

Student Support Services

Newsletter



February 2023



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Visit our Student Support Services website at columbusacademy.org/studentsupportservices



Meet Our Support Services Team



Heather Livingston
Co-Director of Student
Support Services



Suzanne Ritter, Ph.D.
Co-Director of Student
Support Services



Brelle Farrenkopf
Associate Head of Lower School;
Chair for Student
Support Services



Shaun Ditty
Lower School Counselor



Amy Brooks
Middle School Counselor



Taylor Dillon
Upper School Counselor



Andrea Arner
Learning Styles Specialist
Middle School



Kelsey Pecenka
Learning Styles Specialist
Middle School



Alyssa Thiele
Learning Styles Specialist
Lower School



Sarah Wolff
Learning Styles Specialist
Lower School



Jeff Arndt
Reading Specialist
Upper School



Katy Frickel
Reading Specialist
Upper School



Kim Masturzo
Reading Specialist &
First Grade Associate
Lower School



Cyndi Yakscoe
Reading Specialist
Lower School



Kate Dudenhoeffer
Speech-Language
Pathologist



Alexis Marin
Speech-Language
Pathologist Grades 4-8



Ann McCabe
Health & Wellness
Middle & Upper School



Beckie Hoagland
School Nurse



Janet Fireman
School Nurse



Teresa Bowman
School Nurse

A Word from Our Directors

Heather Levingston and Suzanne Ritter
Co-Directors of Student Support Services

Welcome to our first newsletter under the newly-organized Student Support Services Department! We are excited about the opportunity to share updates about the changes in our department and our efforts to support students at Columbus Academy. In addition, we hope to allow our community to learn more about the work our team members are doing and provide professional resources that may be helpful in supporting your children.

Positions that directly fall under the “umbrella” of Support Services include learning and reading specialists, speech-language pathologists, and mental health professionals for each division. We also work closely with our nurses, athletic trainers and our health & wellness teacher to ensure we are providing resources for our students’ overall health and well-being. The primary goal in our new position as the Co-Directors of Student Support Services is to coordinate learning, support and counseling services, and to provide a more seamless transition for students and parents as they navigate mental health and learning support services throughout our lower, middle and upper school.

We are planning to provide more opportunities for parent education through our speaker series, book clubs and other educational opportunities targeted specifically to the different developmental needs across all three divisions. Last fall, we led a training on Executive Functioning for lower school parents. A series of parent book clubs will begin this spring. The first one will take place March 10, is intended for parents of students in grades 4-8. We will be discussing [12 Principles for Raising a Child with ADHD by Russell A. Barkley](#). An email with the link to sign up went out last week to parents of all children in those grades.

After spring break, we will facilitate a book club for parents of students in grades 6-12, focusing on the topic of anxiety in adolescents. Watch for the sign up coming soon.

Lastly, mark your calendar for the evening of April 6 when [Lisa Damour, Ph.D.](#) - a nationally-recognized expert on the psychology of adolescents - will be on campus as our final speaker for this year’s [Parent Academy Speaker Series](#). There will be a pre-event social in the Susan Neal Theatre Lobby with coffee, water and light snacks to enjoy at 6:30 p.m., followed by the speaker inside Schoedinger Theatre from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Dr. Damour will also be available in the lobby for a book signing after the event.

We hope you enjoy each issue of this newsletter and take advantage of the resources provided by our contributing department members. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns!

Co-Directors of Student Support Services

[Suzanne Ritter, Ph.D.](#)

[Heather Levingston, M.A.](#)

Nurses’ Note

In conjunction with Heart Month, our nurses are partnering with Nationwide Children’s Hospital and [Project Adam](#) to certify our school as a “Heart Safe School.” This initiative has been a work in progress for over a year and we are in the last steps of certification.

We have six emergency response teams in place prepared for cardiac emergencies on campus across all three divisions, as well as in Athletics, CASE and SAGE/Security. We are so fortunate all of our coaches, Early Childhood faculty/staff and multiple teachers are certified to perform CPR and use the AED. Our Emergency Response Team (ERT) will have yearly drill checks from our coordinator, Marc Dutro, at Nationwide Children’s Hospital and we will not only respond to heart emergencies, but all emergencies on campus.

Also, on March 1, we are hosting a three-hour CPR Certification Class for Columbus Academy parents in the Barton Room from 6:00-9:00 p.m. PACA is covering event fees per person and registration is limited to the first 20 parents. Click the graphic to the right of this note for more details. RSVP to nurse@columbusacademy.org.



Heart Saver CPR Certification

Three-hour CPR certification class
for Columbus Academy parents

March 1, 2023 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Barton Room

RSVP as soon as possible by emailing
nurse@columbusacademy.org

**Limited to the first 20 registrants*

*This opportunity is organized by the
Academy Nurses’ Office and Dr. Ritu Bakhru P’26, ’28, ’30*

*Event fees per person are being covered by PACA
Two-year certification card is \$15, if desired*



Shelby Reichle
Strength & Conditioning

Fitness & Nutrition Corner

Shelby Reichle
Strength & Conditioning

Katie Wilson
Masters Student in Dietetics & Nutrition at Ohio State

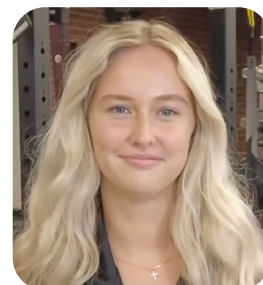
Ashley Kish
Exercise Science and Health Promotion Student
Cross Country/Track & Field Athlete at Otterbein University

Hello everyone!

My name is Katie Wilson and I am a first year student in the Master of Dietetics and Nutrition program at The Ohio State University. I am currently completing an elective sports nutrition rotation here at Columbus Academy by working with the athletic department to provide nutrition information to the athletes. Regardless if you are an athlete or not, proper nutrition is important for everyone. It really comes down to the fact that everybody eats!

By fueling your body in a way that promotes healthy habits, you will feel better in the long run. In the past month, I have been able to observe the cafeteria here at CA and see the impressive amount of nutritious options that are available to the students. In addition to the main meal offered each day, the salad and sandwich stations offer great options for students who are looking to make their plate a little more colorful! The dining service at CA is now incorporating a "Performance Plate" presentation using the "Main Ingredient" offered daily. This acts as a guide for the athletes to use when creating a meal that will help to enhance their performance!

Everyone starts somewhere on their journey to better nutrition. My tip for an easy change to make in your diet is to add an extra serving of fruit or vegetables to every meal. Colorful plates are the prettiest to look at and mean that you are likely getting a good source of antioxidants from the foods you are eating! I am excited to be here at Columbus Academy this spring and promote better nutrition knowledge for all! If you are interested in learning more about what your "plate" should look like at each meal visit [USDA MyPlate](#) for some more information. For our athletes, here is a resource that provides great visuals of what your [Performance Plate](#) should resemble!



Katie Wilson
Masters Student in
Dietetics & Nutrition
at Ohio State



Ashley Kish
Exercise Science &
Health Promotion
Student at
Otterbein University

Recovery may be the most overlooked component of sports performance, yet it is absolutely necessary for improvement. There are several different types of recovery and they all play a role in overall success. Recovery allows the body to get the most out of workouts, heals and prepares it for future efforts, prevents overtraining, and gives the mind a rest. While multisport athletes may desire to jump right into the next training block after one season ends, giving the body rest after a long season is crucial to enable the body to train hard for the next one. Even the greatest athletes of all time take time to recover! Most take WEEKS completely off and then gradually get back into training.

Don't short-circuit yourself and your potential by skimping on recovery. Make it a priority -- your body will thank you.

Click on these graphics to learn more! →

LEVELS OF RECOVERY

BTWN REPS & SETS For controlling the accumulation of fatigue to allow greater volume of hard training.	POST-WORKOUT Stretching, rolling, eating, hydrating Carb intake immediately after can boost glycogen storage 200-300%.
AT NIGHT SLEEP Repairs damage, regenerates neurotransmitters, strengthens immune system, improves performance, and so much more!	BTWN HARD DAYS Rest/frecovery days allow your body to adapt to hard training.
FROM DAILY LIFE Stress doesn't just come from training! You also have school, relationships, and other obligations. Find a de-stressing activity you enjoy for optimal life balance.	BTWN SEASONS You NEED time off! Take a couple weeks off or weeks of LIGHT training with at least two off days per week. Use this time to do other things you enjoy. Your mind and body will thank you!

"If you don't take planned breaks, you'll find yourself taking unplanned breaks."

-Dr. Tom Cotner

THE BEST ATHLETES IN THE WORLD TAKE BREAKS!!

- 1 MICHAEL JORDAN**
 When Jordan's season ended, he would play several games leading up to his final game, and then he would take a break before training camp in September.
- 2 USAIN BOLT**
 Bolt takes 4-6 weeks off after his seasons. Other Olympic athletes resting from 6 weeks to 10 weeks after the end of their season.
- 3 LEBRON JAMES**
 During his season, James took a few weeks off before the start of his training camp in September.
- 4 SIMONE BILES**
 Biles decided to take a year off from competitive gymnastics because she felt she wasn't able to give it her all. She took 12 months off and then, when she just like any way, she can do 100 percent of it again.

Former Lakers AT, Gary Vitti, said,
 "As soon as the season was over, everybody would take at least minimum two weeks, two to three weeks off, give their bodies a rest, let them recover, and then slowly we would do other some jogging or lifting and come strength training."



Lower School Support Update

Shaun Ditty
Lower School Counselor

Self Advocacy-The Roadmap To Success

I am a frequent reader of parenting and child development articles. One of my favorite places to look is [Understood.org](https://www.understood.org). For those of you who are not familiar with this website, know this, it's great! While on its surface it is a website that offers resources for individuals who have been diagnosed with ADHD or Dyslexia and/or their family and caregivers, it's also simply a great resource for people and parenting in general. Recently while I was perusing the website I came across an article titled [Self-Advocacy: What It Is and Why It's Important](#) by Andrew M.I. Lee, JD.

Mr. Lee shares that self advocacy can be broken down into three main elements: "Understanding your needs, Knowing what kind of support might help, Communicating these needs to others." What I appreciate most about this idea, aside from the fact that he has broken this seemingly simple, yet incredibly complex and important thing into digestible chunks is that he highlights the act of understanding and knowing. Oftentimes the idea of advocating for yourself is focused on the last part, communication or speaking up. But in focusing on that, we forget the other two steps that must occur before that. You cannot speak up, if you do not understand what you need, or know what support you might need.

Mr. Lee encourages people to think about themselves and ask themselves, what are my strengths? Where are my challenges? Spending time discussing this with your children can be incredibly helpful and powerful, as it enables them to think of themselves as a person that has both strengths and challenges in their life. Waiting to discuss this until there's a challenge being presented often results in a much more challenging conversation than if done preemptively. If your child is able to enter a situation knowing their current challenges while also being able to lean into the self identified strengths they already have, they are more likely to feel empowered when met with a challenge, rather than overwhelmed or defeated. These conversations can help them feel prepared rather than caught off guard. This of course leads into the second part understanding your needs.

Helping your child identify their needs in any given situation is truly a skill that will serve them well throughout their entire lifespan. We want children to clearly think about, identify, and understand what they need in any given situation. When a child is able to do this, it enables them to essentially have a roadmap or guide to helping them succeed at whatever the challenge that lies ahead may be. But the reality is that we often don't spend enough time thinking about this idea until we need it, and oftentimes we are too flooded with emotions to clearly think about it. So what do we do to help develop this skill?

The article highlights several things such as talking regularly with your children about strengths and challenges, including your own. This doesn't need to be a formal conversation, on the contrary, make it a part of your everyday life. Make sure we always use a growth mindset when discussing these things, don't forget the power of yet! Model asking for help in front of your children, even in simple ways "Can you help me and clean up your dinner spot?" Consider sharing stories that highlight when you asked for help in your own life, and ask kids to reflect back on when they asked for help in their day. When kids are met with a challenge, guide them through the steps of understanding, knowing, and communicating, to let them figure it out instead of solving the challenge for them. And don't forget to praise them when they use their voice to communicate their needs.

[Shaun Ditty](#)
Lower School Counselor



Lower School Support Update

Sarah Wolff

Lower School Learning Styles Specialist

I hear frequently from parents struggling with homework. Homework can be a stressful aspect of home life, and creating routines and habits can help. How can you overcome homework struggles and make it less of a battle? No two students are alike and what works for one student may not work for another. Some need complete silence, others benefit from white noise or light music in the background. A child's personality and work habits can guide the ways in which parents set up homework expectations. The article [5 Ways to End the Homework Battle for Good](#) gives suggestions for ways to help your child depending upon their personality and work habits.

Also, [9 Smart Tips for Homework Success](#) and [Strategies to Make Homework Go More Smoothly](#) are helpful resources for how to set up a homework station, develop routines, and establish an optimal homework time. Perhaps most important though is knowing when is enough. Homework should reinforce what has already been learned. If your child does not understand a concept without simple review, approaches the content like new material, or is spending an inordinate amount of their time afterschool on homework, please reach out to their teacher.

Consider the well-being of everyone involved. If the struggles are causing high tension between parent and student, or the frustration level is becoming increasingly higher with no resolution in sight, abandoning the assignment is the right thing to do. I recommend an email to the teacher sharing that attempts were made, and, if possible, identifying particular challenges. The goal of homework is reinforcement. When it impacts the parent/child relationship, please reach out. We are here to help.

[Sarah Wolff](#)

Lower School Learning Styles Specialist



Middle School Support Update

Amy Brooks
Middle School Counselor

We've reached the time in the school year when the sky is just a bit brighter in those early morning hours as we arrive at school. Spring is just around the corner and the days are getting brighter and longer. Middle School is bustling with activity as we navigate the journey of academics, activities and connections with peers. Managing all of these can be a challenging balancing act. Positive Education, groups like ROX and providing stress management tools for students are some of the ways the MS Counseling Office is supporting our middle-schoolers.

This year, we have been adding Positive Education activities into some of the advisory meeting times. We started our second semester in middle school with this [Looking Back, Looking Ahead Guided Journaling Activity](#) as a way of looking at how far we have come this year and as a way to set goals for the second semester. This activity was a way for students to reflect on their accomplishments and all they have learned in the start of the school year. It also has allowed students to spend some time thinking about how they want to grow and challenge themselves this second half of the year.

Ruling Our eXperiences (ROX) is in its second year at Columbus Academy. This group has been learning and growing together this school year. We started with team building and communication and have since moved into learning the skills needed for conflict management and navigating changing friendships. The group has spent time discussing the influences social media plays on the lives of girls and women as well as healthy relationships and how to set boundaries. Standing up for ourselves and others is the latest topic in the group. I cannot say enough about the accompanying book [Girls Without Limits](#) by Dr. Lisa Hinkelman. This book is an excellent resource for parents of middle and upper school girls.

Managing the activities of middle school can be stressful for students. In my conversations with students, we focus on ways students can use and develop their tool to navigate their middle school experience. Focusing on the things that add joy to our lives is a tool featured in positive education. Knowing when and how to ask for help is also a skill we work on frequently in middle school. Many conversations also center around taking breaks, breaking down large tasks and ways to practice mindfulness in the everyday life of school.

If you are looking for some additional tools to help your middle schooler manage stress, here are a few to try:

[Headspace](#)

This app shares breathing exercises and gives a good amount of freedom to explore different relaxation techniques.

[Calm](#)

The Calm app has music, sleep stories and breathing exercises to help unwind and let go of a hectic day.

[Simple Habit](#)

This app can provide guided reflections and can help students process stressful days.

As we move into the spring, I am excited to continue working with and supporting our middle school students.

Be Well,

[Amy Brooks](#)

Middle School Counselor



Middle School Support Update

Andrea Arner and Kelsey Pecenka
Middle School Learning Styles Specialists

The Importance of Sleep



By: Andrea Arner & Kelsey Pecenka
Middle School Learning Specialists

Sleep is essential, but getting enough sleep can be difficult. Students who do not get enough sleep are at a higher risk for health, behavioral, and academic problems. According to the CDC children ages 12-18 should regularly get 8-10 hours of sleep a night. In a recent analysis of students ages 12-18, 57.8% of them self reported that they got less than 8 hours of sleep a night. One of the best ways you can support your child's health, academic, and behavioral needs is to make sure they regularly get 8-10 hours of sleep a night.

THE BRAIN AND SLEEP

Regularly getting enough sleep improves brain function; conversely not getting enough sleep can lead to impaired brain function. Two areas of the brain that are strongly affected by sleep are the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. The prefrontal cortex is the area of the brain where learning takes place. When a child doesn't get enough sleep it is harder for him/her to learn new information and to remember and recall previously learned information. The amygdala is the part of the brain that handles emotions. Lack of sleep can lead to poor emotional regulation. In fact, both of these areas of the brain are so closely connected to sleep that just five days in a row with a healthy amount of sleep is enough to improve academic performance and emotional regulation.

HELP YOUR CHILD GET THE SLEEP THEY NEED

Here are a few strategies to help your child get the sleep they need.

- Set a consistent sleep schedule that allows for 8-10 hours of sleep a night.
- Develop a bedtime routine that doesn't involve electronics.
- Do not let your child have electronics (ipads, phones, etc) in his/her room at night. Plug them in to charge in a different location.
- Limit screen time 30-60 minutes before bedtime.
- Establish an after school activity and homework routine so your child does not have to work on homework in the last 30 minutes before bed.



Upper School Support Update

Taylor Dillon
Upper School Counselor

Jeff Arndt and Katy Frickel
Upper School Reading Specialists

Hello Families!

I want to first take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Taylor Dillon, the new Upper School Counselor. I am a Licensed Independent Social Worker and come from the clinical world where I provided individual and group therapy for over six years. I am so excited to be a part of the CA community and am here to help our students flourish in school and at home.

This year, I have been working hard to build connections with students. Having a sense of connectedness to a trusted adult at school is crucial and can lead to happier students and higher grades. To gauge how connected our students feel, upper school has been conducting a Student Connections Survey. This allows students to identify the teachers they not only have positive relationships with, but those adults that they trust and can lean on for support in a time of need. I am happy to report that a vast majority of students have a strong connection with at least one or more faculty and staff members in the upper school. This is attributed to the hard work our faculty and staff put in to aid in students thriving, focusing not just on academics but the student as a whole person.

Another project I have been working on this year is assessing student mental health. Working closely with Dr. Ritter, we have administered a depression screening to our freshman and sophomores utilizing the [Mindwise Signs of Suicide Program](#). We will also be completing this with juniors and seniors after spring break. These screenings help us identify students who may be struggling with depression or anxiety, allowing us to link them with support and assist in the development of coping strategies. It also provides us with the opportunity to educate students about what depression looks like in teens, and what they can do if they or a friend needs help.

While I have only been at CA for a short time, I have been diligently working to make sure our students are harnessing their skills to succeed. I have future plans to implement groups and workshops to assist students in managing their mental health and keeping up with the stressful demands of upper school. My goal is to support our students by helping them identify warning signs, triggers and coping skills so they are empowered to manage their complex emotional feelings.

[Taylor Dillon, MSW, LISW](#)

At the beginning of the 2022-23 school year the upper school reading specialists, [Jeff Arndt](#) and [Katy Frickel](#), moved into a new space in our Reinberger Upper School Library. While Katy and Jeff continue to meet with students one-on-one and in small groups, all students are welcome to take advantage of the informal and roomy surroundings. Formerly the Upper School Makerspace, this area was transformed last summer to include two offices and a common area where students can come to during scheduled and unscheduled times to complete homework, work together on projects, take tests or get extra help from the reading specialists on various academic skills. This month we are beginning study skills mini-workshops that will be open to all upper-schoolers. Some of the topics will include, test taking and study strategies, time management, active reading and notetaking skills and more.



The reading specialists have also been busy partnering with departments and teachers across the curriculum in the upper school. In mid-December, they visited all freshman Research classes to share midterm exam preparation, study and time management tips with as they prepared to take their first round of semester exams. They have also been joining ninth grade Human Geography classes to assist with refining topics and starting the organization process of their opening statements as they prepare for in-class debates. Katy and Jeff have also been working with some Modern World History classes to assist in the research and organization of topics for upcoming term papers.

If you find yourself on campus and near the Reinberger Upper School Library, stop by and say hello and check out their new offices and common study area. They'd be happy to show you around!

Upper School Support Update

Suzanne Ritter
Co-Director of Student Support Services

There has been a lot of press coverage lately about two topics: the [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the publication of [The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Study of Happiness](#). While the research on the mental health of adolescents is disturbing, there are important lessons from this book on "happiness" research that can guide us in how to help our children navigate their these difficult times.

The Youth Risk Survey study findings fall in line with other recent studies on both adolescent girls and boys – the overall depression and suicide rate for adolescents has alarmingly risen over the past decade. In 2021 and 2022, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children's Hospital Association together declared "a national state of emergency" in children's mental health. This CDC study found that almost one in three high school girls reported in 2021 that they seriously considered suicide. This is an increase of about 60 percent from a decade ago. The significant, but smaller, increase in boys reporting those feelings may be due to the fact that they are more likely to internalize feelings of depression or express these feelings in anger or aggression. Overall, researchers agree that our adolescents as a whole are struggling at an alarming rate.

Fortunately, we know there are protective factors that will help our adolescents navigate mental health challenges. In the CDC study, they found that students who have access to counseling and support at their school and feel connected to adults in their schools have lower rates of suicide and feelings of sadness. Studies in Positive Psychology have also given us a rich body of work about the factors that influence our overall health and well-being at any age. [The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Study of Happiness](#), written by Robert Wldinger, M.D. and Marc Shulz, Ph.D., summarizes the findings by the [Harvard Study of Adult Development](#), a remarkable ongoing longitudinal study that, since 1938, has used extensive data collection and interviews to determine the ingredients to "happiness." They highlight the most robust finding that good relationships keep us happy and healthier. This outcome has been validated by numerous cross-cultural studies as well. These relationships can be with friends, family, co-workers or those gained in community and church involvement. We flourish when these connections are nurtured and allow for growth and change over time.

Our Support Services Team will continue to work with our students, teachers and administrators to promote connections with the CA students. We will strive to be part of their network of positive relationships that will help buffer them through their difficulties and build resilience for the future.

[Suzanne Ritter, Ph.D.](#)

Co-Director of Student Support Services