

VASSAL LANE VIPERS

Vassal Lane Upper School

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CPS
Cambridge Public Schools

VASSAL LANE VIEWS MONTHLY

April 2019



Mix It Up Lunch

On March 20, VLUS participated in Mix It Up Lunch. As described on the Teaching Tolerance website, "Mix It Up at Lunch Day is an international campaign that encourages students to identify, question and cross social boundaries." Led by the International Ambassadors and the SEI Team, over 50% of the student body volunteered to mix up their usual lunchroom routine to sit with new friends. Tables introduced themselves to new faces and enjoyed fun conversation.

~SEI Team

We Want to Hear from You!

CPS is pleased to launch our 2019 Family Survey. The purpose of this survey is to learn about the experiences of families in our schools and district. It is important to us that all families feel welcomed, and that all students receive the best possible education.

As a district committed to equity, we use survey results to understand whether students and families from all backgrounds are having positive experiences in our schools. Your answers will be completely anonymous and can not be connected to you.

[Take the survey now >> www.cpsd.us/familysurvey](http://www.cpsd.us/familysurvey)



Looking for things to do in
Cambridge? Take a peek:
finditcambridge.org



Important Dates

Friday, April 5 | 7:30AM

FOVLUS Meeting

Tuesday, April 9 | 1:30PM

Tobin/Vassal Lane Free Market

Friday, April 12 | 8AM

Student Advisory Council Meeting

Friday, April 12 | 9AM

Day of Silence

April 15-April 19

School Vacation

Classes resume on Monday, April 22

Tuesday, April 23 and

Wednesday, April 24

MCAS: 6th Grade ELA

Thursday, April 25 and

Friday, April 26

MCAS: 7th Grade ELA

Monday, April 29 and

Tuesday, April 30

MCAS: 8th Grade ELA

**The 2018-19
VLUS Yearbook
is for sale!**

6th Grade News

Happy, Healthy Spring Everyone!

In **6th grade social studies**, sixth graders, after reading, discussing, and analyzing five documents, completed their DBQ thesis writing, responding to the question: "Was the Code of Hammurabi Just?" Ask your scholar: what was your thesis response? Where was your evidence, and why did you select that evidence? Many students detected the nuances in the 282 laws compiled for this Shamash-given Mesopotamian code, and recognized the challenging living conditions of people 4000 years ago, among them: unpredictable and unsanitary water supplies for drinking and farming, medicinal techniques that weren't always effective (no antibiotics!) and enslavement as a result of indebtedness or war. A number of students decided to develop a strong thesis statement with credible evidence suggesting that Hammurabi's code was just. (Who was Shamash? Ask your child!) We've been addressing the pros and cons aspects of civilization and society, analyzing and wondering if humans and the planet, in general, are better off with societies. Wrapping up this unit shortly, we will research, analyze and compare two additional civilizations this year, Egypt and Greece.

Thank you for the outpouring of tissue boxes and pencils- much appreciated! Happy Spring!

~*Leslie Kramer Grade 6 History Social Science Teacher*

In **6th grade, math** students are working with linear equations that have single occurrences of one variable, e.g., $x+1=5$ and $4x=2$. They examine values that make a given linear equation true or false, and what it means for a number to be a solution to an equation. Solving equations of the form $px=q$ where p and q are rational numbers can produce complex fractions (i.e., quotients of fractions), so students extend their understanding of fractions to include those with numerators and denominators that are not whole numbers.

~*Heba Abu, Grade 6 Math Teacher*

In Ms. Barber's **sixth grade science class** we are starting a new unit called "River to the Sea". We will examine the Charles River and its journey to the ocean. We will test the Charles River water to determine the cleanliness of the river water. Getting outside will be an emphasis for April!

~*Colleen Barber, Grade 6 Science*

In **ELA**, students have learned about communism and capitalism in preparation to dive into memoirs. They read *The Wall*, a graphic memoir by Peter Sis, and will be reading either *I Am Malala*, by Malala Yousafzai, or *Red Scarf Girl*, by Ji-Li Jaing. They are comparing the fictional oppressive society of *The Giver* to memoirs of young people responding to oppression. The Reading and Writing MCAS will happen on April 23 and 24, right after April Vacation. Please keep reinforcing independent reading time at home. Supports include: remind students to put their books in their backpacks after reading them; visit the library; set up quiet reading times with no media on to interrupt; develop a habit of reading in bed; have students do reading before starting math homework, if the bedtime reading isn't working. Each student is required to read for 30 minutes minimum, every day (at least once on the weekends). Thanks!

~*Anna Marsh, Grade 6 ELA Teacher*

Staff Spotlight: Oksana Deinak

Nickname: Ms. Oksana

Birthday: September 23rd

Hometown: Havana, Cuba

VLUS position: Spanish Teacher

Where did you go to college? UMASS Boston

Who was your favorite teacher and why? Amy DenOuden, one of my Social Anthropology professors and a woman with limitless empathy. She is an advocate for social justice, who helped me intellectualize what I instinctively felt and thought was right (Standpoint theory anyone?). She also made me aware of social issues that were foreign to me, such as Native-American current land grabbing by local and state governments, or other issues such as, women's rights, rural and inner city poverty to mention a few.

What is the most favorite part of your job? Interacting with my students.

What profession other than your own would you like to attempt? Law

Children: Zaida (10) & Victor (7)

Pets: Cats: Micha (~12 yo) & Ava (10 mo)

Favorite Color? Bright ones! Orange, red, blue

Favorite Quote or Saying? This is a mantra straight from my grandmother's mouth (translation from Spanish): "There is

nothing like one day after another, which I found to be the ultimate hopeful phrase.

Where is the farthest place you have ever traveled? Hum? India? Japan? Borneo? Which one is farther?

Favorite food? Mangoes

Hobbies or Activities: I'm passionate about traveling to places off the beaten path, hiking (all levels of altitude), surfing, dancing, should I keep going?

Something I am proud of? Living (not just surviving) the last three years of my life with an open heart and mind, a genuine smile, and full of hope for the future.



7th Grade News

Mark Your Calendars!

Seventh grade students are hard at work, and we invite you to join in a moving celebration of their success. On the evening of **Thursday, May 9**, seventh grade students will be performing their *Stories of Persecution and Perseverance Monologues*. This incredible event runs from 6 - 8:30PM in the evening and the entire VLUS community is encouraged to attend for as much of the evening as they are able. Each student will share the story of their research subject, an inspiring individual who has experienced persecution and shown perseverance, through an in-character dramatic performance.

~Sarah Shaw, Grade 7 ELA Teacher

Seventh grade students went to different classes in the afternoon part of their trip to Harvard. One of the classes was learning how to make the most of an art museum. It included mini-sessions on thinking about why curators set things up the way they do, how to look at paintings, and ways you can use your own drawing skills to learn more about pieces in museums. The students had a lot of great insights and really excellent questions!

~ Kolleen Burbank, Grade 6-8 Math Interventionist



Art Around Town!

Vassel Lane student artwork is all around Cambridge this Spring! Twenty-Seven 6th, 7th, and 8th graders have work on display at City Hall in the Mayor's Office. Nine more have work that is on display at the MultiCultural Center in East Cambridge. Spring Arts Night will be here in June, but if you need more work in the meantime a special project between the SEI 3 class and the Art Room will be up before April Break.

~Robin Seeran, Grade 6- 8 Art Teacher

Specialist Spotlight

Spring is here it is a great time of year to get out with your child. Whether it is bike riding; walking the pond or just playing catch get outside and be active. The students are wrapping up their fitness unit and this is a great way to connect with your child and also get outside and start being fit.

~John Burgess Jr, Grade 6-8 Physical Education Teacher

Photo Club News

Spring Photo Club is up and running and searching for more cameras. Do you have any manual film cameras laying around your house collecting dust that you don't use? Photo Club is seeking film cameras (in working order) preferably film SLR cameras to use on photo walks and photo projects. If you have any that you would like to donate, please reach out to Photo Club advisor. Thank you!

~Robin Halperin, Grade 7 OSS Teacher

Save the Date: CRLS' Parent to Parent Evening

Come to CRLS Principal Conference Room (459 Broadway St. Cambridge 02138) on **April 4 from 6-7:30PM**, and connect with other parents to share experiences, and to support each other through these interesting developmental stages and yet challenging exciting times. A light meal is provided & childcare will be provided upon request. For more information please email Greta Hardina at ghardina@cpsd.us or call her at 617.349.6660



8th Grade News

8th Graders Visit Biogen

8th graders recently went to Biogen Idec and experienced a Hands-On laboratory. They analyzed hemoglobin patient samples to determine whether the individuals had sickle cell, were carriers, or were normal.

Marine Biology students are learning about cephalopods and recently made squid prints and dissected squid gaining an understanding of structure and function of these amazing creatures! They also recently completed Wonder Jars, Glass jars partially filled with sand and marine artifacts gathered on their field trip to the seashore. Turning the jar reveals each artifact.

All 8th graders learned about the **Maasai people of Tanzania**, and how they are working to access clean water and to make their homes free from cooking fire smoke. Bob Lange of the Maasai Stove and Solar project discussed his work with the Maasai and challenged students to come

up with a way for the Maasai women to quickly and easily collect rain water. What is the best design for an inexpensive tarp to be positioned to gather the most water?

8th graders have been invited to attend lectures at the **Harvard Museum of Natural History in the Evolution Matters Series**. Last Thursday 17 students and several parents and siblings attended the lecture on Viruses and asked questions of the speaker. The next lecture is this Tuesday, April and is about the Great White Shark.

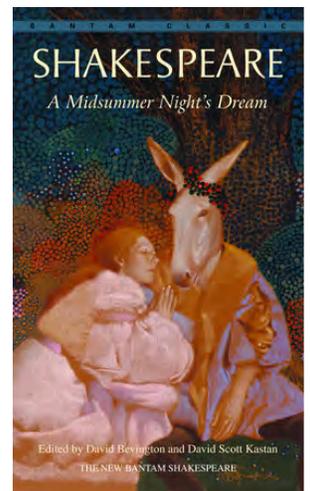
Sewing Club has started. All are welcome! Learn to use a sewing machine or advance your existing sewing skills. We will make a variety of projects over the coming weeks.

~Iona Brightman, Grade 8 Science Teacher

English Language Arts Class

In 8th grade ELA, students have begun reading (and acting out!) William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ask your child who Bottom, Hermia, or Oberon are! Or to define or give an example of an *oxymoron*. Send all inquiries, comments, and/or funny responses my way...cobrien@cpsd.us

~Caitlin O'Brien, Grade 8 ELA Teacher



April is School Library Month

School Library Month is AASL's celebration of school librarians and their programs. The 2019 theme is Everyone Belongs @ Your School Library and the 2019 spokesperson is Dav Pilkey. Visit the [AASL website](#) to view and share a video from Dav on the importance of school libraries and reading, register for complimentary webinars, and download free resources - and check back often for more to come!

VLUS Student Council raises \$886 for the Leukemia Society

All Advisories Grades 6-8 participated in funding this important cause. Thank you parents/guardians for your support. Advisories raising the most within each grade level were:

6th grade- Jenna Havelin

7th grade- AnnMarie Viaud

8th grade- Sarah Stewart

As always, thank you for your support

Upcoming Trip to Quebec

April vacation will be here very soon and the French trip to Quebec will head north bright and early the morning of Saturday, April 13. A very important meeting for parents is set for **Thursday, April 4th at 6:30PM in room 322**. This will be a time to fill in important documents for the tour company (ACIS) and Cambridge Public Schools. It will also be a chance to ask important questions. A reminder that all families must pay off their balance to ACIS 60 days before the trip begins. Please contact Mme Laura if there are any questions about this.

~Laura Sylvan, Grade 6-8 French Teacher

Let's Connect!

Find us on Facebook:
[facebook.com/vassallane](https://www.facebook.com/vassallane)



Spring is here and it's time for some cleaning!

Please look at the photos, you may find that winter coat, hat, or gloves you were missing.

~Rachelle Boyce, Clerk



VLUS Healthy Girls Save The World!

On Friday, March 27th VLUS girls Grades 6-8 joined together to celebrate Women! It was a great success! They had the opportunity to meet this diverse panel of 6 accomplished, young women from Harvard University. They learned about themselves and their peers. The panel encouraged them to be healthy in mind, body, and relationships. We want to give a heartfelt thank you to Ms. Rachel McGirt, the Co-Founder of this program for introducing it to VLUS.

The next monthly meeting of Friends of Vassal Lane Upper School is this Friday, April 5th. We meet from 7:30 - 8:30AM in the VLUS Library. Can't make it? Please join us the following month on May 10th. All are welcome!!