


Our Program



A TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION


FOR A CHANGING WORLD





*“In a time of drastic change it is the learners
who inherit the future. The learned
usually find themselves equipped to live
in a world that no longer exists.”*

— ERIC HOFFER, PHILOSOPHER¹



Cover: Upper School students
engage in the Experimental
Archeology course. Above: Menlo
faculty members congratulate
students at Commencement.



OUR PROGRAM THROUGH
THE EYES OF THAN HEALY,
HEAD OF SCHOOL



DRIVERS *of* CHANGE

Why Education Must Evolve

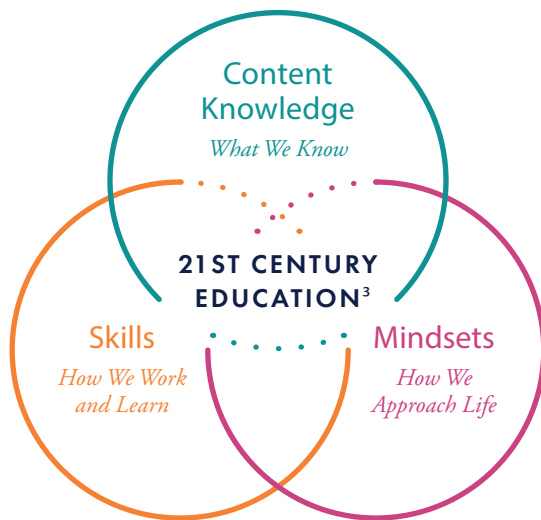
We may not know what the world has in store for our students. But we do know that our students will need to be more than learned—they'll need to be learners. They must be **"future proof"**²: open to a constantly changing world and able to adapt, to learn new skills that don't even exist yet, and to continually reinvent themselves.

Can education future proof our students? I believe it can. But how we educate needs to evolve more quickly than it has in the past.

We at Menlo believe great institutions never arrive but are constantly in a state of becoming. As such, we often ask ourselves how we can evolve our courses and program to offer students a relevant, responsive curriculum that provides them with the tools they'll need to face an ever-changing world.

What We Need to Teach to Prepare Our Students for *a Changing World*

The 21st-century educational approach emerges at the intersection of three areas:



① Content Knowledge

② Skills

③ Mindsets

① Content Knowledge: *What We Know*

We're quite good at teaching content knowledge, and without a doubt the "hard" skills are still critical. But they need to align closely with how we actually use knowledge in the real world. We can't find a way to alleviate climate change through an understanding of atmospheric science alone. Such an endeavor demands interweaving chemistry, international policy, computer programming and modeling, entrepreneurship, agriculture, energy storage, and economics. Our society can't afford to separate knowledge into discrete disciplines anymore. Instead, our educational approach must be interdisciplinary—that's how we'll help our students understand the issues and give them the tools to tackle the problems they care about. Courses will need to approach big questions or topics through the lens of multiple disciplines. One course under consideration at Menlo would look at energy from scientific, environmental, political, and literary perspectives. Our students themselves will need to become "transdisciplinary"⁴—able to move between areas of knowledge to tackle whatever conundrum they're facing. Similarly, journalist Fareed Zakaria, in *In Defense of a Liberal Education*, writes about academic "cross-training": by studying science and humanities, students learn different ways of thinking.⁵

② Skills: *The Super Seven*

Now that we can pull up any fact on a phone or have an AI tool construct an argument, essay, or research paper, it is the ability to apply knowledge in new and novel ways and to know enough to filter the good from the garbage that will demarcate an individual's ability to add value. The emphasis in education is shifting towards "soft" or noncognitive skills. In fact, so-called "soft skills" are the ones that will future proof our students.

If you read through the research by experts in education, neuroscience, and psychology, you'll find multiple lists of skills considered critical for the 21st century. The one that resonates most for me was outlined by Pat Bassett, the former head of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), in his TEDx talk outlining the "six Cs."⁶





Building on his keen insights, I've added one more to the list from my own experience (although it doesn't neatly follow Pat's "C" pattern).

CREATIVITY



Creativity is a way of thinking, improvising, and innovating that leads to something original, be that a painting or a new mathematical theorem. And you could say that both a painting and a theorem are a form of self-expression. To be creative, we must be able to shift back and forth between divergent and convergent thinking,⁷ and in an age of continually improving AI, originality and creativity will be distinguishing factors.

COLLABORATION



Our global economy, new organizational structures, and complex problems that can only be solved by group effort make teamwork critical. Let's teach our students to build effective partnerships, resolve conflicts, understand group responsibility, shift between roles in a group, and accept feedback.

CRITICAL THINKING



Really, critical thinking is about knowing what questions to ask, how to evaluate the answers, and how to problem solve. With so much information at our fingertips, we have to dig deeper to find new insights, look beyond face value (one of the reasons that statistics courses are so important), and create new ways of thinking.

COMMUNICATION



So many of our world's problems are caused by miscommunication. We have to articulate our ideas and opinions with clarity and be fluent in writing, speaking, and digital media. And it's not enough to know how to convince others—we also have to know how to listen, find common ground, and respond effectively so that we can find a path forward.

CHARACTER



This is what we think of as the foundation of who we are as people. We want our students to rely on good values—you could even say to be virtuous—as they interact with the world. Where once the ability



to code a computer was a sought-after skill, now the ability to ensure that an algorithm is virtuous and free of bias may be lifesaving.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCY



I don't particularly love Basset's term "cosmopolitanism," but his idea of cross-cultural competency is on target, and it's dependent on having an openness to and curiosity about other people, cultures, and perspectives. Let's help our students develop an understanding of their own responsibility to the world, so that when they find themselves working with a diverse group of people, they're solving problems not just for their own (or their community's or their country's) self-interest, but for the common good.

ADAPTABILITY OR INTELLECTUAL FLEXIBILITY



If we don't know what the future holds, we must be able to unlearn and relearn, to reinvent ourselves, and to improvise as challenges arise or new pathways emerge. Of course, to do this, we have to be comfortable with some ambiguity.



"By instructing students how to learn, unlearn, and relearn, a powerful new dimension can be added to education."

— ALVIN TOFFLER, WRITER AND FUTURIST⁸



③ Mindsets: *How We Approach Life*

The final piece of a 21st-century education is more intrapersonal than interpersonal and encompasses the qualities that most often predict student success—and student happiness.⁹ What does a student think about themselves? How do they face each new problem?

A central mindset is resilience, which is different from perseverance or grit though those terms are often used interchangeably. Can you bounce back from obstacles, look beyond short-term failures, and leverage what you learned to try again? Can you stay calm under pressure and deal with ambiguity? Resilience requires direct contact with adversity and failure as well as space to reflect on and learn from how one successfully navigated those setbacks. It also takes courage: the ability to act despite fear, take risks, and be open to new experiences.

It's so important that we make time for reflection—that's what leads to true, deep learning. Mindfulness, or "paying attention on purpose,"¹⁰ leads to self-awareness and a sense of identity: confidence in who we are and an understanding of our place in the world. It also teaches us empathy, so that we can see from someone else's point of view and have compassion for their experiences, which is so vital to cross-cultural competency and collaboration.

Providing a solid foundation built on ethics, kindness, integrity, and inclusivity is at the core of our work as educators. Culture is determined by what we as adults permit, promote, praise, and practice ourselves. These are incredibly transformative years, as each Middle and Upper School student shapes their unique identity and purpose in an ever-changing world. We, as a school, will do all we can to instill a sense of agency, optimism, humor, wonder, and joy along the way.

This thinking around a 21st-century education is not new. As educators and parents, we know where we want to go. The real challenge is how we impart that content knowledge, develop those skills, and build those mindsets over the course of an academic year, a week, or a day at school.



It's All About the Student Experience: How We Need to Teach

At Menlo we're rising to the challenge. Our strong academic program, high-caliber faculty, and exceptional students put us in an ideal position to continue to evolve and prepare our students for an uncertain future.

More Relevant and *Globally Aware*

Our brains are most engaged when the work we do has meaning—when it's something we care about and we can see the impact it will have on others. Students who have some choice in what they study will drive their own learning. Our Interdisciplinary and Personalized Scholars Program (IP) is designed for students to take deeper dives into subjects they care about. This voluntary program is focused on the making of meaning and is interdisciplinary in nature with some clear real-world applications.

As much as students seek relevance to their own lives and interests, they also seek relevance to the world around them. Our first step is to give them access to other cultures through coursework and exploration. Our global travel programs—Menlo Abroad and Borderlands—enable cross-cultural classroom learning. We hope to expand opportunities for experiential cultural immersion, not through "tours" but through extended travel that allows for meaningful relationships, service projects, and interdisciplinary learning.

Taking a Deeper Dive and Discovering the World

GLOBAL TRAVEL PROGRAMS: MENLO ABROAD AND BORDERLANDS

UPPER SCHOOL

Each May, our MTerm Borderlands program offers one-week domestic travel opportunities to the Southwestern United States to study Indigenous America, immigration, and a host of related topics.

Through Menlo Abroad, Upper School students embark on international trips that span three weeks in late May and early June. Through facilitated curricula, service learning, and homestays, students develop meaningful relationships with people in distant places, make friends, and use their skills to address common problems. Menlo Abroad currently offers travel to Costa Rica, Cambodia, and Tanzania. Past trips have included India, China, and Guatemala, and future destinations are in the works.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Launching in 2024, Middle School students have an opportunity to travel to the Southwestern US in early summer.



MENLO IP

Students can show initiative, pursue their interests, and chart their own course of study in Menlo IP (Interdisciplinary and Personalized Scholars Program), an elective interdisciplinary capstone project centered around one of four areas:

CITIZENSHIP & LEADERSHIP

Students develop a deep understanding of a local (or national) public policy challenge from multiple perspectives with an eye to generating solutions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & IMPACT

Students examine the root causes of a societal issue or inequity and become problem solvers who envision possible solutions to community challenges.

ARTS & LETTERS

With grounding in the history, theory, and context of their chosen genre, students interpret creative works in preparation for creating their own original work or producing original scholarly criticism.

GLOBAL SCHOLARS

Students investigate issues and systems at play in the world while gaining global competency and dispositions of global engagement.



More Interdisciplinary and *Experiential*

You may have heard the phrase “moving from knowing to doing.” This is the underlying idea behind project-based, experiential, real-world learning. Think about the kind of learning that goes on when students plan, write, design, and produce an online arts magazine that’s read by a wide audience. I won’t ever forget the absolute joy I saw on the face of a student at a recent Menlo Maker Faire: he had completely gutted an old VW Bug, had before built an entire electrical engine, and was preparing to register the car so he could drive it around town. Our biotech students intern in local labs and are often listed as authors of ensuing published papers. How can we expand this kind of integration of real-world experiences and curriculum?

Much project-based learning is, of course, also team-based. Courses such as Neuroscience and Sustainable Earth Engineering offer interdisciplinary experiences and require group collaboration. Co-curricular programs like drama and sports are the epitome of collaborative work—how can we bring the dynamic that happens during an intense rehearsal or a tournament game into our academic program even more?

This is, actually, what students really want from their schools. They want their work to be relevant. They want to know that their work has meaning, and that they have purpose in their lives and in the world. And they want to enjoy their time while they’re here.

The role of the teacher and mentor must also evolve from the expert in front of the class to collaborator. Menlo does this well. Every year visitors tour Whitaker Lab, and it is indeed a remarkable workspace with sophisticated tools. But what these visitors are really here to see is the collaboration that goes on between teachers and students as they create learning together. Watching Dr. Dann and a student trying to figure out why the circuitry of an EEG “mind control” device isn’t working is a remarkable sight to behold.

More Balance, Well-Being, and *Joy*

We can’t forget that our students are surrounded by a world that can be hypercompetitive and stressful and that puts their health and happiness at risk. But we can teach them how to create balance in their lives, redefine success, and prioritize joy. Menlo puts a premium on social and emotional learning (SEL), evidenced by our Middle School Human Skills class, the freshman wellness unit, and excellent school counselors who lead a host of activities that teach mindfulness. We launched “Open Session,” an advocacy program in which students can respond to each other’s real-life issues and concerns and offer support, encouragement, solutions, and wisdom to their peers.



“The school must represent present life—life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground.”

— JOHN DEWEY, PHILOSOPHER AND EDUCATION REFORMER¹¹



MTerm

MTerm caps the school year with a series of two-week immersive, experiential courses designed to get students out into our local and global communities while fostering awareness, empathy, and citizenship.

9TH GRADE

Students partake in one of a series of classes organized around the theme of “making change.” After exploring the ways that citizens have historically shaped the physical environments and human communities of our region, students are invited to become change-makers themselves by participating in hands-on activities and educating their peers.

10TH GRADE

Grouped in cohorts, sophomores examine themes of educational inequity, the criminal justice system, affordable housing, and housing insecurity in their immediate community.

11TH GRADE

Students participate in a Junior Project (JP), allowing them to dive deeply into a societal topic or issue they are particularly interested in to expand their knowledge and deepen their understanding of that issue.

12TH GRADE

Seniors prepare for their next chapter in our Life Beyond Menlo program. Through a series of classes and workshops, students cover college-bound topics such as personal finance, resume writing, health and wellness, and even basic car maintenance.

MENLO ABROAD

Students in grades 9-11 may apply to join a Menlo Abroad or Borderlands trip for their MTerm experience.





Arts and Athletics

Arts and athletics are an integral part of our broad program. They give students opportunities to shine, to challenge themselves, and to more fully discover their talents and interests.

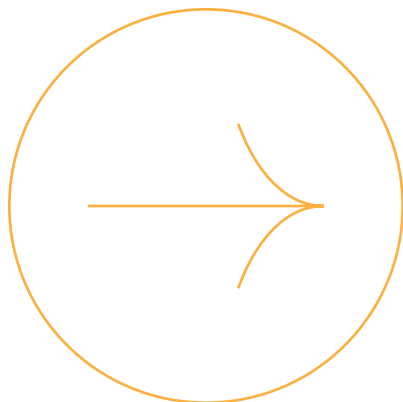
In sports, while we strive for competitive excellence at the highest possible levels, it's not the wins and championships but what the students learn as a result of their athletics experience that really matters. Character development—including resilience, grit, teamwork, and humility—is at the core of Menlo's Athletics program.

The arts provide a safe space for students to explore their identity and find their voice. Creativity is going to be a distinguishing trait for students who will increasingly witness a world in which more and more human tasks are automated and fulfilled by robots and artificial intelligence. In such a world, creativity and unique ideas will reign supreme.

Faculty Excellence

Schools are not mechanical, they are human, and it's the interaction between our students and teachers that makes us what we are. To the degree we are an exceptional school delivering an exceptional education—and I believe we are—it's because we have a superior faculty. They are innovative, engaging, supportive, intelligent, hard-working, dedicated, and fun.

I see evidence of this excellence every time I visit classes. I start each week watching classes in both divisions. I find it grounding and it helps me stay connected with what is happening at our core. And what I see are moments of individualized education that promote creativity and curiosity as well as laughter and depth and a serious school that doesn't take itself too seriously. Learning here is still playful and humor is central. Students are valued and cared for and supported by their teachers. This is a place where teachers know their students, and it's a place where it's cool and safe to be smart. This environment is perhaps the most important thing that our teachers create, and I am inspired by it every day.





A Changing World Demands a Transformative Education

Our job is to prepare our students to meet the demands of a changing world. We don't know what that the future will be, but we do know that their success will depend on a set of skills and mindsets that will enable them to adapt quickly to new, complex problems—and to lead lives of fulfillment and meaning. If we do that, we can help our kids leave the world better than they found it. Put simply, our purpose is to transform our students and, through them, transform the world.

Than Healy

THAN HEALY,
HEAD OF SCHOOL

“Our schools need to be places that instill not just information but virtues like kindness, patience, and compassion—tools that our society desperately needs.”

— DAVID BROOKS, COMMENTATOR AND AUTHOR¹²





Menlo School

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ENDNOTES

1. Eric Hoffer, *Reflections on the Human Condition* (Titusville, NJ: Hopewell, 2006), aph. 32.
2. IBM Global Business Services, *Leading through Connections: Insights from the Global Chief Executive Officer Study* (Somers, NY: IBM, 2012), 21.
3. This graph is based on one in Maya Bialik et al., *Character Education for the 21st Century: What Should Students Learn?* (Boston: Center for Curriculum Redesign, 2015), ii.
4. Howard Rheingold, quoted in Davies, Fidler, and Gorbis, *Future Work Skills 2020*, 11.
5. Fareed Zakaria, *In Defense of a Liberal Education* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 80.
6. Patrick F. Bassett, "Schools of the Future: The Big Shifts," address presented at TEDx, Saint Georges School, Spokane, WA, March 20, 2012, NAIS, last modified July 1, 2013, accessed June 19, 2015, http://www.nais.org/Articles/SiteAssets/Pages/Schools-of-the-Future-3a-The-Big-Shifts-156794/Bassett_TEDx_BigShifts.pdf.
7. Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman explain this process in "The Creativity Crisis," *Newsweek*, last modified July 10, 2010, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/creativity-crisis-74665>.
8. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 271.
9. Jim Soland, Laura S. Hamilton, and Brian M. Stecher, *Measuring 21st Century Competencies: Guidance for Educators*, A Global Cities Education Network Report (Santa Monica, CA: Asia Society; Rand, 2013), 7.
10. Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (New York: Delacorte, 1990), 437.
11. "My Pedagogic Creed," first published in *The School Journal*, Volume LIV, Number 3, (January 16, 1897), pages 77-80.
12. David Brooks, speaking at Weave: The Social Fabric Project, <https://youtu.be/Rr1K1BAIYag?si>

Menlo School does not discriminate or condone discrimination on any basis. The School's nondiscriminatory policy, which is detailed online at www.menloschool.org/ledib, covers admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, the School's programs and activities.