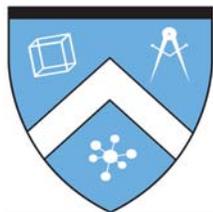


Columbia Secondary School Newsletter

January-February 2014
Volume 2, Issue 3



M362 – CSS
Columbia Secondary School
for Math, Science & Engineering

The CSS Production of HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

Friday, 2/7, 7 p.m.
Saturday, 2/8, 2 p.m.
Saturday, 2/8, 7 p.m.
Sunday, 2/9, 5 p.m.

*Suggested donation: \$6 in advance,
\$8 at the door. Advance purchase
recommended. Friday's show will
definitely sell out and others may
as well. Purchase tickets from
Roxana Bosch in the OSS.*

Coming up...

In addition to the four
performances of
High School Musical,
mark your calendars for:

- ◆ Philosophy Roundtable for
parents, students, admin.
Thurs., 2/6, 6-7:30 p.m.
- ◆ PTA Meeting
Agenda: Earth Day
Tues, 2/11, 6-7:30 p.m.
- ◆ SLT Meeting
Thurs., 2/13, 3:45 p.m.
- ◆ Valentines Bake Sale
Friday, 2/14
- ◆ February Break
Mon, 2/17-Fri., 2/23
- ◆ CSS Future Cities Expo
Wednesday, 2/26
- ◆ Black History Celebration
Friday, 2/28

Be on the lookout for
announcements of
"Breakfast with the
Principal" in March.

Miriam Nightengale, *Principal*
Lenice Nelson, *Assistant Principal*
Dan Novak, *Assistant Principal*
Andi Velasquez, *Parent Coordinator*

Letter From Our Principal

Dear CSS Community,

It may be cold outside, but things are heating up at CSS. January's PTA meeting was terrific. It was well attended by CSS parents who enthusiastically asked questions, traded perspectives and gave suggestions to help make our school even better.

In case you missed it, here are some of many items that were discussed: CSS has started its own endowment fund with a \$1 million donation. In addition, the donor will continue to give CSS \$100,000 per year for our college office. Speaking of college, CSS seniors have received early college acceptances to schools including Columbia, Barnard, MIT, Mt. Saint Mary, Cal Tech, Fordham, SUNY New Paltz, Providence College, St. John University and more. Students have been offered full scholarships to Vanderbilt, Wesleyan, the University of Wisconsin and Middlebury.

New courses in the humanities and

languages have been added to our Columbia University course catalog, in addition to math and science. The HS government initiative Pride Fridays has been approved, allowing HS students to wear T-shirts showing a CSS event or activity. On the facilities front, school bathrooms should be renovated by November and new classroom construction will begin this year.

We had great discussions about upcoming events, a CSS Earth Day fundraiser, efforts to put out a Middle School yearbook, and having special topics at meetings and workshops. Our first one, "Tweens, Teens & Screens" took place January 28. If you have ideas for a topic or a guest speaker, please contact Andi Velasquez (andivelasquez@columbiasecondary.org)

I attend all PTA meetings and look forward to seeing you at our next one, Tuesday, February 11 at 6 p.m. in the third floor library.

—Miriam Nightengale

CSS To Present *High School Musical* Feb. 7, 8 & 9

While its songs are probably more familiar to CSS students than from any other production, Disney's "High School Musical" was not even on the radar last fall when discussions were held for possible choices for this year's Columbia Secondary School musical production.

"We needed something that would feature students of different grades, support a large cast, feature dance and singing, and was accessible to the kids," says Professor Meredith Hill, the founder and coordinator of the school's highly successful theater program and co-director of the production. The more "High School Musical" was

discussed, the more it seemed a great choice for CSS, she added.

Recalling when she taught dance classes at the school in 2007-08, its founding year, Hill said the music to which her students most wanted to dance was from the immensely popular made for television Disney musical. "This is coming full circle for 12th graders," she said of those then-sixth and seventh graders. "The seniors, who have really grown to trust us in the theater program, said this was an awesome choice."

And an awesome choice it was. CSS's High School Musical casting forms

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Musical Brings Students Full Circle

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perfect parallels to the musical itself. Just as *High School Musical* tells the story of basketball star Troy and science-loving "brainiac" Gabriella finding their way to the school musical, the CSS musical features a cast of some CSS Musical Regulars -- alongside some new auditioners. "We ended up with a whole posse of senior boys who had never done a musical before," Hill said. "We joke that it's just like the show. The CSS sports stars coming to the musical. It's been fun to see kids new to theater embrace it."

Majoring in theater directing as an undergraduate at Barnard College, Hill grew up in Massachusetts doing musical theater, and wanted to pass this on to CSS students. The first CSS musical was "Seussical" in the spring of 2009, with students from the sixth and seventh grade, the only grades CSS had at the time. "I brought a friend who works on Broadway to musical direct," Hill recalled. "The faculty and parents were blown away." Next came the equally impressive "Once on this Island" in 2010 and "Thoroughly Modern Millie" in 2011.

Co-directing "High School Musical," following their collaboration in the wildly successful productions of "Annie" in 2011 and "Fame" in 2012, is Joey Brenneman, a professional theater director and mother of a sixth and a 12th grader at CSS. While Hill directs the choreography, Brenneman is the "scenic director," which includes directing the acting and bringing the scenes together. Rounding out the team is musical director Daniel Attridge, a CSS 10th grade English and 6th grade Latin Teacher. "It's exciting for students to know their teachers outside of their regular class. It builds energy and engagement," Hill said.

The many weeks of practice are coming to fruition for the 60 cast members and the students building sets, with Engineering Professor Phillip Hubbard, and those involved with stage lighting and sound, Hill said. The student dance captains, who have led dance rehearsals and have even done

some choreography, have also greatly helped, she commented.



HSM cast members at rehearsal

More help for "High School Musical" is needed: Parents can help with stage work, costumes and props; operating concession stands during performances; make-up and backstage help on show days; and with donations to help pay for the show. To volunteer or donate, please contact Andi Velasquez (OSS, 212 666-1278 x 637, andivelasquez@columbiasecondary.org.

1st Term Electives Are A Success!

The fall 2013 elective participation at CSS was high: 513 elective seats out of 665 students in classes like AP Spanish, underwater robotics, biking and collage. Arts electives accounted for 38% of seats, followed by 12% in science and 11% in math. Following are highlights from two electives, Future City and Green Team.

Future City Elective

The Future City Competition is a national, project-based learning experience where students in grades 6-8 grade imagine, design and build cities of the future. Under the leadership of Prof. Phillip Hubbard, ten CSS teams Jan. 18 participated in the NY Regional Competition. They won numerous awards, including seven specialty awards and 4th place overall. An additional 22 CSS students will exhibit in a CSS competition on Feb. 26 at 4 p.m. in the West Gym.

Green Team Elective & Green Update

According to a 2013 waste audit, on an average day CSS generates the following amounts of waste: 136.5 pounds of paper, 97.5 pounds of plastics/metal/glass, and 175.5 pounds of food waste. The CSS Green Team has been working hard to ensure that this waste doesn't end up in a landfill and that recycling is happening in the lunchroom and classrooms. Bins are in place, signage posted, fliers have been distributed to all students and teachers, and in-class trainings have taken place about procedures and reasons for recycling, composting, and waste reduction.

CSS was chosen by NYC's Office of Sustainability Management and the non-profit Grow NYC to be part of a composting pilot with 100 other schools. Our food waste is collected daily and sent to be turned into industrial grade compost and/or biofuel. Senior Jamie Feldman created a project that inspired the CSS community to compost at home.

Next semester the elective's focus will be on creating energy conservation awareness. We will kick off the discussion with a high school assembly on Feb. 5 by the Alliance for Climate Education. Please consider joining the Green Team spring elective. Help is also needed with monitoring the lunch trash sorting stations. You can earn community service and feel great about helping CSS be green!

Did You Know...

Siemens PLM Software, Columbia University and CSS have partnered to apply for a grant from the US Department of Labor for career and technical education. Eight New York City public schools are applying for a total of \$7 million. Thanks to parent Wayne Collier for helping to secure support from Siemens.