Letter From Our Principal

Dear CSS Community,

With the holidays approaching, I find myself thinking about the spirit of our community and the ways in which so many students, teachers and parents go above and beyond to help CSS provide experiences and education beyond what most other public schools can do on a public school budget. Just in the last month, teachers and staff have worked hours overtime putting together an incredible parade of events and experiences such as the Hispanic American Month festivities, the pre-college fair, a math-art festival, a field trip to the zoo for 100 students, participating in a UN conference, information sessions for students and parents, writing recommendation letters for colleges, holding open garden hours, bringing in guest speakers as diverse as Maasai warriors and state assemblymen, holding an NHS induction ceremony, participating in (and sometimes winning!) volleyball, soccer and cross country competitions, maintaining a stunning array of afterschool activities, and so much more, while continuing to provide high-quality instruction day in and day out. We have a truly talented and hard-working staff, and I am always inspired by their energy, motivation and commitment to their work and our students.

Speaking of our students, they have also turned out in force to volunteer and support every activity in the building. None of the events listed above could have taken place without the full participation and community service of our students. They have kept time for parent-teacher conferences, contributed to open houses, and helped set up, staff and break down every community event we have held this year. They have taken part in our local community’s participatory budgeting process, raised money for those less fortunate in other countries, started a can drive for the hungry, and served our community in so many ways. Their positive energy and growing potential rewards our work and is a joy to see.

Finally, a note of sincere gratitude to the many parents who provide for and support our school and make it possible to stretch our resources farther. From the donations they make to the PTA and Friends of CSS to the work they do with teachers and staff behind the scenes to manning events and contributing to bake sales and potlucks to providing food to hungry teachers on parent-teacher evenings and organizing picture day, our parents form a backbone without which we would simply not be able to operate at our current level. I am endlessly grateful to the parents who support our school with their time, energy and expertise.

Many, many warm holiday wishes to all of the faculty, parents and students of Columbia Secondary School who keep the spirit of giving in their hearts the entire year round and make our community a warm and special place.

With gratitude,
Miriam Nightengale
Celebrate the Season and Help CSS

This holiday season, there are lots of ways parents can help CSS. Following are some suggestions.

CSS Holiday Tree Sale
It’s that wonderful time of year again! Get into the holiday spirit early and support our school by ordering your tree now, through the CSS Christmas Tree Sale! Prices are competitive, the quality is excellent, you can’t beat the service, and you are supporting CSS!!!

There are a variety of heights (from 5’ - 10’) and styles (including Blue Spruce, Douglas Fir and Fraser Fir) to choose from. The deadline for orders is Dec 1. The trees are super-fresh, cut the day before delivery, in the heart of the Poconos. Baled with twine in a cone shape, your tree will be ready for pick-up at the school playground or delivered to your door (for an additional charge) on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Here are some comments from happy CSS Christmas tree customers:
...“The tree we got from our order is amazing, way better than anything we ever got on the streets.”
...“I have to say, our tree is the most beautiful tree we have ever had and what a fantastic deal it was...What a bargain and it is absolutely gorgeous.”

You can have your child pick up an order form from the OSS (room 503). Please spread the word to your family, friends and neighbors! Children should not be selling door to door and should only sell with a parent’s knowledge.
Questions? Contact parent volunteer Debbie Taylor-Kerman at 212-280-3876 or 917-446-1612.

BOX TOPS for Education
Cut out the Box Tops from everyday products that you already buy. Send them in to school with your child - to the OSS - or bring them to PTA meetings. Tons of brands have BoxTops, each worth 10 cents, which adds up fast! www.BTFE.com

Shop through iGive
This is a VERY easy way to help when you shop online. Use the link below and install the iGive toolbar on your browser. All of your eligible online purchases will then automatically generate a commission to CSS at NO COST to you! Spread the word on FB, letting friends and family know they can support your child’s school just by shopping online! www.iGive.com/ColumbiaSecondarySchoolPTA

Link your Target Card to CSS
Our school ID is 126433. If you already have a Target card, simply make sure that it’s linked to CSS. If you sign up for a new Target card, make sure you link it to CSS! Encourage family and friends to do the same! All linked purchases send a percentage of your sale to CSS at no cost to you. www.target.com/tcoe

You Can Learn A Lot at PTA Meetings!
At the first three PTA meetings of the school year, parents have learned about:

- The many ways parents can be involved at CSS, parent groups like the PTA, SLT and Friends of CSS; the District 5 Community Education Council and the Urban Advantage middle school science program.
- How to lighten backpack loads for our kids, locker organization and time management, and what kinds of backpacks to select for back health from Professor Meredith Hill and physical therapist and CSS parent Susan Calise.
- Issues that students face, types of support available to them and the CSS community service program, which is tracked/coordinated by middle school guidance counselor Amanda Robin and high school guidance counselor Elsa Cordoba, who gave presentations.
- The college counseling program at CSS from one of our terrific two full-time high school college counselors, Karlette Fuchs.

In addition learning about topics of interest, parents who attend meetings hear a school report from Principal Nightengale and learn about upcoming events and pending budget issues from PTA officers. Don’t miss our next meeting on December 9 at 6 p.m.!

Connect Online with CSS
Did you know that CSS has its own Facebook page? Liking the page will keep you informed about CSS events and accomplishments. By sharing photos and posts, you can spread the news about CSS! www.facebook.com/columbiasecondary

Our school’s public website, www.columbiasecondary.org, is a great source for school and community announcements; daily, monthly and school-year calendars; information about the school, parent groups, events and guidance (for middle school, high school and college); and much more.