

VIEWS

Indian Mountain School 2025-2026

Courage to
Climb Higher



IMS Head of School Lisa H. Sun enjoying a meal with students in our new Dining Commons, which opened in September 2025.



VIEWS

2025-2026

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ON THE COVER:

Fourth grade students tackling the climbing wall at Camp Sloane YMCA, one of our partners in Outdoor Adventure & Education programming.



Indian Mountain School



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View from Becket House

Message from Head of School, Lisa H. Sun



Before I was hired as Head of School at Indian Mountain School, I had the chance to read an issue of *Views*. I remember feeling immediately drawn into the life of this community. There were stories filled with joy and curiosity, reflections about trips up the Mountain and beyond, celebrations of student accomplishments, and meaningful traditions.

Even then, I could sense the love people have for this school. I could feel the pride, the care, and the deep sense of belonging that came through in those pages. And I wondered, as I read: *could it really feel this way in daily life?*

After my first year, I can say with a full heart that it does.

The spirit I first encountered in *Views* is not just something captured in a magazine. It is real, and it lives in the everyday moments of this school.

I have felt it on the Lower Campus, where childhood is honored and protected. This spring, four tiny chicks—Chick Pop, Mustache, Nugget, and Squeak—became part of the learning, as our Pre-K students measured, counted, observed, and cared for them with delight. I saw that same joy in our fourth graders as they performed *The Fish Who Can't Wish* and created an original film inspired by the year's theme, "Lights, Camera, Action!" In each moment, they were practicing creativity, teamwork, courage, and confidence.

As students move to the Upper Campus, the learning becomes more independent, but the same spirit remains. Fifth graders step into new responsibilities, while ninth graders begin to understand their influence as the oldest students in the school. I saw that leadership in the way they spoke with younger students about technology and social media, and in their Poquonook Solutions Projects, where they looked at global issues through a local lens. One group even organized a Fun Run to raise awareness around pedestrian safety on Route 41. That is Life Through Service in action: noticing a need, working together, and believing you can help make a community better.

The arts and athletics have also revealed so much about the heart of IMS. In performances, artwork, music, creative projects, games, and practices, I have watched students find their voices, support one another, take risks, and learn from both success and disappointment. Whether creating something new or competing as a team, they are learning courage, patience, resilience, and the joy of being part of something larger than themselves.

And then there are the traditions that make this place feel like IMS: Gray and Maroon Sorting Day, morning assemblies, shared meals, Winter Carnival, LEAP Day, and, of course, Mountain Day. My first Mountain Day was unforgettable: the warm breeze, the laughter, the pillow jousts, the faculty-versus-student manhunt, and the ninth graders sliding down the hill near Becket House with total joy. It captured something I now know to be true about IMS: we take learning seriously, and we still believe in letting kids be kids.

What has inspired me most this year is the extraordinary dedication of our faculty and staff. They know our students deeply: how they learn, where they shine, what they need, and who they are becoming. They are the lifeblood of IMS and the reason our students feel seen, known, and loved.

From my earliest days on campus, the students made space for me in a way that felt genuine and disarming. I have worked in schools for a long time, but I have not often met middle school students who take the time to ask an adult, "How are you settling in?" and truly mean it. That openness and care says so much about who they are and about the community that has helped shape them.

This issue of *Views* carries forward the same spirit I first encountered before I joined this community. As you read it, I hope you will see what I have seen throughout this first year: the joy, care, and meaningful relationships that make IMS such a special place.

This first year has deepened my love for IMS and strengthened my belief in all that is possible here. I look ahead with gratitude and great excitement as we continue to climb higher together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa H. Sun".



Alumni Connections

“Our Mountain is Calling You” isn’t just a catchy tagline on our website; it’s a reminder that no matter where you are in life’s journey, our mountain will always be here, calling you back to the memories and people who have shaped you.

Braving a winter storm, over forty IMS alumni from the classes of ’22 through ’25 returned to the Mountain this February for our newly founded Young Alumni Sunday Supper. The night kicked off with an alumni conversation and Q&A led by Head of School Lisa H. Sun for current boarding students. The panelists reflected on their years at IMS, their favorite memories, secondary school, and everything in between.

After the Q&A, everyone shared a delicious dinner in our Dining Commons, a beautiful new community space many of our returning alumni had never seen before. The conversations ranged from favorite campus meals and classic IMS traditions to new campus spaces and, of course, navigating homework. It was a wonderful way for current students to connect with alumni in a casual setting.

At the end of the evening, alumni gathered in the HarvEst Hub for ice cream sundaes, photo booth fun, and a lot of reminiscing. Ms. Sun said, “Watching you reconnect and share your excitement with one another underscores the special bond you all carry as part of the IMS community. It is inspiring to see how these friendships endure long after you leave the Mountain.”

We hope to see you at one of next year’s alumni events!
See page 35 for more details.



Alumni Guest Speaker Series

Another invitation back to the Mountain this school year was our Alumni Guest Speaker Series. Several alums joined our Upper Campus community throughout the year for Q&A sessions, reflecting on their time at IMS and providing advice for current students. These conversations proved helpful for many of our students looking at secondary school and beyond.

“IMS had a really profound impact on me. I try to carry the values that it has given me through each stage in my life.”

Lylli Stern ’23,
headed to Williams College in the fall

Roundtable with Ahmad Cantrell

With Mr. Cantrell: Lyanne '26, Max U. '29, Roberta '26, Ruby '29, Cole '29, and Niall '26



When Ahmad Cantrell first arrived on the Mountain as our Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, he met a group of students on his tour through campus. In the last week of the school year, he checked in with those same students.

Mr. Cantrell: The questions you all asked me during my first visit to IMS played a really important part in my decision to join the community. Now that I'm a year in, I have some questions for you. If you had to describe the school culture along the lines of the equity, inclusion, and belonging work that we've done this year, what word would you use?

Niall: I'd say *extensive*. You've covered a lot of different cultures this year and made a big effort to show us how other cultures actually live, rather than just showing us a slideshow.

Cole: *Inclusive*. We have a lot of different affinity groups like the Black Affinity Group and the AAPI Group. People who may not have felt included in a different school are included here.



Throughout the year, Mr. Cantrell spent time on both campuses engaging in conversations about what it means to be part of an inclusive community. He organized all-school events and professional development for faculty, helping foster cultural competency and empathy.

Max M: There's a lot of *ambition*. You've made EIB a lot more visible, like, in the morning meetings and with special guests.

Mr. Cantrell: Do you feel like the EIB office has been accessible and welcoming this year?

Max U: Yes, the door to your office is always open!

Niall: I feel very comfortable coming to your office to ask you questions.

Ruby: Same! Your office is a safe space where I never feel like I'm in trouble.

Mr. Cantrell: Have I met your expectations this school year or surprised you in any way?

Roberta: The first time we talked, you looked so serious! It was a huge change to see how you opened up to us and brought so many amazing qualities to this community.

Niall: You made EIB more of an experience and less of a talk or lecture. I didn't expect that.

Lyanne: Being part of the black community group in previous school years, I kind of felt like I belonged just because I was in a group full of people like me. But this year, we were more connected through activities, and you tried to really know us. It felt different.

In reflection of this conversation and his first year at IMS, Mr. Cantrell had this to say:

"It was surprising how fast I connected to the kids. In my previous experience working with high schoolers, students can be very focused on presenting their 'best self,' which can make it harder to truly get to know them. At IMS, they're younger and you might catch them when things aren't going great, so you can build a relationship from raw, real moments. At this



Mr. Cantrell launched our Courage to Climb Higher Speaker Series, inviting former NFL champion Malcolm Mitchell to campus. Read more on page 16.

age, we can really help them see past their own perspectives before those rigid social dynamics set in.

"It was an exciting challenge to translate my work to much younger students this school year. On the Upper Campus, students have the maturity to put empathy and kindness into practice. They can understand different perspectives. On the Lower Campus, with Pre-K through fourth graders, it's all driven by pure, beautiful curiosity. They will ask things bluntly: 'Why is your skin black?' or 'Why is her hair blonde?' At that age, it's about building a foundation. We show students that yes, we are all different, but we treat each other well.

"Making this work interactive and fun for the kids has been incredible. This first year was a 10 out of 10, for sure."



Niall '26 and Max M. '26

Learning in a Microcosm



The Montserrat Sustainability Program

Microcosm

noun | MY-kroh-koz-uhm

A community, place, or situation that encapsulates the characteristic qualities or features of something much larger.

On July 18, 1995, the once dormant Soufrière Hills volcano awakened on the island of Montserrat. The series of eruptions that followed destroyed Montserrat's capital city, Plymouth, and caused two-thirds of the island's population to flee. Thirty years later, a group of IMS students and faculty set foot in Plymouth, entering a recently opened exclusion zone. They were the first international group allowed access to this area in nearly thirty years.

The weight of the moment was not lost on the students as they stared upon the ruins of the capital city. Their tour guide grew up in Plymouth. As he pointed to the area where they stood, he recalled camping there under the stars as a child with his brother before the eruptions clouded the skies. "Watching this emotional moment, in the very place it happened, clearly impacted our students," said Ms. Weyerhaeuser, one of the IMS faculty program members.

Prior to this, the students had been connecting with locals from across the island as part of the IMS Montserrat

Sustainability Program — a 10-day, experiential learning trip for ninth grade students. They learned about the emotional complexities surrounding the mass exodus and the many challenges of rebuilding the economy, culture, and population. Students worked with local conservationists to help build a coral nursery, which will be used in restoring the damaged coral reefs surrounding the island.

Everyone has the power to make a difference. What we do in our own communities can have a far-reaching impact.

The impact that small groups of people can have in their own communities when they work toward positive change is what the Montserrat Sustainability Program is all about. "There is so much hyper-global messaging about everything going wrong in the world right now that it is easy to feel overwhelmed and lose hope," Ms. Weyerhaeuser said. "That's why exposing students at this age to a microcosm like Montserrat and the amazing work that is being done — with success — is so important."

Students on this trip came back to campus newly inspired for their capstone work: the Poquonook Solutions Project, where they research and devise sustainable solutions to support their local community.

Falcons Find Home at IMS



In partnership with the Sharon Audubon Center, our fifth-grade science classes installed an American Kestrel bird box at the foot of our mountain.

The tiny but mighty American Kestrel is a falcon species of special concern in Connecticut, with loss of habitat being the main cause of its decline. They prefer to nest in open fields, which are rapidly decreasing due to human development of rural areas. Our fifth graders, under the guidance of their science teacher, Sarah Hyland, spent this school year studying ecosystems and the importance of environmental conservation. The construction of this box was a hands-on learning opportunity for our students to make an immediate ecological impact.

Full of hope, our fifth graders closely monitored the box this spring, waiting for a pair of kestrels to find it and turn it into their home. After weeks of observation, students spotted a kestrel flying over campus. They raced down to the foot of the Mountain to check the box. Under the guidance of Sharon Audubon Center volunteers, the group opened the box and was thrilled to find not one, not two, but FIVE eggs clustered together in the nest!

Moments after students counted the eggs, a kestrel swooped over their heads, giving a protective cry. Our fifth graders were gleeful and proud, knowing that the goal they had set for themselves had been accomplished. The kestrels had found their new home amongst our Falcons.

Early this summer, the Audubon Center team returned and confirmed that four of the eggs hatched. We are grateful for the partnership with Sharon Audubon Center, and we hope to see our new kestrels flying over campus next school year.



Top Left: Queso the American Kestrel is an ambassador bird of Christine's Critters, a non-profit dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of birds of prey. Queso visited IMS this spring.



Lower Campus Mentors

Once a week, a group of Upper Campus students ventures down to the Lower Campus to engage, inspire, and, more often than not, lose a game of basketball to our youngest learners. Sometimes, they'll read books, share cultural traditions, or start a spontaneous dance party. These visits are far more than just a break in the school day. They are meaningful touchpoints that allow both Upper and Lower Campus students to pause, connect, and fully embrace the joys of childhood together. For our older students, it's a way to give back to the community and grow leadership skills. Meanwhile, our younger students learn social skills, and have a fellow student to look up to, both figuratively and literally.

Campus Collaborations



Leading "Mountain Time"

It's not easy to hold a Pre-K student's attention, but our fifth graders were up for the challenge this spring. During their Outdoor Adventure and Education overnight trip on our mountain, our fifth graders were joined by our Pre-K class who came to the Mountain for their weekly "Mountain Time," where they explore the outdoors under the guidance of our experienced faculty. This time, however, the fifth graders took charge, leading a scavenger hunt for our youngest learners. This exercise allowed our youngest students on the Upper Campus to step into the leadership roles they had been preparing for all school year long. Watching them patiently guide their Pre-K partners proved that you're never too young to be someone's role model.

The Scop

This year, the editors of *The Scop*, our Upper Campus student-run newspaper, invited Lower Campus students to submit their own work to be published for the entire IMS community to read. Our Pre-K through fourth grade students enthusiastically answered the call, filling the brand-new “Lower School News” section with their own brilliant content. The pages came alive with original poetry, adorable photos of newly hatched chicks, and a delightfully insightful second-grade advice column. By sharing the spotlight, the editors of *The Scop* gave our young writers a major platform and an important reminder that their voices matter to the entire IMS community.

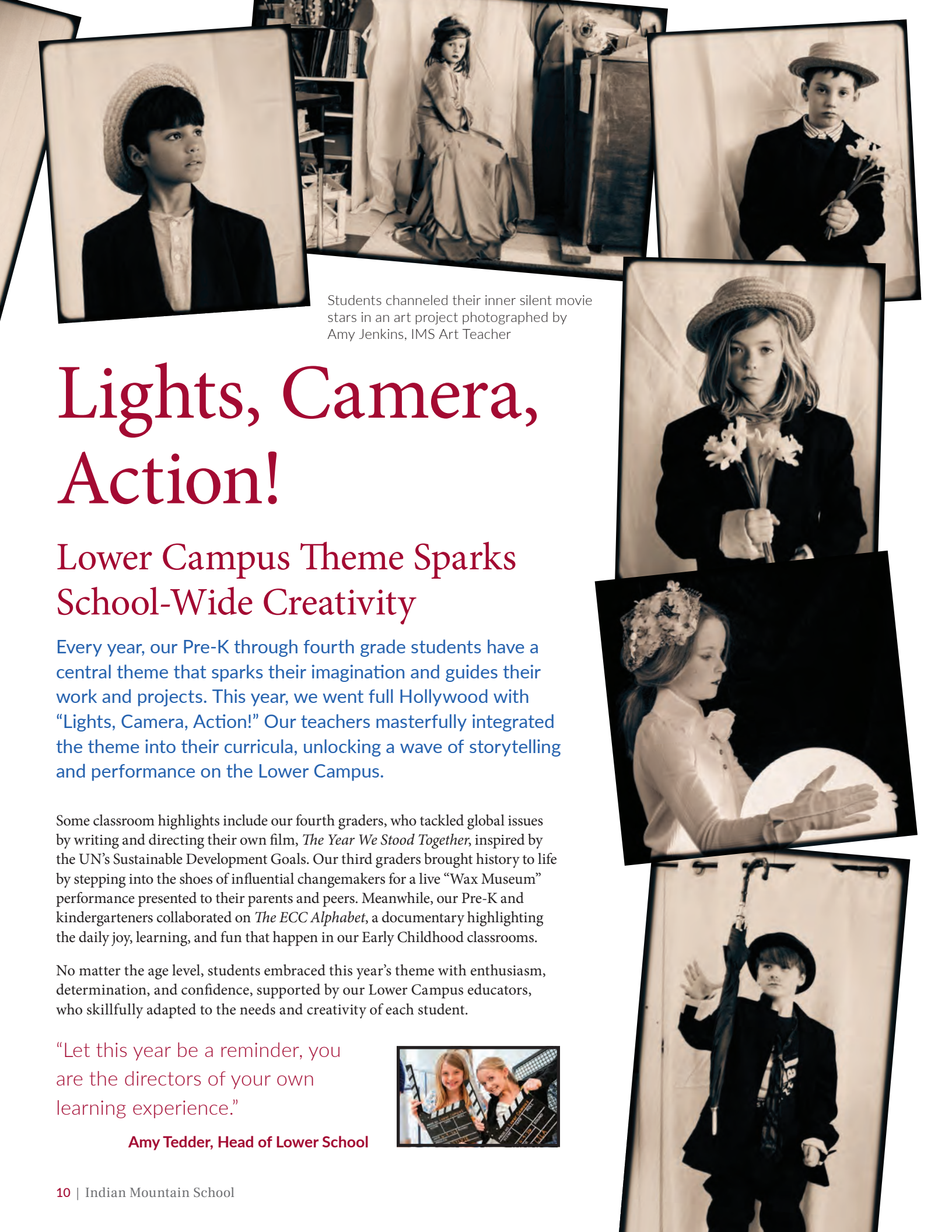


What does it take to become someone's hero? It doesn't require a cape or superpower, just time, presence, and compassion. At IMS, students step up to the challenge as role models for each other.

Hotchkiss Guest Speaker Series

Extending beyond our mountain, an opportunity arose this spring for IMS fourth graders to connect with students from The Hotchkiss School in conjunction with their social studies curriculum. Four Hotchkiss students visited IMS this term, presenting on Ukraine, Somalia, Japan, and New Orleans. Each guest speaker shared vibrant, personal glimpses into their family's food, holidays, and cultural traditions. Our fourth graders rose to the occasion. They wowed our guests by making thoughtful connections to the global topics they'd been studying all year. We look forward to expanding this series with Hotchkiss next year, ensuring our Lower Campus students continue to have inspiring role models both within and beyond the walls of IMS.





Students channeled their inner silent movie stars in an art project photographed by Amy Jenkins, IMS Art Teacher

Lights, Camera, Action!

Lower Campus Theme Sparks School-Wide Creativity

Every year, our Pre-K through fourth grade students have a central theme that sparks their imagination and guides their work and projects. This year, we went full Hollywood with “Lights, Camera, Action!” Our teachers masterfully integrated the theme into their curricula, unlocking a wave of storytelling and performance on the Lower Campus.

Some classroom highlights include our fourth graders, who tackled global issues by writing and directing their own film, *The Year We Stood Together*, inspired by the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Our third graders brought history to life by stepping into the shoes of influential changemakers for a live “Wax Museum” performance presented to their parents and peers. Meanwhile, our Pre-K and kindergarteners collaborated on *The ECC Alphabet*, a documentary highlighting the daily joy, learning, and fun that happen in our Early Childhood classrooms.

No matter the age level, students embraced this year’s theme with enthusiasm, determination, and confidence, supported by our Lower Campus educators, who skillfully adapted to the needs and creativity of each student.

“Let this year be a reminder, you are the directors of your own learning experience.”

Amy Tedder, Head of Lower School





Sharon Playhouse Partnership

Over the years, IMS has fostered a vibrant partnership with the Sharon Playhouse, a premier not-for-profit theater and beloved New England cultural destination. Members of their exceptional teaching staff bring the magic of theater directly to our students. They lead classes and programs for students in Pre-K through fourth grade, while offering specialized electives for our older students in fifth through ninth grade.

The signature program of our partnership is “Putting on a Show,” now in its fourth year. This opportunity is made possible by the generous support of an anonymous donor who passionately champions the arts. Students in second through fourth grade audition for the program and then rehearse for four months under the direction of Sarah Cuoco. The experience culminates in performances for family and friends on the Sharon Playhouse stage.

“When we start this process in January, there may be three or four kids out of the whole group who think they can sing a song on their own. Four months later, all eighteen cast members have a solo and feel confident singing in front of an audience. That’s the power of a performing arts program.”

Michael Baldwin, Sharon Playhouse’s Education and Community Director

This year’s production of *Shrek, Kids!* was a masterclass in the transformative power of theater. On the surface, it is a hilarious fairy-tale adventure. But at its heart, the musical explores resonant themes of finding acceptance, celebrating differences, and building self-confidence. Watching our students step into the spotlight, find their voices, and cheer each other on was a reminder of what happens when we give children the space to shine.



IMS Theater

Each school year, students may sign up to perform in the fall school play and the spring musical. This year, under the direction of Danny Tieger, Kelly Tieger, and Dana Domenick, audiences were able to experience two spectacular and imaginative productions.

By Danny Tieger, Director of Performing Arts

Macbeth

Inspired by a field trip to Lenox, Massachusetts, to see Shakespeare & Company's production of *Macbeth*, a group of our students began meeting to edit and adapt the script for an IMS audience. They created the framing device of kids playing at recess. Another group of students took that script and completed the work. They built sets, rehearsed, and crafted extraordinary moments, adding fresh brilliance to the telling of the story. Students alternated between Shakespeare's words and typical schoolyard conversation, adding humor and insight. The set, made entirely of cardboard boxes, kept us grounded in the imagination of middle school students, while still staying true to the intent of expressing the best and worst of what it means to be human.



3 Sisters Pizza

Theater is a uniquely collaborative art. This seed of this musical began as a very silly idea. I thought of the name and suddenly imagined this antique play by Chekhov, adapted and sent through a "Disney channel-ification," and it made me laugh. I mentioned it to Ms. Tieger and Ms. Domenick and their immediate suggestions for potential ridiculousness were what made it seem possible. Then I sat down with Donald Sosin and Craig Pecchia. Both saw the opportunity in the challenge. The score, arranged and conducted for a pit of student musicians, is extraordinary, as is the set.

Early drafts were read aloud by the seventh grade public speaking classes, who gave notes and *very* honest feedback. Then, in seven weeks, this show was passed through the imaginations of fifty theater company students and even a kindergarten class of pizza art creators. In the final moments, the community of collaborators grew even larger, thanks to the Stephanopoulos family of Four Brothers Pizza, who supplied pizzas for the audience. How perfect that Four Brothers would support these *Three Sisters*?



Setting the Scene

By Craig Pecchia, Director of Theater Productions

Every set begins the same way: a blank stage, a script, and a room full of students eager to create something together. Somewhere between the first conversations and opening night, an environment is created that actors can inhabit and audiences can step into. That transformation is what makes set building so exciting. More than the finished product, it's the process of creating something together that matters most.

Once a play is selected, the director and set designer develop an initial concept and invite anyone interested to join the process. Now we have a group of students who might never otherwise find themselves working alongside each other. The first meetings are usually organized chaos. Ideas are thrown onto paper, crossed out, reworked, and expanded as everyone builds on one another's thinking. Somewhere in that mess, the foundation of the set begins to take shape.

At some point, students inevitably say, "We can't do that," or, "That's impossible." Those are usually the most exciting

moments, pushing everyone to think differently and solve problems. Once the idea is set, we build. More students join in because it looks like fun — and it is. They work with materials and tools they might not otherwise have the chance to use, learning how to turn an idea into something real. Over the years, that has led to some incredible sets, from a two-story ship in *Anything Goes* and flying actors in *Peter Pan* to rain pouring across the stage in *Singin' in the Rain*.

This year's productions, *Macbeth* and *3 Sisters Pizza*, were perfect examples of the process. Although the two sets could not have been more different, both started with students gathered around a table imagining possibilities. *Macbeth* grew from a bold cardboard-and-tape concept that challenged students to push simple materials to their limits. *3 Sisters Pizza* relied on carefully crafted details to create a believable and inviting environment. One was playful and imaginative, the other familiar and grounded, yet both were thoughtful and beautifully constructed works of art.



Students creating the stage backdrop for this year's By Kids For Kids benefit concert

What audiences see on opening night is the finished product, but the most meaningful part happens long before the curtain opens. Students learn to collaborate, adapt, and trust their ideas while working alongside actors, musicians, costume and lighting designers, stage managers, and directors. The sets may only exist for a few performances, but the experience lasts much longer. There is a special kind of pride that comes from standing back, looking at something you helped build, and knowing that, for a brief moment, an entire community stepped inside a world you helped create.

Finding Our Way Back to the Story

A Community Read-Along of *The Odyssey*

By Brian Hess, English Department Chair

This fall, as the ninth-grade English students were reading Homer's *The Odyssey* (translated by Emily Wilson), I invited IMS parents to join in the reading. The premise was simple: one Book, or Homeric chapter, each day, Monday through Friday, accompanied by a short morning reflection. But what unfolded over the weeks that followed was something quieter and more meaningful than I had anticipated.

Each weekday, I sent out a brief note: sometimes a bit of context, a question, a piece of art inspired by the epic, or sometimes just a moment in the text worth lingering on. The goal was not to "cover" the story, but to slow down inside it: to notice patterns, contradictions, and the small human details that often get lost in a story we tend to remember only in broad strokes.

What made the experience distinctive was not the structure, but the company. Though we were scattered across towns and time zones, professions, and different relationships to the school, we were moving through the same story at roughly the same pace. There was something grounding in that shared rhythm. In a given week, we might all be sitting with Odysseus on the shores of Ogygia, or tracing the tenuous reunion between father and son, or watching Penelope test the boundaries of recognition and trust.

Many participants were returning to *The Odyssey* for the first time since their own school days. Others were encountering it anew. But in either case, the distance from the classroom seemed to open up a different kind of reading, an experience that was perhaps less hurried, more reflective, and, maybe, more personal. Without the usual structures of classroom discussion or assessment, the act of reading became its own form of connection: to the text, certainly, but also to one another.

I was struck, throughout, by how naturally the boundaries of the school extended outward. What we often think of as a classroom experience — in English, that means close reading, sustained attention, and shared inquiry — proved just as vital, and perhaps even more resonant, beyond it. The conversations were almost entirely unspoken, but no less real for that: a sense that others were carrying the story with them into their days.

In the end, the read-along did not build toward a single insight, conclusion, or analytical essay. Instead, it offered something closer to what *The Odyssey* itself suggests: that meaning emerges over time, through repetition, through peril, return, and the act of paying attention. In a way, it was itself a small journey, one that reminded me how reading, even in its quietest form, can still be a shared endeavor.



Adding to the ninth grade experience of *The Odyssey*, the creative team behind the new chamber musical, *Penelope*, visited IMS to perform songs from the award-winning show. Following the performance, students participated in a Q&A with the show's lead, Grace McLean, and playwright, Alex Bechtel. The musical emphasized to students that there are many different ways to tell a single story.

AI in the Classroom

IMS piloted a new AI Course this year entitled “IDEA,” which stands for Inquiry, Data, Ethics, and Agency. Using these four pillars, students are challenged to study the evolving relationship between human intelligence and artificial intelligence. Jason Barillaro, the instructor of this course, shared his perspective on the challenges and benefits of teaching a subject that is ever-evolving.



I have taught Latin continuously for three decades and, over the years, arrived sideways at computer science through a long affection for web design, small coding projects, and Arduino boards. Those subjects I teach from mastery. Artificial intelligence I taught via summer reading, experimenting and testing, staying a step ahead some days and, on the best days, learning alongside the students.

That was the risk. Latin is a language whose evolution ended centuries ago. I can teach it from solid ground. AI moves under your feet. A headline or a new model release can upend the plan and upset the syllabus. For an experienced teacher, there is a humility in feeling like a beginner again.

In this project-based class, students studied real technical content: how large language models and machine learning actually work. They built classifiers, designed systems that run on live data, and assembled workflows that inserted AI into solutions for genuine problems. At every step, students reflected, in writing and in discussion. The goal was never simply to teach students to use this technology. It was to teach them to partner

with it, with a commitment to transparency, an ear tuned to bias, and a shield held over their own identity and voice.

In the middle of all this were our guests: a venture partner, an early adopter from industry, a visiting professor, and a recent graduate working in this new field. We hosted several presentations and forums that opened the minds of our students to new possibilities with an eye to their own futures. They listened intently, asked deep questions, and were hungry for inspiration.

“For an experienced teacher, there is a humility in feeling like a beginner again.”

This all culminated in their final projects, which required them to develop and state their personal “AI manifesto.” Their presentations were filled with statements that reflected their relationship with AI, their respect for its capabilities, and equal measures of excitement and trepidation for the future.

I went looking, all year, for the lesson that would survive the speed of all this, a practical thing a teacher could hold onto while the ground shifted. Here it is, and it is almost reassuringly old-fashioned: The fundamentals are still fundamental. You cannot partner with a powerful intelligence unless you can reason clearly, think creatively, communicate fluently, identify a real problem, and critically question assumptions. Those are the skills we have always taught. They have not been replaced. I offer instead that they have been made more valuable.

Jason Barillaro teaches Latin, AP Computer Science Principles, IDEA, and is the Director of Academic Technology





Courage to Climb Higher

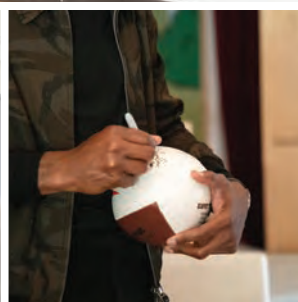
Super Bowl Champion Malcolm Mitchell Has A Story To Tell

Our Courage to Climb Higher Speaker Series explores IMS's core values of Honesty, Compassion, and Respect through the lived experience of individuals who have overcome great obstacles in life. In April, we welcomed Super Bowl LI Champion, children's book author, and literacy advocate Malcolm Mitchell to campus.

As students shot baskets, played volleyball, and kicked soccer balls around the Morehead Athletic Center, Malcolm Mitchell entered and quietly stood on the sidelines for a while. He watched the kids play and remarked on the students' enthusiasm, cooperation, and respect for one another.

Once the students caught sight of the Super Bowl champion, they gathered on the bleachers and peppered him with questions about his football career, what it was like getting drafted, what it was like playing with Tom Brady, and how he managed to persevere through injuries. He answered all their questions, shared some great insider moments, then said, "Tomorrow, I'll tell you more, but I'll leave you with this: football was the easy part. Of course, I'm extremely proud of that. But real success? That came from reading."

The next day, Mr. Mitchell visited both campuses and shared his story. Growing up poor and hungry in a small town in Georgia, he believed that his natural football skills were the only pathway for him to succeed and make his mom proud. He earned a football scholarship to the University of Georgia. "But football came naturally. What no one knew was that I could barely read. And in order to succeed in life, that was the



Top: During his visit, Mr. Mitchell answered questions from a panel of students in Grades 7, 8, and 9. Bottom Left: Malcolm Mitchell is the author of several books: *The Magician's Hat*, *My Very Favorite Book in the Whole Wide World*, and *My Super Duper Me*.



Mr. Mitchell with Head of School Lisa H. Sun and Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Ahmad Cantrell, during a parent reception

most important skill to have. Even for athletes, it's the smartest ones that really go far."

Embarrassed but determined, Mr. Mitchell began frequenting bookstores and libraries. "I started with picture books. I read all of Dr. Seuss. I loved Shel Silverstein. Eventually, I moved on to chapter books. I pushed myself to read everything I could get my hands on." What he soon realized was how reading

could open up so many worlds, both figuratively and literally. He joined a book club to explore different genres and discuss books with others. He went on to publish his first book, *The Magician's Hat*, before his senior year.

Then, in 2016, his hard work paid off. That year, he joined the New England Patriots as a wide receiver and founded the "Share the Magic Foundation," an organization dedicated to improving reading interest, enhancing reading skills, and providing free access to books for students of all ages.

"When I was a kid, I was scared of books,"

Mr. Mitchell said to our youngest learners on the Lower Campus, "but now I know that reading is succeeding."

Malcolm Mitchell's story is about the power of reading. It's also about how we lead our lives, truly living a life through service. "I try to tell kids the truth," he says, "that life is not all sunshine and rainbows. It takes perseverance and hard work. And if we want to get the most out of our lives, one of the best ways to do that is to help other people get the most out of their lives. That's what I'm trying to do; I'm sharing my story to help others write theirs."

Year One with Lisa H. Sun

With the Mountain in full fall colors as a backdrop, the IMS community celebrated Ms. Sun with an Installation Ceremony on Thursday, October 16, 2025. “This moment fills me with immense gratitude,” Lisa said to the crowd. “For the privilege of being part of this remarkable community, and for the trust you’ve placed in me to help lead IMS into its next chapter.”

We asked Lisa to reflect on her year.

What are three words you would use to describe your first year?

Joyful, formative, and bucolic. Joyful, because our students bring so much life to this community, even on the busiest days. Formative, because this year has been about listening, learning, and beginning to understand the history, culture, and rhythms of IMS. And bucolic, because living and working on the Mountain has given me a real sense of peace, gratitude, and perspective.

What were your goals for this year?

My priorities this year were rooted in learning and building trust. I wanted to get to know the people who make this community so special. I have been grateful for the openness and generosity of our students, families, faculty, and staff, and for the many ways they have helped me feel connected to this place.



Scooping ice cream for Lower Campus students on “LEAP” Day

**Watch Lisa’s
“Meet a Falcon”**





Greeting new students on orientation day

I also wanted to support our faculty and staff in the important work they do every day. That has meant taking time to understand their experiences, encouraging their growth and development, and thinking carefully about how we can help them continue to do their best work on behalf of our students.

At the same time, I began looking ahead to IMS's next strategic chapter. That work begins with knowing the school well and honoring all that is already strong, while also creating space to imagine what is possible.

What were some of the challenges you faced?

One of my biggest challenges was simply learning everyone's name. There are so many wonderful students and adults at IMS, and I wanted to know people not just by name, but by who they are and what matters to them. That takes time, and one year never feels like enough. Still, every conversation, shared meal, classroom visit, and walk across campus helped me feel more connected to this community.

What are you most proud of this year?

I am most proud of our students and the growth they have shown this year. Watching them take on new challenges and become more sure of themselves has been incredibly rewarding.

On a more personal note, I am also proud that I can now drive to many places without using GPS. In rural Connecticut, that feels like a real accomplishment!

When Lisa was officially installed as our Head of School, student council leaders shared advice for her they had solicited from other students. Advice ranged from "More movie nights," to "Let us bring pets to advisory!" One more serious piece of advice felt poignantly universal: "When you are in the hard moments, you should take a deep breath, and try to be present. You matter more than you know."

What is something about IMS that you love?

IMS is a school where people *truly care* for one another.

How does IMS's culture inform your leadership?

The care people show one another, and the school's commitment to Life Through Service, are constant reminders that leadership is not only about making decisions or setting direction. It is also about listening well, caring for people, and creating the conditions for students and adults to do their best work.

Our values of honesty, compassion, and respect give that leadership a clear foundation. They remind me to be transparent, to lead with empathy, and to treat every person with dignity, especially in moments that are difficult or complex.

For me, leading at IMS means trying to live those values every day, in both the important decisions and the small interactions that shape a community. It means being thoughtful, clear, and human as we care for this school and help it continue to grow.

What message do you have for IMS alums?

I would love to meet you, hear your stories, and learn about your IMS experience. While many things have changed over the years, the true spirit of IMS remains. The Mountain is calling you. Come back and visit us.

What does "Courage to Climb Higher" mean to you?

"Courage to Climb Higher" means being willing to stretch ourselves beyond what is comfortable. It means having the bravery to try hard things, to keep growing, and to believe that we are capable of more than we may first imagine. At IMS, it also means doing that within a community that encourages us, supports us, and helps us find the confidence to keep going.



Lisa and Director of Residential Life Mallory Toolan with their advisees

"The point isn't figuring out exactly who you are.
It's letting other people, places, and moments
leave their mark — while you leave yours."

Sofia Catalan '26

photo by Sarah Hyland



Congratulations, Class of 2026!

"As the first graduating class in my first year at IMS you will always hold a special place in my heart. You have left a lasting impression on IMS. We are proud of you, we believe in you, and we cannot wait to see all the ways you will continue to grow."

Lisa H. Sun

**Take a look at a video
from Commencement:**



Our students will be matriculating to the following schools in the fall:

The American School
Foundation
Avon Old Farms
Berkshire School
Blair Academy
Canterbury School
Choate Rosemary Hall
Darrow School
Don Bosco Preparatory

Emma Willard School
The Frederick Gunn School
Groton School
The Hotchkiss School
Kent School
Kimball Union Academy
LaGuardia High School
Loomis Chaffee
The Masters School

Mercersburg Academy
Millbrook School
Miss Porter's School
New Hampton School
Northwood School
The Peddie School
Phillips Academy Andover
Phillips Exeter Academy
Proctor Academy

Salisbury School
St. Andrew's School
St. Paul's School
Suffield Academy
The Taft School
Westover School
Westtown School
The Williston
Northampton School



Why Ninth Grade?

A junior day and boarding school holds a unique space in the educational landscape. Ninth grade as the senior year is one of its many defining factors.

By Lisa Schmitt, Director of Secondary School Advising

I am in the lucky position to have walked the graduation gauntlet at more than thirty ceremonies throughout my career. Every June, I witness tears of joy and celebratory cheers — excited about our collective next steps even while we share a bittersweet farewell. Our ninth graders feel those emotions deeply. It is clear that something exceptional is happening at IMS.

We send graduates of our Ninth Grade Program into secondary school with a strong sense of purpose, confidence, and self-awareness. These young adults are equipped with the skills to navigate a changing world. I believe strongly that this is a team effort: friendships are key and community is at the core. So what makes this community so special?

While the Ninth Grade Program is built for and focused on ninth grade students, the power of this program benefits all students in the school. Our motto is *life through service*, and leadership is an important facet of service at IMS. Lower Campus children jump for joy when they see their Upper Campus mentors arrive in the classroom. Fifth- and sixth-grade students learn important interpersonal communication skills and conflict resolution with the guiding expertise of a



After IMS

Throughout the year, parents and students are able to learn about the transition from IMS to secondary school through panel discussions and presentations with IMS alumni and secondary school admissions experts. In October, Ms. Schmitt hosted a discussion and Q&A with Erby Mitchell, Assistant Head of School and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid at The Hotchkiss School, and Jeff Beaton, Chief Enrollment Manager of the Admissions Office at Choate Rosemary Hall.

trained Peer Mediator. Sixth- and seventh-grade dormmates look up to and rely on their Prefects. All the while, eighth grade students are taking notes... very soon, they too will be the oldest students and leaders of the student body.

Ninth grade at IMS is truly a capstone year. It is a combination of academic exploration and intellectual growth, a time to hone interests and examine goals for a student's next steps at secondary school. When students are happy and healthy, they are curious and engaged. Teachers provide the scaffolding and support to allow ninth graders to gain confidence and self-assurance.

Our highest level academics, such as Third Level Languages, AP Precalculus, and AP Computer Science Principles, provide the opportunity for advanced students to enjoy the challenge of a college-level course while maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and preserving the joys of childhood, and enjoying the plain fun that junior boarding schools provide.

When I visit an IMS alum at schools such as Hotchkiss, Choate, Loomis, and Andover, I am greeted by a student who has been able to hit the ground running. A student who has not only experienced the rigors of boarding school, but also a student who knows how important our relationships are. Community is at the core of our success and IMS students are happily and willingly serving their schools and colleges as leaders and changemakers.

The Space Between

Growth Through Outdoor Adventure & Education

Every year, our ninth graders embark on two major trips: one in September, and one in June. The space between those bookend experiences is filled with growth and preparation for their next life adventure.

The first trip: a three-day hiking trip in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, sets the stage for their capstone year of learning, leadership, and community at IMS.

By Alex Weyerhaeuser, Upper Campus Science and English Teacher

On September 10, IMS ninth graders embarked on their three day backpacking trip in New Hampshire's White Mountains. For many, this was their first time hiking on challenging, rocky trails with bulky backpacks. Settling into their own paces, smaller groups emerged as the students trekked through the spruces, firs, and pines. There was chatter, laughter, and guessing games to pass the time, echoed by the chickadee songs in the afternoon sunlight. It was hard not to reflect that the timing of this trip was perfect.

At the start of their ninth-grade year, students spent time examining their connection to the broader world. In English class, they noticed details about our campus: the sudden sound of birdsong when we reached the field behind Doolittle dorm, the sharp smell of goldenrod leaves by the solar fields, the hidden yellows, blacks, and purples in all the greenery around the ponds. They used a biological lens to learn about how life functions in both large and small-scale ecosystems. In their history classes, they examined identity and power. These classes thematically complement each other; their capstone Poquonook Solutions Project focuses on personal reflection and making a contribution to the sustainability of our community, and the entire curriculum centers around what it

means to be part of an interconnected ecosystem. By the time they embarked on their trip, they were primed to notice the smell of pine needles around them just a little more, be a little more aware of the energy exchange between their lungs and the trees, and think a little more deeply about what kind of people they want to be in this community.

In group discussions in the evenings, we reflected on the ways in which we can create a positive impact on others quietly or by example, and the settings in which we may not yet be ready to guide others. Many of these students were still growing into their ninth-grade selves, and while I watched them explore the woods for three days — climbing mountains with determination and joy, respecting each other and the land around them, and traveling through the space between childhood and adolescence — I was confident this group would step up as role models just as past ninth-grade classes have before them. This trip deposited a foundation of camaraderie and interconnectedness — with one another and the broader world — that they continue to build upon in their final year at IMS and beyond.

Below: The final adventure for our ninth graders is a sailing trip off the coast of Maine; a powerful culminating experience before the graduates chart the course of their next academic adventure.





Boarding Life

An advantage of being an IMS student is being connected to people from all over the world. Approximately 100 students live on campus in one of seven dorms. Living on campus is a special experience: one that fosters leadership and life skills, the ability to balance academic work with social fun, and the opportunity to make friendships that last a lifetime.



"At IMS I found a warm-hearted community that welcomed me, challenged me, and helped me to grow. It became one of the greatest gifts of my life."

Mollie Sosin '26



Weekend Activities

By Chris Littler, Director of Weekend Activities

Plant yourself outside the Student Center at around 4pm on a Saturday. In the distance is the Mountain, gorgeous and serene, overlooking Centennial Field, where some kids are playing lacrosse, somehow still dressed in their pajamas. A trio of students is heading into the Morehead Athletic Center to practice free throws while blasting Bad Bunny from an enormous speaker.

One bus pulls up to the curb, then another, and another, ready to take groups of kids on adventures: a show at the Bushnell, Six Flags, a hibachi dinner, the Shoppes at Farmington Valley.

“Do we get our phones?” someone asks. “How long is the ride?”

Without waiting for the answer: “Wait — will we be back in time for the ice cream truck?”

Dorm parents scroll through the rosters, each the result of days of deliberation, a long negotiation about who they are sitting next to on their bus, and whether or not the timing allows for them to actually compete in the soccer tournament that happened that morning — “We can do both, I’m sure.”

And then they’re off.

Each bus heads in a different direction. Each off on a different adventure. The sound of children scream-shouting along to the driver’s playlist — “We actually know this one!” — eventually fades, replaced by the twitter of starlings and the click of lacrosse sticks and almost certainly just the bass line of that Bad Bunny song.

You take a deep breath. They’ll be back in a few hours, and there are still Falcons on campus who are looking for the bedazzling kit.

And then — after that?

Time to start thinking about next weekend.

Athletics

Our Upper Campus students participate in a different sport every season. Some seek to push themselves competitively, while others desire to develop a new skill. No matter their goal, students are encouraged to reach their highest potential through teamwork, sportsmanship, and determination. We're proud of our Falcons for their tremendous hard work this year.



FALL

Cross Country
Equestrian
Intramural Sports
Mountain Biking
Soccer
Volleyball

WINTER

Basketball
Dance
Ice Hockey
Squash
Skiing
Swimming

SPRING

Baseball
Golf
Lacrosse
Outdoors and the Arts
Softball
Tennis



Team Spotlight

The IMS Varsity Ski Team reached new heights this year, with eight athletes achieving All-NEPSAC recognition. All-NEPSAC honors are only given to students designated as the best prep school athletes in New England. What makes this group extraordinary is their age. All-NEPSAC selection comes out of a pool of 185 member schools, nearly all secondary schools, and the honor is almost always reserved for the top juniors and seniors in each sport. Our athletes are in seventh, eighth, and ninth grade.



“With so many member schools competing across so many sports, an All-NEPSAC designation is already a great distinction in any given year — to have this many of our young athletes earn it in a single program is rare and something that our community celebrates.”

Jason Barillaro, Interim Athletic Director

In addition to this triumph, the Varsity Ski Team had a remarkable win at this year’s NEPSAC Championships in New Hampshire. Our girls came in first place, and the boys placed second. This is the third back-to-back win for our girls at NEPSAC and marks their first win in Class B, which they qualified for after a tremendous performance all season long.



Visual Arts

Every student at IMS is given the opportunity to create art, dig deeper into their current artistic passions, or discover new ones.

Student Artist Receives National Recognition

Have you ever felt like a piece of art was watching you? IMS seventh grader Melody Zhao embraces that feeling in her interactive piece entitled “Electio.” Her beautiful painting is hardwired with red eyes that, at the press of a button, roll to cast their gaze upon you.

For her innovative work, Melody received the Gold Key and Best in Mixed Media Award at this year’s Connecticut Regional Scholastic Art Awards. Her outstanding performance in this statewide competition also caught the eyes of the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, which awarded her the Gold Medal and Best in Grade Award out of thousands of young artists nationwide.

Melody’s accomplishments were recognized at a ceremony held at Carnegie Hall in June.



Falcon Logo Contest

The falcon, a.k.a. “Freddie,” has been our school mascot since the late 1980s. This year, all IMS students from Pre-K through ninth grade were invited to design a falcon logo. We were truly impressed by the range of ideas that came from students. They reflected creativity, effort, and pride in our school community. Of the many designs submitted, ninth grader Remi Kurasawa’s falcon head was chosen from the Upper Campus, and fourth grader Brooke Buttacavoli’s falcon was chosen from the Lower Campus. Both logos were printed on select school store items.



Marisin with her father, Colin McLain P'22,'26,'26 at the art show

Alum receives Prize at our 10th Community Art Show

In April, IMS hosted its 10th annual Community Art Show and Contest, highlighting the creativity of artists in the tri-state area and beyond. Marisin McLain '22 won third place for her piece entitled “Light Divides.” After graduating from IMS, Marisin attended The Hotchkiss School and is now a full-time student studying Cognitive Science and Art at Yale University.

Scan the QR code to read our interview with Marisin on our blog:



Camerata Baltimore Performs at IMS

In January, the entire IMS community of students, faculty, and staff gathered in the Qianxun Performing Arts Center for a rousing musical performance by Camerata Baltimore. It was a joyous start to a winter day, and a celebratory way to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



“Music has always been more than entertainment. It is a way to express joy and creativity, but also a powerful way to communicate freedom and resistance. When words are not enough — or not safe — music carries hope, truth, and resolve.”

Ahmad Cantrell, IMS Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Life Through Service

Celebrating Lauren Frankенbach

By Alex Hodosy, Dean of Faculty

For three decades, generations of Indian Mountain School students have shared a comforting open secret: if you need a safe harbor, you head straight to Lauren Frankенbach's office. It is a space defined by compassion, honesty, and deep understanding.

Whether she was helping a Pre-K student unpack overwhelming feelings, walking a teenager through the messy anxieties of middle school friendships, or anchoring a family through a crisis, Lauren spent thirty years ensuring people felt genuinely seen. Along the way, she quietly became the emotional backbone of the entire IMS community.

A Different Era: IMS in 1995

When Lauren first stepped onto campus in the fall of 1995, the landscape looked entirely different. No internet. No email. No dedicated counseling department. If you wanted to schedule a meeting, you literally dropped a handwritten slip of paper



into a colleague's physical mailbox. Back then, like at most independent schools, mental health services were outsourced — treated as something to be handled far away from the daily campus hustle.

Lauren saw a massive gap, but more importantly, she saw an opportunity.

She came to IMS from the intense world of residential treatment in Massachusetts. At the time, she and her husband, Charlie Frankенbach (a longtime Hotchkiss educator), were raising young kids and needed a role that synchronized better with family life. The stars aligned. Hired by Head of School Derry Dunham and Dean of Students Scott Wiggins, Lauren stepped into a blank canvas. She began building, brick by brick, a comprehensive counseling and Health and Wellness program that would eventually span both campuses.

What started as a one-person operation with a few scattered wellness classes grew into an essential pillar of daily life at IMS. Lauren pushed hard for more counselors and expanded health education. She fought to prove a truth she knew instinctively,



long before it became widely understood: you cannot separate a child's emotional health from their academic growth.

"People used to think academics and mental health lived in completely separate boxes," Lauren recently reflected. "But everything improves the moment you pay attention to mental health. It's all completely integrated."

The Philosophy of "Learning to Recover"

This mindset transformed the student experience. Lauren's philosophy centers on a few non-negotiables: resilience, independence, and the dignity of making mistakes. She frequently reminds both anxious parents and stressed students that true confidence isn't built by avoiding failures — it's built by overcoming them. It's about realizing, internally, that you can handle hard things and keep moving forward.

More Than a Counselor: A Grounding Presence

Ask anyone on campus what defines Lauren, and they'll usually point to her presence. She is an anchor in a storm — calm when a crisis hits, steady when emotions boil over, quick to listen, and incredibly slow to judge. She always keeps both wisdom and a sharp sense of humor within arm's reach.

Her footprint at IMS reaches far beyond her office walls. Lauren was a driving force behind the school's diversity initiatives, curating workshops and bringing powerful, diverse voices to campus. Because of her efforts, IMS students had the profound privilege of listening to figures like Terrence Roberts of the Little Rock Nine and Khmer Rouge survivor Arn Chorn-Pond.



Lauren with Terrence Roberts

"Originally one of my Hotchkiss dorm parents, Lauren deftly created an environment of safety and support. I would go on to have the privilege of knowing her as a friend and colleague. Her impact is profound: unwavering advocacy for students, communities that students gravitate toward, and, within those spaces, fertile ground for life-altering relationships."

Sarah Stapleton Rees P'35

HONOR BY THE HOUSATONIC YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU (HYSB)



HYSB has a long and meaningful relationship with IMS, and Lauren has played a pivotal role in this partnership, enabling countless students in the Region One school district to access critical services that would not otherwise be available to them. Lauren received a special honor at the HYSB's Gratitude Gala in May for her unwavering community stewardship.

Feeding the Soul

Holding space for other people's trauma and anxiety is exhausting work, but Lauren mastered the art of boundaries, balance, and unapologetic joy. Whether she was skiing, digging in her garden, cooking, or exploring the local community, she practiced exactly what she preached. It's a bit of advice she frequently shared with newer teachers:

"You gotta get out and feed your soul."

As Lauren steps into a well-deserved retirement, her impact is visible in every corner of the school — from the sheer structural strength of the Health and Wellness program to the pervasive culture of empathy that defines modern IMS.

For thirty years, Lauren Frankenbach has been a living reminder that schools shouldn't just teach academic subjects; they are the places where children figure out how to become human beings. For generations of IMS students, she didn't just point toward the exit of a dark tunnel — she walked right alongside them, lighting the way.

Celebrating a Legacy: The Next Chapter

Now, as the final bell rings on a remarkable thirty-year chapter, the entire IMS community is pausing to celebrate Lauren's retirement. It is a profoundly bittersweet milestone. While it is tough to imagine the campus without her steady, grounding presence, this retirement is the ultimate, hard-earned reward for three decades of putting everyone else's well-being first.

We know she won't be sitting still. As she steps away from the daily rhythms of school life, she is finally taking her own advice to "feed her soul" full-time. Whether she is catching fresh powder on a ski mountain, tending to her garden, cooking up a masterpiece, or enjoying slow mornings with Charlie and her family, she goes into this next adventure with the endless gratitude of a community she helped build.

Health and Wellness

Students Helping Students

Health and Wellness is a pillar of the student experience at IMS. Sometimes, mental and emotional support is peer-to-peer. When students help each other, channels of communication can often be more open, leading to stronger bonds and a deeper sense of safety and belonging within the community.



2025–2026 Peer Mediators: Camille, Lyanne, Mariko, Lucia, and Andrew

Peer Mediation

Peer mediators are a group of ninth-grade students who use a peer-centered approach to help fellow students work through conflicts, disagreements, and arguments that arise. Conflicts could include issues with roommates, arguments about games or competitions, respecting boundaries, or challenges over friendship loyalties. Students go through an application process to become mediators, followed by extensive training through the IMS counseling office.



Second Grade, Second Step

A vital part of the Lower Campus curriculum (Pre-K through fourth grade) is social-emotional learning. One of the many tools used is “Second Step,” a curriculum that helps guide students through foundational skills such as empathy, emotion regulation, and responsible decision-making. In the fall, Ms. Miller’s second grade class learned about voting and democracy, and along with that civics lesson, she led the students through a Second Step lesson on managing disappointment when the person you vote for doesn’t win. Later, they created a presentation on conflict resolution for all of the Lower Campus students. Amy Tedder, Head of Lower School, says: “We’re proud of this work, which helps kids develop the skills they need to navigate our increasingly complex world.”

Work-Life Balance

For 17 years, Dave Pecchia has balanced the roles of being a teacher, coach, and parent at IMS.

By Brian Hess

On cool mornings, driving up Route 41 from Sharon, CT to Indian Mountain School, there is a moment, just before the final rise, when the valley either opens or disappears. The game in the Pecchia car was always the same. Leaving the house, each member of the Pecchia family made a guess — fog or no fog? — before conversation turned to the day ahead. As the road turned upward and the IMS campus came into view, the answer revealed itself. Some days it was obvious, the fog settling low and thick, blurring the edges of fields and buildings. And sometimes, as Dave Pecchia admits with a laugh, there was debate. “Is that smoke? A cloud?” For Dave, the answer always mattered less than the simple act of a family noticing together.

Over time, the car grew quieter. First, Dave’s wife Jules, who stopped making the drive when she began working at another school. Then his two daughters: Paisley, who graduated in 2023, followed by Harper, Class of 2025. These days, Dave says, he sometimes still plays the fog game on his own.

The ritual holds something essential about Dave’s 17 years as a teacher at IMS. What begins as a daily routine becomes, over time, a way of marking change: who is beside you, what you notice, how you arrive.

Dave joined the faculty in 2009. They had a young daughter and were drawn in part by the possibility of work and home not as separate spheres, but as something more continuous. “We were really excited about being here,” he recalls.

That sense of overlap — between work and home, teacher and parent — defined much of his experience at IMS. As a teacher, Dave moved through his days as usual: classes, advising, coaching. But as a parent, there were quieter moments layered within. Looking across the dining hall. Catching a glimpse in

the hallway. Watching, from a distance, as his daughters found their way.

He speaks about this carefully, as if the balance still requires attention. To be present without pressing in. “To be able to see and not be right over their shoulder,” he says, “that was really important.” There is pride in that, but also an awareness of what it asks of both sides. Of what it means for a child to grow up in a place where their parent is never entirely absent. His daughters were here, lifers at IMS moving through the same spaces, known by the same people. Their lives, and his, unfolded in proximity. “Even now,” he reflects, “I can look back and think, as a parent, to have had my kids at the place where I worked, how lucky that is.”

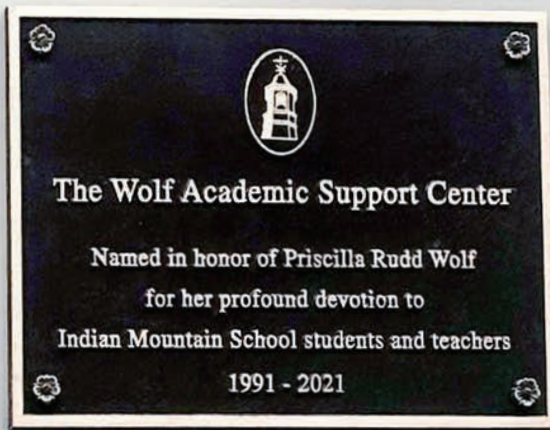


Dave Pecchia with his daughters, Harper '25 and Paisley '23

Family, in many forms, runs through Dave’s time at IMS. His brother Craig — to students, Mr. C Pecchia — has been a colleague most of Dave’s tenure, someone he sees daily, in classrooms, dorms, over a coffee in the dining hall. It’s a dynamic they both once only imagined, shaped by memories of their own father and uncle working side by side at their construction company. At IMS, it became a reality. “In my formative years as a working adult,” he says, “I’ve been here with my family.”

As he looks ahead and is moving on to a new job, Dave describes “a swirl of memories and emotions” — the accumulation of relationships built over two decades: students, colleagues, teams, years of memories that do not compress easily into a summary. He coached hockey every year of his tenure at IMS, measuring success not only in wins but in growth. Even as he steps away, it’s not hard to imagine him returning. “Don’t be surprised,” he jokes, “to look up one practice and see Coach Pecchia taking notes.”

Like the drive up Route 41, this moment of departure for Dave carries both clarity and uncertainty. The hill rises, the view shifts, and something comes into focus. Fog or no fog, you make your call, and keep going.



“Priscilla has an uncanny ability to understand how each child learns. She takes her work with students seriously, understanding the impact adults can have on children’s future.”



In Memoriam

Priscilla Wolf (1946–2026)

Our tutoring center is named The Wolf Academic Support Center in honor of Priscilla Rudd Wolf, for her profound devotion to Indian Mountain School students and teachers from 1999 to 2021. As the Director of Academic Support, she was hailed as “the teacher of all teachers” for helping generations of students fall in love with learning, and countless teachers fall in love with teaching. Priscilla passed away on May 24, 2026, after a valiant struggle with ALS. Her positive spirit, patience, kindness, and wonderful sense of humor will be remembered fondly. Her unwavering support of the young minds she helped grow is her legacy.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania (B.A.) and Central Connecticut State University (M.S. in Reading and Language Arts), Priscilla came to IMS in 1991. Along with her work as Director of Academic Support, she was also Head of the Harris Library, an advisor, and

a member of both the Curriculum Committee and the Student Support Team. Priscilla was also a certified yoga instructor and offered classes in the music room, sharing her calm, supportive demeanor and providing a safe space for conversation. When she retired, her colleagues noted, “Priscilla has an uncanny ability to understand how each child learns. She takes her work with students seriously, understanding the impact adults can have on children’s future.”

Even in retirement, Priscilla remained deeply connected to the IMS community, always eager to see photos of the evolving campus and to hear stories of daily life at the school. While our physical spaces have transformed over the years, the Wolf Academic Support Center stands as an enduring reminder of Priscilla’s distinct magic and the decades of students and educators who flourished under her care.

Save the Dates!

Fall Family Weekend
October 22-24, 2026

Young Alumni Sunday Supper
for all alumni currently in secondary school
February 21, 2027

IMS Art Show Opening
April 2, 2027

IMS Book Fair
April 28-30, 2027

Grandparents and Special Friends Day
April 30, 2027

Mountain Fest
May 8, 2027

Ninth Grade Commencement
June 11, 2027

For more information
about special events,
visit our events page:



Mountain Fest '26

Our fourth annual Mountain Fest brought our alumni and parent community together for music, wood-fired pizza, laughter, and great conversation under the tent on Soja Field.

Our line-up of performers this year included:

- Mike Cobb '85
- Charlie Comfort '17
- Graham Stone '05
- Kevin Wiggins '81
- James Winston '19

And for the first time, the band Passing Time, with faculty members Alex Hodosy, Madeline McIntire, Ram Miles, and Danny Tieger, brought their passion for bluegrass and Celtic tunes to the Mountain Fest stage.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us for this event.

Join us at our next Mountain Fest on May 8, 2027!





We are Maroon & Gray

At the beginning of every school year, students in fifth through ninth grade are welcomed to our 600-acre campus through a color-sorting hike up the Mountain. Once new team members join their ranks, Maroon and Gray face off in a series of friendly competitions throughout the year in academics, athletics, and leadership. After a wonderful year filled with school spirit, Gray's flag was raised as this year's winning team!



Your support fuels what matters most: extraordinary teachers,
excellent programs, and a community where students thrive.

For information about the many ways to support IMS,
please email advancement@indianmountain.org.

Or make a gift to the Annual Fund today: indianmountain.org/giving



Thank you for
making a difference.





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VIEWS
2025–2026

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Indian Mountain School inspires in each member of our community the courage to climb, the joy to create, the passion to learn, and the spirit to contribute in kind and meaningful ways.