



CAMBRIDGE STREET UPPER SCHOOL

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October 30, 2017

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Mix It Up day

On October 27th our annual Mix It Up Day took place during our WIN period. The typical format of Mix It Up Day includes mixing scholars with peers they don't normally sit with at lunch. This year we changed the format given the push back we received from scholars. Some did not want to participate in Mix It Up Day during lunch, which is the only time they have to socialize with friends. With that in mind, Student Council scholars came up with an alternative plan. This year participation in Mix It Up Day took place in WIN classes and was followed by a structured discussion led by students. 6th grade scholars were mixed up together and 7th and 8th grade scholars were combined by subject areas. The agenda began with a World Map activity where scholars identified their country of origin. The next activity for Mix It Up Day highlighted cliques and the impact they have on scholars. 8th grade scholars served as facilitators and led discussions that focused on being inclusive of everyone. A great amount of positive feedback was received from both scholars and staff who hope to see more scholar facilitated activities throughout the year.

Spirit Week

Last week CSUS celebrated Spirit Week with a focus on anti-bullying, breast cancer awareness, school spirit, diversity and inclusion. The week culminated with this year's first school dances. Everyone who attended had a blast! 6th grade scholars enjoyed their first upper school dance with a lot of dancing, selfies & pizza! At the 7th and 8th grade dance scholars jumped right onto the dance floor! It was a great week to celebrate success at CSUS!

Homophobia at CSUS - from the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Members

Introduction: It seems like there is an increase of anti-gay slang at CSUS. Scholars and staff hear phrases like "That's so gay," "Are you a f*g or something?," and offensive slurs such as "D**e" and "Fa***t" from some scholars in reference to others.

Why is it a problem to use this language? Just like other derogatory racial terms directed towards Latinos, Chinese, Japanese, and the use of the "N word" in regards to African Americans, these words have been used to divide people, "us against them," or "my group is better than yours." It pushes people away and says, "Your kind is not welcome here."

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What do these words mean? The disparaging terms *F*g* and *fa**ot* are directed toward boys and men who are perceived to be attracted to other men. Whereas, *d**e* is directed toward women who are attracted to other women. All these terms, regardless of intent, are rude, insensitive, and insulting.

What does it feel like to hear these words? These terms make our scholars feel different, disrespected, awkward, violated, insulted, hurt, unsafe, disgusted, and foreign. Ms. Tracey, the 7th grade Social Studies teacher, said this: "It would make me think that someone would need some sort of an education. I would wonder if they knew if it was hurtful or if it was just another meaningless slang word."

What can you/we do about it? As we respect parental choices in matters related to sexuality, we encourage conversations at home about this hurtful and insulting language. Please encourage love, respect, and caring in your children regardless of another's race, religion, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation. We are pleased that we have a school administration that has stressed that homophobia and other forms of bigotry will not be tolerated at CSUS.

Thank you, Members of the GSA

Diversity Dialogues

On October 26th we held this year's first Diversity Dialogues event. Caregivers, staff, community members, visitors from Weston public schools and CSUS alumni were all in attendance. They watched a video of former and current CSUS scholars discussing how race and cultural differences affect their lives both in and out of school. The video was recorded last school year, as staff interviewed groups of scholars who identify as black boys, white boys and girls, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ and a group of scholars who immigrated to the US. In the videos, scholars reflect on how racial and cultural issues affect teaching and learning in both subtle and overt ways. They also discuss what it's like to be labeled and/or seen as what they appear to be on the outside instead of who they are on the inside - intelligent and capable. In the video, scholars expressed a need to see their cultures studied and affirmed in class and for our school community to create a more inclusive environment, full of respect for differences and to be sensitive to language that is offensive. Many scholars cited the variety of opportunities that CSUS provides for them to feel included and affirmed while offering ways in which we can improve.

After watching the video, attendees reflected on the important take-aways we gained from the scholar voices and how to learn from them moving forward. Candid conversations ensued about our experiences talking (or not talking) about race and being affected by racial injustices both personal and systemic. The discussions were powerful, sensitive and poignant, and confirmed our belief that these discussions need to continue in our community. We hope you can join us on Dec. 14th for the next Diversity Dialogues. Details to follow.

MCAS

Please be advised that the 2017 MCAS scores have arrived. Coincidentally first quarter grades close on November 3rd. Your child's scores and first quarter progress report will be sent to you via postal mail no later than November 17th. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Ms. Robinson at trobinson@cpsd.us or [617-349-3050](tel:617-349-3050).

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School Site Council

On Nov. 15th, the School Site Councils of King Open, Cambridgeport and Fletcher- Maynard Academy will meet at King Open for the first of several joint meetings this year. The agenda will focus on 5th grade transition and collaboration between all 4 schools. Upcoming meetings will include presentations on: Health and Wellness, 8th grade transition to high school, ELA, Math, Restorative Practices, Social Media, and Special education. Look for a special invite to our December meeting.

PCO

The CSUS Parent Caregiver Organization (PCO) will have its next meeting on Wednesday, November 8th, at 6:30 pm in room 312 of the school. Everyone is welcome and invited to join the group in the following discussions: funding Diversity Dialogues nights and author visits, 8th grade trip fundraising, improving communications between the CSUS teachers/administration and parents, and upcoming CSUS initiatives with Cambridgeport, King Open and Fletcher Maynard Academy. If you can't make it to this meeting but want to stay in the loop, just visit www.cambridgestreetpco.org and scroll down to click on the link that says "Sign Up for Our Newsletter." The PCO is always open to all parents and caregivers of CSUS students, and meetings are attended by either Principal Fernandez or Assistant Principal Sohn and a teacher representative as well. Come join us for friendly conversation and to learn more about the school.

Thanks for your continued support. We understand that you have choices and we appreciate you choosing CSUS!

Peace,

Manuel J. Fernandez
Head of School

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