



COLUMBIA ACADEMY

# Columbia Academy News

September 29th 2015

## RISE UP

RESPECT  
INTEGRITY  
STRENGTH  
EXCELLENCE

UNDERSTANDING  
PRIDE



## Principal Update

Thank you for taking the time to read the first CA newsletter of the year! The 2015-2016 school year is off to a great start setting routines and establishing high expectations that result in greater learning for all students. Our commitment to you at Columbia Academy is to work hard every day to provide a culture of academics within which your child has the opportunity to thrive. This year, each child and our school as a whole will RISE UP.

It is important for us to partner with you to assist your child in having a great school year. Communication is key. In addition to this monthly newsletter, I will provide information on upcoming events through a recorded phone message twice a month. On a daily basis, your child will bring home a binder that provides you with access to his /her daily planner, calendar, and work. Teachers and students work with the binders and planners every day and your signature helps provide accountability at home. We thank you for staying current with your child's work at school and for your daily signature.

Finally, this newsletter will provide important reminders and samples of great things happening in our schools. Columbia Academy will emphasize Respect, Integrity, Strength, Excellence, Understanding, and Pride as we RISE UP together this year. Your support is greatly appreciated. Thank you for the opportunity to serve your child as we work together to prepare him/her for a great future.

Columbia  
Academy

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Principal  
Duane Berkas

Assistant Principal  
Jon Moberg

Assistant Principal  
Rick Ostby

Dean  
Camille Erickson

### OUR MISSION

Columbia Heights Public Schools create  
**worlds of opportunity for every learner**  
in partnership with supportive  
small-town communities  
by challenging all to  
discover their talents,  
unleash their potential  
and develop tools  
for lifelong success.

# Columbia Academy News

## AVID Comes to CA

Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) is an international system that helps prepare students for the rigors of college and career. AVID has a very strong record across the country of helping students graduate from high school and go on to college. This year our 6<sup>th</sup> graders will be involved in AVID programming in their classes. Our hope is that in a few years, our entire school will be AVID. In fact, some of our school-wide work already reflects our commitment to utilize proven strategies from AVID. This includes the use of binders and planners

to organize students and communicate with parents, the promotion of a college readiness message through college banners and teachers talking about their college experience, and through transforming school culture to focus on rigorous academics.

We are excited to have the opportunity to learn from schools across the country who are building middle schools that promote a path to college readiness. Columbia Academy will use AVID to build college and career readiness.



## A Culture of Academics

We define a culture of academics as students and teachers working within rigorous classrooms with serious intent to improve learning. High expectations mean that time is not wasted and that distractions are not tolerated. The excitement of dynamic learning results in students describing their classrooms as interesting and fun. Teachers are working this year to provide high structure while building a sense of community in their classrooms. Students who have difficulty engaging in learning will be provided with support so that they can also benefit from being in a school that takes learning very seriously. Above all else, we want your child to be successful.

In order to make this happen, we are increasing our attention on both incentives and appropriate

intervention. Incentives this year will include the opportunity to qualify to participate in fun events and the possibility to earn CA Cash to be used to buy items in our CA Store. Interventions will include lunchtime and afterschool detention time that will be used to help students change habits that interfere with learning. Finally, we will include direct instruction of social/emotional skills and provide intensive adult support for students with the greatest needs.

We know that changing culture takes time and is not always an easy task but it is essential for the good of your child and that of our school as a whole. We welcome your feedback and ask for your support in helping students see the importance of school being a place to learn.

## 100% one to one tablets

This is the first year that every student at Columbia Academy has his/her own tablet. Students spent the second of week of school learning and practicing digital citizenship. Last week, students started receiving their tablets and will begin carrying them to each class in their backpack. In order to make sure students are bringing their devices to school and that they are fully powered for the day, devices will remain at school overnight. Using technology to learn is an important 21st century life skill that we will emphasize with our students this year.



# Columbia Academy News

## CA Athletics Update

We are proud of our Columbia Academy athletes and coaches who practice hard each week in order to compete with strength and respect in their quest for excellence. Some highlights include:

- Girls volleyball are 3-0 under the guidance of Coach Anderson. Ms. Anderson is also a PE teacher at CA.
- Boys soccer defeated Fridley 8-1 last week and are coached by CA PE instructor Scott Opatz.
- The football team has had several hard fought games with a big win over St. Anthony under the lights at CHHS Stadium. Coach Howe and Coach Laskowski both work at CA. Mr. Howe is in charge of the CA behavior room and Mr. Laskowski is a CA Social Studies teacher. They are assisted by Coach Sheets.
- Columbia Academy students are also currently participating with high school students in competitive tennis, bowling, as well as girls' soccer and swimming. Go Hylanders go—we are proud of each of you!



## CA Afterschool Activities

We are proud of our Columbia Academy students who pursue interests in the arts, science, or engineering and learn what it takes to achieve excellence. Some highlights include:

- The Robotics team is led again this year by CA math teacher Aaron Kennedy with a group of 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders and assisted by high school students and dedicated CA parents.
- The CA musical this year will be Lion King directed by CA Theater teacher Tara Lorence. This should be a fun and exciting production. More information to come!

## CA Store — remodeled!

CA students have been earning CA cash through exhibiting Respect, Integrity, Strength, Excellence, Understanding, and Pride as they RISE UP. The school store opens its door this week giving students the opportunity to use their CA cash to purchase snacks, Heights apparel, and an assortment of trinkets. The school store has been transformed through the hard work of a team WEB leaders led by Mr. Hamann and Ms. Nelson. The team brainstormed a new design of the store, painted the room and hung new signs. The store is bound to be a busy place this year and now looks sharp due to the hard work of our students. Thank you participating WEB leaders, as well as staff members, especially Ms. Nelson, and Mr. Hamann!!



# Columbia Academy News

## Thank you!

We are grateful for donations of time and money that help improve the learning experience of our students. We would like to extend our appreciation to the following people and organizations for their support of our school:

- Members of the current and past year CA Parent Advisory Council who donated time and energy to make our second back-to-school at CA picnic a big success
- The Lorence family for their generous donation of \$2500 to support our Theater department
- Legion Post 555 for their kind donation of school supplies



## Important Dates:

- Columbia Academy Picture Day, October 1 (Students will wear uniforms.)
- Columbia Heights Homecoming Football Game, October 2, (7 p.m.)
- No school (MEA Convention), October 15, 16
- Parent Teacher Conferences, October 22 and 26, (4:00 – 7:30 p.m.)

## Reminders!

- Please let us know if your **address or phone number changes**. We use numbers on record to contact you.
- Please make sure you have signed **the Media and Internet agreement**. Your child needs this to use his/her tablet for school work at Columbia Academy.
- **Free and reduced lunch applications** must be filled out annually. This provides additional funding to schools so that all students are receiving the support needed to grow physically and mentally.
- **Proof of immunization** must be provided to schools by parents. Students may be forced to miss school if they have not received all required immunizations.

Questions—call 763-528-4700!

## District News

### Calendar now online

Keep track of your schedule and know what is needed for school; the 2015-2016 Calendar and Back-to-School Guide are now online at [www.colheights.k12.mn.us](http://www.colheights.k12.mn.us)

### Finance Award

The Columbia Heights Public Schools Finance Department earned its Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting international award.

### National Recognition

Superintendent Kelly and Columbia Heights Police Chief Nadeau were recognized by the US Department of Justice for their innovative work to improve community and police relations. Both received the Sutin Civic Imagination Award in recognition of their efforts.

### School Board Election

With the resignation of former School Board Director Lori Meyer, a Primary Election followed by a Special Election have been set. The Primary Election will be held Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2015 with a Special Election scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2016.