Meet Mrs. Partridge
Merion's Vice Principal
By Alessandra Cahill

Everyone knows Ms. Jeffron, our friendly principal. She comes to all of Merion's events, and our school is a wonderful place thanks to her. But there is one other person who also deserves some credit. Mrs. Lynne Partridge is the Vice Principal here at Merion. You may have passed her in the hallways. She has short, salt-and-pepper hair and eyes that sparkle. She often wears earrings and glasses. And most importantly, she has a smile that lights up the room. I recently had a chance to talk to Mrs. Partridge and I thought she was very welcoming and enthusiastic about our interview. Here's what I learned.

What job did you have before you became our Vice Principal?
Before I came to Merion four years ago, I was an Assistant Principal [which is the same as a Vice Principal] at Penn Wynne Elementary. Before that, I was a Challenge teacher at Belmont Hills Elementary.

How come not a lot of the students know who you are?
Well, that's because I am only here at Merion one day a week, sadly. I am still four days a week at Penn Wynne, and that's because of the size of the school [Penn Wynne is bigger than Merion]. But I would love to be here more often because Merion is a really special place.

Why did you become a Vice Principal?
Because I've always loved school, working with kids, and learning. And I realized that being a Vice Principal is just a different way to help kids, and teachers too.

If you had a magic wand, what would you change about the school?
I would wave away all of the unnecessary tests and let learning be fun!

PSSAs: One Teacher's Perspective

By Josephine Cini

Oh no! It's PSSAs—those scary, stressful, long tests. At least that's what some kids think, but we don't know the opinion of one of the most important groups at Merion: Our teachers! In this interview with Mr. Morton, I heard what this fifth grade teacher thinks about PSSAs.

Do you think these tests are too lengthy?
Mr. Morton: Well, they used to be much longer, but they started to cut them down. They used to be at least 13 days, and now they're just 5 days.

What is your favorite part of the test?
Mr. Morton: My favorite part of the test is Language Arts. I like it because it shows more of kids' capabilities.

What is your least favorite part of the test?
Mr. Morton: My least favorite part would be math. It makes me nervous for the kids who are very good at math but tests are just not their strong suit.

What could you do while kids do the assessment?
Mr. Morton: Teachers are expected to monitor the kids during the tests. I try to do activities where I can still watch the kids and get things done at the same time, like making a schedule for the future or a teaching plan.

If you could change anything about these tests, what would you change?
Mr. Morton: I would change their reputation because a lot of people think they're terrible and awful, but they do have value. They are just misread.

* * * *

Mr. Morton offers a look at what one teacher thinks about PSSAs. Even though these tests can't be perfect, and they have a purpose: to help us kids in the future.
Why Water Conservation is Important

By Kenny Mellon

I think we should all reduce the amount of water we use. By wasting water, we are depleting the Earth's limited supply of drinking water.

The first good reason to reduce your water usage, besides spending less money on your monthly water bill, is that Americans waste a lot of water. When you take into consideration all of the water that one person uses daily for both direct use (drinking, flushing the toilet, brushing teeth, and washing clothes—approximately 80-100 gallons) and indirect use (which includes the water it takes to raise the livestock for your meat, grow crops, and make your clothes), an average American uses 2,000 gallons of water per day whereas an average African family only uses 5 gallons. In other words, one American uses 400 times the amount of an average African family, which usually has more than seven members in it. This means that we clearly use way more water than we need, since a seven-member family uses just 5 gallons.

Another reason you should try to conserve water is because only a small percentage of the world's water is actually drinkable. Did you know that just 1/5% of the world's water is freshwater? And did you know that just 2% of that freshwater can actually be consumed, clean or not? This means that only 0.0001% of the world's water is available for drinking, and we're wasting a lot of that very small amount.

We take it for granted, but fresh water is not always easy to come by. Instead of turning on a faucet, some people in places like Africa, Asia, and South America have to walk miles to get to their water source, in most cases a well. Then they need to make the back-breaking journey home carrying their 2 or 3 gallons of water. But what happens if they get to their well and find it empty or their aquifers dry? Water sources really can run out. In fact, that's what's going to happen to a city named Cape Town in South Africa. Cape Town's reservoir is supposed to run dry by July 1st, 2018, and Cape Town is a major city in Africa with a population of 3.75 million people. Would you want that to happen to you or anyone else?

I hope that after reading this article, you will make a bigger effort to save water so that we and the rest of the living things that call Earth their home don't run out of water. You can save water by putting a few tips into practice. First, don't lean on the water fountains at school. Second, make sure that you turn the faucet all the way off when you're done with it. And lastly, turn off the water when you brush your teeth. I hope that the next time you are using a sink or water fountain, you think twice about leaving the water on when not in use.

In My Opinion

Protecting Our Schools

By Brian Hirsch

Do you think there should be stronger regulations on school safety? Or, more specifically, on gun safety? I think so. I think we need stronger regulations on guns.

First, we need stronger regulations on guns because there is a fear of future mass shootings in schools like Sandy Hook and Parkland. This is a big issue for many people, like the protester whose March for Our Lives, a student-led demonstration in support of tighter gun control. These survivors and protesters want to alleviate the fear of future tragedies by making more gun regulations.

Secondly, we need stronger regulations because of accidents with guns—e.g., someone accidentally shoots himself or someone else, and many of these unfortunate incidents involve children under the age of 18. Lastly, we need stronger gun regulations for people who suffer from mental illness. Someone with a mental illness who gets access to a gun can hurt or kill themselves or use guns to kill others.

An example of how stronger gun regulations will help schools can be seen at Parkland where students were traumatized by the shooting and now need help to cope with that disturbing event. The Parkland students protested the current gun laws and, in a few years, they will have the power to vote for legislators who will make better gun laws possible. An example of stronger regulations because of accidents with guns is that anyone living with a gun that is not locked and put away may have a child accidentally fire the weapon and unintentionally hurt him or herself. People affected by this tragedy will also hopefully vote for stronger regulations. The last example, for gun safety and mental health, is how people are allowed to purchase a gun when they don't have a thorough mental health background check or if they have a history of mental illness.

Votes for stronger gun regulations might stop these tragedies. There are many people that think there must be stronger regulations, but there also some people, like Trump, who think mental health issues are the problem. Some people also rely on the Constitution for guidance on this topic as this topic is a political maze. A type of gun law that people are pushing for is the so-called “Red Flag.” This type of regulation is when a person is suspected to be a threat, then the police can take away their guns until further notice. However, it might violate the Second Amendment depending on the conditions.

In conclusion, while there are many reasons to have stronger gun regulations, there are many obstacles as well. There is no simple solution. In order to prevent future tragedies, support must be given to both mental illness health care and stronger weapon regulations. People need to put away their political differences so we can work together to save lives.

Spanish Festival 2018

By Sasha Grollman

The 2018 Spanish Festival was one to remember! The fourth and fifth grade classes got to work in the Mercado and Restaurante for the first time, grades 1-3 got to “Escape the Room,” and everyone learned about Puerto Rico and “Stole the Sombrero.” Feliz Cinco Mayo a Todos Los Estudiantes!

Merion Goes to Mount Snow

By Ana Byler and Ella Milby

Since 2016, Eric Milby (Ella's, Maggie, and Sarah's dad) and Jen Gallagher (Aksen and Henry's mom) have arranged a ski trip for kids from Merion Elementary School and their parents. This year, we went on President's Day Weekend. We took a bus to Mount Snow, a ski resort in Vermont, and everyone stayed at the Kirzof Inn for three days and four nights. We rented out the entire inn so that the families on the trip were the only ones there. We love the Inn, and have stayed there in years past.

On the first day of the long weekend, we all boarded the bus at 8:00 am. The drive to Vermont was about 6½ hours long. We talked, watched movies, played card games, and slept. There were about 100 seats on the bus, and everyone had someone to share a seat with. All of the kids sat in the back of the bus. There were TVs in every 4 seats for us to watch movies and shows. We also watched the beautiful scenery go by as we got more and more excited for the weekend.

Once we arrived at the inn, everyone scattered to their rooms to unpack. We got into our snow gear, and then we all boarded the bus for dinner. We went to a place called Snow Barn. It had an arcade with a lot of fun games and a dance floor with a band. Afterwards, we hopped back on the bus to go to a private snow tubing session. If snow tubing wasn't your preference, there was a nice seating area by a campfire where you could warm up and chat with your friends.

The next day, we all got up at 6:00 am for breakfast. The chefs had prepared a custom menu and we had different options for what to eat every day. When everyone had finished eating, it was time to hit the slopes! At Mount Snow, we got on our skis or snowboards, and went up the lift. Everyone went down the mountain in groups. Some people took greens. Some people took blues. And some people, mostly parents, went down blacks. We took a break almost every 2 hours. Some of the groups went to a waffle stand called Waffle Cabin (which has the best waffles EVERY!).

When it was time to go home, we had all had an amazing weekend of skiing and snowboarding, playing, and having fun with our friends in the wonderful Vermont outdoors. The ski trip was a success once again, and we can’t wait for next year!
Snowstorms Hit the East Coast

By Lilia n Wa ng

The weather has been weird along the East Coast lately. From 70 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to record snow in March, it’s far from normal. This year, the East Coast had a bunch of snowstorms and many disasters, too. One of the worst happened on March 1st when a blizzard started. The wind surged up to 90 miles per hour. There wasn’t heavy snow accumulation, but the wind knocked down thousands of trees and nearly two million people lost power. We were the lucky ones.

Our house didn’t lose power, but several of our friends did. One of the friends didn’t have power for more than a week!

As I was driving home from school on the day of the blizzard, the car in front of us drove onto ice and started to slide across the road. The car came bustling at another car and swerved at the last second to avoid an accident. Along the way, we saw two toppled trees. One landed on top of a car, but thankfully the owners got out safely. After ten long minutes of driving (it felt much longer), we got home safely. My dad was so worried that a tree might fall on our house that he decided we should go to a hotel.

On the way to the hotel, we had to take what seemed like a thousand detours because the roads were icy and covered by branches and trees. When we finally got there, it was already 10:00 pm. I was so worried and scared I couldn’t fall asleep. I could hear the howling wind and feel the fear churning in my stomach. After a few hours, I fell asleep. I woke up in the morning at 6:00 am feeling nervous and I hoped nothing bad had happened to our house.

When we got back to my house, I was relieved. I hoped that there was never a storm like that again. Later that month, another storm hit our area with heavier snow accumulation. Some areas got up to five feet of snow! (Here, we got only one foot of snow.) Although it wasn’t as dangerous as the first storm, people still died from falling trees in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. These snow storms were really dangerous and I’m glad that everyone here survived. I don’t want any more dangerous snowstorms!

The Case for Outdoor Classes

By Joy Rao

Imagine sitting under a shady, quiet tree, chatting with your friends as you write on a paper, or lying on a fuzzy rug of grass, listening to your teacher talk. This is what outdoor classes are like, and they are entirely possible and much less boring than indoor classes.

First, outdoor classes are much more fun than indoor classes, because, well, you’re outside! Instead of being crammed up in a room with hard chairs and crowded desks, you can lie on a cool carpet of grass, take notes under a shady tree, or breathe in the fresh, cool air of nature. It’s much more comfortable, you can have classes with your seat of choice, and be with your best buddies. In the winter, the useless little space beneath the blacktop could be renovated into a room with a glass roof, equipped with a heater for rainy weather that would still let you feel like you were outside! Classes could take turns in there, and everybody will be happy!

Second, having classes outside can spice up learning and keep students from falling asleep. For example, a nature class could be created, and students can learn all about poisonous plants, names of wild plants, and even experiment with making yummy nutritious foods. Also, some classes can be enhanced by nature such as art, in which you could draw the beautiful plants outside, or science, where you could have fun experiments with nature. Boring-free classes, check!

Last, outdoor classes can help teach stress. Being outside in the fresh, relaxed outdoors is just as good. It’s almost like yoga balls, but even better! Many students are worried about tests, good grades, or even pressure in class attendance! With outdoor classes, though, recess time will have to be shortened, but not to worry! Being outside will make up for that. Being outside will give you a calm, relaxed feeling.

Outdoor classes offer the chance for innovative learning and stress-free days at Merion! Students are likely to feel happier, and other schools might even follow our example! So, if you can’t wait for the next outdoor class, show them what you’re doing and maybe ask your teacher to add more outdoor classes!

Spring Returns to Merion

By Sofia Viator

Now that spring is finally here and everyone at Merion can get outdoors, a whole other world has opened up before our eyes. You just have to see it. While you look down, birds live up above you, flying and hunting to survive this world. You pass by flowers and are impressed by how beautiful they are, but have you ever thought about how plants try to beat each other to reach the sunlight, or about how they wait patiently to be pollinated and bloom with their colors? Insects may seem gross to you, but our world depends on them; plants and birds need them to pollinate and eat. Nature doesn’t just look splendid, nature is amazing and complex—and spring is the perfect time to appreciate that.

Like yesterday, when an enormous, majestic hawk landed on my fence, probably searching for mice, a prime example of the food chain. The natural world is a little more unfair than ours; it’s either eat or be eaten. At Merion, bees are already buzzing around the blooming gardens, and pesky mosquitoes are lingering around, looking for some tasty blood, to our dismay. But spiders, with their webs, catch those mosquitoes and pesky little flies—even the creatures we are afraid of are needed.

When you are walking outside, you have never smelled a bug on the ground, breathing. “Dzwaw” Imagine how that bug might have felt when you did that. It looks up and sees your big foot about to come down and crush it. Bugs may seem small and insignificant, but we should appreciate how they have adapted in specific ways to survive. For example, ants work together to build a home, take care of their young and feed the colony.

Seasons are lovely to observe, but they also have a purpose. Spring and summer aren’t just enjoyable, they are the time for nature to reproduce, for butterflies to lay eggs, crack open cocoons and start the cycle once again. The downtime of winter and fall might seem dull by comparison, but it lets nature store up energy for the coming year—and of course, winter lets us have snow days at school! Too often, we think that nature can just be thrown in a corner and our lapses relieve headaches and stress. With outdoor classes, though, recess time will have to be shortened, but not to worry! Being outside will make up for that. Being outside will give you a calm, relaxed feeling.

Outdoor classes offer the chance for innovative learning and stress-free days at Merion! Students are likely to feel happier, and other schools might even follow our example! So, if you can’t wait for the next outdoor class, show them what you’re doing and maybe ask your teacher to add more outdoor classes!
Baseball Season: 2018

By Jack Hollowell

“Going, going, GONE!” On the first pitch of the first game of opening day, March 29, 2018, Ian Happ of the Chicago Cubs hit a home run off of the Marlins pitcher, Jose Urena. If this is any indication of the season ahead, Merion students, grab your peanuts and Cracker Jacks and head to a baseball park near you.

In the regular season, 30 teams will play a total of 162 games. Teams who want to advance to the postseason need to give it their all on the field, and fielders who can field the ball cleanly and correctly. So let’s take a look at some of the teams mentioned in Sports Illustrated.

Yankees: The New York Yankees bashed a mind-blowing 241 home runs and went 99-63-1. Hendry, in this gang of home run hitters, the Yankees recently acquired Giancarlo Stanton, who hit 59 home runs last season, out-hitting none other than the Yankees own Aaron Judge, who was a close second with 52 home runs. This duo will be formidable this season. But when the bats are in a slump, the Yankees need the pitchers to take charge, if they want to go all the way.

Astras: Last year’s World Series champions are looking like they might be back in it this year. Jose Altuve smashed an amazing 24 home runs and had a .346 batting average. Last season, the Astros acquired Justin Verlander of the Tigers in return for 3 prospects. Their most recent addition, former all-star Gerrit Cole, who had an ERA of 4.26, will help further strengthen a very strong bullpen.

Nationals: My brother’s favorite! Perennial MVP candidate Bryce Harper smashed 29 home runs, had 87 RBI (runs batted in), and a .330 batting average. Daniel Murphy also hit 23 home runs, had 62 RBI, and a .322 batting average. Pitcher Stephen Strasburg dominated the hill for the Nationals by allowing just 3 home runs in 300 innings over 52 starts. The Nationals, the time to take home the title is now!

Cubs: Last season, the Chicago Cubs had one of the most fearsome lineups in baseball, as they had Kris Bryant who had 29 home runs, 73 RBI, and a .272 batting average along with Anthony Rizzo. The Cubs recently said goodbye to all-star starting pitcher Jake Arrieta to pick up Yu Darvish. They have an ERA of 3.80 ERA in the regular season repeat, and the national league ERA in last year’s World Series is forgettable.

Phillies: For the first time in years, your home team the Philadelphia Phillies may have realistic aspirations to bring home the World Series and win it all. A couple of main contributors to this endeavor and top prospects are, Rhys Hoskins, the amazing hitting Rhys Hoskins, outfielder Nick Williams, infielder Cesar Hernandez and newcomer Carlos Santana. For a little bit of strategy and determination, you might find Phil in the running this year.

To wrap up, this baseball season will be super fun to watch. Who knows, maybe your name or mine will be on one of these rosters someday. For now, have fun and “PLAY BALL!”

Why You Should Join Girls on the Run

By Aliyah Alwyn

Every spring, Girls on the Run starts again at Merion. It is a program that teaches girls important lessons about self-confidence and positive thinking through running. At Merion, it is open to girls in 3rd to 5th grade. I joined Girls on the Run last year and liked it a lot so I joined again this year. I like it because it’s not just about running, you also learn life lessons. The lessons are about things like how to deal with bullies in nonviolent ways, and how to make choices that are right for you, not just because your friends make them.

We start each session by doing stretches and talking about the lesson for the day, and then we start the day’s activity, which involves running with a purpose. The running is easy because you don’t have to go players fast, you get to pace yourself. Every week we set a lap goal, and we work our way up to 5K. At the end, we write on our identity cards about the lesson we learned, and we give an Energy Award to the most dedicated and hardworking girl for that day.

Something I really liked about GOTR was that it taught me different strategies for dealing with frustrations. I also liked how there wasn’t just one group of people hanging out together every time, or one person off by themselves. We were all together, almost like we were a family. In the beginning of the year, we all did an exercise where we had a partner, and we would say things that motivated each other to keep going when it looked like we wanted to give up. Some of the things we would say were, “You can do it!” and “Show your star power!” It made me feel like I could trust my partner to always have my back and be there with me.

I interviewed two girls who did GOTR last year, Ellie Pulitzer from 4H and Eva Mcbain from 60, and I asked them what they liked best about the program. Ellie said, “I liked how Girls on the Run brought friendships together.” Eva said, “I liked how we did the practice 5K.” Then I asked them what they think GOTR helps with, and they both said self-esteem. I think they said this because we did a lesson where we practiced saying things like, “I can!” and “I’ll try again!” so we won’t give up so easily or at all.

From my experience, what I think GOTR helps you with most is control over your brain. It is all about putting your mindset in a good place so you can dream big and never give up. When you leave GOTR, you know that you have control over your destiny, so you will always believe in yourself—and never believe anyone who tries to tell you otherwise.

Top 5 Most Exciting NFL Post-Seasons

By Jack Kelly

The NFL post-season can be an exciting part of the year, but what have been the most exciting ends to the NFL season in recent years? I came up with a list based on my research about past seasons and general knowledge of the NFL and its players. Factors determining my list include an offensive and defensive balance, number of blow-outs, and personal preference.

#5: 2015

This season, New England Patriots fans saw the agonizing last-second field goal miss by Blair Walsh resulting in the Broncos’ upset of the Patriots in the AFC championship game. Also during that post-season, the Panthers beat the Broncos in both the NFL and NFC championship game. Factors determining my list include an offensive and defensive balance, number of blow-outs, and personal preference.

#4: 1985

This post season gave us the Bears historic defense, Walter “Sweetness” Payton, Steve Young’s rookie season, and Joe Theismann’s career-ending injury. It was an eventful season. The Bears steamrolled through the post season, and the Broncos believe it or not made a #1 appearance in the divisional round. That year, the Bears defeated the Patriots in Super Bowl 19.

#3: 1999

This was the year of the greatest show on turf with Kurt Warner and Marshall Faulk, the 62-7 Jaguars blow-out; and the Music City miracle, making it one of the most eventful post-seasons ever. The Music City Miracle was a game between the Buffalo Bills and the Tennessee Titans in the AFC Championship. In that game, the Bills kicked off with 16 seconds left. In the return, the Titans threw a lateral pass in and scored a touchdown to win the game. During the Super Bowl though, the Titans came up one yard short against the Rams.

#2: 2016

Tom Brady got suspended, the Falcons surprised everyone by taking it to the Super Bowl, and Peyton Manning retired. Many things changed the 2016 season. The Falcons beat out the Packers to get to the Super Bowl and the Steelers’ Bell went down injured. The Super Bowl had a clear winner until just after halftime, when the Falcons choked. Tom Brady led the Patriots on a 25-point historic comeback, winning one for the thumb (a fifth Super Bowl ring).

#1: 2017

This was the year Carson Wentz led the extravagant Eagles through the season, the Rams rolled, the Saints were stupendous, and the Vikings were victorious. And Tom Brady was doing the usual. The Eagles won a thriller against the Falcons, the Patriots came from behind to win the game against the Jaguars in the AFC Championship, and the Eagles blew out the Vikings in the NFC championship. As you probably know, the Eagles won the Super Bowl.

Poetry: Endurance

By Hafsa Kanewchwa

I envision wounded soldiers,
weakly getting up on the bloody battleground, ready to fight the gruesome war to establish justice.

I hear the breaths of a tired out runner, still moving forward to finish the marathon.

I witness my grandmother recover from her monstrous heart attack, and I watch her take on a new challenge of taking care of a new little life.

I observe refugees devouring every moment of learning offered, to make a difference on this planet.

I hear physicians pursuing their dreams of helping those who are less fortunate.

Endurance, Endurance, Endurance.

These experiences symbolize the pathway of endurance.
March Madness 2018

By Jack Kwiat

A lot of memorable things happened this year during March Madness. I’m still thinking about the game that messes up all of our brackets, Virginia! Or how about Loyola Chicago’s underdog run? And let’s not forget about Philly’s second championship of the year with Villanova (following with the Eagles’ footsteps) showing how it’s done. So let’s explore how all of this so-called “madness” went down.

The Virginia Cavaliers were seeded #1 in the Atlantic Coast bracket. Their first round game was against the #16 seed UMBC Retrievers. Surprisingly, the Cavaliers lost 74 to 54 while the Retrievers went on to the second round of the tournament playing Kansas State. The Cavaliers were heartbroken after the game. I can’t imagine how disappointed their coach, Tony Bennett, along with the players and their fans must have been.

Loyola Chicago made history as the first eleventh seed team making it to the Final Four. As an underdog in each of its games, Loyola beat Miami in the first round, and then Tennessee No. 3, Nevada No. 7, and Kansas State No. 9. Loyola lost to a strong Michigan team in the Final Four, but put in a great effort. It goes to show you that any team in the tournament can win on any given day.

The last two games Villanova played against Kansas and Michigan were outstanding, especially if you’re a Villanova fan, as many of us are here at Merion. In those games, every person on Villanova proved to be a sharp shooter. Against Kansas, Villanova broke the record for most three-point shots made in a tournament game with 18. In the final game they made 9 three-point shots. Although that is less than the prior game, it was still amazing. Because of their three-point shooting accuracy, Villanova was able to beat a taller Michigan team and win the NCAA Championship. They had previously won the championship in 1985.

There were many reasons why the 2018 NCAA tournament was exciting. Virginia’s loss in the first round, Loyola Chicago’s underdog run, and Villanova’s exciting victory were a few of the more remarkable ones. The drama surrounding the games makes the NCAA tournament arguably the best tournament in sports every year.

What 4th Grade Thinks About Basketball: A Survey

By Anna Kobell

Do you watch college basketball? Do you like Pro basketball or college basketball more? After Villanova’s recent win in the March Madness tournament, I wanted to hear what people thought about the sport. Here’s what I learned from my survey of 22 people in 4th grade.

I started by asking whether they watch college basketball. Most people said they watched college basketball sometimes, with a total of 8 votes; 7 people didn’t watch college basketball at all; and 5 people told me they watched all of the games. I went on to ask what team they each wanted to win the March Madness tournament. Villanova came in first place with a total of 12 votes, which was more than half. Then came Michigan with only five votes. Tied for third were University of North Carolina and Duke, each with one vote each.

Who Do You Want to Win the NCAA Tournament?

Villa nova
Duke
Michigan
North Carolina

Finally, I asked whether they liked college or professional basketball more. Pro basketball got the most answers with a total of 9. Next came college basketball, which got the same number of votes as those who said neither pro nor college basketball—each got 5 votes. Only two people said they liked both college and pro basketball equally.

Do you think it would be different if Michigan had won the March Madness tournament? Do you think the Sixers doing well in the playoffs will make a difference? Only time will tell but one thing’s for sure—there’s a lot of basketball to enjoy!

What about Loyola Chicago?

By Sam Wu

You have probably heard about the new video game console, the Nintendo Switch. It is different from other popular gaming consoles, like the Xbox or the PlayStation. Instead of a giant box with all the wiring in it, it fits everything inside a tiny device the size of a Kindle. So how does it work? That’s what this article is all about.

Controllers: The Nintendo Switch controllers are pretty small, you could hold both of them in one hand. They can snap onto the console itself, or you can take them off to use the motion controls. The controllers have their own separate batteries, and they charge when the console is charging or you can buy a separate charging station just for the controllers. They each have separate buttons and one joystick. They each have separate buttons besides the regular ones, like the snapshot button.

Dock: The console dock transfers the Kindle-like screen to the TV screen. It also charges while doing this. All you have to do is connect one wire to an HDMI input, and one wire to a power outlet. Then, you just have to put the console inside the dock holder, take off the controllers, and play!

Console: The console is really small, like a Kindle with controllers on the side. Its storage space is 30 KB (30 kilobytes). The game card is on the top, even though you don’t necessarily need it. You can buy games from the Nintendo eShop, which is the online store that downloads games directly to the Switch, no wait time needed. It is pretty smart, and parents can also download an app called Nintendo Switch Parental Controls to ensure their child’s safety and/or restrict them from playing too many games.

Nintendo Labo: Nintendo Labo is a software along with a cardboard kit that lets you build things to make your Nintendo Switch even more interactive. The cardboard kit uses heat reflectors and detectors to send a signal to the Nintendo Switch, which changes the screen or makes a certain type of sound. For example, you can build a piano using the cardboard kit and when you press a one of the piano’s keys, the heat reflectors detect the heat, and the game console makes a sound.

Not surprisingly, Nintendo has already sold 10,000 units of Nintendo Switch. It is a pretty cool electronic, and I recommend it very much!
Disney Cruise Dream

By Yuqi Zheng

I love Disney movies and Disneyland. I went to the Hong Kong Disneyland several times which was little. I’ve watched almost all the movies that were available in the theater. Everyone loves Disney movies in China, because Disney movies tell really good stories. This spring break, I went on a Disney Cruise. It was like a magical kingdom moving in the ocean!

Our cruise ship was named “Dream.” It was a huge ship of eleven floors. There were six restaurants, and shops. There were even two theaters. One theater was a movie theater, and one theater was for live performances. It was like a city. Captain Henry told me that the ship had 1,250 rooms, and could entertain 4,000 guests.

On this trip, I had fun from day to night. Most of my favorite places were on the deck. There was a swimming pool in the shape of Mickey’s head, a mini-golf field and places to play basketball and table tennis. There was a food buffet, pizza, and ice cream. I played all the games on the deck, and tasted all the different types of ice cream. The water slide called “Aqua duck” was awesome! It was a long ride around the deck. It was transparent, so when I was going down it, I could see the outside—the people, the playground on the deck, and the ocean. My mother and I went on it together. Pashed along by the cool water, we moved so fast. It was extremely exciting!

I loved a game called Detective on the ship. There were “magic” pictures on the walls of the different floors that by reading my “passport” showed clues to rescue some kidnapped puppies. I succeeded in rescuing all the puppies each time. On my way to rescuing the puppies, I met Princess Cinderella, Daisy Duck and Captain Mickey. They said “Hi” to me, and hugged me! Every night, my mother and I went to the Walt Disney Theater to watch a show. There were always surprises falling down from the sky. I collected colorful paper in the shape of Mickey’s head and gold leaves. One time, even icy rain fell. Both my mother and I loved the show, Beauty and the Beast. It told the story of a prince who was transformed into a beast and his household servants into furniture and utensils, all under a crust. The furniture and utensils each had eyes and a mouth that looked so real and such natural facial expressions!

How could they do that?

The cruise docked twice during the trip. Once in Nassau, in the Bahamas, and again in Castaway Cay, which is owned by the Disney Company. Nassau has white sand and a crystal-clear sea. Groups of tiny fish swim beside me. I even saw a yellow and blue tropical fish. On Castaway Cay, the mother and father of the node built a sand castle on the beach. That night, we watched a fireworks show on the deck. Fireworks blossomed over the darkness of the ocean and sky.

I have been back home for a while now. Though the excitement I felt during the cruise fades away, the happy moments of this sweet dream always stay with me.

All About Hangeul: the Korean Alphabet

By Swoobin Ahn

Have you ever heard about the Korean alphabet, Hangeul? It was invented by Sejong the Great, the fourth king of The Joseon Dynasty. A long time ago, the Korean people used Chinese characters called “Hanja.” But Sejong the Great created Hangeul for several reasons:

First, Hanja has so many characters that it is really hard for people to remember them all.

Second, there are many linguistic differences between Korean and Chinese, so it’s difficult to explain some Korean words with Chinese characters.

Third, in general, the people of the Joseon Dynasty were not rich men. They had to work hard and they often didn’t have the money or opportunity to learn any Hanja.

Fourth, because people didn’t know Hanja, they didn’t know about the laws and what activities were prohibited. This ignorance meant they committed crimes.

Hangeul is an exceptional and usual alphabet because we know who made it; how and when its creator, King Sejong, distributed it; and how he came up with the letters. It took Sejong 2 to 3 years to compose Hangeul, and it was first published in 1446. Hangeul is very scientific because the consonants are based on the shape of the phonetic organs—the lips, teeth, tongue, and palate—that helps us to make sounds. The vowels are based on the Three Elements, which are an important concept in all Oriental philosophy. Chaos (heaven, ⤙), ł (earth, ⤔), and fun (sea, ⤝) are some of the other remarkable properties of Hangeul:

One can write every single sound by hearing.

One can learn the letters quickly and easily. An adult can master Hangeul within a week.

Each vowel has one sound, so one can read the sounds easily. English vowels have multiple sounds like ‘a’ in station, apply, apple, and card.

On the left is a chart of Hangeul’s letters. With this chart, you can try to compose the consonants and the vowels while listening to Korean words.

We can see how the alphabet works by looking at the picture above of the structure of oral cavity. The ⤙, ⤔, and ⤝ are the Korean consonants. When you say and pronounce the sounds of the letters, (ModelAttribute:semester) our throat and mouth are the same as that letter. How wonderful that is! That’s why Hangeul is called the scientific alphabet.

Travels on the Costa Maya

By Yijia Mao

On President’s Day (also the Chinese New Year), I went with my family on a cruise to explore the Mayan culture in Mexico, the coral life in the Caribbean, and the nature reserves for alligators in Florida. I’m not going to talk about the cruise itself, although I was so impressed by the hospitality that I couldn’t write about it without babbling on and on. Instead, I want to share with you three amazing excursions we had along the way.

The main purpose of our trip was to visit the Mayan ruins on the Costa Maya, a stretch of Caribbean coastline on Mexico’s eastern Yucatan Peninsula. With a local tour guide, we went to see a stone pyramid that was excavated from the overgrown jungle. There are over a thousand structures like that in the area, and Costa Maya is a only small patch of land. The ancient Mayan people took the stairs to reach the top of the pyramid, where they worshiped and sacrificed. They also measured the position and size of the sun’s shadow on the stairs to build calendars. After the tour, we even got to taste traditional Mayan food such as chicken, tortillas, salsas, and veggies. I even saw the “oven” in the ground that the Mayan people used to cook the chicken, and made a tortilla by myself!

On the next excursion, we went to look for corals in our snorkeling gear. At first, I couldn’t see clearly because it was very windy (hence big waves). But on the second and third stops, I could see the bottom of the ocean. There were all sorts of sea creatures such as starfish, turtles, sand dollars, and glistening starfish. By looking at the picture above of the alphabet, we found many kinds of corals, including a kookaburra that can mimic the sound of monkeys. The airboat (a kind of flat-bottomed boat) we rode was so loud that we had to put earplugs in our ears. We had a good boat captain, Bob, who showed us his 360-degree trick and explained the history of the place. Can you believe that the Army Corp of Engineers once tried to turn the whole area into farmland, only to find 20 years later it was impossible? Later, they threw mansions in the swamp so no one could eat any of the living things there.

I would love to tell you more about my experiences during the rest of the trip, please let me know and I will be happy to share my full review. In short—if you have a chance to visit the Costa Maya, I highly recommend it!
Book Reviews:

Hello, Universe

By: Alessandra Cahill

If you’re at the library or a bookstore, and your eye stops on the book Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly, do not hesitate to pick it up and check it out! Hello, Universe won the 2018 Newbery Medal, so it must be good, right? I’ve read it, and I think that it has so much originality and personality that readers across Merion will be drawn to this story. It has something for every student, including humor, characters that are fun to read about, and lessons about bullying and self-acceptance.

This book is about a boy named Virgil Salinas, who is lonely and shy. His parents call him “Turtle” because he can’t come out of his shell, and the biggest bully in school, a boy named Che the “Bull” Builes, always teases him and calls him “turtle.”

It is the first day of summer vacation after sixth grade, but Virgil isn’t excited. In fact, he is miserable, so he texts his friend Kaezi for help. Kaezi claims that she is psychic, tells fortunes, and can read the stars. She advises him to travel into the woods and get five different stones so she can help him. Unfortunately, he meets Chet while in the woods. Chet grabs Virgil’s backpack, which has Gulliver, Virgil’s (totally adorable) pet hamster, inside. But Che doesn’t know that, and he runs to an old well, and dangles it over the edge.

Will he drop the bag? Will Virgil stand up for himself and stop Chet’s bullying once and for all? And why was Virgil so sad? You will figure out all of this as the story unfolds.

Hello, Universe is a great chapter book full of friendship and heart. It is perfect for people (adults included) who value kind friends and enjoy realistic fiction that is thrilling and exciting. And if you happen to be psychic or a little shy, or to have a pet hamster that loves dancing, you can totally relate to the characters in this novel. Some of my favorite parts when the author talks about Kaezi’s different appointments, because her sister, Oola, who likes to help Kaezi with her clients, always seems to say something at the wrong time, and it is so funny!

Overall, I thought Hello, Universe was a stupendous novel. If I could rate it, I would give it fifteen out of ten stars. That’s how good it is! Third graders and up will probably understand and enjoy this book more, but if you are younger and really want to read it, go for it! It is in the Merion library, patiently waiting for you.

A Restaurant Review: Daiki Hibachi & Sushi

By: Nancy Hall

By: Ma e ve Hong

By J o y Ra o

By: Alessa ndra Call

A Restaurant Review: Daiki Hibachi & Sushi

Madeleine: Tofu teriyaki and Hibachi and fried rice.

Madeleine: Five stars.

Michael: I like the sushi too, but I also like the chicken teriyaki.

What dish do you recommend?

Madeleine: Tofu teriyaki and Hibachi and fried rice.

Madeleine: Five stars.

What dish do you recommend?

Michael: I like the sushi.

Michael: I like the sushi too, but I also like the chicken teriyaki.

Is there a specific roll you like two?

Maria: I like the chicken tempura roll.

Michael: I liked the crispy spicy tuna roll.

What else do you want to say about Daiki?

Maria: It’s a great place. I enjoyed it a lot.

Michael: Same thing. I’m always with her.

All in all, I highly recommend this restaurant because of its delicious food, elegant decor, and spectacular service.

House of Hades

By Joy Rao

The book House of Hades by Rick Riordan is about a boy named Percy Jackson and his friends, Jason, Piper, Frank, Annabeth, and Hazel. They are all children of Roman or Greek gods.

House of Hades is the fourth book in the series The Heroes of Olympus. It is a book filled with adventure that will get you hooked and strongly recommended that you read it.

In House of Hades, Percy and his friends are on a mission to save the Romans and Greeks from Gaia, the evil earth goddess. But, in order to do this, they must bring the Romans and Greeks together, face many of Gaia’s minions—minotaurs, harpies, and centaurs—and promised things to in order to get them to work for her—and overcome many challenges that seem impossible. Percy and one of his friends, Annabeth, fall into the pit of Tartarus, which is a pit in the Underworld that is, well, the evil god Tartarus’s body. Even Hades’s own son could barely survive down there, so Annabeth and Percy will have to be extremely lucky to be able to survive it.

I liked this book because it is filled with detail, and the way Rick Riordan writes makes it seem like you are there, watching all the action. Riordan pours suspense into his book, and it is almost impossible to stop reading once you have started (especially because he always leaves you with cliffhangers at the end). If you are intrigued by this review, I would probably recommend that you start reading from the beginning of the series, because otherwise, it might be hard to follow what is going on. Also, I don’t think you should read this if you are under 8 years old. But if you are a fourth, fifth, or sixth grader who is looking for a great series, this is definitely one that you should try! You will have House of Hades to look forward to.

Beneficial Boredom

By Haifa Kanchwala

Mmm. I swiftly walk into the bakery to get some tasty warm bread in the City of Love. Woah! Woah! Where am I getting off topic? Maybe this has happened to you. Have you ever had your mind wander? Or found yourself staring out into the universe and feeling bored? I have and actually boredom is beneficial for you. It leads to creative ideas, it lets your brain relax, and it gives you more time to chat with your family. Would you rather get lost in endless videos on screens, or would you like to take a moment to collect mellow, interesting thoughts? From my point of view, boredom can help us with life skills and other things that video games can’t.

How do we build up innovative ideas? Well, these thoughts pop up into your head while you take a moment to unconsciously just let your mind flow like a river with possibilities. Experts say, “It is often when we are staring at a wall, you can expand this skill that will help you with almost everything that is coming in your direction. If your brain is exhausted from addicting screens though, you might not be able to shut down easily or drift off into outer space. Sometimes we need to calm down, take a long nap or a breather, and relax into Introvert Mode. Our minds need rest to recharge, just like battery, for the next activity. A 2014 study showed that people who were bored for a period of time were better able to solve complicated problems afterward. These people were able to excel because they had time to refresh before they transitioned to the next task.

Boredom also leads to better social skills. Usually, when our days are packed with learning or television, we don’t get to communicate with our loved ones. Your family and friends want to hear about what’s going on with you. Many researchers say, “And of course, when we’re not staring at screens, we’re more likely to have conversations with friends and family.” Talking to others can help you develop better friendships. Plus, it’s fun! It can also help you solve problems or figure out your career or your main goal in life. So, boredom will also be beneficial as we get older.

In conclusion, boredom is healthy for you because it leads to creativity, it gives your mind room to be social, and show some creativity.

Boredom is a challenge that we have to face and overcome with maturity. It is a skill that we all need to improve. So, what do you do when you have nothing to do? And what do you do when you are bored? What are your tips for overcoming boredom? Do you have any tips for overcoming boredom? If so, please share them in the comments below!
**Coco**

By Emma Maloney and Nika Altman

This heartwarming, funny movie is one that you don’t want to miss. In *Coco*, the main character Miguel lives in Mexico with his dad, mom and grandma and they don’t have a good history with music. But Miguel loves music, and wants to find out who is truly his great, great, grandfather.

On the Day of the Dead, he strums the guitar of Ernesto de la Cruz, a legendary singer of long ago who he thanks is his great, great, grandfather, gets caught in the afterlife. Along his journey in the afterlife, Miguel takes with him a street dog (Dante), meets his ancestors, and makes a new friend.

Miguel eventually goes to Ernesto de la Cruz’s party, and learns that the legendary singer is not his great, great, grandfather after all. Miguel wants to give up but he knows he can’t just yet. You are going to have to watch the movie to see what happens next.

According to critics, this movie received a 97% out of 100 and got an 8.5 out of 10. According to Common Sense Media, they gave the movie 4 out of 5 stars and described it as a “gratifyingly animated, poignant tribute to family heritage.”

We definitely recommend this movie and we hope that you will enjoy it too! It has a lot of life lessons that we all can relate to. What are you waiting for? Grab a bag a popcorn, gather your friends and family and watch Coco. You’ll love it!

**Stick it to the Writer**

By Eden Carlson

Would you like to see a musical where kids play instruments LIVE on stage and the actors may be just around your age of nine, ten, or eleven? If so, you might get a lucky opportunity to see *School of Rock*, the musical, like I did.

Compared to the movie, there were better actors in the play. Being able to sit down and watch the play in person, rather than watching it on a screen, makes you feel closer to the characters and the play. It was so cool how you could feel how the scenes become part of the show and you can really enjoy the whole rock band experience. Though the movie was great, it doesn’t give you as much excitement as the show has to offer and it doesn’t leave you wondering, “What’s going to happen next?”

Furthermore, the movie isn’t as modern so the script follows a bit of an older storyline while the show adds a more modern-day touch. The songs in the show are fun and catchy. A lot of kids can relate to a few of the INCREDIBLE songs sung by the very talented young actors such as, “If Only You Would Listen” and “Stick It To The Man.” Each of the songs carries different feelings all throughout the play which was very entertaining. The fun choreography fits perfectly with the upbeat and catchy songs.

Next is the set design! The set was so amazing. Sometimes the cast and crew would remove it from the stage after quite some time so it would move electronically. The floor to ceiling set was just filled with so much detail it made you feel like you were on the set with them. Some people asked me, “If you could change something about the traveling Broadway show of *School of Rock*, what would it be?” My answer to them is, “I would have Jack Black from the movie play Dewey Fin, the main character. I think that it would give you a very energetic experience.”

Overall, the School of Rockshow with elementary-school-aged actors playing instruments live and dancing to let all of their “aggression out” was absolutely astounding! It includes fun-loving songs, heartwarming scenes, and so much energy! The show is appropriate for ages 5 and up, and is a wonderful show to take the whole family to.

**Buying Local: Narberth Store Ratings**

By Libby Coyle and Ella Milby

What do you do on a free day? This question is asked in a lot of Merion households and we may have an answer for you: just head down to Narberth! In this article you can learn which stores to go to, to a little bit about what they offer, and what we recommend. (Note: These ratings are based on five stars, with five being “A Must Do.”) Four stars being “Check It Out,” three stars being “It’s OK,” two stars being “You can skip it,” and one star being, “It’s more fun to go home.”

**SHOPPING**

**Sweet Mabel:** ★★★★★

Looking for a gift or a collectible item? While Sweet Mabel is a great place to get trinkets, their items can be a little pricey for an elementary school student’s budget. Nevertheless, Sweet Mabel is cool because almost everything is handmade! Getting something one-of-a-kind can be worth busting the bank.

**Swan Dancewear:** ★★★★★

If you want to get a dance class, Swan Dancewear is a good place to stock up on gear or get new accessories. Not a dancer? How about a gymnast? One of the best stores in Narberth is leotards for gymnasts and mats for yoga. They also have general fitness equipment to increase flexibility.

**Cadence Fitness:** ★★★★

If you’re looking to get into shape, Cadence has an amazing camp for kids. Get ready to sweat! It’s also a local workout gym known especially for Rowing. (Rowing is a boat using sculls for “Crew” and Dragon boat.) Warning: The capped is very physical (AKA: intense!)

**American Family Market:** ★★★★

At A&P you can get fabulous deals on candy. You can also get ingredients for dinner or baking supplies. Need a snack? A&P is the place for you. A&P has been in business for over 50 years. If you go there often enough, the owners will call you by name. American Family is Narberth’s own Little Market.

**Character Development:** ★★★★★

Character Development has an amazing selection of books and is a great place to shop for birthday presents for friends. Feel free to have a seat inside Character Development and check out the latest title from your favorite book series, or get a new activity to keep you busy for the rest of the day.

**FOOD**

**McShea’s:** ★★★★★

Looking to grab lunch? The food at McShea’s is very filling and yummy, but the sit-down service can be slow. If you have time to spare, this is a good stop. Grilled cheese and French fries with a nice cold drink is the perfect order for anyone in 10-5.

**Real Pizza:** ★★★★★

Looking for a quick bite? Real Pizza is a cool place to drop in. Be aware, though, that the pizza can sometimes be too greasy! Hope you are hungry, because the $3 slices are huge.

**Coco Thai Bistro:** ★★★★★

If you are in the mood for delicious Thai food, then Coco Thai Bistro is the place for you. The food is great and the atmosphere is very friendly. They also do a great job with the decorations outside. Pretty flowers in the spring, cool balloons in the summer.

**Village Treats:** ★★★★★

BEAT THE HEAT! Are you ready for more cream? How about a perfect root beer float, or thirst-quenching milkshakes? You know where to go! The ideal place to stop for ice cream on a hot day, but skip the toppings; they can be a little too much money.

**Fun Fact:** the owner of Swan Dancewear ALSO owns Village Treats!
Dreams: Why They Happen

By Ellencie Delgado-Quiles

Have you ever felt as though you were paralyzed while dreaming about a stressful situation such as being chased? Many of us have experienced this sensation while dreaming. We try to run, or dial a phone number, or say something urgent to another person, but we can’t. So why does this happen? Here’s what the scientists say...

AFunny Thing Happened
On the Way to the Military Base

By Leo Walls

Once on a normal Saturday, my family and I drove to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey in my parents’ 3-year-old, dark blue Honda Odyssey. We were going to shop at the Base’s giant grocery store called “The Commissary.” My mom used to be a doctor in the Navy, and my dad retired from the Navy last year, so because they used to be in the military, we are allowed to shop there.

The drive was really long. It took us about 1 and 1/2 hours to get from our house all the way to the gate at the McGuire Air Force Base, where they check ID’s. But when we got to the gate, the ID people said that my dad’s ID was expired. And my mom’s ID? Also expired! So after all that driving, both of their IDs were rejected and we couldn’t get in the gate. My parents were surprised, but they didn’t show it. And I felt like I was going to throw up if I had to be in that minivan for one more minute. I was feeling kind of sick after the car ride. But since everyone else was hungry, we went to a schnitzel place called Sebastian’s Schnitzelhaus. (Schnitzel is a German dish that is chicken dipped in egg, flour, and bread crumbs.)

After the Schnitzelhaus, I definitely felt refreshed. But we still needed groceries — so we got back in the car and ended up going to Wegmans in New Jersey.

5th Grade Girl Scouts Lend a Hand

In late April, 5th grade Merion Girl Scouts worked with the Philadelphia Charity Group to make lunches and hand out toiletries to over 100 homeless people in Kensington. Pictured left to right: Aalen Gallagher, Libby Coyle, Sasha Grollman, Elia Milby, Avery Pelletier, Aurora Soosar, Nora Whalen, Maggie Milby, Wren Purcell, Talia Kasner, and Mrs. Whalen.

A Short Story:
The Kid Who Beat the Odds

By Trinity Bethva

On a cold, winter day, it was “Snowball Fight” day. That meant Mrs. Croger’s class would split into 2 teams, crumble paper up and throw the crumbled paper at the opposite team. There was Group A and Group B. Group A included a girl named Alison whom everybody in Mrs. Croger’s class disliked. Group A thought that Alison could not get even one person out on Group B.

On the first few tries, Alison didn’t hit anyone with “snowballs” on Group B, but no one else in Group A was doing very well either. Still, everybody on Group A started to chant, “Alison can’t throw; Alison can’t get one person out.”

After about 10 minutes, Alison was the first person in Group A to get someone out. From that point on, Alison started to feel the power in herself. She kept throwing at Group B and all on her own, Alison got everybody out on Group B.

After that, Group B begged for Alison to be on their team. Alison won the game all by herself and now Group B admired her. But Alison was not leaving Group A because she thought they would need her help. From that day on, everyone in Mrs. Croger’s class loved Alison.

What is the theme of this story?
A-MUSE-ing Comics

The Egg by Devin Pettit

The Secret Life of Tommy by Devin Pettit

Messy Room by Alessandra Cahill

In Class by Mia DiSipio

Snack by Jack Kelly
**Cupcake Cones**

By Libby Coyle and Maggie Milby

Cupcakes are delicious, but put them in a cone and they are amazing! Moist and sweet, this recipe can be a birthday treat or even a rainy day activity during the summer! (Inspired by a recipe found on www.genuikitchen.com.)

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. flour
- 3/4 cup sugar (if you like very sweet cupcakes, add a little more!)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract (optional)
- 20-25 sugar cones

**DIRECTS**
Preheat oven to 375 degrees; line muffin cups with papers.

Blind bake cupcakes for 18 minutes. Let cool in pan.

Once cupcakes have cooled, ice the cupcakes. (For a more “ice-creamy” look, you can use an ice cream scooper.) Once cupcakes are frosted, remove wrappers. Gently place cupcake inside a cone. (You may customize with toppings however you would like.) Enjoy with a glass of milk!

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**Chocolate Cheesecake**

By Nika Altman

This cheesecake is one of my favorites, and I hope it becomes one of yours too!

**INGREDIENTS**
- 18 crushed Oreo cookies (about 1-1 1/2 cups)
- 2 Tbsp. of melted butter
- 3 packages of softened cream cheese
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1 tsp. of vanilla
- 1 package of melted chocolate
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup of thawed Cool Whip

**DIRECTS**
Heat oven to 325°F. Mix cookie crumbs and butter, then press into the bottom of 9-inch pan. Bake crust up to 10 min. Beat cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla with mixer until well blended. Add chocolate; mix well. Add eggs one at a time, mixing on low speed after each until just blended. Pour over crust. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until center is almost set. Run a knife around the rim of the pan to loosen the cake; cool before freezing. Refrigerate 4 hours. Top with Cool Whip and fruit of your choice.

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**Cake Decorating Tips**

By Alison Badler

Ever want to bake a cake and have no idea how to decorate it? I interviewed a professional baker, Christine Carney, who has been baking cakes for over a decade. She was introduced to baking from her grandmother. While baking is not her full-time job, she has a Facebook page (@CarneyConfections) and over 100 clients that she has baked for. Not only are her cakes delicious—believe me, I’ve tasted them—but they look amazing too! Here are some of her tips and tricks for how to decorate an amazing cake.

1. **The Icing.** Christine says, “My favorite frosting is American buttercream, and to make it I use confectioners sugar, vanilla, heavy cream, and butter.” This icing has been used in many of her cakes and makes them taste and look spectacular.

2. **Fondant vs Buttercream.** Christine says, “Personally I like using buttercream, but it depends on what you want to do. If you are shaping a cake in a fun or unusual shape, it can be helpful to use fondant.” In fact, I remember once she made an elephant cake and shaped it with fondant (pictured above).

3. **What’s the coolest and easiest way to decorate a cake?** Christine says to “use store-bought frosting and buy different candy, and then decorate the cake till your heart’s content.” Personally, I would put a bunch of M&M’s around the border, Hershey’s Kisses inside of that, and then, snick dab in the middle a little?”

4. **What’s the best way to use sprinkles?** She answered, “When using sprinkles you should use buttercream icing as it helps the sprinkles stay in place.” Also, in her opinion, the best way to use sprinkles is to use them to cover the top of your cake—the sides are harder to get them to stick. In my opinion, adding sprinkles also gives your cake a burst of color.

5. **Flavor.** I asked Christine how she makes her cakes taste so good (seriously, you should try one). Her response was, “When baking with cake from a box mix, if the recipe calls for water, use milk instead. This makes the cakes nice and moist.”

I don’t know about you, but all this talk about cake has made me hungry. Maybe this weekend, I will use these tips to make and decorate my own cake!

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**Chocolate Mug Cake**

By Piper Slogoff

Everyone loves a good cupcake or cake to snack on for dessert, but sometimes they can be a hassle to make. Between all of the bowls and ingredients you need, they can be a little time consuming, not to mention all of the dishes you would have to do afterwards! So today, I want to show you how you can make a very easy chocolate mug cake.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 2 tsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- First, mix flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt into a microwave-safe mug. Then, stir in milk, canola oil, water, and vanilla extract. (Chocolate chips are optional.) Finally, put the mug in the microwave and cook on high for about 1 minute and 45 seconds, or until the cake is cooked in the middle (insert a toothpick in the middle to see if it comes out clean of any batter). Let it cool down for about a minute, and then ENJOY!

TIP: If you want it to be extra flavorful, try adding on some toppings! Whipped cream, ice cream, and/or sprinkles can really top it off! You can make it into an easy “s a la mode.”

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**Six Surprising Facts about Dogs**

By Amelia Dennis

Many people call themselves dog lovers but how much do you really know about man’s best friend? Here are a few facts that may surprise you!

1. Dogs can smell thousands of times better than humans. For this reason, they can smell diseases like cancer on a person’s breath.

2. Dog bones found in Belgium suggest that the world’s first dog lived approximately 31,700 years ago.

3. Puppies are about as smart as two-year olds, and they both understand about the same number of words and actions.

4. Not all people who have service dogs have a problem with their five senses. For example, some dogs of service are used to detect blood levels in people with diabetes.

5. The city of Paris loves dogs. In fact, there are more dogs in Paris than there are children!

6. Dogs have a higher body temperature than humans. While our average body temperature is 37 degrees Celsius, a dog’s temperature is 38 degrees Celsius.
How to Make Soufflé Slime

By Willa Melton

Soufflé Slime is an irregular fluffy slime with a puffy “cream top.” It is a satisfying twist on regular slime, combining with hours of play. It is relatively easy to make, and fun, too!

**SUPPLIES**
- White PVA craft glue (like Elmers)
- Contact lens solution
- Baking soda
- Borax dissolved in water**
- Shaving cream
- Small containers to put the slime in*
- A teaspoon and a tablespoon, for measuring
- Food coloring
- Two bowls

**TIPS**
- Be sure your contact lens solution has buffered saline on the ingredients list, or even water, sodium borate, and/or boric acid.
- You can use a “slime solution” mixed from either contact lens solution and baking soda OR a borax solution. Not both!

To make a successful borax solution, put 2 tsp borax in 1 cup warm water.
- Until dissolved, take care not to touch the powdery borax too much.

To make a solution from contact lens solution and baking soda, combine about 1 tsp contact solution with a pinch of baking soda. If the slime is still sticky, add a little more of each. Pour your solution, perhaps into a bottle, and stir until combined.
- Put in 1-2 tsp of your borax “slime solution,” or all of your contact lens-baking soda solution.
- Stir until the mixture clumps together. It should look like slime now, and have some elasticity to it. A good way to test your soufflé slime is by poking it. If it pops out instead of making a hole, you’ve got it! Set aside 2-3 tsp of slime.

To make the soufflé slime prettier, put 2 drops of food coloring in one of the small containers. Then, spoon over a heaping teaspoon of slime into the container, and mix. Spread around the bottom so it covers it. Full small amounts of slime up onto the sides for a wavy effect.

**You can add more white slime over the thin, colored layer. Fill to top of container. Fill each container this way, until you have no slime left.**

4. For the puffy dome, (this makes the ‘soufflé’), take the 2-3 teaspoons of the slime that you saved, and put it in another bowl. Add 3 heaping tablespoons of shaving cream and mix. If it won’t chump, add more of the original slime and mix. To test, touch your finger to it. If it comes out with strings of slime, then it’s ready.

**PUT IT TOGETHER**
At last, you are ready to assemble your soufflé slime.

FIRST, take your filled containers, and scoup some dome slime on top. Experiment with different sizes of domes. Don’t worry about touching it too much though, because overnight, the tops will settle and smooth.

NOW, we wait! Leave your slime overnight, and don’t touch. It should be ready in 24 hours!

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**Merion Muse Staff**

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David Wiesner's Extraordinary Visit to Merion

Continued from page 1

I told Mr. Wiesner that we only have art one day a week at Merion, and I asked him if he could run his own school, how much time would he have kids doing art every week? “I’d love for art not to be thought of as a separate activity. If it were up to me, I’d do it every day in the classroom as well as have a separate art class.” He also believes, however, that art classes aren’t necessary to becoming an artist. “What’s important is to provide kids with space and time to create, and to allow them to be bored. Being bored is great! It means you have to come up with something creative to do.”

What’s your favorite food? “I have kids for who dream of becoming artists when they grow up. “To create a lot of work, to have a space in your house to make art which you don’t have to constantly clean up, so that it’s always there for you at the ready—that’s a great thing,” he says. “You have to just do it, and do it a lot! And that starts to tell you what you really like, what kind of ideas you find interesting, because it takes a while to figure out what direction you want to go in with your art. And it’s all about the hours that you put into it. If you do take an art class, you want to be careful that you don’t get a teacher who tells you ‘This is the way to do things’ because there isn’t a right way—it’s all about how you want to do stuff. It’s about, ‘Let’s make crazy stuff!’ And when you have a new idea, never say, ‘Oh that’s silly.’ See where it takes you and go there.”

Before the interview ended, I had an important burning question for Mr. Wiesner. “In your book, Tuesday, when the frogs fly past a man who is eating a sandwich—is that you eating the sandwich? And what kind of sandwich is it?” I asked him.

“Yes! That’s me!” he said. “And the sandwich would probably be PB & J, because that’s still to this day my favorite sandwich.”

I also had to know what he likes to snack on while he works. “Cheezits!” he said. “They’re my favorite food in all the world.”

Mr. Wiesner’s words will hopefully change Merion and inspire our teachers to include more art and creative work in our classes. Maybe once a year, TDAs could become Totally Dramatic Amphibians, DRQs could be Dreamy Radical Questions, and enrichment would mean extra time making art. Now let’s all eat Cheezits and make some crazy stuff!

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Meet Mrs. Partridge

Continued from page 1

**What do you do as a Vice Principal?**
- I meet with teachers, I work on curriculum, and I help students problem solve. And sometimes I have to deal with discipline when students make poor choices.

**What’s your favorite part about being Vice Principal?**
- Working with teachers on curriculum, and watching kids make great decisions and learn from them.

**Now I have some fun questions. What’s your favorite color?**
- Let’s see, my favorite color changes. These days it’s a particular shade of blue.

**What is your favorite Philadelphia sports team?**
- [Leagl] It’s the Eagles these days. That’s an easy one!

**What do you like to do outside of school?**
- Outside of school, I love to garden. And I have a house down at the beach that I like to spend as much time at as possible.

*Now you know that Mrs. Partridge joined the Merion team years ago, feels the same way you do about tests, and likes going to her beach house—just like me. Perhaps you have something in common with her, too. If you see her on your way to class, say hi! Maybe you’ll learn a little bit more about her.*

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**Answer Key**

**Villanova Basketball Quiz**

1. A; 2. B; 3. C; 4. C; 5. A

**You Can Help**

**Make the News!**

Do you love to write or draw and want to get your stories or comics published? Are you interested in learning how to make a newspaper come to life?

Merion Muse will be back next year for all 4th and 5th graders who want to apply! Watch for news in the fall about an informational meeting to learn more. We welcome parent volunteers too! Email us at merionmuse@gmail.com.

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**Meet the Staff**

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- Sarah Na Na

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**Volunteers**

- Ben Goodman, Kirstin Lindemayer