

# MAST COMMUNITY CHARTER

# HEALTHY PANTHER POST

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

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## Introducing health newspaper

The *MaST Community Charter Healthy Panther Post* is happy to introduce its first edition. Our seventh-grade reporters are dedicated to giving accurate health information to our school community.

The purpose of our newspaper is share knowledge about health that will help readers keep the community a positive and safe place and encourage them to care for the living environment.

The focus of this edition is how people care for our community and ourselves.

We hope readers will enjoy our articles, illustrations, tips and quotes from school faculty, and the appreciation of a “studious organization” educating people, said a reporter.

We are motivated by seeing a good change in the world through our newspaper.

In future issues, we plan to share fitness tips, book reviews, ideas for staying safe, and ways to keep the environment clean.

We want to hear your feedback. Please send your letters with your comments and suggestions to Ms. Caldwell.



Illustration by Hannah Zhang

We hope you enjoy our first issue.

—By Brianna Nkrumah, Sarina Rimeris,  
and Damien Ball

## You can make a difference at MaST

“Building a healthy community starts with you,” said seventh-grade science teacher Mrs. Marsteller, who was interviewed by *Healthy Panther Post* about some ways she helps create a safe and healthy environment in MaST Community Charter School.

School Nurse Mrs. Schick agreed with her colleague. Both women talked about the importance of having mutual respect as a way to develop an understanding for each other and ourselves.

“I think students need to be kinder to each other and find better ways to cooperate with emotions,” Mrs. Schick said. “The big thing in seventh grade is mental well-being.”

**Being active helps mental and emotional health**

Staying healthy mentally and emotionally is also related to students’ physical health.

Mrs. Marsteller said her sponsorship of the running club helps give children more access to exercise that will benefit them. She noted that other staff members host sports that promote fitness, such as Mr. Trichon, a sixth-grade teacher who also coaches basketball. She would love for her fellow teachers to allow the upper middle school students to have recess time to let them stay active.

Mrs. Schick said gym class and extracurricular activities such as the running club allow students to engage in more active lifestyles. But she would like for seventh graders to have gym year-round, and she

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# Creating a safe and healthy school

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encourages MaST teachers to allow movement breaks every once in a while.

As the school nurse and a member of the wellness council, Mrs. Schick described other ways the school helps keep students healthy. For instance, the school provides healthy lunch options. She performs annual screenings (height, weight, vision) for students and offers health-supporting tips.

“Instead of cupcakes or other sweets for rewards, I think we should replace them with nonfood items,” she said, giving one example. Such a change in our school can create several new opportunities for healthy behaviors.

## Counselors play a role in students’ success

Along with promoting physical fitness, Mrs. Marsteller also told us how MaST helps students stay well mentally and emotionally.

“All students have access to the middle school counselor,” she said, adding that MaST has “quality staff that deeply care about the students.” They create beneficial rules for student safety.

Counselors help students understand their individual learning styles and encourage them to develop skills that will enable them to reach their academic potential. Counselors work with the students to set both short- and long-term goals, improve attendance, and reduce and resolve conflicts.

## Following school rules keeps students safe

Overall school safety relies on having security guards on site and procedures in place such as fire drills and keeping doors locked during and outside the school hours, according to Mrs. Schick.



Illustration by Briana Thomas

She encourages students to follow rules. For example, fire drills allow students to familiarize themselves with what to do in an emergency and reinforce proper evacuation procedures and practices. They also prepare students to safely evacuate if fire alarms sound. With the help of security guards and by keeping doors locked, both students and staff are protected in case of an active threat.

Everyone in the school community is able to assist in creating a school where students and staff feel engaged and respected, according to The National Schools Climate Center. We also play a role in the well-being of our community by taking care of ourselves—eating healthy, staying hydrated, and more, says KidsHealth.org, a health website.

Mrs. Schick said that as long as students and staff begin to take action against unhealthy school habits and replace them with healthier decisions, a healthy school environment may seem far closer than we think. —By Maria Rehman, Lily Quirk, Claire Herkert, Amelia Mathew, Jaxon Wolf, Alexander Dougherty, and Healthy Panther Post staff

# Showing empathy can benefit the school

Empathy is the ultimate bullying prevention strategy, according to Ms. Vee, MaST school counselor.

She believes that if you can empathize with someone, you can understand how another person feels.

Ms. Vee explained empathy is meeting someone where they're at, seeing things from their perspective, and not making assumptions.

*Healthy Panther Post* reporters interviewed Ms. Vee to gain a better understanding of the importance of empathy and how it can affect ourselves and others.

Merriam-Webster.com describes empathy as “the feeling that you understand and share another person’s

experiences.” It is good for people because it can make someone feel better and become a better person.

“It also helps us to feel valued, loved, and cared for,” according to wellbeingpeople.com.

Ms. Vee encourages lessons that help bring awareness of how to spread empathy within a student’s community. Panther Pride assemblies are held at MaST each month and can help motivate students to display positive behaviors, such as respect, preparation, integrity, excellence, and determination.

Be careful that you don’t assume you know what’s on someone’s mind. Ms. Vee said she encountered a stu-



# Kindness can be contagious

By spreading kindness to everyone, humanity and positivity are increased within our community, said Mr. Giampolo, middle school building leader in a recent interview with the *Healthy Panther Post*.

Mr. Giampolo defines bullying as “intentionally being cruel to someone or groups repeatedly.” It comes in many different forms such as a sound a person might make or the way they look at someone else.

Bullying may seem innocent, he said, like when children laugh at another child it may look like people having fun together, but they are not.

Bullying can occur anytime and anywhere. Even if you are inside your classroom and the teacher isn’t looking, somebody can do just something like making a face at you. The teacher may not notice.

Kindness is the act of showing positive feelings toward another individual. Research indicates it can reduce feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. It also can evoke feelings of happiness and reduces pain.

Dr. Dan Gottlieb, a psychologist, interviewed in the *Healthy NewsWorks* book, *Leading Healthy Change In Our Community 2015*, said, “Be understanding of others. Most of all, be kind to yourself, always. ... you will find it easier to be kind to others.”

A few easy ways that people can spread kindness is by holding the elevator door open for somebody or giving a coffee to somebody who’s low on cash. You can also help somebody carry their groceries to their house. Kindness is a form of being friendly, generous, or considerate of others.

MaST has implemented different groups and programs to promote kindness and reduce bullying. Mr. Giampolo said the school hosts the Panther Pride assembly. It is a monthly gathering of the students and staff of MaST where people’s views are recognized and encouraged.



Illustration by Michaela Kaplan

Another way the school tries to prevent bullying is by motivating students with “PBIS points.” PBIS stands for positive behavior intervention and support program. These points are used by MaST pupils to buy a variety of things at the school store. The school also gives students access to the school counselors, Mr. Giampolo said. “Students are encouraged to see the counselors when they feel hurt,” he said.

Bullying can be stopped with the help of the students. Mr. Giampolo said students should strive to have empathy and put themselves in other people’s shoes. Not only before they are thinking of insulting someone, but also if a student sees someone being hurt by another peer. They should think about how they would feel if they were in the other person’s shoes. They would want someone to stick up for them. Students should be kind to one another, even if they are not friends.

Mr. Giampolo said he has seen compassion and kindness exhibited by teachers, students, and staff in person and online. “If everybody was more kind, the world would be a better place,” Dr. Gottlieb said.

—By *Healthy Panther Post* staff

## chool climate

dent who made a mistake and thought they understood what someone else was thinking. However, they didn’t. Making the assumption that you understand someone else’s feelings can escalate to misunderstandings and the dismissal of the other person’s emotions, Ms. Vee said.

“It can make people more connected if we understand each other,” she said, adding that lending a helping hand to others undergoing a tough situation can help the school climate.

—By *Healthy Panther Post* reporters



Illustration by Sarina Rimeris

# When teachers were students ...

Picking up trash in the hallways. Keeping doors locked. Going to gym class. Like the students they teach today, MaST Community Charter School teachers found ways to stay healthy and keep their schools safe when they were in middle school.

*Healthy Panther Post* spoke with Mr. Costanzo, lead seventh-grade social studies teacher, and Mrs. Miller, who is a Response to Intervention teacher, about their school experiences.

Mr. Costanzo, who attended St. Matthew's School (a private Catholic school in Philadelphia) said there were many ways his school made him feel safe. One example is that doors were locked at all times and visitors had to report to the main office before being able to enter the classrooms.

To help the school environment, he and his friends worked together and emptied trash from the classrooms and hallways.

Mrs. Miller, who attended three elementary schools—Sheridan, Hackett, and Richmond, all located in Philadelphia—said the schools did a lot to help students and staff stay healthy and feel safe.

At Richmond, for example, Mrs. Miller recalled that she felt safe because of hallway monitors and adults in the hallways. For her part, Mrs. Miller helped keep her school clean by picking up trash and throwing it away. She also would let an adult know if someone was being mistreated.

Mr. Costanzo remembered that his school promoted healthy behaviors by holding gym class all year, not just for a semester.

"That was a way for students to stay fit and in shape all year round," he said. Recess every day after lunch was a great help as well.

Being on the basketball team "was a great experience during my middle school days," Mr. Costanzo said, explaining another way he kept in shape. His team even finished as state runners-up his eighth-grade year.

Mr. Costanzo also talked about the choices students were allowed to make about their courses.

"There was a lot of freedom in my middle school days," he said, explaining that students were allowed to pick an elective course when he was in eighth grade. Mr. Costanzo picked stocks as his topic for his class.

Toward the end of the interview, he showed us his seventh-grade English Language Arts copybook. It was filled with many interesting things. We could tell that he loved to draw, as almost every page was very colorful and filled with doodles. We learned a lot

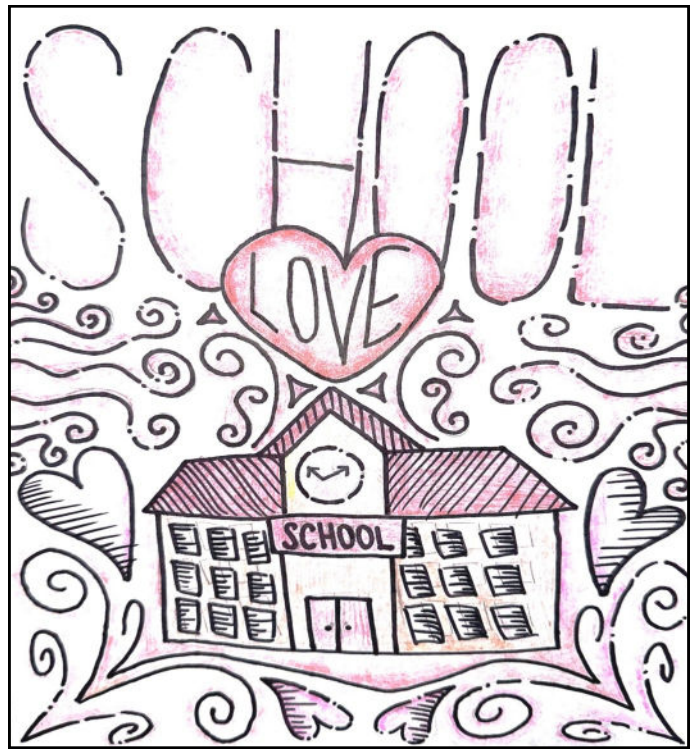


Illustration by Ameila Skala

about him, and that he is a person who will do anything to keep his environment a safe place.

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Feeling healthy and safe should always be a priority in school, and the *Healthy Panther Post* is here to help you. We'll provide you with the foremost information on staying healthy and feeling safe in your school environment and also use drawings and images to help convey information about the topic.

—By *Healthy Panther Post* reporters

## MaST Community Charter School

The *Healthy Panther Post* is a publication of MaST Community Charter School in Philadelphia. Contributing seventh-grade reporters include Iuliia Avilova, Damien Ball, Gianna Depa, Alexander Dougherty, Matthew Gable, Claire Herkert, Michaela Kaplan, Colin Loftus, Amelia Mathew, Emily Miller, Brianna Nkrumah, Lily Quirk, Maria Rehman, Sarina Rimeris, Lyla Santulli, Ameila Skala, Briana Thomas, Julia Toth, Daniel Watson, Jherek Wiseman, Jaxon Wolf, Hannah Zhang, and Austin Zhen.

The *Healthy Panther Post*'s faculty advisor is Ms. Caldwell. The middle school leader is Mr. Giampolo.

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Healthy NewsWorks is a nonprofit program that partners with elementary and middle schools in the Philadelphia area to empower students to become researchers, writers, critical thinkers, and confident communicators.

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