



Welcome to our newsletter!

Page 2 COVID Response Team Update

Pages 3-4 Health & Wellness Update from Ann McCabe

Page 5 Lower School Counseling Update from Shaun Ditty

Page 6 Middle School Counseling Update from Shekyra DeCree

Page 7 Upper School Psychologist Update from Suzanne Ritter

School Counselors

Lower School Counselor
Shaun Ditty, M.A., LPC

Middle School Counselor
Shekyra DeCree, M.A., LPCC-S

Upper School Psychologist
Suzanne Ritter, Ph.D.

Counseling Intern
Amy Brooks

Health & Wellness Support

School Nurse
Beckie Hoagland, L.S.N.

School Nurse
Janet Fireman, L.S.N.

Health & Wellness Educator
Ann McCabe, M.S./M.A.T

Academic Support Specialists

Early Childhood Director
Brelle Farrenkopf

LS Reading Specialist
Cyndi Yakscoe

Learning Styles Specialist
Alyssa Thiele (PreK-Grade 4)

Speech-Language Pathologist
Adrienne Moser (PreK-Grade 4)

Speech-Language Pathologist
Alexis Marin (Grades 4-8)

MS Reading Specialist
Tamarah Davis

MS Learning Styles Specialist
Carolyn O'Brien

US Reading Specialist
Jeff Arndt

US Reading Specialist
Katy Frickel

Update From Our COVID Response Team

We are happy to inform our community that faculty and staff, with the help from the Franklin County Health Department, have completed our COVID-19 vaccinations. We sincerely appreciate our families' willingness to be flexible and patient with this process. The COVID Response Team feels this is a huge step towards keeping everyone safe at school.

As of February 25th we have been informed of the updated K-12 School "modified quarantine" as outlined by the Ohio Department of Health. Columbus Academy will continue all mitigation policies put in place last fall, such as 6ft. social distancing, universal masking, daily health screening, hand hygiene and increased cleaning measures throughout the school day.

The Ohio Department of Health and Franklin County Health Department revised its quarantine guidelines to state that if a student or staff member has been deemed a close contact while at school and has met the following protocols, they may return to in person learning. The quarantine would be a "Community Quarantine," which means the individual would attend school but not participate in any other activities. The COVID Response Team will review each individual case to determine if a "Community Quarantine" applies and this will be communicated to all individuals involved. [Click here](#) to view these updated K-12 School Quarantine Guidelines.

The newly updated quarantining guidelines can only be initiated if the student is in a school setting where all above protocols are followed. We realize that the 6ft. distance may not be maintained every minute of the day, however, we continue to remind students in hallways and non-classroom settings to spread out. Please continue to communicate with your child about these protocols and email Beckie Hoagland and Janet Fireman in our nurses office (nurse@columbusacademy.org) with any questions or concerns.

The COVID Response Team wants to thank all of our faculty, staff, students and families for adhering to all policies set forth. We realize how hard everyone has been working to keep everyone safe and it has definitely paid off! Spring Break is on the horizon, so please remain diligent as we are so close to ending the school year on a positive note.

Columbus Academy COVID Response Team

Erich Hunker '81, Assistant Head of School for Development and External Relations

Beckie Hoagland, School Nurse

Janet Fireman, School Nurse

Doug Bennett, Director of Facilities and Grounds

Tim Williams, Director of Campus Safety and Security

First Aid & CPR in Middle School Health Class

Ann McCabe
Health & Wellness Educator

Students in both 7th grade and 9th grade learn first aid and CPR skills in health class. 9th graders will receive certification in Adult/Infant CPR/AED during April and May of this year via the American Heart Association Heartsaver CPR AED Course. 7th grade students learn CPR/AED skills in addition to other first aid skills, including how to recognize the signs of cardiac arrest and stroke, what to do in cases of heatstroke, choking, drowning, hypothermia, burns, and accidental poisoning, and how to deal with major bleeding.



7th-graders (from left to right) Hanna Arnold, Dominic Cacchillo and Krish Bakhru practice their CPR skills.

Recap of Middle School Wellness Day

Ann McCabe
Health & Wellness Educator

On Wednesday March 10th, middle school students relaxed and enjoyed fun activities during a beautiful day outdoors during a designated Middle School Wellness Day. Teachers and administrators organized this day for students to prioritize social and mental health and to take a break from academic pressure and screens.

All middle-schoolers began the day with a delicious breakfast made by our dining hall staff from SAGE, then made their way outdoors to play games, participate in a service activity and get creative with a variety of arts and crafts. Some of the activities offered to students included pickle ball, yoga, charades, pottery making with clay, nature sculptures, painting, planting, juggling, jumping rope, making puzzles, decorating advisory classroom doors, playing ultimate football and competing in a beach volleyball tournament. There were also designated “relax and chill” times with activities to help the students get a break throughout the day.

We hope this helped students feel refreshed and rejuvenated after having an entire day that promoted social connections, getting outside, being active, having fun, participating in community service and taking time to relax.



Students & Digital Well-Being: Virtual Parent Information Event

Are you worried your t(w)een spends too much time on their phone (what are they actually doing on there anyways)? Thinking about giving your child a phone but not sure what you need to do to keep them safe? Stressing about how to set boundaries around devices for your child (especially in the middle of a pandemic)?

On Tuesday March 16th at 7 p.m. [The Center for Family Safety and Healing](#) will feature a technology well-being parent information session for Columbus Academy families with students in grades 4-12. This virtual session will cover what the new and popular youth social media trends are, how youth are using social media, and what current research tells us about youth and technological well-being.



Parents will learn what they can do to make sure their child is safe online, including how to create graduated rights/responsibilities around technological devices, how to open the door to conversations about online safety, the best way to navigate parental control technology, and how to create a personalized family media agreement.

This will be an informative and engaging presentation with the intent of uplifting and empowering parents with the knowledge and skills needed to care for their child's technological well-being, whether their child is just starting to use devices and social media or has been for a long time.

[Click here to access the Zoom link on the meeting date](#)
(Meeting ID: 990 6708 2516 Passcode: 203455)

“Minding Your Mind” Speaker to Present to Middle-Schoolers

On March 17th a [speaker](#) from [Minding Your Mind](#) will present to middle school students. Minding Your Mind is an organization that helps bring professional adult speakers to schools to talk about mental health challenges they faced as young people and how they have successfully and productively coped, with the goal of showing students they are not alone when they are struggling. The organization uses the power of storytelling to provide evidence-based education about mental health and provide information for youth about how to seek help for themselves, their peers and others.

[Ann McCabe](#) | Health & Wellness Educator

Lower School Counseling Update

Shaun Ditty
Lower School Counselor

How many times have you found yourself saying some version of this: “You need to say sorry”? Or perhaps, “That wasn’t very kind, please apologize and try again.” These are common things we tell children as they are growing up because we want them to become kind, responsible and empathetic adults one day. And we know that skills like apologizing are ones they need to learn and practice throughout their childhood.

I think providing a genuine apology to another person, owning your mistakes and expressing your feelings about a given situation is one of the more challenging things we as people can do. Admitting wrongdoing is hard sometimes and the less we do it the more difficult it becomes.

It’s been a year since COVID-19 entered our lives – yes it really has been an entire year – and there have been stressors and plenty of challenges during this time. With those challenges and changes often come times of strained patience and even the occasional snapping at the children we love and care for.

I came across [this article](#) by Jessica Grose and found it to be honest, real and something I would encourage all of us to consider. Jessica shares a story in which she snaps at her daughter for interrupting her work for the fourth time in an hour. She shares how apologizing to her child was difficult but ultimately a really important thing to do. She is quick to point out that everyone snaps or loses their cool sometimes, because we are all human beings with our own thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and that is okay. But we, just like our children, need to know when and how to say I’m sorry.

[Shaun Ditty](#) | LS Counselor



Middle School Counseling Update

Shekyra DeCree
Middle School Counselor

Every Day Can Be Wellness Day

Greetings from the Middle School counselor's office! As I write this, your children are bustling around the entire CA campus enjoying Middle School Wellness Day. It's truly a beautiful sight to see! The sun is shining, the sky is blue and the mood in middle school is synergic and carefree. The middle school faculty has done a phenomenal job planning a screen-free interactive day for your kids to enjoy the outdoors, laugh, and engage in fun activities with each other.



To that end, today's events provide an excellent reminder of how important school-life balance is for your children's social and emotional well-being. As parents and caregivers, it is important to model healthy self-care practices and promote balance for your children. Children pay attention to our lifestyle practices. It is essential to incorporate intentional "wellness time" throughout their weekly schedule to promote school-life balance.

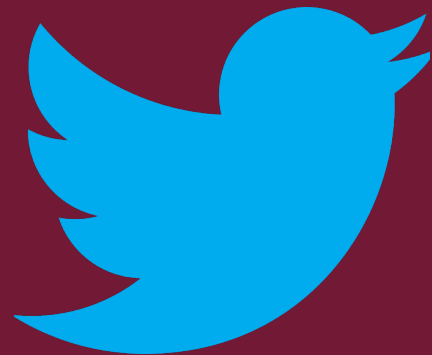
Consider connecting with your children to develop a weekly wellness or self-care plan to include in their routine. Try planning meaningful family activities that encourage healthy family engagement and well-being. Communicate the importance of emotional well-being and self-care practices as much as you promote academic achievement and success. These are just a few examples of how to encourage school-life balance for your children.

Check out the resources linked below which highlight ways to help ensure your children embrace a lifestyle of balance, self-care practices and emotional wellness.

[Center for Parent and Teen Communication](#)
[Building Emotional Wellness](#)

Follow us on Twitter
@Vikes_Support
twitter.com/Vikes_Support

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



Celebrating Neurodiversity

Shekyra DeCree
Middle School Counselor

As one CA middle school parent brilliantly stated: “kids SMART differently.” The middle school Child Study Team wants to ensure we foster a culture that embraces and celebrates our students’ learning differences by offering the support they need to thrive. While there is no one-size-fits-all way of doing this, we are committed to developing strategies that embrace and support the diverse learning styles of the students we serve.

In doing so, we have also made it our mission to destigmatize, demystify and debunk misguided perceptions associated with the role of support services and student learning differences in middle school. We look forward to forging an ongoing collaborative effort with students and families in promoting a culture that values and supports learning differences.

With that in mind, [here’s an excellent resource](#) discussing the concept of neurodiversity and ways of supporting how your children “SMART” differently. Also, check out the link for [Marburn Academy’s excellent free parent education seminars](#) that also explore ways to best support your children’s learning differences.

[Shekyra DeCree](#) | MS Counselor

Upper School Counseling Update

Suzanne Ritter
Upper School Psychologist

Happy almost Spring! It has been such a boost to the faculty to see so many of your teens back on campus. With more students sitting in class, hanging out in the lounge and enjoying a bit of time outdoors, it feels like some “normalcy” may be sneaking back into our lives.

Change and better times are “so close” but are “not yet there” for our students. As they are finishing up their 3rd quarter, and soon their school year, while waiting to be released from restricted lives, their patience is likely to be wearing very thin. This is making them more vulnerable to the effects of daily stressors. One symptom we are noticing for many of our students is unusual difficulty in maintaining focus on their studies and organizing and completing assignments on time. In her article [How to Help a Teen Out of a Homework Hole](#), Lisa Damour, Ph.D., a well-known author and clinician in adolescent psychology, describes the reasons and possible solutions.

She recommends that parents be empathetic and solution driven, rather than critical during this difficult time. It is crucial that we work together to diagnose the reasons and help our teens come up with appropriate solutions. A parent I met with at conferences told me she realized that, despite being tech savvy, some teens aren't as comfortable with using Gmail to read and keep track of the constant influx of information, so they often miss important details from teachers. So she taught her child an organizational system for keeping track of and prioritizing emails. These small solutions can go a long way towards helping your teen feel more in control.

Other solutions offered by Dr. Damour include helping them prioritize all of their commitments and learning to communicate with teachers. These are all useful lessons that will help as they get closer to the finish line of this school year. It is also essential right now to remind them (and ourselves) to add daily doses of “positive interventions” into our lives. Positive Psychology researchers defined positive interventions as “interventions designed to foster well-being through the promotion of positive emotions, thoughts and behaviors (Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013; Schueller, Kashdan, & Parks, 2014).” These can be as simple as a daily gratitude practice, writing down “what went well” every day, taking small moments to savor a meal, time in nature and/or connection with family and friends. Whatever it is, make sure that your child is building positive interventions into their daily routine to fight the “negativity bias.”

One useful and easy strategy to foster positive emotions is the creation and sharing of a “Strengths Story,” a short story about a time when we have been “at our best.” Writing about what strengths we used at that time, and sharing this story with others, has been found to increase positive emotions. This is because it allows us to savor the past, understand more about how we use our strengths and connect with one another. Recently, I have been able to use this intervention with Sophomores in Mr. Leet's Ethics classes. They have all taken the [VIA Character Strengths Survey](#) highlighted in the [Winter Support Service Newsletter](#). This allowed them to learn and understand more about their strengths and to see how they have naturally put them into action. The students seemed to enjoy pausing to take the time to write these simple, yet powerful stories, and share with their classmates.

Finally, please don't hesitate to reach out to me for any questions or concerns you have about your child well-being. You can email me at ritters@columbusacademy.org or call my direct line at 614-509-2296. Also remember that our teachers, advisors, coaches, deans and administrators are all here to support you and your child. It definitely takes a village this time of year and we welcome the opportunity to help.

Have a wonderful Spring Break!

[Suzanne Ritter](#) | US Psychologist