

May 22, 2020

Dear 8th Grade Families,

As different as distance learning is, I'm often touched by just how many things have remained the same. Calhoun Spirit Week is gearing up. Parent coffees continue. Superclusters meet regularly. We are maintaining school traditions, community norms and our whole approach to educating young people. We talk about students the same way as usual. We see their trials and their triumphs the same way. We build each other up, just like always. We exercise patience and recognize hard work and highlight creative thinking just as we did at 433 West End Avenue. Now we're discussing graduation. Faculty members are agonizing over the details to provide our students not just with a graduation of this adventure, but a commencement of the next. It's an exciting time in our community, just like always.

Here is this week's recap:

Advisory - Nayantara & Advisors

This afternoon in advisory, clusters and superclusters played some online games to bring us into a well-deserved long weekend.

English - Shelley

We continued our analysis of Arthur Miller's *All my Sons* as we finished discussing Act I and began Act II. Study questions have helped students focus on exploring the deepening plot, complex character development, and emerging conflict which exploded in Act II. The next set of study questions has been assigned which will help students understand the resolution reached in the stunning conclusion of Act III, as we explore the moral decisions made by the major characters.

Health - Alyssa

We are concluding our unit on relationship management. Students were asked to interview a trusted adult in their life about dating and record their answers on the Google Form provided. A trusted adult can be someone like a parent or guardian, grandparent, aunt, uncle, older cousin, coach, etc. I look forward to reading their responses.

Identity - Sabrina

This week in Identity class, 8th graders were joined by twelve 11th graders for an engaging and informative conversation about the transition from middle school to high school. In our final two weeks together we will explore values as we continue to discuss transitions and high school.

Math - Ben

This week we learned how to solve systems of equations graphically and began to explore strategies for solving them symbolically. We noticed that all of our work last unit was designed to give us the tools for systems. Our favorite competing pool tile megastores and our method of relating amusement park profits directly to the probability of rain (setting equal and substitution) were sneaky set-up challenges for what we face now.

Physical Education - Nick

We are continuing with our daily physical activities. On Monday, students received a new list of five different workouts, ranging from Zumba to a Pilates core and abs workout, as well as cardio and low impact HITT workouts. Eighth graders should try to complete at least two workouts for the week, though one per day is even better. On Friday, students completed a Google Form to share their workouts. As always, the goal is to keep our students active and moving for at least 20 minutes per day.

Science - Ardalan

This week we laid the groundwork to understand Mendelian genetics. We plan to apply our knowledge to create a family of monsters with dominant and recessive genes. The last two weeks of school will focus on the heredity monster project in which students will predict the outcome of the monster offsprings and draw the families they create. We are going to be filling out many Punnett squares!

Social Studies - Marco

This week we will examine a timeline that begins in 1848 and ends in 1860. Students will understand that Manifest Destiny lit a fuse. This burning fuse will take us through a series of events that include the Fugitive Slave Act, Kansas Nebraska Act, Bleeding Kansas, Lincoln-Douglass debates, John Brown's raid, the rise of the Republican party, Lincoln's election, and secession. Students will see that this series of tragic events culminates in a reckoning for the institution of slavery.

Languages

Mandarin - Yutong

This week, students recorded an interview show in Mandarin. In the "show," they played two roles, the host and the "celebrity." They practiced their speaking skills asking and answering questions about personal information as well as hobbies, habits, school work, etc.

Spanish - Linda

This week we concluded our unit on chores and pastimes by focusing on reading, verbal and written exercises to assess the students' comprehension of the subject. First, we reviewed our verb conjugations related to chores such as *limpiar*, *cocinar*, *hacer*, *lavar* and *secar* with a focus on mastering the conjugations, proper noun agreement, and identifying infinitive verbs in our reading. Practicing our interrogative words, and places around our neighborhood and our house were important elements of our unit assessment.

Music

Active Listening - Kevin

In Active Listening we began work on our culminating research projects due on June 3. Next week's class will be optional to give students time to work.

Chorus - Alison

Students worked on a recording project this week that will be used for a musical performance at the 8th grade graduation in June. Their task was to practice and then sing along to a pre-set practice track of the song, and record two videos of themselves singing both the melody and harmony parts for the song. When all the videos are completed, we will edit them together for a "virtual choir" so that the 8th grade chorus will still be able to perform at graduation, like they would have in person.

Jazz - Kevin

In Jazz-8, we have continued to review the intervallic relationships of the major scale in hopes to gain speed with chord recognition.

Electives

Art - Amy

This week students in 8th grade art classes continued to explore the work of Yayoi Kusama. We used class time to work on creating a still life drawing/painting or create an Infinity Room diorama. We met in Zoom for class and had a virtual studio session. Many students have already shared their work and it's looking great!

Comedy/Improv - Ed

Students in Comedy/Improv continue their participation in an in-class improvisational comedy workshop led by professional improv performer and teacher Nick Kanellis. This workshop is also an optional out-of-class activity on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 1:40 to 2:15pm.

DJ - Kevin

In DJ class, we have reviewed our 5-10 original tracks to import into the Mixxx.org app.

Special Topics in Algebra - Ben

This week we explored linear inequalities in both one and two dimensions. We used challenging activities on Desmos.com to explore manipulating functions to behave in predictable (and not so predictable) ways. We did a systems activity, critiqued a "proof" that $1 = 2$, and watched a video about different infinities.

Ukulele - Kevin

In ukulele class, students have continued working on our rendition of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight."

I didn't receive much feedback from parents this past week (barring that from my own parents, with whom we're living, and Elaine and Cary Schwartz have *more than picked up the slack*). I'll take that to mean that all is well, that lines of communication are functioning, that students are engaged and learning, and that we are all entering the final stretch of the school year with optimism and excitement.

Have a lovely, gratitude-filled long weekend.

Warmly,
Ben