

The Pond Street Press

A Publication of Cohasset Middle School Students



February 2022 Issue

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School News

Keeping Up with the Mask Mandates

By Janet O'Carroll

On several occasions this winter, the CMS morning announcements have included an update to the mask policy. The reason is that the Cohasset School Committee has put the mask issue to vote at many meetings this winter, adjusting the mask policy at the district's four schools in response to vaccination rates and state guidelines.

As of February 28th 2022, the State of Massachusetts is going to officially lift the mask mandate for schools throughout the state. Currently, masks are optional for all students and staff at CMS, CHS, and Deerhill Schools, regardless of vaccination status. However, on Wednesday February 16th 2022, the Cohasset School Committee will discuss and vote to decide if Joseph Osgood School will have masks be optional for students and staff beginning February 28th 2022. They will also determine if masks will be required of visitors in all or any of the buildings and if masks will be required in the nurses' offices.

In early February, CPS received official permission from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for masking to be optional for all students and staff at Deer Hill Elementary School due to the school's 80% vaccination rate.



On January 19th, 2022, the Cohasset School Committee met to discuss the mask mandate because the CMS population reached the 80% vaccination rate. Their decision was to allow fully vaccinated students to have the option of wearing a mask.

As mask mandates were lifted in the high school and middle school in January, The BoH (Board of Health) still **strongly recommended** that all students and staff continue to wear masks throughout the month of January.

Before the February 28th mask mandate, Elementary schools were still required for all of the elementary schools in the district. All students and staff in the Middle school and High school **must** wear masks in the nurses' offices and on the school buses because of the federal law. Visitors are also required to wear masks in all of the schools in the district regardless of vaccination status.

(Image Credit: <https://consumer.healthday.com/>)

Teachers Weigh in on Changes to Mask Policy

By Eva Harries and Catherine Willock

As you have probably heard, the mandate on masks has recently been changed due to an 80% vaccination rate across CMS. We wanted to see how a couple teachers felt about the altered policy, so we interviewed two CMS educators.

First, we interviewed Mrs. Duggan, the grade 7 ELA teacher, to get her opinion on the decision. “My husband is in the healthcare field and he tells me a lot about what's happening on the situation,” Mrs. Duggan told us. Because of her constant updates from her husband, she said she was a bit surprised when the rule was passed, though she didn't think any decisions would be made that would put kids in harm's way. “I'm comfortable not wearing a mask, and I respect people's right to wear a mask if they want.”

Additionally, we interviewed Señorita Lima, the grade 6 Spanish teacher and got her opinion on the matter. “I think that the mask mandate being lifted was the wrong decision, especially since there has been a recent surge of Covid,” she exclaimed to us. “I really don't think that Covid is over, but I know that the decision is ultimately up to the School Committee.”

Throughout the school, teachers have a wide spectrum of differing opinions pertaining to the newly-altered mask mandate. Some teachers disagree with the decision while others are all for it, but overall, the decision came down to the School Committee.



Black History Month

By Nora Khan and Campbell Schiebel

Black History Month is a time where culture, history, and black influential voices are recognized. Throughout the month of February, Cohasset Middle School (CMS) is making an effort to commemorate the successes of the black community.

The CMS Diversity group has collaborated with student council members in memory of Martin Luther King's (MLK's) achievements throughout his fight for civil rights. Numerous posters were created to further educate students and administration on the drastic changes that were made because of his belief system and his inspirational role as an African American leader.

Our goal in the Diversity Committee is to celebrate black voices that may not be perceived or recognized. The importance of recognizing minorities is to help our community flourish in order to educate our students on the contributions black people have made for the betterment of our society. Not only will we recognize the hardships that people of color have faced in the past, but also the achievements and cultural impact they have made on America today.

Black culture has created a more diverse environment in America. Thanks to the millions of African Americans who have added to the development of our society, we can confidently say that times have changed throughout the history of American culture.

Through many empowering social justice events, many prominent advancements have created a deep rooted cultural impact into what the United States is today. One of the most influential and noticeable movements in African American history was the Harlem Renaissance. In the 1920's, the Harlem Renaissance began, a movement that heavily embraced music, literature, and visual arts created by black individuals. It made way for a cultural awakening in the black community, and actively challenged racist stereotypes by including racial and social integration in their art, as well as other progressive beliefs. The main objective was to truthfully represent African Americans for who they were, and to appreciate and support them during more than a decades worth of extreme discrimination and bigotry.

The Harlem Renaissance wasn't the last of black voices, the Black Lives Matter movement has created awareness on social justice issues that minorities face, and shined light on the successes of millions of black

businesses. Relating these cultural events to CMS, we can learn to celebrate ethnic differences, and begin to recognize the beauty of different practices. This will increase the level of diverse thinking at our school and the world as a whole.

(Image Credit: Gonzanga.edu)

MCAS Strikes Again

By Quinn Kearney

The MCAS assessment may strike some negative emotions from students, but it is a great way to represent the school and what we have learned. MCAS may have been strange these past few years, but it's back and making a strong reappearance.

First off, the MCAS assessment will be taken in April and May. The ELA MCAS will be taken on April 4 & 5 for grades 6 and 7, and April 6 & 7 for grade 8. That's right. *Two* days will be necessary for these exams. The last time the MCAS required two days for each subject was three years ago. That means that if you are an eighth grader, the last time this happened was when you were in *fifth grade*. Now back to the dates. If you are in sixth or seventh grade, you can breathe a sigh of relief, because you don't have to take the



science MCAS. Eighth graders however will take this MCAS exam on May 9 & 10.

The math MCAS will be taken on May 12 & 13 by the sixth and seventh graders, and May 17 & 18 by the eighth graders.

So, maybe you aren't a fan of the MCAS and wish it didn't have to happen. If this is the case, just remember that it is a great way to show off what we have learned as students in our academic career.

Snow Day

By Sari Reyes

Nothing is better than waking up in a winter wonderland and a report that school is canceled. After last year's lack of snow days and abundance of Zoom, many believed snow days went extinct. However, on January 7th a precipitation miracle brought snow and no school!

On January 7th, Cohasset along with many other districts, decided to cancel school due to the 8-10 inches of snow that were predicted. The weather did not disappoint and brought many inches of snow that were the perfect texture for sledding, snow ball fights, and building snowmen! Cohasset called the snow day surprisingly early. Once the snow day was announced on the previous day, children were already planning sledding events and hot chocolate hangouts. The snow day fell on a Friday, which gave everyone a three-day weekend break, after the first week back from winter break.

This snow day was a hope for many students. Cohasset schools didn't send students home with work and let them take the day off and enjoy the snow! Last year, Cohasset experienced 1-2 snowdays, and both were filled with zoom and/or work. A classic snow day was needed!



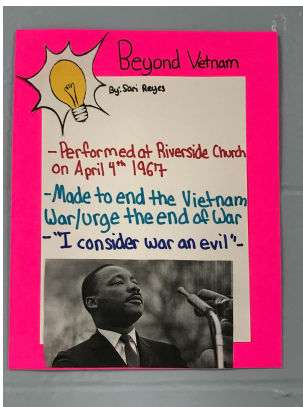
January 7th 2022 was for many, a blessing filled with all the necessities of snow days. Let's just hope more snow comes our way!

MLK Day

By Malone Yemini

On January 17, we had no school to acknowledge Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. I'm sure that at some point you have read books or sat through many lessons on who this man is, so that's not what I will talk about. My main reason for writing this article was to make sure our school acknowledges this amazing man enough.

In elementary school, Martin Luther King Jr. day included things such as reading a book or making an art project. In class, we would write quotes and draw pictures. I remember spending quite a bit of time learning about MLK so I was interested to see if Cohasset Middle School does the same thing.



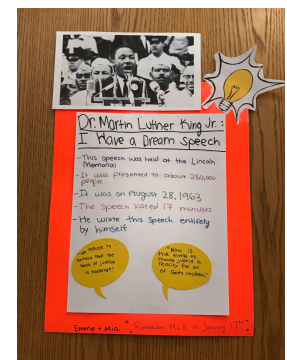
I began by interviewing Mrs. Melia, the 8th grade English teacher and the teacher supervising *Pond Street Press*. In her class, the students will read *To Kill A Mockingbird*, a novel set in the 1930s, which was before the Civil Rights Movement. Students are learning about what African Americans' lives were like during slavery and after slavery was abolished, but

when the Jim Crow Laws resulted in discrimination. I think this is a great idea to help students realize how important Martin Luther King Jr. was to the Civil Rights Movement which resulted in the Jim Crow Laws becoming illegal.

When walking through the halls, you may have seen some of the posters displayed. Students were given the opportunity to create posters showcasing Martin Luther King Jr. and his amazing accomplishments. The posters were bright, colorful, and hard to miss!

There was also a trivia contest to see how much you know about MLK. There was a question and students wrote down their guess and submitted it. The winners were Amelia Gardner from 7th grade and Maddie Campbell also from 7th grade! This was a creative way to get students thinking about Martin Luther King Jr.!

I decided to interview Mrs. Ryan who helped organize the week-long MLK campaign. She collaborated with the Student Council and the Diversity Club. The reason they wanted to start this campaign was because they felt that not many kids knew



much more about MLK beyond his speech "I Have A Dream". It was an amazing speech but there is so much more to Martin Luther King Jr. than that.

Another purpose for starting the campaign was to give a kick start to Black History Month which takes place in February. Kids in the Student Council volunteered to create the posters to help kids with the answers to the trivia questions. If kids wanted to participate in the trivia competition they would submit their responses to the question into a small bucket. Someone was then randomly chosen from the bucket. If you won you got a giftcard to Nona's!

Our school taught kids about MLK in an engaging and fun way! Overall I thought kids must've learned interesting facts about Martin Luther King Jr. and had fun reading the posters to answer the trivia questions and win the prizes!

High School on the Horizon

By Declan Bergan and Eli Kagel

8th Graders - Have you thought about what courses to take in high school?

As we welcome springtime, we also realize that our 2021-2022 school year and middle school experience will be coming to a close before we all know it. Some time in March, we will have an assembly to learn about the high school courses and course options for next year. Eighth graders will likely be pleasantly surprised at the range of choices they will have.

We suspect most CMS students are excited to be advancing to the next grade. For 8th graders, this can be a bittersweet time as even more layers of our youth are shed as we accept increased responsibilities and opportunities as part of maturing and becoming high school students. One opportunity is the numerous electives and classes we will have the option to take. Regardless of what your future career and personal dreams are, how you avail yourself of opportunities presented at CHS and use your time in high school can influence and change your future.

One of the first and most striking differences about high school course curriculum is that many core subjects are offered on a semester basis, not school year basis. This means that you may take two different classes for English whereas, at CMS you took one class for ELA each year. The semester based offering is similar to our Wellness/PE, Art, Music, STEM, and other electives on a semester basis. The semester basis approach means greater diversity in students' course pathways during high school. If you compared four students, you could find each of them have dramatically different course pathways

through CHS and not just which classes they took but when they took them. If you have certain goals you would like to accomplish in high school, you will have to pay particular attention to designing your pathway so that you both achieve the necessary prerequisites in time to take the courses you want to take, but also that the course you want to take is offered at that time.

At CHS, academic courses are categorized as College Preparatory (CP), Accelerated and Advanced Placement (AP). CP is College Preparatory and is the foundational level for the course. Accelerated is like our accelerated courses at CMS where you tend to go through the material faster to allow for more exploration of the material, whether in content or application of the learnings. AP is Advanced Placement and is college-level content, pace, and application of material. At the end of the AP course you can elect to take the AP exam and if you score well enough you may receive credit from your college and be waived out of taking that course in college.

CHS also offers electives in many subjects. Electives are courses that delve into subjects and areas of interest that regular courses might not. These courses can offer students the opportunity to further their study and engage on a deeper level.

Eighth graders, keep an eye out for the assembly announcement. You'll soon begin charting your course for high school.

H.S. Seniors Flash Back to Middle School

By Saoirse O'Duggan and Madison Williams

Seniors in the class of 2022 are getting ready to graduate this spring, and we decided to take them down memory lane to middle school. We asked two seniors, Lilly Wallingford and Connor Nicholls, a few questions regarding their middle school experience. We wanted to share some of our favorite responses.

In response to the question "What is your favorite memory from middle school?" Lilly reminded us about the normalization of braces. Lilly replied, "Everyone had braces and those who didn't, wanted to have them. The one good thing about braces was that they were a unifying factor for everyone, and no one felt embarrassed to have them."

We liked Connor's response to our second question, his favorite memory from middle school. The 8th grade semi-formal dance of Connor's class is something he has always remembered. "I remember feeling a sense of pride and excitement that I was becoming a 'high schooler.'"

We asked Lilly and Conner "What advice would you give a middle school student now?" Lilly answered, "I would suggest that they try their best and put as much effort in as they can, but not to get too stressed over grades. Every student will get a fresh start in high school and middle school grades will have no effect on them after they start 9th grade."

Connor said, "The advice I would give to all middle school students is to enjoy every moment you have in your three years there. Although it seems long, it goes by quickly, so it's important to appreciate the little things. Coming from me, I'm in my final year of high school. I try to go about every day with a positive mindset because each day that passes is one less day before it's over."

Connor and Lilly also shared their biggest regret with us. Lilly's biggest regret: "When I was in middle school I was worried that taking Standard English meant that I was not as good of a student as my other classmates who were in accelerated English, and thought it may put me at a disadvantage for high school. However, when I got to high school and took accelerated English for the first time, I realized that I had nothing to worry about."

Lilly and Connor also shared their favorite middle school teachers. Lilly's favorite middle school teacher was Mrs. Jewell. "The joy and brightness she brought to every class is what inspired me to pursue engineering in college." Connor couldn't pick just one teacher. "With that being said, a few of my favorites were Mrs. Jewell, Mrs. Noble, Señora Barry, and Mrs. Duggan."

Thank you Connor and Lilly for your words of wisdom and sharing your middle school memories. We wish you all the best in your future!

New Middle School Building Update

By Grace Kiernan and Sienna Marshak

You might remember the Pond Street Press's previous article focused on the possibility of a new school. We have new information regarding the progress. Cohasset School Committee Chairman, Mr. Craig MacLellan, recently updated us on the progress.

He explained, "...the exploration efforts for a new school in our district are still in early stages." Recently, the School Facilities Committee voted to select a design firm to create an "Existing Conditions Study." This will assess the status of all of our other school buildings and help identify areas of regard within each building.

Mr. MacLellan added, "Concurrently, the School Facilities Committee is in the process of drafting a "Statement of Interest" for submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority's CORE program."

MSBA is the state authority that inspects drafts from interested Massachusetts' towns. They consider whether it will allow the given town to participate in its CORE program, which supplies financial and other assistance in the construction of new schools. The selection process is based on a number of factors, including the overall needs of a district compared to others.

The Statement of Interest is the formal notice to the MSBA that Cohasset would like to be considered for the CORE program. The Statement of Interest is due in late April and selections are ultimately made by the MSBA in December - February 2023.

Mr. MacLellan said that in the near future, the School Facilities Committee will be writing an update to our entire community about this project and will host public forums to encourage conversation. He also wrote "It is important to remember that this is a community-wide decision and that no project will move forward unless it is in line with the clear will of the community."

Stay tuned for more information on this possible project of a new school building and we will keep you updated!

Something for Everyone After School

By Saoirse O'Duggan

After school enrichment clubs are a fun way to educate yourself on a new topic and make or hang out with friends. A few clubs that are held after school are photography, robotics, beast mode fitness, cooking, choir and jazz band. There is an afterschool club for everyone, and after reading this article, I hope you will find a club you love.

Seventh grader Grace Kiernan participated in choir last year, and shared, "So I thought I'd do it again." Grace added that unlike last year, the choir club will get to perform at the holiday concert this year.

If singing isn't your thing, then maybe you'd like the cooking club. In the cooking club they make food that they are able to take home afterwards. Still not interested, what about the photography club? In this after school program you learn photography tips and participate in fun projects. You can also learn how to take professional-looking photos and get to work with cool camera equipment. If nothing has caught your eye, there are many other clubs that we're sure will spark your interest and present great opportunities to showcase all of your skills.

The Rec Center: A Cure for the Winter Blues

By Sari Reyes

As the New Year begins, more resolutions and reflections come into place. 2021 was a very successful year for many, and the Rec Center is no exception. Get excited for 2022! There will be at least one event at the Rec Center each month to look forward to. A special surprise will be coming out soon too!

During the holiday season, the Rec Center hosted a holiday event featuring snacks, popcorn, games and lots of laughter and fun. The event was very

successful with 20+ people attending. A gingerbread house competition and dreidel games were added along with the Rec's regular electronic and in person games.

After three of the Rec Center's very successful events, the Rec Center has decided to create a monthly movie night! Once a month, you and your friends can hop down to the Rec Center and enjoy a fun movie night. The movie nights will have snacks and beverages provided along with the option of vending machine snacks!

As the sweet month of February arrives, the Rec Committee has decided to create a sugary treat activity featuring the iconic candy hearts. Down at the Rec Center, you will find a table featuring a jar filled with candy hearts. Your job is to guess the amount of candies in the jar. The closest guess will receive a gift card to Peel Pizza! Our next movie night will be in March!

March will also bring a new project that the Rec Center and even the town can enjoy! This secret project will feature town residents' opinions, special events and entertainment!

The new year is certainly not going to disappoint, so get excited for 2022! The Rec Center's bimonthly movie hangouts, holiday events and special surprises are something to mark your new calendars for!

Student Council Updates

By Grace Kiernan

The Student Council in 2022 is still running strong! The whole StuCo had their second open meeting since the beginning of the school year on December 10th. According to 8th Grade Press Secretary, Mia Peeples, they spent the meeting brainstorming ideas for spirit week on the week of 12/20. Some ideas were Holiday Festivity Day, Pajama Movie Day, Character Dress Up Day and Fandom Day. In addition to coming up with spirit week ideas, they also decided that students would be watching a movie the day before break starts and that a different movie would be playing in each utility, in each grade, so students can pick the movie they would like to watch the most.

At the meeting on December 14th, StuCo spent most time making posters for the upcoming spirit week. The decided themes were Monday-Character Day,

Tuesday-Festivus Day, Wednesday-Comfy Cozy Day. They also made a survey so that students could choose what movie they would like to see the most.

At the January 4th meeting, StuCo discussed that the Winter Formal, which was supposed to be at the end of January, has been postponed due to the new spikes in Covid-19 cases. Since the focus was now off the dance, they discussed MLK day plans. Some ideas were making posters, researching interesting facts about him, and making a video with students saying quotes. The 8th Grade Student Council also talked about possibly asking Mr. Mills if the 8th grade could switch to first lunch so that they could have a longer, uninterrupted utility. The possibility of students being able to use their phones during times like break was also discussed.

On January 25th, the Student Council talked about having a dodgeball tournament before April break and fun activities to thank the teachers later on in the year. They also discussed Valentine's Day ideas such as maybe doing candy grams or treats, and a red, pink and white spirit day.

On February 2nd, StuCo had a full meeting with officers and subcommittee members, and discussed Valentine's ideas, and created a fun surprise which students enjoyed on Valentine's Day.

Editorials

Bathrooms are for One Purpose

By Luke Hurley

Some kids just go to the bathroom, some just go there for a break from class, and some go there to use their phones. My opinion is that you should not use your phone in the restrooms because it is a place where you should go to the bathroom. It's a bit annoying because when you walk into the bathroom and you see someone on their phone, they try to hide it. But why? I see it already. That's not all that students bring into the bathroom. Kids also bring in their airpods. Why do you

bring your airpods in the bathroom? They can fall on the floor or worse. The floor is very disgusting in the bathroom. In conclusion, students should not bring your phone into the bathroom and should keep it in their backpack when school starts.

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