



**Columbus
Academy**

Student Support Services Newsletter

• MARCH 2020 •



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Welcome to our first newsletter!

Columbus Academy enriches its academic traditions of excellence by valuing a broad diversity of students as it seeks to develop the complete person: mind, body and character. Our curriculum, culture and community cultivate a love of learning and the higher-order skills that are vital to a happy childhood and success in today's world.

The Child Support Team is a group of professionals dedicated to assessing the needs of and providing services and accommodations for students with different learning styles and other needs. We hope to empower teachers, parents, administrators, and students with an understanding of their unique personalities and learning styles.

The support services throughout Lower, Middle, and Upper School are provided based on each student's specific level of need. All three divisions have Child Support Teams which meet weekly to discuss students who may come to their attention via teacher concerns and/or parent concerns. The primary goal of the Child Support Team is to assess the needs of the student in a meaningful way.

Each division has its own full-time counselor to help to meet the social and emotional needs of the students. While counselors' services vary according to developmental need, each division works closely with each other to ensure that there is a communication and coordination of services at PreK through grade 12.

Our Health and Wellness curriculum is designed to engage students in taking responsibility for their personal health and in developing the necessary skills for making well-informed, empowered, positive health-related decisions. Students learn about health issues that affect their immediate and long-term health with an understanding that health requires a balance of physical, mental/emotional, environmental, and social well-being.

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

General Articles & Announcements

Ohio Dept. of Health Fact Sheet on Coronavirus [Beckie Hoagland and Janet Fireman](#)

The Ohio Department of Health recently posted a fact sheet on the coronavirus (COVID-19), complete with helpful tips and recommendations.

Read the fact sheet at: tinyurl.com/r4s6bu4

The Food That Helps Battle Depression [Elizabeth Bernstein | Wall Street Journal](#)

The right kind of diet may give the brain more of what it needs to avoid depression, or even to treat it once it's begun.

Read the full article at: tinyurl.com/vd3tjfx

TED Talk - Happiness Toolbox: What Every Child's Education Needs [Michelle Schroeder-Lowrey](#)

A new TED Talk features our very own Michelle Schroeder-Lowrey who, along with upper school psychologist Dr. Suzanne Ritter, is leading our faculty & staff this school year in learning about and practicing positive education and flourishing

Watch the video at: t.co/N4qeOFP8I5?amp=1

CA Graduation Dress Exchange [Beckie Hoagland and Janet Fireman](#)

Our Graduation Dress Exchange program allows graduates to donate gently-used graduation dresses to be loaned to the current year's senior class for use at their graduation ceremony. The dresses listed on this website are complete with a photo and dress specifications including sizing information.

More info at: sites.google.com/view/cagraddress/home

Upcoming Support Services Events

Counselor & Conversations

Wednesday, March 4 | 6:30-7:30 p.m. | MS Library

Parents of 6th grade students are invited to join middle school counselor Shekyra DeCree on Wednesday, March 4 from 6:30-7:30pm in the middle school library for an informative session of "Counselor & Conversations." This is an opportunity to learn about support services in the middle school. We are so excited about these new gatherings, as our last meeting with 7th and 8th grade parents was a positive time of enrichment and education about support services available to middle school students and parents. Feel free to email questions or topics you would like to discuss to Mrs. DeCree (decrees@columbusacademy.org). Hope to see you there!

Follow us on Twitter
[@Vikes_Support](#)
twitter.com/Vikes_Support



We will provide links to helpful articles, publications & organizations related to school-age children's mental, emotional & physical health.



Wellness Wall



Mrs. DeCree & Mrs. Ritter

Middle School Articles & Resources

MS Counselor Shekyra DeCree

Counselor & Conversations

Parents of 6th grade students are invited to join middle school counselor Shekyra DeCree on Wednesday, March 4 from 6:30-7:30pm in the middle school library for an informative session of "Counselor & Conversations." This is an opportunity to learn about support services in the middle school. We are so excited about these new gatherings, as our last meeting with 7th and 8th grade parents was a positive time of enrichment and education about support services available to middle school students and parents. Feel free to email questions or topics you would like to discuss to Mrs. DeCree (decrees@columbusacademy.org). Hope to see you there!

ERB Accommodations March 4-6

Our middle school students will be taking their ERB's on March 4-6. Students who receive testing accommodations (due to either a documented learning disability or medical condition) are eligible for nonstandard administration of the ERB's. Nonstandard administration of the test includes taking the test in a less distractive environment and with extended time (time and one-half.) While students who take their ERB's in a nonstandard setting will have their ERB's scored separately from their grade-level counterparts, there is no penalty for taking this assessment with accommodations. Parents with children who are eligible to receive standardized test accommodations are encouraged to discuss this option with their child. **Unless the Middle School Child Study Team receives a request via email by Monday, March 2, stating that a student NOT take the ERB's with accommodations**, students who are eligible for taking the ERB's in a nonstandard setting will be placed in a separate room and allowed the allotted extended time to complete their assessments in this less distractive environment. If there are specific questions for the Middle School Child Study Team (Mrs. DeCree (decrees@columbusacademy.org), Ms. Davis (davist@columbusacademy.org) or Mrs. O'Brien (ObrienC@columbusacademy.org), please do not hesitate to call or send an email.

Wellness Wall at CA

We're breaking barriers by creating a wall dedicated to wellness in the middle school. The Wellness Wall is a student led initiative launched by 7th grade students, Faith Wood, Grace Edwards, Ella Farrell and others, aimed to encourage middle school students to post positive messages in the spirit of wellness and flourishing. The wall is located on the second floor of the middle school, just outside of the middle school library. Please encourage your child to "post positive" and empower their peers to thrive and support each other. If you happen to pass by the Wellness Wall, take a look at some of the positive messages students are posting, and feel free to share one of your own.

Break the Stigma

Mental illness has become one of society's most stigmatized issues faced in schools, families and communities-at-large. We hope to partner with students, faculty and parents in the CA community in cultivating healthy dialogue about mental health and ways to promote a thriving community. We cannot do this by suffering in silence. Please partner with us by dispelling the stigma and shame associated with mental health and mental illness. Here's how:

1. Talk to your children about mental health and let them know you support their mental AND physical health needs. Keep an open mind during these conversations.
2. Partner with your children in developing a lifestyle that reflects wellness and balance; discuss the necessity to maintain a healthy balance between academics, extra-curricular activities and self-care practices that include fun activities with friends and family.
3. Do not discourage your children from seeking mental health support while at school. Communicate that it is okay to seek support from the school counselor equally as much as it is okay to receive support from school nurses. Mental health is a key part of their HOLISTIC health.
4. Keep the conversation going. Contact the counseling and support services staff anytime you have questions or concerns.
5. Encourage your child to identify a trusted adult on campus to talk to if they have a social or emotional crisis that needs addressed. Remind them that counselors are nearby anytime they need support.
6. Refrain from vilifying mental illness. Let your children know that having a mental illness does not mean a person is "gross," "stupid," "dumb," or "crazy." All mental illness is treatable with adequate support, therapy and clinical care.

Nationwide Children's Hospital Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion

Middle school counselor Shekyra DeCree had the opportunity to join upper school psychologist Dr. Suzanne Ritter at the Community Dedication Celebration for Nationwide Children's Hospital's new Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion on Friday, February 28. This is a phenomenal new resource in our community that will provide extraordinary mental health care, treatment and resources to children and youth throughout Central Ohio and beyond. Leadership representing the new, innovative facility voiced their commitment to breaking the mental health stigma and empowering youth and families to get the treatment and support they need. Please contact Dr. Suzanne Ritter, Shekyra DeCree, or Shaun Ditty for more information about mental health resources and support provided by Nationwide Children's Hospital's Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion.



Upper School Articles & Resources

US Counselor Dr. Suzanne Ritter

I am really excited about launching our new Student Support Newsletter, which will highlight our mission to help our students flourish physically, emotionally, and academically. I am passionate about Columbus Academy's latest initiative, implementing the science and practices of Positive Education into the daily lives of our faculty, staff, and students.

Positive Education combines the latest research into well-being and flourishing, also called Positive Psychology, with the best practices in education. Although Positive Psychology is a relatively new focus of study in the field of psychology, the concepts and strategies will be familiar to all of us who have struggled, bounced back from adversity, and flourished, and have watched our children and students do the same. It is not about being happy all of the time, it is about learning to be aware of and nonjudgmental about our feelings, to work with our thoughts and actions that arise that keep us stuck, and to find a way to move forward in order to "show up in the world the way we want to" (Dr. Srikumar Rao). Positive Psychology research has informed us that positive emotions, engagement in activities that challenge and interest us, meaningful relationships, finding meaning and purpose in our everyday lives, achievement of our goals, and physical vitality all contribute to our sense of well-being.

Last weekend I watched "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" about Mr. Rogers and his mission to help children grow as "confident, competent, and caring human beings" (fredrogerscenter.org). He really should be known as one of the founders of Positive Psychology! When talking about how to manage negative, difficult emotions, he says, "There is always something you can do with the mad that you feel", and "Anything mentionable is manageable". These concepts are not new, but in today's world, for a variety of reasons, our children do not feel they can safely face and navigate uncomfortable feelings. Our mission as educators is much like Fred Roger's mission, and to be more purposeful in our intention to do so. Because when our children feel better, they will do better – they will thrive academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Please check out this link to an article about one school district's experience with their positive psychology initiative. You can learn more about our focus on flourishing and its role in Academy's strategic vision in our school magazine coming next month!