

May 29, 2020

Dear eighth grade families,

Spirit Week has been terrific. It reminded me (yet again, if you've been reading these letters) of why this community is so special. Having Upper School students from the Spirit Squad drop into Middle School morning cluster meetings was nice. Mike Z. put together an amazing mash-up of clusters talking to the camera, revving up the excitement. The Calhoun Cougar even made a few appearances. It gives me great pride to note that even when apart, we're **#CalhounTogether**.

Here is this week's recap:

Advisory - Nayantara & Advisors

This week Middle Schoolers participated in a Spirit Week assembly run by our school-wide Spirit Planning Committee. We were treated to a visit from some Upper School student-athletes and we shared what we love about Calhoun. Thank you to our dedicated planners and to everyone who participated in the many events that were offered this week.

English - Shelley

This week we finished Act II of *All my Sons* where the conflict exploded, revealing the deception and moral positions of the main characters. We began Act III, heading toward the dramatic resolution. Next week, our last classes will have students filling out the outline format which will assist them in writing the in-class, open book essay. Students have already received the question with the suggested procedure for development. They will receive a written response, but this will be an ungraded exercise, one which provides good practice for writing in class. We will review this exercise in our last class, and we will end with an introduction to what I hope will be summer reading of *The Catcher in the Rye*, which due to the events, we could not cover in time.

Health - Alyssa

We are wrapping up our unit on relationship management. Eighth graders read a short story about Jesse and Jamie and their relationship. Students were then asked to determine if this relationship was healthy or unhealthy using clues from the story. They also suggested aspects of the relationship they could improve. Students were then asked to share important characteristics they think all healthy relationships should have.

Identity - Sabrina

This Wednesday was Wellness Wednesday and to honor the many ways we all seek self-care, 8th graders had a choice of activities to complete in class this week. Options included: a meditation, a live group check-in space on Zoom, journal reflections and writing a gratitude letter. We will reflect on the year, chat a bit more about the high school transition, and share appreciations in our final class next week.

Math - Ben

This week we finished with our strategies for solving systems of equations. We are now comfortable with both substitution and elimination (and will practice the latter over the weekend). We then turned our attention to linear inequalities and different strategies for solving them. We saw how they are slightly more complicated than equations and practiced solving inequalities symbolically, on a number line, and using interval notation. For example, a solution of $23 \geq x$ can be expressed as $(-\infty, 23]$ or graphed on a one-dimensional number line with a closed (inclusive) circle on 23, shaded to the left. We put the *quality* in inequalities!

Physical Education - Nick

We are continuing with our daily physical activities. On Monday, students received a new list of five different workouts, ranging from 90s dance party workout to a leg and cardio workout, as well as workouts for volleyball and basketball players. 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

We're working on our last science project: the monster heredity project. On Friday, students drew their parent monsters and figured out which traits can't, might, and must show up in the following generation. Next week we will cross these monsters and see if the three offspring ended up as predicted by Punnett squares probabilities. Students will draw the three offspring next week to finish the family portraits.

Social Studies - Marco

This week we examined a timeline that began in 1848 and ended in 1860. We are about to learn about Lincoln's election and the South's secession. Both of these events will lead to a civil war that will finally deal with the "peculiar institution" of slavery. Students will understand the social, political, and economic differences between the North and South which cause this reckoning to take place and how it ended.

Languages

Mandarin - Yutong

This week, half of the students took the Calhoun Upper School Mandarin placement test, where their overall speaking, listening, reading and writing skills were evaluated. The other half of the students continued to work on the end-of-MS review exercises, where they practiced the vocabulary and grammar structures they were taught since 6th grade. In addition, they practiced typing and speaking the sentences that peer teachers have taught the class, with topics varying from traveling to advanced restaurant conversations.

Spanish - Linda

This week in Spanish class we watched the last episode of our soap opera about our American friend Marissa. This episode was a conclusion to a year-long themed centered guide to learning a new language through the eyes of a second language learner in Mexico. The final episode focused on *las vacaciones*, or vacations. In these final few lessons we discussed items related to traveling, making reservations, discussed the weather and the seasons, and expressed emotions using the verb *estar*. Several listening and comprehension exercises were used at the end of the activity to assess the students' comprehension of the video.

Music

Active Listening - Kevin

In Active Listening, we continued to work on our culminating research projects due on June 3.

Chorus - Alison

For the last project of the year, the task was for students to record a cover of any song of their choice that feels good to sing! In our live class, students watched the editing progress for their virtual choir video for commencement, and shared feedback and edits for the video.

Jazz - Kevin

In Jazz-8, we have continued to review the intervallic relationships of the major scale in order to gain speed with chord recognition as well as recognize major keys quickly.

Electives

Art - Amy

This week, students looked at a few different emotional works of art and considered how artists convey feeling through, color, line and composition. They spent time outside of class looking at and responding to the painting [Separation](#) by Edvard Munch. Students wrote about a time when they may have felt the same way as the man in the painting and about how they dealt with those feelings. Next, they will be creating a work of art related to the themes “loss and separation” or “joy and connection.”

Fiber Arts did not meet this week due to Memorial Day. Students should be continuing their work using thread, yarn, string, twine or anything similar to create a drawing, sculpture or painting of their own. This work can be two- or three-dimensional. I’m looking forward to seeing what they all come up with!

Comedy/Improv - Ed

Students continued 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. Editing has begun on the video footage submitted by students for the “Two Capitanos Meet” exercise. A link to the completed video will be emailed out to students when the editing process is completed.

DJ - Kevin

In DJ class, we have begun producing and composing original music in BeepBox. We plan to import these songs for a live DJ set in the Mixxx app.

Special Topics in Algebra - Ben

As a class, we decided to spend our final sessions watching one of the greatest maths films of all time. “The Man Who Knew Infinity” is the story of legendary mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan and how he turned mathematical academia on its head.

Ukulele - Kevin

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

The phrase “home stretch” is used to indicate the final segment of a race, or more specifically, the section between the final turn and the finish line. I think we can all agree on what the final turn has been this year; we took it together on March 13. The efforts required by teachers, students and parents have been extraordinary. While the home stretch is usually associated with a sprint, I’d suggest that it’s more about leaving it all on the track, keeping nothing in reserve. It’s less about speed and more about exertion. We teachers have the summer to get back in racing shape, to plan for the challenges that the fall will bring. Students cross their finish line and get a chance to relax a bit. Parents... well, we know our work is never done. Thanks for making the home stretch more enjoyable than it has been in any race I’ve ever run.

Have a lovely weekend.

Warmly,
Ben