contest celebrating intellectual freedom. I gathered some picture books that are part of our own library collection, but which also appear on the American Library Association’s list of Frequently Challenged Children’s Books. Old favorites like *The Lonx, In the Night Kitchen,* and *Heather Has Two Mommies* were joined by a new book purchased this year for our library, *I Am Jazz.* Students were invited to read a challenged book, and enter a drawing to win a cool Banned Books tote bag.

We began by defining terms: challenged books are books that someone somewhere objected to and formally requested be removed from a library. Banned books are books that were actually removed from a library somewhere. Censorship is suppressing ideas that certain people find objectionable or dangerous. The goal of censors is to remove or limit access to ideas—which takes away people’s right to form their own independent ideas. That is contrary to the mission and purpose of our school.

I chose picture books for our contest because they can be read quickly, so a middle school student could stop by the library on a break or after school and participate in the contest—but I also chose picture books so that lower school students who became interested in the topic could also get the opportunity to explore intellectual freedom issues.

The American Library Association’s (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom tracks challenges and banning annually. Librarians and other ALA members are professionally obligated to report challenges—but the Intellectual Freedom Roundtable estimates that around 80% of formal challenges are not reported. The good news is that only about 20% of reported challenges result in books being removed from library collections. Librarians nationwide are on the front lines, defending the rights of readers.

I am really proud of our students. Several noticed that books depicting minority groups like LGBTQ+ people appeared to be targeted for challenge. We see that reflected in the data: in 2015, nine of the top ten challenged books depicted minorities. I’m also really proud of the students who were worried that certain books might be removed from our library. Our middle school students already have a grasp of the importance of having a diverse library collection that reflects multiple viewpoints.

**Intellectual Freedom in the School Library**

Intellectual freedom is a complex issue, especially when we consider the developmental needs of children. A healthy library collection consists of books that are selected to meet the needs of the entire user base. For us, that means our collection is selected for Kindergarten to 8th grade students. With an age range that broad, not all books are right for all students, and not all books align with the needs of individual families. How do we balance the needs of the 8th graders and the needs of the 8 year olds?

**Reflecting Diversity in the Library’s Collection**

A key part of building and sustaining a vital library collection lies in providing what we often call “window books,” which allow readers a view into the lives of people different from themselves, and “mirror books” so that every child can see themselves reflected in library books. During my tenure as McGillis Librarian, I have built on the strong work done by my predecessors by adding books with authentic depictions of Asian, LGBTQ, Latinx, LDS, and Muslim characters, as well as continuing to add books authentically reflecting the experiences of women, Jewish people, and African Americans. This year, I will continue to focus on building our collection so that it’s appealing to our readers while authentically reflecting the diversity of our community.

The McGillis library contains about 10,000 titles, and, like any good library, our collection consists of books that are selected to meet the needs of every child and builds the child as a reader.

My door is always open to parents, students, and grandfriends who want to discuss our library collection, or who need help finding books right for their children. I’m committed to finding the right book for each individual child, one that ignites the spark of curiosity and builds the child as a reader.

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The McGillis library contains about 10,000 titles, and, like any good library, the collection will continue to evolve and change over time in order to stay relevant to our students and our curriculum. I spend a lot of time talking with students about their interests, reading reviews of new and popular books for kids and teens, and making sure we have sufficient copies of popular books in our collection. And, I love hearing from parents and community members about what their families enjoy reading together. Students should always be able to find fun, awesome books that inspire them to continue to develop as lifelong readers.

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The answer lies in creating and following a materials selection plan that aligns with the needs of students and community. As your librarian, my role is to recommend books while providing honest information about their content. Our students’ role is to find materials they love, that they can see themselves and others reflected in, and that will help them grow as readers.

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Some books we have recently added to the collection:

- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herfel
- *A Tale of Two Hommes* and *A Tale of Two Daddies* by Vanita Oelschlager
- *The Year of the Three Sisters* by Andrea Cheng
- *Mustaches for Maddie* by Chad Morris and Alex Jackson Nelson
- *LGBTQ+ Athletes Claim the Field* by Kristin Crown-Hills and Alex Jackson Nelson
- *It Ain’t So* by Firoozeh Dumas
- *The Garden of Danian* by Duncan Tonahus
- *The Heir* by Shelly Brown
- *Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Gephart
- *The Garden of My Imagination* by Farhana Zia
- *A Tale of Two Daddies* by Andrea Cheng
- *Herthel* by Chad Morris and Alex Jackson Nelson
- *I Ain’t So* by Firoozeh Dumas
Joining the largest and fastest growing youth cycling league in the US, the McGillis Magpies officially formed a Junior Development cross-country mountain bike team under Utah High School Cycling League. The national governing body of the league, National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA), promotes Strong Mind, Strong Body, Strong Character, Equality and Inclusivity. Twenty-five 6th-8th grade Magpie students rode their mountain bikes out on the Bonneville Shoreline or Round Valley trails with the team this 2017 fall athletic season. While the league only allows 7th and 8th grade students to race, our 6th grade students joined the team at practices to gain basic mountain bike skills to be even more prepared for next year’s race series.

Some of our middle school students on the mountain bike team have never played a sport at McGillis before. One of the fantastic parts about the co-ed team is that everyone gets equal playing time, no one sits on the bench, and all body types and abilities can learn how to ride a mountain bike. The focus of the team is fun with friends, personal challenge, and learning a life-long healthy sport. For many students, this was the first time they had ever ridden a mountain bike, which takes so much courage to try something new and so far out of your comfort zone.

The mountain bike team began the season learning basic bike handling skills on the McGillis field. Practices were then held on singletrack dirt trails on the Bonneville Shoreline Trail and Trailside Park in Park City where riders increased their endurance and improved their skills. Riders even spent one practice at a local bike shop, Go-Ride, to learn basic bike mechanic skills from skilled mechanics, ranging from how to change a flat tire, how to take your wheel on and off, and how to fix a dropped chain. The season culminated in three cross-country races against other Junior Development scholastic teams of Northern Utah at Powder Mountain, Snow Basin, and Round Valley. Races ranged from five to ten miles in length depending on the students’ category. The team boasted approximately six 7th and 8th grade students, boys and girls, who participated in the race series. Students even braved early morning mountain temperatures in the 30 degree temperatures, but were all smiles as they crossed the finish line.

Thank you to all students, coaches, parents, and administrators who made this new beginning a possibility! The 2018 Magpie season will pick up again for current 5th-8th graders in April 2018. Stay tuned for more information.
Remembering Cazzie

By Bridget Gill, Kitchen Manager

How do you put into words the life of a man who was larger than life, who had so much impact on our community? My dear friend, Cazzie Brown, was an icon not only at McGillis, but throughout every community he was a part of. He was unmistakable; for his tall stature and for his presence and the connection he made with every single person he met. Cazzie brightened the McGillis community and the world around him.

I met Cazzie seven years ago when our McGillis building was under construction and we had to prepare lunch at a nearby school every day and drive it back to McGillis to serve. Cazzie was teaching at that school. Somehow during his busy day, he would help me load my van without even being asked. He greeted every person who walked in to the building with a smile, a handshake, and a hearty “Good morning!” Immediately, I knew this person was special and needed to be a part of the McGillis community.

When he came to McGillis, Cazzie brought the same warm and welcoming spirit and started instantly making a connection with every student, parent, faculty member, or stranger he encountered. He was physically large, but his personality was even bigger. He stuck out in the crowd, and he was both aware and telling them off the ground, lifting them big bear hugs and kisses, lifting them up, and telling them how much he loved them. This love was extended to every student - Cazzie could often be seen hand in hand with a little Kindergartener, leading them back to class.

Not only was Cazzie warm and sweet, but he also had an unfailing knack for being bold and honest. Sometimes that meant saying important things that others might find uncomfortable. He served on the McGillis Diversity and Inclusion Committee and wasn’t shy about letting the community know what it is like to be different. He held high standards for every person he encountered. He instilled manners, respect for self and others, and a sense of duty to his students and the community. Cazzie was never afraid to call out disrespect when he saw it. He was not just a PE teacher; Cazzie taught students to be good people, to be kind, courteous, and considerate of others.

The joy that Cazzie brought to McGillis was contagious. Cazzie had a serious side, but most of the time he was a total goof ball. He loved to tell jokes, sing, dance, give big hugs, and share happy stories about his own family. Students and faculty will never forget the dance parties he hosted during PE, blasting music from the MAC and teaching children to have fun and express themselves unabashedly. Cazzie’s favorite response when someone would ask, “How are you?” was, “Livin’ the Dream.”

And he was.

Cazzie was continually there for anyone who was in need. Where he saw anyone who looked busy or stressed, he was always the first to ask, “How can I help?” and jump right in to any task that could make someone’s day easier.

Cazzie had an office space but, when he wasn’t teaching, he could be found in the kitchen. He would come in, put on gloves, and serve lunch, cajoling students to try vegetables. He often showed up with treats for the kitchen crew and always found ways to keep the mood light and make us laugh. He was seen all over The School doing similar helpful things; on snowy mornings he was the first to grab a shovel, and he would stop whatever he was doing when a new family was touring the school to say hello and tell them how much he loved McGillis.

We saw Cazzie in many roles; he was an amazing teacher, a caring father, a loving husband, an inspiring coach, a supportive colleague, and a true friend. The loss of such an incredible man has hit the McGillis community hard, and his presence has been deeply missed. Cazzie taught each person he came into contact with something, and that was to be kind in every interaction that we have every day.

As we all move forward, we can each continue his incredible legacy. How will you be like Cazzie? Will you help and be a voice for the underdogs of the world? Will you simply make more of an effort each morning to say hello and smile at everyone you see? Will you help someone, even if you get nothing in return? Will you share your time, money, and talent with those in need? Will you tell a joke to make someone smile? Will you call out disrespect when you see it even when its uncomfortable? Let’s all continue Cazzie’s incredible legacy.
8th grade
Outdoor and Environmental Education
Backpacking Trip to Coyote Gulch