



---

# Board Report

School-Wide

### From the Senior School Director's Desk

Dr. E. Ward-Jackson

We made it!

Our school community has not only survived, but we have thrived through a full school year of remote operation and distance learning. We can also add to our celebrations of triumph that we have persevered through a year of heightened civil unrest, racial injustice, political overwhelm, a global health crisis, and consistent bouts of engagement with the unknown. "I will not let anything get in the way of my success" is not only a line in our Affirmation, it is a declaration of our reality!

We acknowledge the *resilience* of our community quite often. *Resilience* is one of our Five Core Values, and it is truly one of the most commonly recognized characteristics of our Wave-Makers. In reflecting upon leading our school during the pandemic, and thinking deeply about the resilience that we will need to activate as we return to on-site learning and as we embrace the anticipated onset of post-pandemic life, I found myself paused from realizing that it is not actually resilience that I was experiencing from our community during distance learning, it was fortitude. It is the strength of mind and of heart that has enabled everyone to show up and to endure adversity, change, and isolation with courage—that's fortitude. Looking ahead, what we need is *resilience*. We need to recover quickly, to learn from the adversity, the change, and the isolation...and to bounce back even STRONGER than before! This reflection has helped me to become more targeted in my appreciation for what we have overcome and for how we have overcome, and it has also helped me to be crystal clear about how critically important our core value of *resilience* will be as we move forward into the 2021-22 school year and beyond.

This year we celebrate grit, innovation, and buoyancy. We've experienced new ways of learning, of gathering, and of participating in events that would allow us to have continuity of rigorous instruction, high expectations, and continuous growth and improvement as a community. On January 6, 2020, I felt so blessed and honored to start my first day as the Senior School Director of our Academy. Although I am grateful for each moment, I only had about 8 weeks on-site with our community, in my new role, before we had to close our doors due to the pandemic, and to launch a fully virtual academy. Ending the second semester of one term, and having a full school year of distance learning the next isn't something I would have ever chosen or would have ever wanted, but I must admit, it has been amazing to launch the first full year of our new aligned school model, even though we had to do so remotely. We have learned so much, and I can say without any reservation that I am proud to have been our School Leader during this global crisis and I do not take lightly the trust and support that my leadership has received from our Board, from our CEO, and from our Executive

## Board Report - June 2021

---

Leadership Team. I have not had time with all of our students, teachers, leaders and families in the way that I would have liked, nevertheless, I learned that I did not have to be in close proximity to be able to attest to the grit and the determination to maintain relationships and community that each of our stakeholders have exemplified. I can also attest to the ingenuity, innovation, and substantial growth in school spirit and culture that is illustrated so vividly in all of our virtual events and the way that we have all shown up for each other.

The 2020-21 school year was all about optimizing for three very specific areas:

- 1) Safety
- 2) Rigorous Instruction
- 3) Social-Emotional Wellness

When I reflect, all three of these areas rely strongly on the third: Social-Emotional Wellness.

With the implementation of Group Mentorship offerings in May, our Center for Holistic Support Services has achieved implementation of a complete, three-tiered, differentiated, wrap-around holistic support program for our Wave-Makers, and this was the Center's inaugural year! The Holistic Support Services Team (HSST) is very proud to have provided the highest quality of universal, targeted and individualized support for our Wave-Makers in the areas of academic, social-emotional, and career development. I am, however, further proud of the work that this team has done to support the students and teachers in our community, because I know full well the challenges of my colleagues who have struggled through this year without such offerings. One of the most notable differentiators of the MWA program is our understanding of and our commitment to holistic support. The fortitude of our community is attributed in great part to the preparation, tools and supports provided by this dynamic team of experts in student support.

One of our greatest successes this school year included developing and implementing daily synchronous Advisory lessons for all students that focused on relationship building, connectedness and social-emotional learning development. Survey data indicates that:

- Over 80% of MWA students feel that Advisory offerings have been helpful during distance learning
- Over 60% of students like to come to school because they feel safe
- Over 75% of Wave-Makers believe that their teachers and staff treat them fairly and make them feel like they belong
- Nearly 70% of students know what resources and adults to connect with when feeling sad or hopeless

Adding to these successes, our HSST committed approximately 25% of their weekly professional development calendar to developing the social-emotional skills and competencies of faculty and staff. Over 85% of faculty/staff survey

## Board Report - June 2021

---

respondents report that they are likely to use the mindfulness and resilience-based practices provided via these offerings on a daily or regular basis. With these supports in place, over 73% of faculty/staff report that they "often" or "regularly" incorporate social-emotional literacy and mindfulness into their current teaching practices. What a timely accomplishment, considering that while consistent and targeted efforts were made to address the interpersonal connection and safety needs of students during distance learning, it is very clear that this school year presented challenges in student safety and connectedness. Our student data indicated that over 40% of students remained worried or very worried about not being able to be with classmates during distance learning, while 38% of students were worried or very worried about conflict with other students or Bullying.

When asked how we have a 95% attendance rate for SBAC and ELPAC testing, or how we're still seeing record breaking post-secondary matriculation data, or how we were able to accomplish high stakes programmatic compliance reports during such unprecedented times, I always respond, "our school optimizes for the social-emotional wellness of students and adults." We provide tools to teachers and to students and to families, and they are not only using their tools, they are witnessing and experiencing the value of using them and they are thriving.

The work of our HSST allows us to not only say that "we made it," but also, to exclaim, "learning happened!" Despite the challenges that persist all around, our Wave-Makers and our teachers are equipped with the tools and with the supports necessary to show up and to lean into our rigorous instruction and to meet our high expectations, and ultimately to fulfill our audacious achievable mission.

I am excited about next year. We will have 168 brand new Wave-Makers, and we will have 336 Wave-Makers walk on to campus for the first time. The 19<sup>th</sup> Wave will be Seniors! We will have new teachers who have taught with us for a whole year, but have never seen their classrooms finally be able to experience the energy and climate of our corridors. We will have several new community members, who will bring new energy and new excitement to supporting our learners. And, we will finally be able to properly, in our MWA way, onboard and orient our new families to all of the things that make our community so unique and so special. I can hardly wait.

Throughout the year my team and I have written several reports and have shared presentations that highlight all of our amazing progress, our challenges and areas of growth, and next steps to move forward, to grow, and to innovate. There is one area of our school program that we were not able to present on, but I wanted to give a platform today, our Athletics program. It was our Athletics program that launched Phase 1b of our return to on-site learning by being the first group of students and adults to return to campus for engagement. Cross-Country conditioning led and modeled the way for us all. In the next section of this report you will have an opportunity to read reflections from our esteemed Athletics Director, Mr. Jeff Hazel.

### Athletics Department

Jeff Hazel, Athletic Director

#### What?

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Athletics at MWA was quite different this past school year. We had no Middle School sports at all (games or training) in part, because the students were at home for school and because the Middle School Athletics lead (Mr. Paschall) was on paternity leave until mid-May. In the Upper School, the entire year of sports took place in a less than four-month period beginning the last week of February and ending the first week of June. In order to participate in sports, students and coaches had to follow all of the CIF (California Interscholastic Federation—the organization that oversees high school sports in California) and NCS (North Coast Section—the section of the CIF that manages athletics in our area of the state) regulations as well as the protocols and procedures our conference, the Bay Area Conference (BAC), and our league, the Bay Counties League (BCL), adopted. These Covid protocols and procedures included outlining which sports could be played when by the tier the county was in (purple, red, orange and yellow), the wearing of masks by all involved at all times, remaining as socially distant as possible, the cleaning of equipment after use by each player, weekly Covid testing (paid for by MWA), daily healthy screening including temperature checks, and the normal pre-participation physical examination clearing a student for athletic competition. Schools only participated in league contests with no play-offs at any level: league, section or state.

In order to play all the sports the BCL offers and to abide by the tier structure set forth by the CIF/NCS, approximately 6 week long sports' seasons took place. The first sport we offered was a new addition this year—E-Sports, which began preparing in mid-February. 15 students expressed interest in participating. The last week of February, we began with Cross Country (an allowed purple tier sport), an outside, socially distanced activity with 8 girls and 12 boys participating. Cross Country competed in 3 meets all hosted by MWA running a course starting outside the MWF offices on Research Drive and running down into Hilltop Lake Park for two laps around the lake with detours up the hill on the backside of the lake and finishing in the parking lot outside the MWF offices. In Mid-March, softball and baseball began their seasons (these were red tier allowed sports). Softball had 10 players and Baseball had only seven players. The last week of March, Boys and Girls soccer (an orange tier sport) began with 10 girl soccer players and 16 boy soccer players. We also started Track and Field with practices at Kennedy High School. Track had only 6 participants—4 girls and 2 boys and participated in two meets with the BCL and BCL-East schools at Las Positas College in Livermore. The first week of May, we began Girls and Boys Volleyball as well as Girls Basketball (only one boy showed interest in playing basketball this year). Since Contra Costa and Alameda Counties were still in the orange tier, the league decided to play Volleyball and Basketball outside. To play inside would have required Covid testing every 48 hours and all the schools involved thought the safety of outside play was a much better solution. Schools played Volleyball on grass, or in MWA's case turf, courts, Basketball on our outside basketball courts. We had five girl volleyball players and six boy players. We had five girl

## Board Report - June 2021

---

basketball players. Unfortunately, no other schools had girls' basketball, so no games were played. We did not offer Cheerleading this year as there were no games to cheer at or teams to cheer for.

### So What?

E-Sports-- We decided to jump into the video game arena because of the popularity of these games for many students and the safety provided, since the students could play from the comfort of their homes. Colleges now field E-Sports teams and offer scholarships to the top players to play at their school. Based on students' available technology at home and their schedules, we decided to field Rocket League teams for the season. PlayVS is the platform for high school and college teams to compete and we decided to participate in the Regional leagues our first season. Regional leagues pit schools in the same time zone against each other so that matches always take place at 4:00pm local time and on the same day of the week. These leagues are a little less competitive and allow a school to enter multiple teams. Based on our original numbers of interested students, we signed up for three teams but had to fold two of the teams as our numbers dwindled due to the game choice, lack of technology at home, and day of week conflicts for some of our students. The eight-week season ended on a positive note though, as our remaining "White Marlins" team qualified for the play-offs and won their first play-off game.

Cross Country competed in 3 meets all hosted by MWA running a course starting outside the MWF offices on Research Drive and running down into Hilltop Lake Park for two laps around the lake with detours up the hill on the backside of the lake and finishing in the parking lot outside the MWF offices. This provided opportunities for fans of the Marlins to attend and watch much of the races from the parking lot above the rest of the course. It also allowed us to avoid transportation concerns, as the pandemic was still a major concern in February and March. By running in a BCL only Cross Country schedule this year, the number of participants in races was manageable (only five BCL schools had runners and only MWA had complete teams—at least five runners in a race) so boys' races had at most 15 runners and girls' races had at most 10 runners.

The other sports (softball, soccer, and volleyball) had seasons of between six and eight games over a 4-week span. Practices were held on campus for most sports so that our Ops team could do temperature checks on the athletes (or for Track and Field and Baseball the coaches did the checks). Baseball played no games since they did not have enough players to field a team. The Girls Soccer team played games with mostly seven players and their competition reduced their players on the field (at times) to match us. Our league felt the goal this year in Athletics was to provide our students a chance to play, get some exercise, have some semblance of normality in their lives, and have a chance to interact safely with their classmates.

## Board Report - June 2021

---

The number of MWA student-athletes this year was down by 50% from previous years. This was the case at other BCL schools as well. CSD and OMI did not even participate in sports this school year. Holy Names only did Cross Country and some conditioning of their other athletes. Fremont Christian fielded fewer teams than normal and pushed their soccer season back to May so they played in the BCL-East. Far less frosh participated in sports this year (only seven). MWA students did not play sports this year for a variety of reasons: working to support themselves or their family, home responsibilities of looking after younger siblings as their parents were at work, transportation problems with getting to school for practice/games, hesitancy about testing regularly, worries about contracting Covid-19 due to increased interaction with more people outside their bubble, worse grades so not eligible to play.

Besides the positives of the creation of an E-Sports team and hosting Cross Country meets, we had no cases of Covid-19 among our players and coaches, we found places to play and practice even if our normal off-campus fields were closed, and the students that did participate really enjoyed the opportunity to play. With low numbers on many of the teams, it was imperative that the players showed up and they did for practice and games. Go Marlins!

### **Now What?**

Moving forward it will be interesting to see how our students return to sports participation and at what levels, both in numbers and skill sets and experience. Since we did not have much frosh participation this year, as well as no Middle School sports, Varsity teams will most likely have fewer highly skilled and more-less experienced players. Junior Varsity teams will likely be more inexperienced and that is if the students return to play at our normal levels of between 40-50% of the students in the US participating in at least one sport. The increase in the frosh class size should help (168 frosh for the upcoming school year). The easing of restrictions and protocols related to Covid should as well as things return back to more normal (students being at school each day, no testing requirements, etc.).

Middle School Sports will start up again in the fall with the return of students physically to school. We plan to continue with Girls Volleyball and Boys Soccer in the fall; Co-ed Volleyball, Girls Basketball and Boys Basketball in the winter; and Girls Soccer and Co-ed Volleyball in the spring along with, hopefully, Ultimate Frisbee. After one more year of sharing our on-campus sports facilities between the MS and US, we look to expand the number of teams the MS can offer for each sport since the US will have their own Gym and field to use.

We plan to continue our participation in E-Sports and look to expand the number of games in which we compete. With practices and competition taking place in Mr. Gordon's (he is our E-Sports coach) classroom after school, hopefully the lack of technology will not be an issue for our students. Of course we do need to provide more Play Stations and other

## Board Report - June 2021

---

game compatible computers (Chromebooks are not video game compatible) to use for E-Sports.

Multiple studies have shown that students who participate in Co-curricular activities (Sports, clubs, drama, music, etc.) have higher GPAs and better attendance as well as less behavioral issues at school. Hopefully with the issues associated with the Covid-19 pandemic abating, our MWA students will return to these activities and reap the benefits they provide for the students. Go Marlins!