

“Midland is a community with a sense of belonging... a coming-of-age place.”

“Midland teaches students life-long values: community and working together, hard work, balancing everything in life.”

“Midland’s legacy is based in the land, the earth – just as every tree grows to its fullness, each individual that plants their feet in the ground, carries this essence.”

“Midland is timeless. It provides the lessons, questions, community, and challenges needed to develop strong thinkers and doers.”

“Self-reliance; life-long learning; engagement with the world around us and the people in it; simplicity; healthy lifestyle... Disengagement with the incessant American need to consume, whether it’s consumption of products, celebrity, or the fear and insecurity the advertisers are peddling; “freedom from” all that stuff. As opposed to deprivation.”

“We teach current, exciting subjects on a “ranch-week” schedule (means: all-in, all-help, admire your work along the way).”

“At Midland we are mindful of the impact that our actions have... and are reminded daily of the importance of doing your part. The system quickly begins to unfold and fall apart when people fail to do this at Midland... Through simplicity, compassion, and intention, great peace and joy can be achieved.”

“Our library is about innovation – trying new things, experimenting, involving the students to develop new ideas and practices, evaluate the program, generate ideas for positive change, and then leading the way to implement these changes... Midland is innovative as well as traditional.”

“Midland is a place of independence, growth, and responsibility. It transforms children into thoughtful, impressive adults. It’s like a montage scene of growing up.”

“Midland offers an environment that challenges and nurtures the best in each of us, from the first time visitor to the enrolled students, family members, faculty, trustees, alumni... Rigorous college preparation in a natural setting.”

“Midland is a sustainable, educational model that is environmentally-based, grounded in a sense of belonging, connectedness, usefulness, achievement – aligned with adolescent development and trusted adults.”

“Community experience unlike what even other boarding schools offer... Historically, the story has been delivering a quality, no frills education at low cost. Now, it is more about access, with 50% of our student body receiving financial aid.”

“Midland’s hard work benefits everyone... to develop strong roots like the oak – deep down, not surface roots.”

"Midland is a school that prepares students for good schools and at the same time teaches self-reliance and environmental stewardship...and has a 4 to 1 student to faculty ratio."

"Midland is fun, playful, age appropriate, sustainable, forward thinking; a model for others."

"Midland is a story of community and education for the whole person, with the immediate goal of college preparation and the long-term goal of effective, joyful personhood."

"We are stewards of land, children, and families."

"Live simply and deliberately. Question and analyze deeply. Act, and do intentionally... Leave a legacy of consciousness and awareness for others and our habitat."

"Midland is a place for students and teachers to be unique; it's a community where all are accepted. It's about understanding needs and wants and how to balance both and live well."

■
We recently asked the faculty:

WHAT IS MIDLAND'S STORY?

Each faculty member contributed a statement.

■
"The story of Midland is the daily challenge of prioritizing community needs above the self and long-term well-being over pleasure or quick fixes."

"Midland is a school that seeks to offer authentic learning experiences through intentional choices, significant personal and community challenges, and a dedicated faculty and staff who are ever mindful of the school's mission."

"Midland walks the walk."

"Midland is a school and community which grapples with and strives to live in accordance with our philosophy – the key here is the grappling, which I think few schools really do; they more 'promote' their aspirations."

"We are different and thoughtful about how we do things – all things, like how we teach in our classrooms so that kids truly learn and feel supported and inspired... or how we live together in a healthy community. We are integrative in our approach – a holistic view of school, community, sense of place; how what we do on our farm is part of how we eat, how our jobs keep the campus moving along, how teachers and students work and live so closely together."

"It matters what we do. The Midland community is structured to show us specific ways in which this is true, both in academics and life. Relationships matter."

INTRODUCING MIDLAND SCHOOL...

BY LISE GODDARD, DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

Midland School is an alive and vibrant independent co-educational

secondary school located in beautiful Los Olivos, California. Midland lives its mission: To provide a unique college preparatory boarding school experience to a diverse student body. Through study and work Midland teaches the value of a lifetime of learning, self-reliance, simplicity, responsibility to community and the environment, and love for the outdoors.

Our environmentally-based curriculum prepares students for lives of purpose through rigorous academics and character education. Its key academic elements are: experiential learning, critical thinking, appreciating things that give context to our humanity, expressing ourselves through writing and art, and interdisciplinary understanding of environmental challenges with a focus on solutions. Place-based learning occurs on our 2,860-acre property through classes, an outdoor program, an equestrian program, and a 10-acre organic garden. In our co-curricular life, everyone has a job and everyone is needed.

In addition to being serious about academics, Midland students are active players in meeting basic needs – heating shower water, growing our food, washing the dishes, maintaining our campus, and building our community's renewable energy infrastructure. There are profound educational opportunities in experiential education. Students build inner reserves of strength and garner scientific understanding in developmentally appropriate ways, with personal rewards being resourcefulness and knowledge. These activities, in turn, build community by offering students a meaningful task. Performing and mastering these tasks cultivates an environmental ethic by linking cause and effect; we see what our actions do to each other and to the space around us.

The School was founded by Paul and Louise Squibb in 1932 during the early years of the Great Depression. Choosing to build a school in 1932 gave an urgency and authenticity to its lessons, transcending Algebra, history, or language. Midland's lessons would be real in that they would have direct meaning in the lives of its students. They would help students navigate their lives with self-reliance honestly earned.

The continuing relevance of the Squibbs' radical idea for Midland School derives from something that has generally become de-emphasized or lost in American Schools, both public and private. Midland's

founders believed, “that work is a basic need, an essential element in the ecology of the human spirit.” (Lewis, 113) By “work” we mean not just work of the mind, but work of the hands, that is, requiring a bit of human labor to procure the resources most people get by just flipping a switch. In the school’s first decade, light came from flickering kerosene lamps; now our electricity is generated in part by solar panels that students install every year.

Only by seeing our resources as gifts not to be taken for granted can we begin to appreciate that it is worth trying to save and savor them. This, we believe, is where Midland’s founders had it right, and where Midland today has established its stake in the ground. It holds a key for putting a meaningful environmental ethic within an adolescent’s grasp – one they can feel in their guts, think with their minds, and work with their hands.

Midland’s evolution has been intentional, and our educational model is a rare gem within the rustic backdrop. Key to Midland’s authenticity have been wise leaders with simple truths. Taking the reins from Paul Squibb were Heads of School Ben Rich, whose mantra was, “Leave a place better than you found it,” and Carl Munger, who believed that, “If kids can learn to listen to each other, maybe God has a chance.” Current Head of School, Will Graham says, “You’re right where you want to be.”

Students attend Midland during the formative years of adolescence – grades 9-12, experiencing a sense of belonging in a supportive community – and then navigate their lives with valuable skill sets and heightened senses of identity. In Midland’s classrooms, students are challenged to think critically, work hard, have fun, and to develop and engage life skills, like envisioning projects that have value and meaning in their communities, rallying support, supporting others, and finishing strong.

Perhaps a good way to describe Midland is by metaphor; our diet sustains our souls while sustaining the Earth. We distinguish needs from wants. For example, high speed internet and the ability to navigate the digital world are academic needs, and so we have them. But too much can become noise. We believe that backlit screens are no substitute for quality face time and authentic experience, so we limit access to digital entertainment that can tune students out. Midland aims to make students “unplugged and connected,” that is, unplugged from noise and connected to community, place, and our inner resources.

We invite you to Midland to experience the power of this place
and the timeless education we deliver.

