

## The Gecko



### MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL:

Dear Concept Families,

This time of year goes by so quickly and we will soon be celebrating 2025. I hope your families had a wonderful Thanksgiving and enjoyed time together with loved ones. Thank you to everyone who donated food, supplies, and time to help make TCS's Thanksgiving event a success. Everyone had a good time and shared things for which they were thankful.

We are coming up to our annual Shakespeare Festival, which will culminate with the play on Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. Students will be staying after school that day and will eat dinner together - thanks again to your donations. Please see the sign-up sheet Mrs. Piccone emailed to you and help in any way you can. I look forward to seeing you here that evening.

We will have school on December 19th and 20th. Winter Break begins December 23rd and runs through January 1st. School reopens on Thursday, January 2, 2025. Students are asked to wear/bring a sweatshirt or sweater in case they are cold in the school. We discourage students from wearing their coats in class. Thank you for reminding your students about this request.

Finally, please consider making a donation to our capital campaign, *The Concept Grows*, to help us reach our goal and make our renovation/addition plan a reality. Donations are tax deductible. I wish you a restful and joyous Winter Break.

Sincerely,  
Bill



**December 18<sup>th</sup> – Shakespeare Play – 7:00**  
**December 23<sup>rd</sup> - January 1<sup>st</sup> – Winter Break**  
**January 2<sup>nd</sup> – School Re-opens**  
**January 20<sup>th</sup> – MLK Day – School Closed**  
**January 24<sup>th</sup> – End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Marking Period/1<sup>st</sup> Sem.**

# Dean's Deal

## TCS Music Rocks! 7 Lessons To Note

The TCS Music students have been doing an awesome job with Mr. Giess, so I wanted to take a moment to reflect on music's positive impact on well-being, personal growth, and self-expression. There are several life lessons to be learned from practicing and perfecting an instrument.

Learning how to play the guitar and record music has changed my life in numerous positive ways, so it has been particularly inspiring to see our students enjoying the process and developing as musicians. The students have a huge head-start on me, however, as I didn't learn how to play guitar until my senior year of college! These past few months, I've been fortunate enough to be able to participate in Mr. Giess' music classes and even jam along with some of our students.



Here are 7 lessons from music I have come to appreciate:

### 1. Setting Goals

Learning an instrument can teach you to set a clear goal. "I want to be able to play THAT" is a typical benchmark for playing an instrument. For me, it was Ben Harper's "Waiting on an Angel" - it sounded like something I could learn. If you break larger goals into smaller steps, they're not so scary.

### 2. Self-Discipline

You can't pursue a challenging goal without self-discipline. I like to say that self-discipline is keeping the promises you make to yourself. It's being able to practice and put time in, even when you're not seeing the results you want as quickly as you'd like. The term for this skill is *delayed gratification*. Be pleased with any amount of progress you make, however small, and do not give up.

### 3. Sense of Accomplishment

When you can practice and improve at anything, it can really make you feel good about yourself. It convinces you that you can do hard things and build skills. We are less likely to feel good about ourselves if we stay in our comfort zones and never try anything challenging. Typically, things that come easy don't inspire a sense of accomplishment.

### 4. Patience

You can't learn how to play any instrument without patience and it's tough to learn patience in an age of instantaneous results (i.e. Alexa, Google, TikTok, etc.). But there is no A.I. app (at least, not yet) for learning to play an instrument any faster. You have to put time in and practice. As Tom Petty sang, "The waiting is the hardest part..."

### 5. Frustration-Tolerance

Learning a new instrument can be frustrating. You make a lot of mistakes. Your fingers hurt when you first learn guitar and they don't move the right way to make a proper G-chord. It's easy to give up and many do. But patience can be the cure to these frustrations. Making mistakes is essential to mastering anything and learning how to play an instrument is no exception. Mistakes are just proof you are trying.

### 6. Self-Expression

Author Victor Hugo once said, "Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and cannot remain silent." Playing an instrument can allow you to express whatever you're feeling. It's an outlet for even our most painful emotions that can bring you relief in a difficult moment. It can also positively impact all those who are listening. Interestingly, in those creative instances where something good has been created from something bad, it's possible to find a little gratitude for those negative emotions because had they not formed, the music/art you created may have never had a chance to exist.



## 7. Collaboration and Teamwork

In order for a musical group to play well together, they all have to play on tempo. Each member needs to do their part or else the whole song collapses. If one person is “off”, it’s really tough to play together. It requires *listening* to your group members so that you can shred your solo at the right time. This is a skill that can be applied to other social interactions, like conversations: If everyone is worried about what they’re going to say, no one is listening. Musical collaboration teaches us to *really* listen to one another and to only “play” when it’s our turn.

Keep on rocking, TCS!

-Mr. Schullery



## Guest Speakers

### What On Earth?



Geography is the science of our world. Mr. Jim Higgins from ESRI talked with us about its importance during Geography Awareness Week. We learned about the usefulness of Geography, GIS (Geographical Information Systems), and various maps.

Maps help us organize everything we know—they tell us what, when, where and why. Some of the many areas that maps are used for: public awareness and collaboration, social equity, planning for and responding to disasters, public works management, campus and buildings, urban and regional planning, climate change and environmental monitoring. Maps tell stories about everything and help support various missions.



Mr. Higgins was also kind enough to donate several geography books and items that will help expand our students’ minds and teach them about the world around them.

Thank you, Mr. Higgins!

# Guest Speakers - Continued



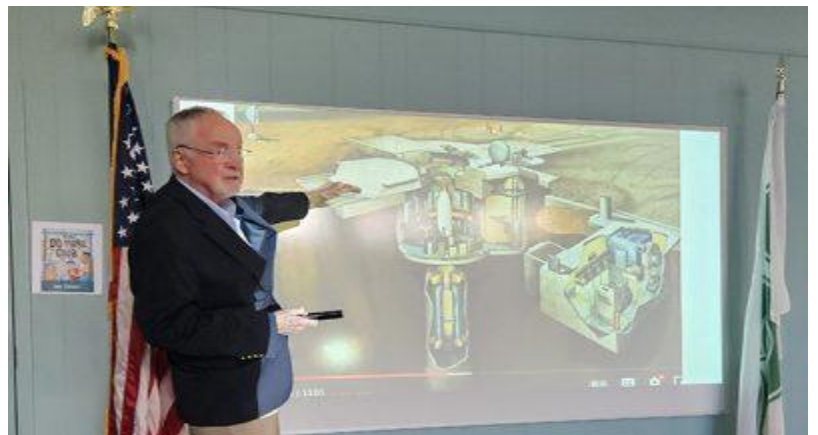
This year on Veteran's Day, The Concept School welcomed US Air Force veteran **Dr. Eric Woodworth** for a presentation exploring his experience as a Missile Launch Officer during the Cold War - a position that our own Mr. Fredericks also occupied, albeit several years later. His presentation began with the

opening scene of the 1983 classic film "War Games." That scene was filmed in the training simulator at the base where he was stationed. Eric sat in each of those actual chairs during training exercises. As part of the military that few people know much about, he visually illustrated both the tension and the importance of such positions during the Cold War and continuing today.

Eric and his partner, along with other two-person launch control teams like his in North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming, played a very unique role. When on duty, if given a legitimate top secret launch code, they had the difficult and unenviable responsibility of literally "turning the key," launching up to ten Minuteman missiles with nuclear warheads under their command at undisclosed targets in the Soviet Union.

Eric shared his daily experience of driving one and a half hours from Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, South Dakota out to the remote location where he and his partner would spend the next 24 hours. Once they arrived, they chatted with the above ground security team, took the elevator down to the

launch control center (in his case, 85 feet underground and surrounded by a concrete capsule with walls 5 feet thick), "changed over" (assumed responsibility for the nuclear codes and the equipment with the crew that had been there the last 24 hours), monitored their control center's assigned missiles, "authenticated" receipt of messages from varied communication devices, performed practice drills, dined on pre-packaged food sent down in foil containers, and slept in six-hour shifts. He was a Lieutenant while his partner was a Captain, so Eric got second choice on when to sleep - not during what we think of as normal sleeping hours.



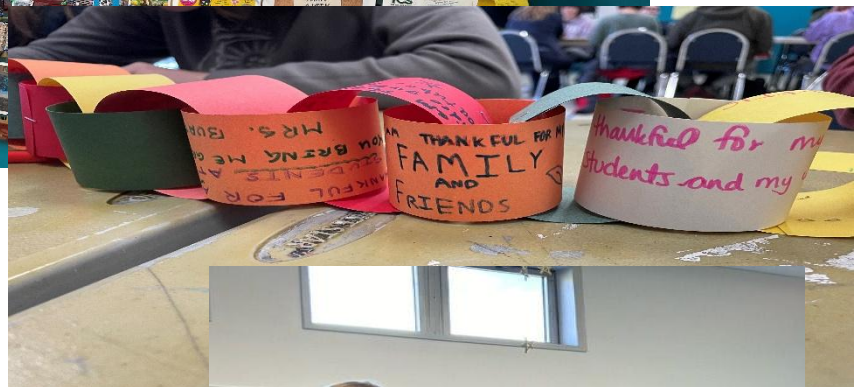
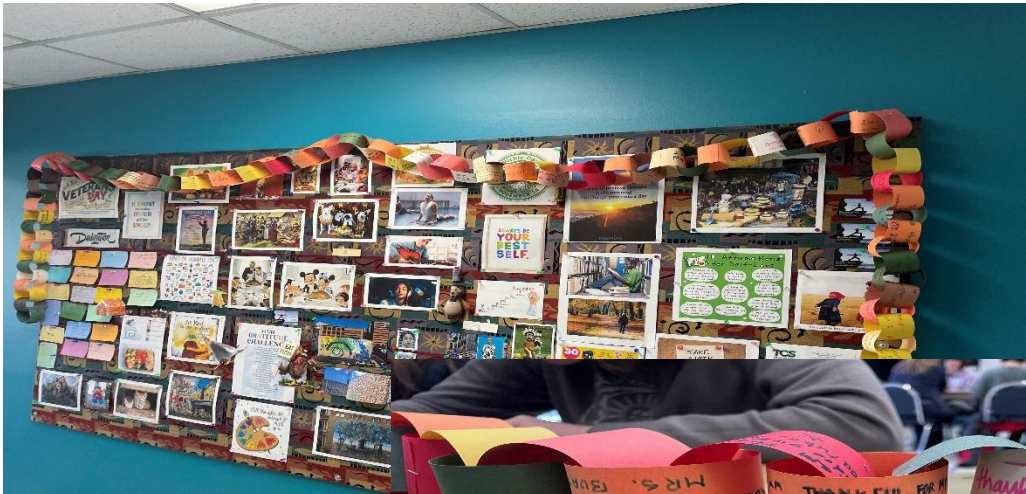
Eric gave us the background of how a missile launch would occur, if the Cold War ever turned "hot," and how the underground web of nuclear warheads was laid out in some of the most remote and unpopulated areas of our nation. During his informative and interactive presentation, Eric helped our students to understand both the intricacies of these defense systems and the importance of those who serve to defend our country, all while illustrating the escalating nature and mutually assured destruction of the nuclear arms race, thus ultimately serving as the deterrent the missiles were supposed to be. It gave us a lot to think about.

Dr. Woodworth is the grandfather of one of our students, Kaitlyn Daniels, and the father of our German teacher, "Frau" Laura Daniels. We were so pleased he could join us and share his experiences with us this Veteran's Day. We thank both him and Mr. Fredericks for their service to our country.





*TCS staff and students were thankful for many things today. Before our Thanksgiving lunch, the entire school gathered to create a thankful chain, complete with everyone's individual words of gratitude. Thank you to Ms. Cuff for the wonderful group project.*





*2024/2025 FIRST MARKING PERIOD*

*HONOR ROLL*

*OLIVER ALLEN*

*DECLAN BAKER*

*SAM MANDELL*

*EMILY PANOSIAN*

*EMMY ROHNER*

*OUTSTANDING CITIZENSHIP*

*OLIVER ALLEN*

*DECLAN BAKER*

*SAM MANDELL*

*EMILY PANOSIAN*

*EMMY ROHNER*



# *Old Glory Travels America's Freedom Road*



*The American Flag, named Old Glory, was first raised on June 13, 1999, at Valley Forge in front of the National Memorial Arch that honors General George Washington and his Continental Army for their Winter Encampment of 1777-78. The ceremony launched Century Link America's world flag tour, Old Glory Travels America's Freedom Road.*

*Citizen participation is a key objective. Americans - civilian and military, ages 6 to 104, have taken part and created the success and cumulative interest. The response is the same everywhere. People are proud to participate.*

*The same 5' x 8', 50-star flag raised at Valley Forge has participated in Presidential Inaugural parades, local parades, school visits for patriotic programs, Naturalization Ceremonies, and countless events throughout the U.S. from Fort McHenry to Mount Rushmore, and in ceremonies in several countries including France, Japan, Italy, South Korea, Bosnia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Old Glory has flown proudly at military bases and aboard U.S. Naval and U.S. Coast Guard vessels on the seven seas, as well as military aircraft worldwide saluting members of every service branch.*

*She has flown over hallowed ground in ceremonies at Normandy American Cemetery and Point du Hoc; aboard the USS Arizona; the USS Nevada and USS Utah Memorials at Pearl Harbor; Midway Atoll; Saipan and Tinian Islands; atop Mt Suribachi on Iwo Jim a; the Oklahoma City Memorial; at Ground Zero in NYC; at the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville PA, and Pentagon. Old Glory has honored those who served and sacrificed with ceremonies at the World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City; at the WWII Memorial and the Korean War Memorial in Washington DC. and raised on the US Marine Corps Memorial in Washington DC. The flag has twice been presented at Arlington National Cemetery on Veterans Day.*

*TCS has been honored to have Old Glory visit our school. Thanks to Dave Pawlesicz and our own TCS Honor Guard, Sophia Bubnis, Declan Baker, AJ Cape, and Chris Segarra, Old Glory has flown outside our school for a day.*





Our Shakespeare Festival is taking shape!  
Students are busy rehearsing on the stage and can't wait to put on an amazing show!





# Senior Field Trip Proposal

## Background

In 2020, TCS was making plans for a senior trip to Southern Ontario. Unfortunately, Covid-19 put an end to that idea. In January 2024, TCS took a small group of seniors on a successful day trip to Harrisburg (a trip outside the local area). Now TCS would like to understand if there might be sufficient, serious interest in a longer trip for seniors. Mr. Burtch has led these efforts and is now considering whether a several-day trip to either Chicago, IL, or Detroit, MI might be of interest.

## What might we do in those cities?

The following table indicates some of the sites we might visit.

Chicago, IL	Detroit, MI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Art Institute of Chicago</li><li>• Chicago River Cruise</li><li>• Museum of Science and Industry</li><li>• Shedd Aquarium</li><li>• 360 Chicago or Skydeck Chicago</li></ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Detroit Institute of Arts</li><li>• Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation</li><li>• Greenfield Village</li><li>• Motown Museum</li><li>• National Museum of the Great Lakes (Toledo)</li></ul> 

## Do we have any details about the trip?

At this point, many details remain to be determined. We are trying to assess if there is sufficient serious interest before working up the details and making commitments.

1. **When might the trip occur?** We anticipate the trip might occur in June 2025, immediately following the end of the 2024-25 school year.
2. **How long would it be?** Likely 4-5 days including travel time.
3. **How might we travel?**
  - To Chicago: Outbound by Amtrak and return by commercial flight.
  - To Detroit: Rental van or commercial flights.
4. **How much would it cost?** While the details remain to be determined, a rough estimate of the trip would be at least \$1,400 per person. However, this could change.
5. **Who would be eligible to participate?**
  - Students who are seniors in good standing (i.e., no attendance concerns, A average grades, no disciplinary or behavioral concerns, willing to follow direction of trip leaders).
  - At least two TCS staff members.

If you are the parent of a senior, and if you are seriously interested in having your child participate, please contact Mr. Burtch ([sburtch@theconceptscool.org](mailto:sburtch@theconceptscool.org)) to express your interest and discuss. If sufficient interest exists, details will be worked up and a deposit will be requested. Thank you.



### **Ms. Tilmon and Mr. Burch's Classic Film Class:**

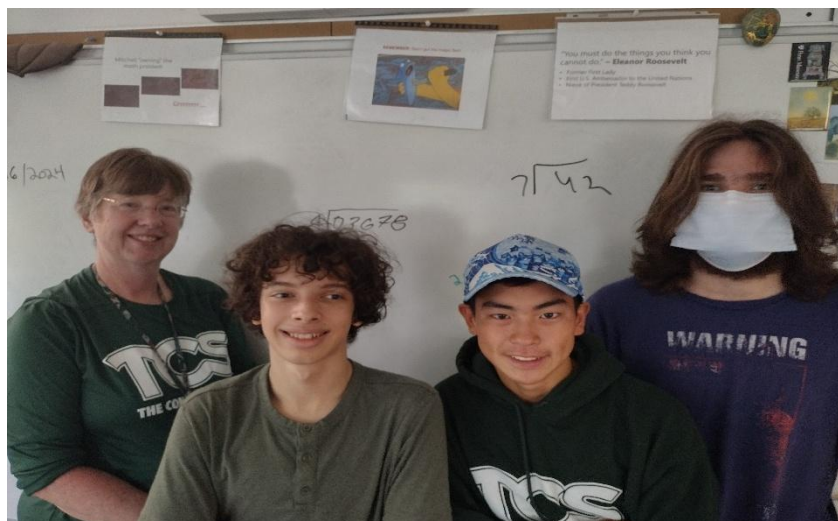
During the fall and Halloween season, Classic Cinema students have watched and discussed several famous and iconic horror movies including the silent classic, *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), and other classics like *Frankenstein* (1931), *Mad Love* (1935) and *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944) (a horror comedy!).



The class has now turned its attention to classic dramas like the 1936 Frank Capra classic, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and *Captains Courageous* (1937).

### **Mr. Burch's Classes:**

The Division Gang learns that long division is like safe cracking. You need to be careful AND fearless to "crack" the number and find the answer (before the math police arrive).

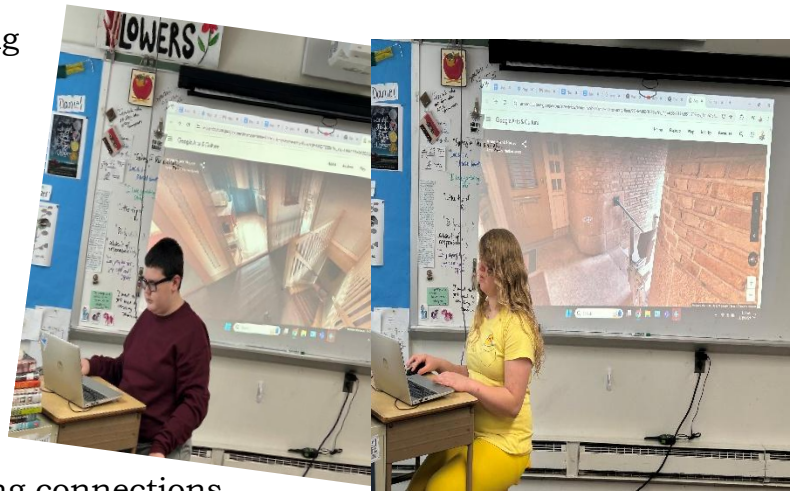


## Mrs. Griffith's English Classes:

After our awesome author day, Mrs. Griffith's and Mrs. Wright's English classes used *The Do More Club* as a mentor text and steppingstone for Holocaust Studies.

Mrs. Griffith's **First and Second Period** are reading Elie Wiesel's meaningful memoir *Night* and are learning how to parse text for key points, speak to those points, and respond to each other on a shared group document. This method keeps students engaged not only in oral conversation but also in written discourse with one another. Students have been given essay topics prior to reading so that they can take notes in preparation for composition. Additionally, students are portraying scenes through art and poetry and are thinking about resilience and the human spirit.

Mrs. Griffith's **Third Period** class is reading Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*. They are seeing themselves in the daily living and feelings of teenage Anne. She experienced angst, crushes, parent/teen conflict, boredom, and the frustration of day-to-day living in close quarters while hiding to save their lives. Third period learners have taken turns at my computer and the big screen to take us through a virtual tour of Anne Frank's annex.



Students in all literature classes are making connections between history and present-day events in Michigan and Ohio, and understanding that in our reading, we learn to comprehend unimaginable events, empathize with others, view different perspectives, and come to the conclusion that history should not repeat itself.

**Creative Writing** class is continuing to muse in their writer's notebooks, demonstrate understanding of compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, and focus on paragraph structure for help in other classes.



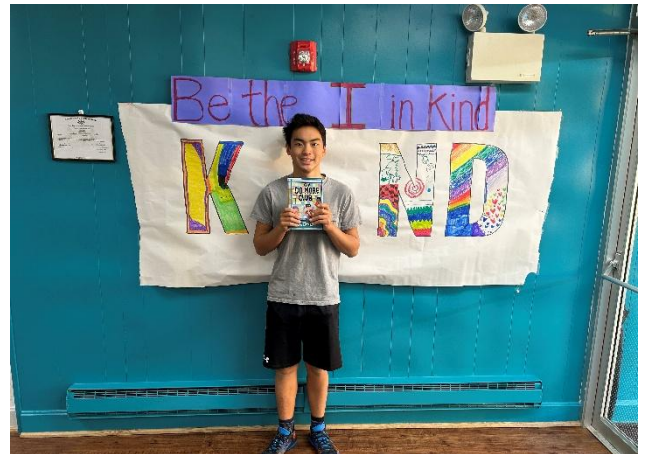
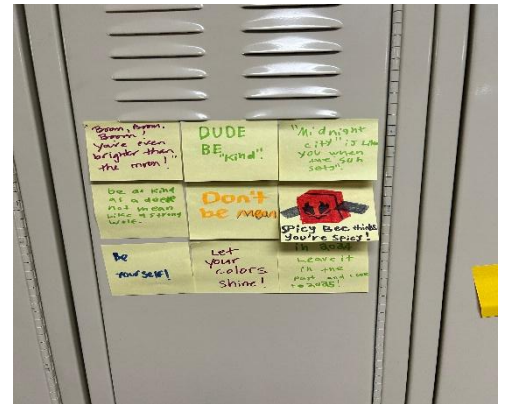
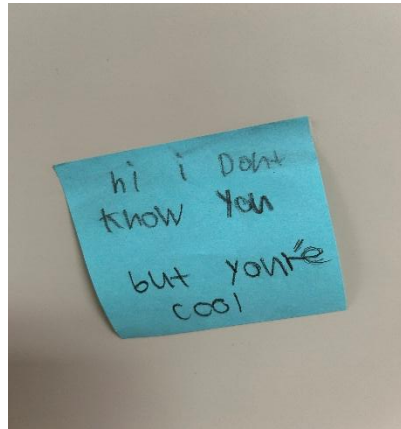
**Reading the World** finished the first marking period strong. Many students read three or more independent novels largely outside each day (thank you, weather!). For the second marking period, we are reading the world through film. We read *The Wizard of Oz* not through the lens of childhood; rather, we read it through a hero's journey/psychological lens. Currently, we are watching the Oscar-winning coming of age film *CODA*, and learning about the deaf community, responsibility, and independence.

On Wednesday, October 30, author of *The Do More Club*, Dana Kramaroff, spoke at TCS about her experiences, inspirations, and writing process. Students were tasked with writing and posing specific questions to Dana. They worked





in shifts making gratitude stones and Lifesaver postcards; afterward, each student had his or her book signed and conversed with the author. What a wonderful way to conclude our one-book-one-community read! (One student was so inspired that he took initiative and is leading TCS's own "Do More Club".)



## Mrs. Culler's Classes:

In Mrs. Culler's 20th Century American History Class, students completed a unit on Labor and Big Business. They concluded with a project that showcased the major events in the US Labor Movement. See slides below:

### Sherman Antitrust Act 1890

The Sherman Antitrust Act prohibited people having a monopoly in interstate commerce and promoted competition in business.



Slide by Grace Wolff

Slide by LeSabien Brown

### The Mother Jones March in 1903

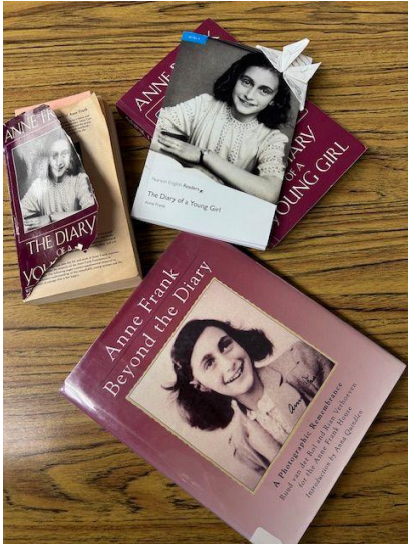
Mother Jones took 80 children who were child laborers at a mill on a march to the home of President Theodore Roosevelt. He saw their horrible injuries and this helped convince people to pass child labor laws.



In Mrs. Culler's Life Science Class students are learning about ferns, gymnosperms, and angiosperms. Students have enjoyed reviewing games and comparing these three classes of plants in order to prepare for their final test on three areas of plant life.

In AP US History Class, students are studying the creation of the early American republic and government, Jefferson's push to expand westward, and gearing up to take the AP USH exam in the spring by examining and analyzing personal accounts and primary source documents from different time periods and perspectives using the SOAPStone tool, which stands for Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, and Tone.

## Mrs. Wright's ELA Classes:



All classes are currently reading *The Diary of a Young Girl: Anne Frank*. This unit connects to our whole school read of Dana Kramaroff's *The Do More Club*.

Students' curiosities were piqued at the mention of the Holocaust and wanted to learn more. Students are using various texts, from my old middle school copy to nonfiction works, to read Anne's poignant story while in hiding during WWII.

While the topic of the Holocaust can be hard to talk about, students have shown wonderful attention and participation in our discussions as we read through Anne Frank's story. To prepare for this reading endeavor, we have used the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website to watch videos for both general and in-depth background knowledge. Students have also gotten the chance to virtually tour The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam through the museum's website. There we found a lot of insight into the life of the refugees in the "Secret Annexe". Through various means, students are getting writing, grammar, and literary workouts to show their understanding of the text.

## Hero's Journey with Mrs. Culler & Mrs. Wright

In our Hero's class we have been having a grand time analyzing main characters and heroes in stories, books, graphic novels, and movies! As the weeks have passed this school year, students have learned the steps of the "HJ" and can identify each step, have created a fun mad-lib version of a "HJ", and have highlighted a favorite character/hero of theirs and analyzed their "HJ" to show their in-depth understanding. Once students formed a solid foundation of the "HJ", Mrs. Culler and I introduced them to the "redemption arc" with the "HJ". We have brainstormed and analyzed many characters who fit this arc. In particular, we took a deep dive into Jack Skellington's redemption arc in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* as well as Ebenezer Scrooge's redemption arc in *A Christmas Carol*.



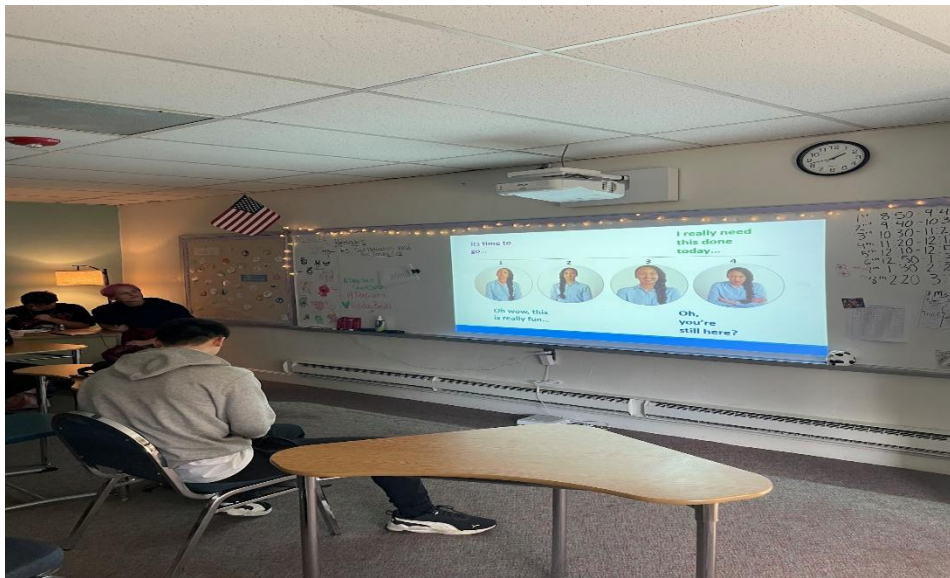
We love Lilith's drawings decorating our white board in RM 9!





## Ms. Cuff's Transitions Class:

Ms. Angelica Webster works for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and comes to visit our Transitions class once a month as part of the Pre-employment Transitions Services program! The 10th, 11th, and 12th graders are invited to her lectures. This month's presentation focused on the types of communication styles in the workplace. She also highlighted that, oftentimes, it is not what we say that matters, but how we say it!



## Ms. Tilmon's Science Classes

In the three Environmental Science II classes this fall, we put on boots and went into the creek to explore amongst the rocks and leaf litter to find aquatic insect larvae, crayfish, and other living things. The students have found stonefly naiads, which are an indicator of excellent water quality!



In Astronomy class, we are studying the nebular and condensation theories of solar system and planet formation. We performed a simulation of these theories involving colored mini marshmallows which represented the atoms of various elements in the original nebula, or cloud, from which our solar system may have formed.

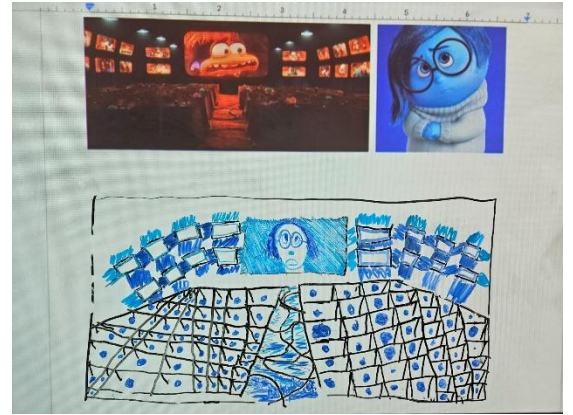
In Chemistry, we are calculating the conversion of moles of atoms to grams of atoms to numbers of atoms of particular elements - lots of math, math, math with scientific notation!



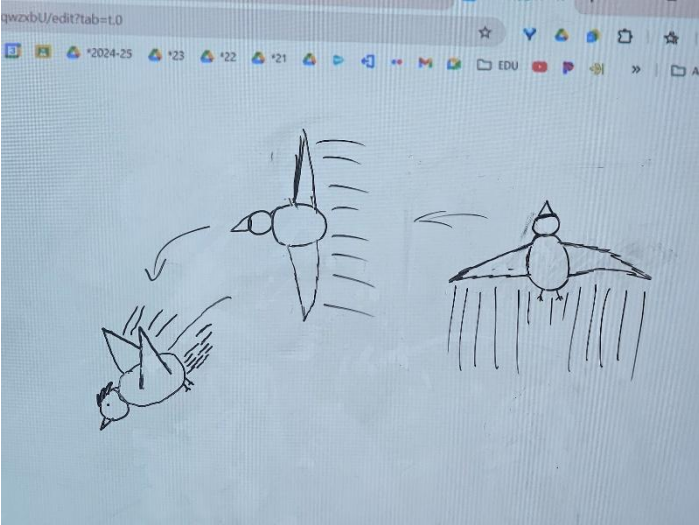
## Mrs. Frederick's Technology Classes

### Pixar

Mrs. Fredericks's Pixar class is learning about the Art of Storytelling. We're currently working on Visual Language and how lines, shape, space, movement, tone, and color can communicate emotions. We've



examined videos from several of Pixar's videos such as Ratatouille, Monsters University, and Inside Out 2. We work together to share ideas and create our own sketches on the whiteboard. These pictures show the students working together, creating movements in sketch show lines, and changing the emotion of an image with color.



### 3D Printing:

Students in Mrs. Fredericks's 3D Printing class had fun creating cookie cutters and then baking cookies using them. Our last project is to design and create a toy car. We just created our own toy block (Lego) in Autodesk Fusion 360.

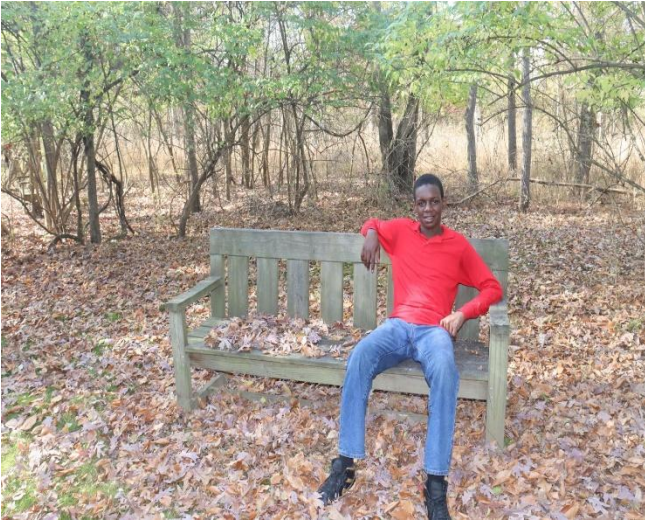


### Photography:

Students in Mrs. Fredericks's Photography class are learning about the Exposure Triangle. We learned about ISO and Aperture and when/how to use them in different settings. Students learned about taking portraits and taking portraits of each other. We're currently working on the basics of editing an image: lighting, color, and cropping.







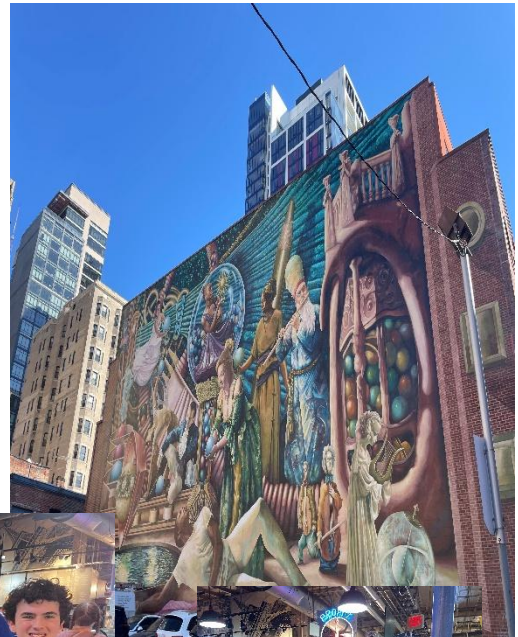
### Video Editing:

Students in Mrs. Fredericks's Video Editing class are learning about Copyright and when to use another's image, video, song, etc. and the protections that Copyright give the creator. We learned about using someone else's music and that parody is one way you can legally use someone else's music. We created a parody of "You've Got a Friend in Me," and changed the words to describe TCS.



# Field Trip

## Philadelphia Mural Tour & Reading Market

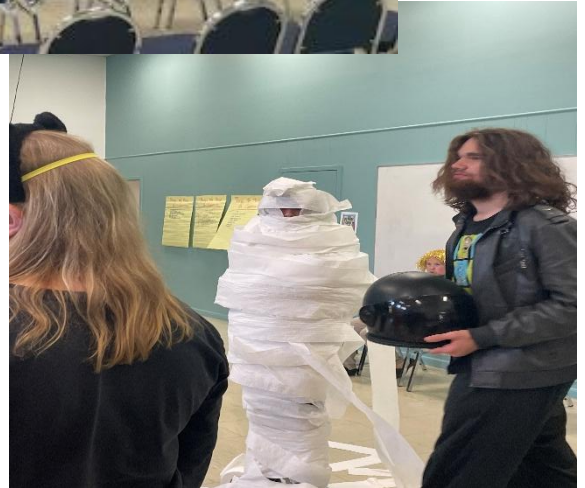




# TCS Picture Gallery

...just for fun!

Halloween 2024







*TCS Anthology Book Signing*

A Little Birdy came to visit - Buddy



*Kristian enjoying his new desk.*

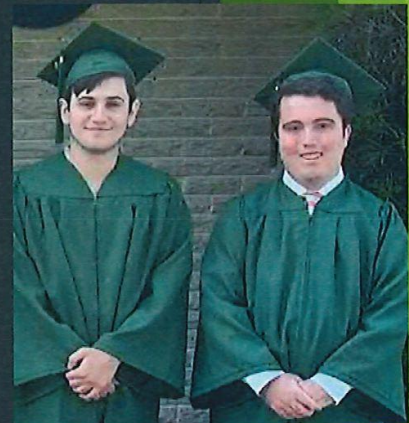




WHERE UNIQUE MINDS  
LEARN IN UNIQUE WAYS

THE CONCEPT SCHOOL **MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT, MINIMIZE YOUR TAXES! DISCOVER THE BENEFITS OF TCS'S EITC SCHOLARSHIP!**

Help us at The Concept School transform the lives of middle and high school students who learn differently by creating a safe, intimate, educational environment where every student is welcomed, accepted, and becomes their authentic self.



Best Regards,

Bill Bennett  
Head of School

**WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?**

Businesses  
w/ PA tax  
Liability

**WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?**

Provide tuition assistance to families in need in your community and receive up to a 90% tax credit.

**HOW MUCH SHOULD I CONTRIBUTE?**

From a min. of \$1000 to a max. of \$750,000.

**Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program**

Businesses are able to redirect their PA state tax dollars to fund a scholarship that supports multiple students attending schools of their choice in select south central PA Counties AND receive up to a 90% tax credit from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**Learn more about EITC and become a TCS Donor [HERE!](#)**