

December 2019

Volume 12

Issue #5

Principal's Newsletter

Somers High School



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Winter is here! Snow, cold temps, and holiday school spirit is putting us in the mood for the upcoming days before our winter break. Staff and students have been great. Hard to believe that in a month midterm exams will begin. We will do our best to make sure your student(s) are ready.

PSAT 10/11 and PSAT 8/9 scores have been released on the CollegeBoard website. We also gave all 10/11 students a hardcopy of their report yesterday. Our math and English teachers will be reviewing the scores and overall data in order to determine where we need to make some concentrated efforts in order to increase all student scores when they test again.

Yesterday, all students were issued their ID badges. These badges will be needed in order for them to access student restrooms. Please see the attached instructions that were given to them yesterday. It is very important to either wear them around the neck or clip them on to their clothing. Replacement badges cost \$5.00 so protecting and securing them is paramount. No lending of badges to other students. We are always continuing to find ways to increase building safety while trying to limit issues that may be occurring in our restrooms.

Lastly, I want you to be aware that we are looking to modify our current rotating bell schedule. The rotation of periods does not allow us to have students attend college connection programs, work experiences, job shadowing opportunities, and/or apprenticeship experiences. In order for this to happen, we must keep some or all periods consistent so that students may leave the building early in order to attend these possibilities without losing class time. Many schools already offer their students these benefits. Our recent, community developed, 5-Year Strategic Plan incorporates this mindset. We will keep you posted accordingly.

In closing, I always maintain an open-door policy and am here to assist you. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any concerns. I am looking forward to working with each of you and in helping to make our school the best it can possibly be.

I truly hope you have a wonderful holiday and a very Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Cotzin
Principal
Somers High School

Spanish Class Sells Reusable Bags to Help the Environment



With the ever changing times in the world, the United Nations is meeting from December 2nd until the 13th in Madrid, Spain to discuss the next steps in the UN climate change process, and submit updated national climate action plans. Simultaneously, Mrs. Dunn's Honors Spanish Four Class has also been learning about environmental vocabulary and reading about sample projects in their textbook to help the environment. With the rising dangers of plastic bag usage, Connecticut has also recently instituted a new plastic bag fee in all stores to try and reduce the harmful impact of plastic on our planet.

With all of these events coinciding with each other, Mrs. Dunn's class came up with a great idea to do their part for the community and the environment as a whole.

The class began a project to create and sell reusable bags to teachers, students, and members of their community. Though it took a lot of planning and organization, they were able to create four groups focused on different pieces of the project. The first group designed an original picture for the bags, then brought it together by putting it onto the computer and a customizable template. The second

group then researched the topic of the UN climate change conference and found out what it was all about. After that, another group found the organization to donate to, WaterAid LAC, which helps to provide clean water in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Another group created posters and advertisements to promote the project, and the final group created a youtube video to further emphasize the cause. The link for the youtube video will be provided below.

Now, Mrs. Dunn's class needs your help to aid the environment! They are selling their reusable bags, December 16th-20th, during lunch waves at Somers High School. The bags are only five dollars each and eight dollars for two. All profits go to WaterAid LAC. Please help support the community and the environment and buy a reusable bag!

Here is an image of our original design:



To learn more about the cause, you can watch the youtube video at this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-0FHKcZvc&feature=youtu.be>

With any questions, contact Mrs. Dunn at ines.dunn@somers.k12.ct.us

A SILENT TRAGEDY

There is a silent tragedy that is unfolding today in our homes, and concerns our most precious jewels: our children. Our children are in a devastating emotional state! In the last 15 years, researchers have given us increasingly alarming statistics on a sharp and steady increase in childhood mental illness that is now reaching epidemic proportions:

Statistics do not lie:

- 1 in 5 children have mental health problems
- A 43% increase in ADHD has been noted
- A 37% increase in adolescent depression has been noted
- There has been a 200% increase in the suicide rate in children aged 10 to 14

What is happening and what are we doing wrong?

Today's children are being over-stimulated and over-gifted with material objects, but they are deprived of the fundamentals of a healthy childhood, such as:

- Emotionally available parents
- Clearly defined limits
- Responsibilities
- Balanced nutrition and adequate sleep
- Movement in general but especially OUTDOORS
- Creative play, social interaction, unstructured game opportunities and boredom spaces

Instead, in recent years, children have been filled with:

- Digitally distracted parents
- Indulgent and permissive parents who let children "rule the world" and whoever sets the rules
- A sense of right, of deserving everything without earning it or being responsible for obtaining it
- Inadequate sleep and unbalanced nutrition
- A sedentary lifestyle
- Endless stimulation, technological nannies, instant gratification and absence of boring moments

What to do?

If we want our children to be happy and healthy individuals, we have to wake up and get back to basics. It is still possible! Many families see immediate improvements after weeks of implementing the following recommendations:

- Set limits and remember that you are the captain of the ship. Your children will feel more confident knowing that you have control of the helm.
- Offer children a balanced lifestyle full of what children NEED, not just what they WANT. Don't be afraid to say "no" to your children if what they want is not what they need.
- Provide nutritious food and limit junk food.

- Spend at least one hour a day outdoors doing activities such as: cycling, walking, fishing, bird / insect watching
- Enjoy a daily family dinner without smartphones or distracting technology.
- Play board games as a family or if children are very small for board games, get carried away by their interests and allow them to rule in the game
- Involve your children in some homework or household chores according to their age (folding clothes, ordering toys, hanging clothes, unpacking food, setting the table, feeding the dog etc.)
- Implement a consistent sleep routine to ensure your child gets enough sleep. The schedules will be even more important for school-age children.
- Teach responsibility and independence. Do not overprotect them against all frustration or mistakes. Misunderstanding will help them build resilience and learn to overcome life's challenges,
- Do not carry your children's backpack, do not carry their backpacks, do not carry the homework they forgot, do not peel bananas or peel oranges if they can do it on their own (4-5 years). Instead of giving them the fish, teach them to fish.
- Teach them to wait and delay gratification.
- Provide opportunities for "boredom", since boredom is the moment when creativity awakens. Do not feel responsible for always keeping children entertained.
- Do not use technology as a cure for boredom, nor offer it at the first second of inactivity.
- Avoid using technology during meals, in cars, restaurants, shopping centers. Use these moments as opportunities to socialize by training the brains to know how to work when they are in mode: "boredom"
- Help them create a "bottle of boredom" with activity ideas for when they are bored.
- Be emotionally available to connect with children and teach them self-regulation and social skills:
- Turn off the phones at night when children have to go to bed to avoid digital distraction.
- Become a regulator or emotional trainer for your children. Teach them to recognize and manage their own frustrations and anger.
- Teach them to greet, to take turns, to share without running out of anything, to say thank you and please, to acknowledge the error and apologize (do not force them), be a model of all those values you instill.
- Connect emotionally - smile, hug, kiss, tickle, read, dance, jump, play or crawl with them.

Article written by — Victoria Prooday

<https://yourot.com/parenting-club/2017/5/24/what-are-we-doing-to-our-children>

Library Media Center Happenings

This month, a new feature was added to our Makerspace- puzzles! A community table was set up in the library, and students and staff have been stopping by during their free time to relax and contribute to the final project. So far three puzzles with 550 pieces each have been completed. The person or group who places the final piece gets to choose the



puzzle that will be worked on next.



Ms. Somma's class visited the LMC recently to work through the different steps of the research process in order to design, build and test catapults. Beginning with more traditional materials, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, and atlases, students then moved on to using the Gale and ScholasticGO databases to find background information and uses for catapults. Once the ground work was done, the class evaluated websites and videos found on the Internet to help them plan out and construct their projects. Three different designs were created, and the winning catapult launched a projectile over 43 feet!



"Fill the Table Cloth" Food Drive

For the second year, SHS students and staff worked together to collect nonperishable items during the Interact Club's "Fill the Table Cloth" Food Drive. Advisory groups competed to see which team could bring in the most food. This year's winning Advisory was Ms. Angelica's group. In total, over 360 items were donated to Champ's Place Food Pantry here in Somers. Hopefully this will help to brighten someone's holiday season!



Battle of the Beards

This year's "No Shave November" Battle of the Beards had a twist! It was Team Teachers versus Team Students. Mr. DeMatteo, Mr. Mangini, Mr. Serrell-Dube, Mr. Slater, and Mr. Goduti were up against Seniors Nick Mendez, Caleb Spielman, and Amit Deonarine. Students were able to vote for their favorite facial hair during lunch, when members of the Interact Club collected money. In the end, Team Students crushed the competition with the most manliest facial hair. They earned this year's trophy and epic bragging rights. A \$55.00 donation was made to Movember, a charity dedicated to men's physical and mental health. Congratulations Amit, Caleb, and Nick!



Business Department Earns All-New England Yearbook Recognition



Each year the SHS Yearbook Team awaits results from national and regional competitions. Last year the team reported earning a “Highest Honor” journalism recognition by the New England Scholastic Press Association – an area the team has been focused on improving over the past four years.

The team’s efforts have been recognized within their latest publication, “We Are Spartans.” The team not only earned a “Highest Achievement” recognition by the New England Scholastic Press Association, but also went on to earn their “All-New England” award for effective journalism.

“Earning the All-New England recognition was big for the team, considering all of the hard work we put into our book...The team has given up a countless number of hours to work on the book, including professional development days, weekends, and vacations. For the first couple months it seems impossible to get a grip on writing to the standards of the judges, which is why every story goes through a number of editing phases, senior and yearbook veteran Emma Koseski stated.

The team has been required to adapt over the years to raise the bar and become more competitive.

“In the past three years I've noticed many changes in the way the team operates. As a team, we've learned to play to the strengths of our members. Some team members find that their strongest subject is journalism while others thrive in the design aspect of yearbook. I think that by separating people into groups based on their interests and skill set has allowed us to progress as a team and earn our recent recognitions.”

SPARTAN SPORTS

With the fall season just concluding after our co-op football team qualified for the CIAC Class S state tournament, the winter sports season has now officially begun. Our wrestling team and boys and girl's basketball teams are preparing for their seasons with their pre-season tryouts and practices. with games and meets officially starting next week. Our ice hockey players have begun their season with Tri-Town after their first scrimmage last week at the UConn Ice Arena, and will play their annual jamboree at Enfield Twin Rinks on December 14th. We have a boys and girls "teams-of-one" participating with Ellington High School in indoor track, and they will participate in their first meet at Hartford Public on December 14th. For more information on al of our winter sports teams and schedules, please visit our high school sports website.