

Spring 2022

CAP NEWSLETTER

Dear Students, Parents, and Teachers,

We are so happy to be sharing our final newsletter of the year with you. This year has been one of adjustments: not only did students need to acclimatize to Blair's in-person learning environment, but they also learned how to balance their new social communities with a substantial academic workload. As you read about each grade, we hope you'll notice the trend of growth and learning through hands-on projects. Each of these projects, whether freshman-year interdisciplinaries or the junior-year polarization project, allow each student to take a creative lens as they approach how to most effectively get their message across. We want to thank every one of you for your involvement in making this year of CAP so special, and we are hopeful for what the future brings!



FRESHMEN

WWII Interdisciplinary / Inspiration Plays



WWII INTERDISCIPLINARY

CAP freshmen have been hard at work completing their second interdisciplinary of the year, focusing on the World War II era. For the interdisciplinary project, students studied the social and political climate of the era in class and read *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand in Dr. Simel's English class, a biography of Louis Zamperini, an Olympic track star turned airman. During the interdisciplinary week, students worked in groups, each in one of four different mediums, to create projects highlighting an aspect of the time. The culminating celebration happened at the end of the week, in the form of a USO show for and by the ninth grade cohort.

INSPIRATION PLAYS

In the inspirations play unit of the drama course, students worked in teams to develop original plays discussing social issues and calling for change and inspiration. The creation of these plays allowed students to channel their creative talent into inspiring change within our community, a triumphant end to an incredible first year. Students have been developing their plays from concept through scripting and rehearsal, culminating in a theater showcase at the Takoma Park Community Center on June 13th, 2022., and we encourage any students and parents to come see the performances!



Shreya Ohri, Lily Schenkner, Emily Kretschmer, Eloise Carter qualified for the National History Day Competition

SOPHOMORES

Choice Project, Podcast, Court

CHOICE PROJECT

After reading *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, students chose from a myriad of potential topics to explore through various mediums. Research papers, artwork, multimedia presentation, and documentaries are just some of the vehicles students used to express their interests and understanding of the two books. In a tribute to her grandmother, Liliana Gray connected her own life to the story told through *Extremely Loud*, describing it as “a way to grieve and immerse myself in a relationship I no longer have.” She hopes that audiences will “take away that you should appreciate the people you have, because they won’t be here forever.” Simply put, “be grateful for what you have.” Zanii’yah Miner-Bradford made a video analysis of themes from *Catcher*, specifically how someone’s childhood will affect their perceived purpose in life. Holden says his life purpose is to “maintain children’s innocence” and catch them before they fall off a cliff in a field of rye. “I didn’t understand because his childhood didn’t match him trying to protect people’s innocence. So I decided to look at people I do know and relate their life’s purpose with their childhood.” Through interviewing classmates, Miner-Bradford was able to explore this connection. “I think that everyone has a purpose, and it’s important to know what yours is. Everyone’s here for a reason.”



PODCAST

Whether it’s in the car, on a walk, or before bed, listening to podcasts has become an important source of information. In *Behind the Curtain* of Shen Yun, Marisa James-Le and Nora Pierce explore Falun Gong and the range of reactions and perceptions from American onlookers and the Chinese Government. “It was completely new to us... it wasn’t something that we were experts on” said James-Le. Communication and outreach are important skills not only in CAP, but also in life after high school. “We definitely learned about reaching out to people and going up to people on the street,” said Pierce.

COURT

Just like in past interdisciplinaries, 10th graders explore the functions and proceedings of an element of government. This time around, they’re exploring the US judicial system through simulated court cases. Structured like real trials, CAP Court includes the prosecution and defense trade opening statements, testimonies, cross-examinations, and closing remarks. This year’s cases included *Estate of Henrietta Lacks v. Thermo Fisher*, *Underwood v. Norton Healthcare*, and *Doe v. Abbott*, all real court cases playing out as students completed CAP Court. In groups, students compiled evidence, selected witnesses, and prepared their arguments. As a defense lawyer in the *Palin v. New York Times*, Gaby Maitra had to craft arguments and examine witnesses. The cross examinations required “thinking on my feet and being able to come up with questions that would help me out in the moment based on what the other side was saying, since I didn’t know what the witness would say.” To prepare for his role as a witness, Gabe Marra had to do extensive research into James Bennett, the editor who wrote the article. “I had to be able to get into James Bennett’s head, the reasoning why he would write that statement” says Mara. Grace Humbert enjoyed her time as a lawyer, saying “the court day was the best part. It’s probably one of my favorites.” Despite the stressful job, Humbert learned much about public speaking and improvisation throughout the case. “I had to learn how to calm down and I became a lot more confident as the case went on.” Every role in these mock trials required careful preparation and organization, skills CAP students will use in their next years at Blair and beyond.

JUNIORS

Political Polarization and Digital Downtime



POLARIZATION PROJECT

In their CAP Junior Seminar class taught by Mr. Shindel, juniors researched the ever increasing political polarization and analyzed countless articles depicting how America came to be this divided as well as historians speculating where it could lead us. Diving deep into America's growing political division, students created works to showcase the divide in the US or the possibilities if division continues to grow. Projects ranged from websites and short videos to mock museums and dioramas.

Juniors Evan Wilson and Ella Moskovitz created a polarization “cheat sheet” focusing on definitions and a brief history as well as resources on depolarizing yourself. Marin Barclay and Chris Ha took a different approach to the project, creating a diorama. Reusing an old shoebox, the two split the box with a line down the middle, painting one side blue and the other red. Each side was paired with a cardboard version of the democratic/republican mascots, a donkey and an elephant. The figures, facing away from each other, are accompanied with hateful headlines about the other side. Wanting to emphasize the growing partisan divide, Barclay notes, “there is just so much hostility towards the other party on both sides. I’m just not sure how it’s going to end.”

DIGITAL DOWNTIME

Following the Polarization Project, students began digital downtime, a two week long exploration into the effects of screen time. The first week students log their normal screen time, including phones, computers, smart boards and music streaming services and then write reflections on how their current screen time is affecting them. During the second week, students have a digital “detox”, beginning with each student writing a contract for themselves. The contracts, signed by both the student and their parents/guardians, begin with each student setting their purpose for the detox. The contracts also lay out which software is completely prohibited, allowed in certain cases, and their goals for the week. At the end of the detox week, students write a reflection on the week sans screens. For many, this is the first time they have been off screens this long and offers a wake up call on how they spend their time.



SENIORS

Where They Are Now



After four long years, CAP students in the class of 2022 are at the end of their high school journey. The last CAP class seniors took was the senior seminar class in this year's first semester. In this class students ultimately worked towards their senior presentation, but also did a variety of other things such as practice interview skills, read books, etc. Passing the senior presentation was a must to graduate high school with a cap certificate. Senior Aditi Evans states that she was really nervous before the senior presentation and felt like throwing up but she managed to get through it. Her presentation was about relating my cap experiences to the five steps of learning how to play a new music piece on the flute. Senior Luke Sanelli said that senior presentations allowed him to close his chapter in an extremely satisfying way.

Over the past four years, seniors have made a lot of memories. When asked to pick his favorite memory, Sanelli said, "It's hard for me to pick just one memory. Even with COVID, I had a lot of great ones. I was hanging out at lunch in journalism with some friends, and decided to tell some silly joke. And I decided to be really extra (as I often am when I tell jokes), and write on the whiteboard. "

"Unfortunately my horrific handwriting got in the way, because before I even finished my joke, one of my friends burst out into uncontrollable laughter. Apparently my handwriting had made it seem like I had unintentionally written something quite humorous (though ironically, I can never remember what it was). And at that moment, seeing my friends laugh with such wholesome sincerity, I realized I was in the company of truly amazing people. And those intelligent, funny and compassionate people have made CAP a special experience for me. I'm honored to call many of them my friends." Sanelli said, friends made the CAP experience special.

Having much of the class of 2022's high school experience happen during the pandemic didn't stop the CAP faculty from making it a memorable one. As seniors go on to the next phase of their lives, they will remember the friends and memories made in these four years with CAP. When asked what he would go back and tell his freshman self, Sanelli stated, "Always be humble, compassionate, and listen to people and the world around you. I like to think I tried to be/do those things already, but some things are worth repeating. Also, don't doubt Robert Pattinson when he's cast as Batman. The dude killed it."

Update Special:

CAP COMMUNITY DAY

For the first time in two years, students in the Communication Arts Program (CAP) celebrated CAP Community Day in-person. With a variety of service activities that, according to one of our feedback responses, "provided everyone with the chance to find something that we were interested in doing," students gave back to their communities. Some of our students' favorite activities involved cleaning trash along Sligo Creek, serving meals to people experiencing homelessness, creating recycled dog toys for our local shelter, and translating historical documents for the Smithsonian's National Archives. As a program, we feel that CAP Community Day is a great representation of our program as a whole: the culmination of hands-on learning experiences and getting involved in our community, as well as giving students an opportunity to bond with other students in the program like Liam Volz, senior, who "made friends along the way in a bunch of different grades that I'd never even seen before." We hope students enjoyed this year's Community Day! If anyone has feedback, we are always looking to continue improving our events: please send us an email at capambassadors@gmail.com!

We would like to thank all of the organizations that made our day possible:

So Others Might Eat
Manna Food Center
Comfort Cases

A Wider Circle
Meals on Wheels
Maryland SPCA
Montgomery Parks

Smithsonian
Second Chance
Tasca's Dog Rescue

