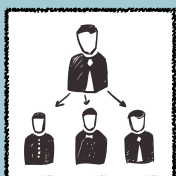


LOCAL DO'S

SCHOOLING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC:

**EDUCATORS TAKE THE LEAD IN PROVIDING
COURAGEOUS AND COMPASSION INSTRUCTION
DURING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES**



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“MY UNION BROTHERS & SISTERS” ROB WALSH, BMUST PRESIDENT

I. Am. Exhausted. I am emotionally exhausted. I am physically exhausted. I am mentally exhausted. I know that you are as well. Our jobs were already challenging before the introduction of masks and barriers and social distancing and lessons conducted via ZOOM. Like many of you, my anxiety is increasing over the growing rates of infection in our communities. I am frustrated by the ever changing rules and guidelines surrounding quarantining and returning to work. Bringing home the virus to my family is a constant fear and I desperately miss seeing my extended family and spending time with my friends.

will continue to say it because it is true. This community is so very lucky to have such a dedicated, talented and caring group of professionals educating their children.



**Rob Walsh,
President, BMUST**

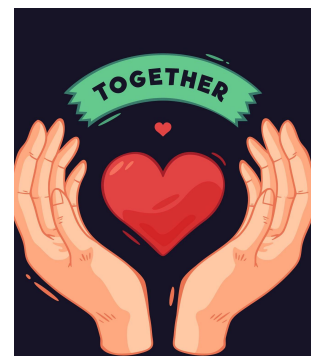
There is no doubt challenging months are in front of us. Months that will be filled with anxiety and uncertainty. During these difficult times, please continue to look after and support one another. We will get through the pandemic together. I wish each

“As hard as it is for me to see our students wearing masks and sitting behind barriers, I remind myself we are providing them with one of the safest places to be. We are providing them with a nurturing, caring and supportive environment in a world sorely lacking in all three.”

It has always been my belief, however, that the job of the teacher is the one of the most important in all of society. The role that we play in the lives of our students can not be overstated. We literally save and change lives for the better every single day and it has never been more true than today. As hard as it is for me to see our students wearing masks and sitting behind barriers, I remind myself we are providing them with one of the safest places to be. We are providing them with a nurturing, caring and supportive environment in a world sorely lacking in all three. Thank you for the incredible work you all have been doing. You have heard me say this several times before, and I

and everyone of you and your families a happy and healthy holiday season. Be sure to take time to do the things that feed your soul and bring joy and happiness to yourself and your loved ones. Stay safe, stay well.

In Solidarity,
Rob



"CALHOUN TEACHERS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE DURING TRIPLE PANDEMIC AN IMPACT"

BY BETH FINNERAN, (CALHOUN H.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

Even during a global pandemic, Calhoun teachers demonstrate pluck and perseverance, adapting to the "new norm" in the classroom. Unable to use the active learning strategies, they'd been trained in for years, like cooperative learning, they transitioned quickly to learn new technology to meet the needs of students in their classrooms, remote students and home, and hybrid students, who show up every other day. **Rich Perry** and **Jamie Romito** provided tremendous support offering zoom training sessions and being available to answer technical questions. **Brian Joyce** turned mask wearing into a source of school spirit when the Junior Class organized a mask fundraiser, selling masks with the Calhoun Colt logo on it.

Calhoun teachers also do not shy away from addressing the controversial issues happening around the country and helping students make sense of them. **Heather Glick, Christine Boyce, Beth Finneran, Sean Formato, and Sharissa Khan** as part of the District's new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative led a discussion during one of the faculty meetings on strategies to discuss current events in the classroom. Teachers are also responding to the needs of students by supporting student-led initiatives to start new clubs. On-going conversations with two students of color in her International Buddy Club, motivated **Heather Glick** to supervise a new Racial Equity Club, which provides a safe space at school for students to discuss their own personal experiences, as well as, their feelings about the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted around the country. **Erin Mormando** agreed to supervise a new Activism Club after she was approached by an inspired junior. Activism club members joined forces with local assemblyman, David McDonough, last winter to collect coats for those in need. In October, the club organized a Zoom meeting with Jerry Greenfield of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream in which Greenfield shared his experiences with activist efforts. As a branch of Girls Learn International, the Calhoun Activism Club seeks to empower and educate high schoolers to advocate for human rights, equality, and universal education in the United States and around the world. **Dr. David Goldberg**, who has been teaching about human rights and the importance of promoting tolerance for years, through his course *Voices of the Past*, was awarded the Edward Weisband Distinguished Alumni Award for Public Service from Binghamton University. Goldberg was also recognized at a Board of Ed meeting for receiving this impressive award, which "recognized Dr. Goldberg as a Binghamton University alumnus whose life, work, career and contributions exemplify the highest standards of service and deepest dedication to the sustenance of the common good," according to the district website.



Teachers also helped families in economic need during the current economic crisis by donating \$5 to wear jeans on Friday. The money would go to help buy food for local families who need some extra support over Thanksgiving. Teachers also encouraged students to donate potatoes and cranberry sauce for the district's community cupboard food drive for Thanksgiving.

Calhoun also experiences some good news....

Matt Kramer...Thomas Matthew was born on November 2, 2020.

Christine Gaylor...Emilie Marti was born on June 2, 2020.

Erin Mormando...McKinley Elle Mormando was born at 4:31pm on March 17, 2020

Nicole DeBonis...Mason Thomas DeBonis arrived at 11:52pm February 12th. 8lbs 9oz

Lauren Miele Whittall...Matthew Whittall was born on December 27, 2019



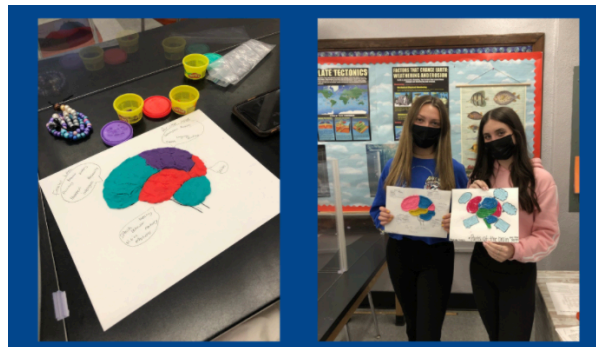
Welcome to Emilie Marti Gaylor!

“MEPHAM KEEPS CALM”

BY LINU CHACKO (MEPHAM H.S.), LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER

In the time of Covid19 protocols and travel bans, Heather Bizewski found a way to teach the art of “keeping calm.” It started in the Spring and Fall of 2019, in what seems like a galaxy far, far away. Bizewski, along with Jodi Langevin, Erin Thompson and Theana Cheliotis, introduced Meditation Mondays for teachers to spend a free period doing yoga and meditation. No one knew how soon we would need to cultivate a greater sense of calm to get through the rest of the 19-20 school year!

Bizewski turned those few minutes of self-care into an official class. Once approved by the district’s curriculum committee in fall 2018, Bizewski and fellow teachers Brook Stehl, also from Mepham and Dawn Sullivan from Kennedy High School, wrote the course curriculum for the Scientific Basis of Mindfulness course. Bizewski said, “It is my hope that through this course students will be able to develop a growth mindset and create a ‘toolbox’ of coping strategies for the stressors they experience in their lives.”



“MEPHAM CARRIES ON!”

This unprecedented school year started with questions, concerns, and confusion. Ten weeks in, students, staff and faculty alike are keeping calm and carrying on in each of our classes, every day. Our routines at home have become the new normal at school: masks worn all day, sanitizers galore, and communicating through a computer screen. Teachers don headphones or headsets and students are excused from class for a “drink break” or “mask break.” QR codes and security guards are maintaining safety at each bathroom. We even pulled off a Covid Halloween in style! School is definitely not the same as before, but we are managing through more than we ever thought possible. Each member of our school and district deserves a big thanks and tons of appreciation for what we have achieved these past 10 weeks. **So JOB WELL DONE EVERYONE!!!**

That said, Mepham recently gave a formal thanks to our much deserving BMUST Union team for a specific reason: “Every minute there is another change, another email, another responsibility, another student going virtual. Behind each one of those emails and changes is our dedicated BMUST team. We know our team has been working endless hours since March, especially Rob Walsh, Bill Morris, and Heather

Castellano, to ensure our safety and sanity. We know we all appreciate all they have done”. So **THANK YOU** Heather, Bill, and Rob and our amazing reps, Heather, Kelly, Lisa, Andrew, David, Stel, Brad & Gregg!



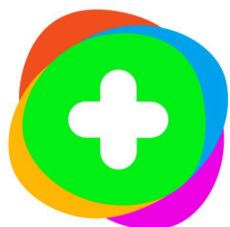
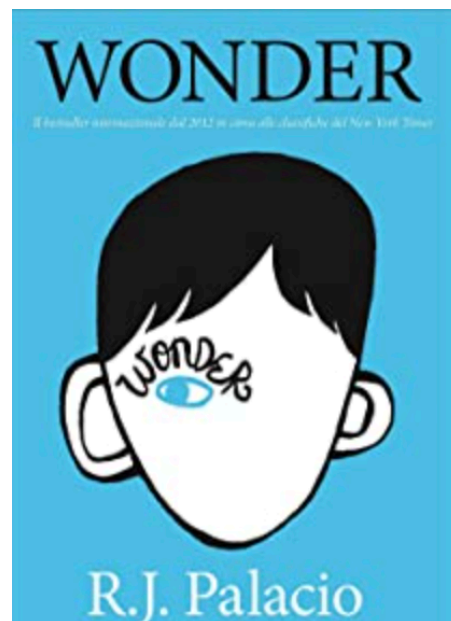
“The Wonder of It All: Podcasting at MAP”

BY LAURA SHERIDAN (M.A.P.), LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER

For several years now, Zachary Gosse and his Leadership class have read *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio and watched the film starring Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson. As an accompaniment to that unit, the students have created a kindness discussion podcast.

The basic premise is this: students connect the book to the modern world and then brainstorm solutions for real-life problems that focus on empathy, friendship, anti-bullying, and being kind rather than being right. Students generate discussion questions and vote to narrow those questions down to three. They then “record their responses to the three discussion questions. They are also responsible for replying to at least one other student's recording.”

Life in the time of COVID has made this project especially challenging because in past years it has been based on a round-table approach. Mr. Gosse is one of our most adventurous staff members when it



Flipgrid

comes to utilizing technology. The way he explains it, “Normally we would record our podcast using a microphone on

Garageband.” Not so easy to do from behind plastic barriers at a distance of 6’. This has forced Zach to dip into the store of virtual platforms we have at our disposal these days: “Because we can't all sit around a table and have an open discussion in front of the microphone, I chose to record responses on Flipgrid. This will give the students an opportunity to reply to their peers' responses in a socially distant manner.” *Wonderful!*

*Best regards,
Laura*

"SERVICE & LEARNING"

BY BRUCE REED, (JFK H.S.), LOCAL DO'S EDITOR

Multi-Faith Forum

A District-wide Multi-Faith Forum was held at JFK in collaboration with Ms. Keele's and Mr. Walsh's 9th grade Global History students. Students were connected with fellow peers at Calhoun and Mephram schools using Zoom technology. Students were able to interact with the hosts to explore the origins and practices of world beliefs, including Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism. Congratulations to all involved in this noble effort!



National French Week

National French Week was celebrated under the auspices of Paul Cirino. Students celebrated French culture in daily life. French cuisine was showcased in a game where students designed "patisserie posters." The posters were displayed in the World Language wing at JFK High School. Well done, students!

New Social Studies Honor Society

The Social Studies Department held its first induction of the Rho Kappa, the National Honor Society for Social Studies. This society provides national recognition for outstanding students, and encourages an interest in, understanding of, and appreciation for the social studies. Kara McManus addressed the students during the ceremony, saying "You are here today because you excelled in your Social Studies classes and because you have engaged in many service opportunities. Your induction today reflects your love for history, geography, economics, and civics. You recognize the importance of studying the past and you've been inspired by the heroes, activists, and leaders you've studied along the way. And today, you inspire us!" Congratulations to the Rho Kappa members of the Social Studies Department and to their teachers who inspired them to pursue this recognition.



“STAYING THE COURSE”

BY LISA SHAPIRO (MERRICK AVE M.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

It feels great to be back! Sometimes it almost feels like the status quo, but then you remember the mask. Then another barrier falls to the ground and somehow that incites a domino effect of more, crashing to the floor. I know I can't possibly be alone in my fantasy of taking every single one and throwing them out the window into a dumpster, filled with flames outstretched, ready to make these damn barriers a mere part of our history. If only! One day, this too shall pass.

This year is unlike any other, and I am sure many of us are not alone in our whimsical fantasies of wishing for old times; times when the network wouldn't cooperate but in hindsight was no big deal, times when our faces were not riddled with “maskne” and times when we were not dissecting exactly what the CDC guidelines mean for today, and praying that the unfamiliar number screaming from our phones



is not that of a contact tracer. The tired is different too; we are over-speaking, struggling to hear, and giving our students more of ourselves than we would on an average day, because we need to amp up the getting to know you process and on a dime, we could be -GULP- remote all over again.

We have defied the odds of what many of us thought would be a near instant shut down, so for as long as we're here, we are all making the best of it. Intra-murals and clubs are finally underway and it is nice to see the kids congregating accordingly on the fields after school, rather than immediately at Starbucks on the corner of Merrick Avenue and Camp. It's nice to see kids showing up in person to clubs, excitedly sharing ideas that the advisors will help to get off the ground amidst the restrictions and rules. We battle this invisible yet bold virus daily, as do our students. IT IS EXHAUSTING. But we are doing it.

We are doing hard things. We are succeeding. Just look at us, look at you. I wish I could tell you of the many amazing accomplishments and events we have participated in since September at Merrick Avenue, but I am just as pleased to share that we are showing up, doing our thing, perhaps with more verve after realizing the best teaching takes place in front of a live audience. We continue to adjust and accommodate and most importantly, laugh and enjoy the little things as a RAMily.

“THE NEW NORMAL AT GAMS”

BY STACI PEKUSIC (GRAND AVE M.S.),
LOCAL DO'S WRITER

Welcome back to a new school year, to the “new normal.” We expected the fall to bring a new surge of the Coronavirus; what we did not expect, despite all the well-organized preparations for a smooth-as-possible return to school, was the overwhelming exhaustion of it all. “Toggling” is part of the jargon now, as in “I am toggling between two screens to take attendance.” So are “mask breaks,” “remote learning,” “in-person,” and hybrid.” It’s all so weird.

At Grand, we have seen our trapezoid tables replaced with new desks. The cafeteria tables have been moved to the gym, and barrier-covered, individual desks have taken their place in the lunchrooms. Lunch periods are split: Eighth-graders spend half the period in the auditorium and the other half eating in the cafeteria, while the seventh-graders eat in the gym. The library is strangely quiet. We have learned to adapt, however. We have now found a new routine, and some changes are actually for the better. Corralling students in three locations before the first bell has certainly solved the problem of a.m. crowds near the auditorium, and lunchtime seems more sedate. The up-and-down-staircase rule is being successfully implemented again. The silence in the library is peaceful. Also, we can rest assured that our door handles, telephone headsets, Chromebooks, and iPads are all sanitized.

We are doing the best we can with an almost impossible task. We can’t say how long this “new normal” will last, but we can at least take the good with the bad and be a little optimistic. Despite the challenges and tiredness, as usual, we’ve got this.



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