

## Welcome to our newsletter!

Page 2	Health & Wellness Update from Ann McCabe
Page 3	Lower School Counseling Update from Shaun Ditty
Page 4	Middle School Counseling Update from Shekyra DeCree
Page 5	Upper School Psychologist Update from Suzanne Ritter
Page 6	Upcoming PACA Parent Education Event

### School Counselors

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

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

*Upper School Psychologist*  
Suzanne Ritter, Ph.D.

*Licensed School Counselor*  
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*  
Heather Levingston (PreK-Grade 5)

*Learning Styles Specialist*  
Alyssa Thiele (PreK-Grade 5)

*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

# Health Class Guest Speaker Spotlight

Ann McCabe  
Health & Wellness Educator

## Health Class Guest Speaker Spotlight: Shelby Reichle, CA Strength & Conditioning Coach

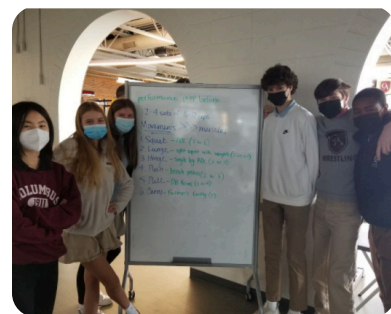


Shelby Reichle is Columbus Academy's strength and conditioning coach. Before coming to Columbus Academy, Coach Reichle worked for four years as the head strength coach at Grove City Christian School, and for The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center Sports Med and Sports Performance as an athletic conditioning specialist. She has a B.S. in sport and leisure studies from The Ohio State University and a M.S. in allied health, specializing in exercise and health science, from Otterbein University. She also is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) through the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA).

Since joining Academy in 2020, Coach Reichle's dedication, enthusiasm and hard work has been extremely beneficial for all CA athletes. Coach Reichle works with athletes to improve athletic performance and reduce athletic injuries. Coach Reichle makes a point to work with every team, learn every athlete's name, and track individual athlete and team fitness goals.

This year, Coach Reichle has been a guest speaker for both the sixth and ninth grade health classes, discussing with students the benefits of lifelong movement and how to integrate physical exercise into their daily routines. A few weeks ago the ninth grade health classes went on a field trip to our fitness center, where Coach Reichle taught them about the benefits of resistance training: improved bone density, ability to perform ADLs (activities of daily living) due to improved muscle strength, and improved body composition and metabolic environment, in addition to mental health benefits.

As part of the ninth grade health class on resistance training, Coach Reichle taught students how to design a resistance exercise session with the goal of health, wellness and longevity. Students learned to design workouts that incorporate full body resistance training 2-3 times a week for increased heart rate and cardiorespiratory response, full body muscle glycogen depletion, and for maximum efficiency. Workouts should include the following foundational human movements: squat, lunge, hinge, push, pull, and carry. "In order to move well for life," Coach Reichle told students, "you must incorporate all these movements in your workouts, either daily or weekly."



At the end of the lesson, students designed a workout with an example exercise for each of the human movements, as well as an ADL that uses that movement. For example, one group came up with "goblet squats" as an example of a squat exercise and "getting up out of a chair" as their squat ADL. By connecting each movement to an ADL, students highlighted the importance of exercising not for athletic performance or physical appearance, but for lifelong health and wellness at any stage of life. During the next class, students practiced some of these strength and conditioning exercises while learning about and monitoring their heart rate.

We are lucky to have Coach Reichle at CA, and thank her for her commitment to teaching lifelong fitness and movement skills!

# Lower School Counseling Update

Shaun Ditty  
Lower School Counselor

Springtime is here my friends...I hope...I mean we do live in Ohio so you honestly never seem to know. But we are going to look at this with a positive lens and assume mother nature has nothing but the best of intentions for us. This month's letter will be focusing on the importance of being outside, enjoying the world coming back to life after a winter slumber, and setting yourself and your kids up for a healthy start to a new season. Additionally, I will share an article with a number of fun activities to do with your children during this beautiful season of change.



Spending time outdoors with your children is incredibly important. It can help everyone feel happier, live healthier, and forge a stronger bond between themselves and the world around them. Beyond the obvious health benefits of being outside there is an entirely different but equally important benefit from spending time outdoors, it teaches and reminds children and people of all ages that they are a part of an ever growing and changing world. Springtime is a wonderful time to observe and feel this phenomenon. Being outdoors and observing the natural world helps to stoke a child's curiosity and sense of wonder.

Families, just as the world, go through seasons of change and growth and participating in activities that open children's eyes to that change can serve as a wonderful way to begin an open dialogue about your family and the changes it has gone through as well as the many changes it will go through in the future. Being in nature, away from technology and distractions, can help inspire and invite those meaningful conversations. Children are full of wonder and questions but sometimes do not know how or when to ask the things they are wondering about. Setting aside technology, being together, and exploring nature is a wonderful way to break down some of those barriers to having these meaningful conversations. Being outside also helps encourage children and families to live a physically healthy lifestyle.

I recently found an article from 2019 written by Woodlands Treehouse Preschool titled [7 Healthy Spring Activities For Kids](#). The article itself is very short but is really packed with some wonderful ideas. Activities range from gardening, to spring cleaning all of which have their own benefits.

We are so blessed as a community to have 231 acres of land for our students and community to explore. Be on the lookout for classes taking place in the outdoor classroom spaces, or children exploring and playing outside in the coming weeks. I encourage you to come to campus with your children on the weekends or even during spring break to hike, explore and play. Our lower school students spend a wonderful amount of time outdoors and surely have a few favorite activities and places to visit. Bring them here, and let them show you around. Children love to be the leader when possible and this is a wonderful opportunity for them to show you around.



Whether your child enjoys the physical activity, the science and inquisitiveness that is naturally brought about, or simply the quiet reflection time of being outdoors and away from technology there is something for everyone to gain.

[Shaun Ditty](#) | LS Counselor



# Middle School Counseling Update

Shekyra DeCree  
Middle School Counselor

We prioritize health and wellness among all students within our school community. Pre-adolescent and adolescent development can be a challenging time for young people as they grapple with social trends, and appearances while building a greater sense of self-awareness and confidence.

In light of that, the middle school faculty and staff have witnessed a growing trend in negative body image behaviors among our middle school girls at lunch. We have noticed our girls becoming increasingly challenged with promoting personal wellness during their lunch and dining hall experiences.

This spring, our health educator Ann McCabe, nurse Janet Fireman and myself will be providing a Body Positive Lunch & Learn program in efforts of empowering our middle school girls to promote their health, wellbeing, and growth, during this key stage of their development.



Topics that will be covered will include: Nutrition and health, Body Image Perceptions, Confidence and Self-Esteem. The Body Positive Lunch & Learn program will be offered as a one-time session during lunch to all middle school girls. The girls will be scheduled for sessions according to their assigned health class section. A nutritious box lunch will be provided for the girls during the session (food selections in the dining hall will also remain available for participants).

Please contact myself ([decrees@columbusacademy.org](mailto:decrees@columbusacademy.org)) or Ann McCabe ([mccabea@columbusacademy.org](mailto:mccabea@columbusacademy.org)) if you have questions about the Body Positive Lunch & Learn program. We are excited about the opportunity to provide a safe space that empowers, educates and fosters healthy conversation among our middle school girls in promoting their health, wellness and development.

## Growing Forward: Promoting Child Wellness Amid Covid and Beyond

On Tuesday March 15, I partnered with middle school parents/guardians from PACA for an evening of interactive dialogue and discussion about the current social and emotional health of middle-schoolers, and ways to promote their wellbeing in the days and months ahead. For those parents who were unable to attend, you can access the information via the links listed below. In addition, feel free to contact me with any questions, insight or concerns you may have regarding the social and emotional wellbeing of your middle school children.

[Growing Forward: Promoting Child Wellness Amid COVID and Beyond](#)  
[U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory: Protecting Your Mental Health](#)

[Shekyra DeCree](#) | MS Counselor

# Upper School Counseling Update

Suzanne Ritter  
Upper School Psychologist

This quarter I was able to spend time with the sophomore Ethics class discussing the concept of empathy. Empathy is an important component of student wellness and flourishing because it helps them find common ground with others, enabling and fostering more deep and satisfying personal relationships with their peers. A lack of empathy and understanding can lead to the mistrust, frustration and divisiveness that has fueled the current “cancel culture” among adolescents.

Like other trends in our culture, the concept of “canceling” has influenced our upper school students. This began as a positive movement for change. In the article [A Parent’s Guide to Cancel Culture](#) in *Parents Magazine*, explained by a teenager, the author recognizes that cancel culture has fostered positive cultural shifts. “Teens have canceled rape culture, racism, sexism, climate change, and the thing that has taken millions of teen lives: gun violence.”

Sadly, however, many of our students have been “canceled,” or boycotted by previous friends or classmates for perceived slights, differences of opinions or perceived transgressions. This could be due to an offensive comment about a marginalized group. It could also be because someone is not “fitting in” with the culture of the school, is socially awkward, or posted something on social media that made someone mad. When used among high school students, canceling almost always is about shaming someone else, with no chance of redemption for the canceled teen. Adolescents often lack the maturity and perspective to understand that their peers can make mistakes, and grow and learn from those experiences.

Today’s social media amplifies the “canceling” so that it spreads far beyond the immediate friend group and can have lasting negative mental health effects on the shunned teen. Instead of helping to foster an atmosphere of inclusivity and empathy in a school community, canceling can become a barrier to that goal, pushing students farther apart from one another.

Alexa Lewis, in the *Parents Magazine* article, offers ways to help your teen navigate this tricky world of canceling. She suggests, if your teen is affected, parents and their teens try to keep an open mind, and realize that canceling is often an impulsive act, and is “not by everyone and not forever.” Help your teen try to self-reflect about what they can learn from the experience and whether someone may be lashing out in pain.

If your teen is the one who has participated in canceling a friend or peer, encourage them to practice empathy, trying to understand the feelings and perspectives of others. Ask them to try to talk directly to the person about the perceived transgression, and if needed, ask a trusted adult to help with the conversation. Make sure they keep the conversation off social media, where it can be inflamed and damaging to all involved.

I used two videos about Empathy during the Ethics class that illustrated the concept, and a fun way to make connections between people of all backgrounds. The students were then asked to partner with someone they did not know and, using a series of questions, explore their differences and more importantly, their commonalities. Their discussions were animated, and they seemed to enjoy the activity so much that I had to cut them off to end the class! Please take some time to enjoy these short videos linked to this article below. I hope it will spark discussions around kindness and empathy. As Chris Peterson, one of the original researchers in Positive Psychology explains, in the end, what flourishing is all about is that “other people matter.”

Have a wonderful spring break!

## Empathy Videos

[Brene Brown on Empathy](#)  
[Take a Seat, Make a Friend](#)

## Further reading about Cancel Culture and Teens

[Cancel Culture: A Shameless Plea](#)  
[Tales From the Teenage Cancel Culture](#)  
[What Students are Saying About Cancel Culture, Celebrity Battles, and Finding Escape](#)

[Suzanne Ritter](#) | US Psychologist

## Mark Your Calendar: PACA to Host Parent Education Event Monday, April 4



### Parent Education Event with Devorah Heitner, Ph.D.

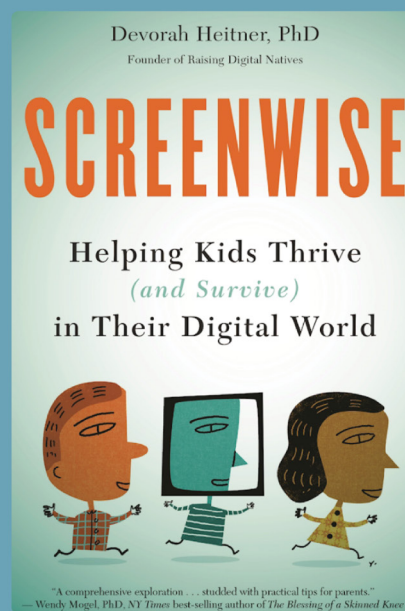
Presented by:



**Monday, April 4 • Dining Hall**  
**Light hors d'oeuvres at 6:30 p.m.**  
**Program from 7:00–8:00 p.m.**

Devorah Heitner, Ph.D., will join us for this Parent Education event to discuss a realistic perspective on how to thoughtfully guide kids in the digital age, as outlined in her book *Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World*.

Devorah is the founder of Raising Digital Natives. Her mission is to cultivate a culture of empathy and social and emotional literacy.



**Registration:** [columbusacademy.org/screenwiseparentedevent](https://columbusacademy.org/screenwiseparentedevent)