
SUMUS LEONES

December Issue

The Cooper Campus: Latin's New Frontier

By: Isabella Lee, Oluwamayowa Akinsanya, and Ruby Churches,
eighth grade

A few months ago, the school community received word that Washington Latin had located a second campus at 711 Edgewood Street NE. Starting in July of 2022, the new campus, called the Anna Julia Cooper Campus of Washington Latin Public Charter School, will provide an alternative space for fifth and sixth graders. Of course, how will the new campus compare to the great space Washington Latin has here?

Mr. Anderson, the Head of School, said, "We have engaged a large team of internal and external experts to help us to ensure that we maintain standards of excellence in personnel, school culture, and academic program."

And, Ms. Fleming, the director of operations explained why the campus is only accepting fifth and sixth graders. "Just as we did with our current school, we're starting with two grades initially and planning to grow one grade each year until we have a full fifth-twelfth grade program. Each school community is different, and that gradual growth will let us learn how to best serve the population at our second campus as we grow the program."

Since the Cooper campus will be similar to the original, it begs the question, why is the school going through the long process of creating a whole new campus? As Ms. Fleming puts it, "Given the length of our waitlist every year, we know there is demand for the experience we offer and it's wonderful to think of serving more

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families.”

“Each year we receive more than 2500 applications for about 120 open seats in the MySchoolDC admission lottery. This indicates overwhelming demand for what we offer.” Mr Anderson said, on why Latin is going through the process of a new campus.

Sixth grade civics teacher Mr. Mullings, as a future teacher of the Cooper campus, contributed his own opinion. “I am excited to transition to the Cooper Campus! Latin is a special place filled with special people, and I feel grateful that I have the opportunity to help create this unique learning experience for even more students in our city.”

Staffing is another big question when it comes to the new campus, how will Latin administrators make sure students will get the same teacher-student relationship?

“Hiring for the Cooper Campus is now underway. I do not yet know of any teachers who are moving to the Cooper Campus but I do know that there is a clear process outlined for those who may be interested. Collectively, I think staff see the new school as an opportunity to expand our reach and introduce the classical tradition to more learners. I know we're all thinking about how to best support the students and teachers who will be learning and working at the Cooper Campus. Opening a new school is not easy work,” said Mr. Mullings.



Dr. Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964), the namesake for Washington Latin’s new campus, was born a slave in North Carolina, but she died in Washington D.C. as an author, teacher, feminist, and an activist for the equality and freedom of Black people.

Reconsidering Race

By: Maggie Southworth and Lydia Park, freshmen

This past summer a Wisconsin representative, Glenn Grothman, tried to pass a law banning the teaching of critical race theory in Washington, D.C. schools.

When asked, a teacher who wished to stay anonymous commented, “First and foremost, the law is racist. Such a law would invalidate students’ lived experiences and family histories. Therefore, it would inhibit the school’s ability to be a safe place for students. In terms of academics, critical race theory is central to the Civil Rights Movement.” With DC also being in the center of the BLM protests this past year, how has Latin decided to incorporate these topics in the classroom?

Overall, teachers at Latin have agreed that it is important to include discussions about racial issues in their classes in order to better prepare students for today’s world.

Upper School English teacher, Mr. Day, shared why he thinks it is significant to talk about racial matters for three reasons, “(1) In order to understand the world and the cultures we find ourselves in -- something we do with literature -- we must address racial issues. (2) Students better see the relevance of their education if it shows them things both about the world and about themselves. (3) The rhetoric and work of anti-racism are extensions of classical rhetoric and classical virtues, as seen through the lens of American democratic values.” He then added, “If Latin is to provide a classical education for the modern world, we must bring our academic tools to bear on issues of race.”

Ms. Peale, a seventh grade English teacher, added, “We hope that (during) discussions students are able to learn from each other and the differing perspectives that are in the classroom. We hope that students can feel respected and valued, despite the tensions of the subject, and we expect that students can apply what they have learned about the historical contexts of the people in the books we read to events happening today.”

With some classes, it has been harder than others to add direct discussions about race to their classes.

Mr. Torrence, physics and AP Environmental Science (APES) teacher, and faculty supervisor for the BLM Club, commented, “While we may not be discussing Kyle Rittenhouse and Ahmaud Arbery, it's important that we still address the general whitewashing of science curricula. In APES we talk lightly about environmental racism and how people in lower socioeconomic

brackets are more impacted, globally, by the changing climate. I regularly feel like I should do more, but I struggle to identify where that would happen.”

While many teachers do find discussions about race significant, many of them agreed that it is a difficult topic to bring into the classroom because of the diverse environment at Latin.

DC History and Conflict Resolution teacher, Ms. Grant commented, “A challenge is that doing all this in a school like ours is that students have incredibly different life experiences. Race plays a huge role in that. Talking openly about how you really feel and sharing your real lived experiences is very vulnerable in a mixed race setting where someone else might dismiss you or attack you for what you believe. It's hard to disagree with ideas and not demean people. It's hard to listen to a view that is totally different from your own. It's hard to acknowledge that lived experience and reading a textbook aren't the same thing and can provoke really different emotions.”

But for some teachers, they try to approach those difficult discussions by leading by example and creating a safe space.

“I try to do so openly. If I can model handling a potentially difficult or uncomfortable issue for my students, they are better able to handle it themselves. My classes also do a lot of work to build safe and supportive classroom communities, so that we can better engage with issues that are hard to talk about,” mentioned Mr. Day.

Students have found discussions about race to be helpful, and even make them feel more confident and informed on the subject.

Senior Sanjana Bhojwani spoke on this, saying, “Learning about racial issues in the classroom makes me feel more seen as a POC [person of color]. Especially because of the Asian American Hate issues in May ... I find discussions around racial issues helpful, especially as it is related to content and gives whatever we're learning about an application. We might be learning about history that happened 200 years ago, but around race it's always really modern and very applicable to the student body as a whole. Talking about race is quite beneficial.”

Brooke Roberson, a freshman, also had similar thoughts about discussions concerning race and commented, “I most definitely think that discussions about racial issues are helpful. I think learning about racial issues, in some ways, makes this school seem like more of a community. Racial issues are something that can tear many things apart, but when we bring it up in the classroom, having a chance to talk about them brings us all together.”

Eighth grader Ruby Churches agreed and mentioned that having discussions about racial issues, “does make me feel better that they are being addressed so there is an extra sense of security knowing it has been addressed, it is less likely to happen.”

Freshman Eamon Price, added on saying, “I think that they are helpful because otherwise (the racial issues) will just be ignored.”

With the mixed feelings about racial discussions in the classroom, students shared what they hope can be improved.

Sanjana Bhojwani added, “One thing I noticed about the discussion of race in Latin is that it's very presented and there's not much room for people to comment. It's always, here's race, here's what's happening, and here's how you need to address it. I think a little more nuance would do the students at Latin a good thing. I hope to see it added in one way or another to the classroom.”

Covid Gives Kids Dance Fever!

By: Aitana Camponovo, freshman

The absence of a homecoming dance has made students very curious about when they can celebrate together again as an upper school community. However, it has been recently confirmed that the Winter Formal will happen after all, on Friday, January 21, 2022 from 6:30-10:30pm. Teachers will chaperone this formal, masked affair.

“There has definitely been a lot of talk and thought about a school dance,” said Ms. Brady, the Director of the Upper School. “We wanted to hold an October ‘Homecoming’ Dance, but a number of moving parts kept us from doing so. Because of the nature of COVID, we wanted to hold the dance outside. I felt it was not safe and secure enough to hold it in the school's outside courtyard because anyone from the public could walk up, making me feel like I could not ensure our student's safety, which is my number one priority.”

It is obvious that COVID causes various difficulties in terms of finding a location, as was the reason for Homecoming being canceled last October.

In response to not having a Homecoming, freshman Liane Riedel states, “Dances are an idealistic high school experience. Literally every other school in DC has had a homecoming; it's a way to get your mind off of the pandemic and we could find a way to do it safely. I think there definitely should be a dance in the future because we didn't get a homecoming which was pretty crappy.”

However, is it truly possible to have a dance in a way that is Covid-safe? Though a dance is an exciting idea, some students disagree that social distancing could truly work.

Sophomore Izzy Morris says, “It's too cold outside, and in the MPR it's practically suffocating when it comes to air circulation.”

Not only is social distancing an issue when it comes to the dance, but so is the sound factor.

“Then we thought about holding it in the Lion Courtyard,” said Ms. Brady, “the issue there arose because the music would reverberate off the walls, making the echo factor very loud all the way to New Hampshire Ave. and Kansas Ave., bothering our neighborhood late at night. Ms. Vercammen let me know that this would be the case in that space.”

In regards to a possible Winter Formal, Ms. Brady says, “with the increased number of vaccinated students, we will be able to hold a winter formal in January in the MPR. Ms. Raskin and I are

working on the details of this! Believe me, we want to make this happen for our community, but there are a lot of moving parts, COVID and student safety being at the forefront.”

Though it has already been confirmed, could having a dance truly work? How big of a sacrifice could one harmless night truly be?

Advisory Olympics: Let the Games Begin

By: Sadie Greenhalgh, Ry Shapiro, and Madelyn Zeller, seventh grade

On Monday, November 8, 2021, at the start of the second quarter, middle school students started the Advisory Olympics. The Advisory Olympics is a competition between advisories, where students do good deeds for the Washington Latin community, challenge themselves, and engage deeply with learning. In exchange, the students are rewarded by faculty members with points for their advisory. Some of the ways students can earn points include studentship, acts of service, self-advocacy and taking academic risks. At the end of the second quarter, on January 21st, 2022, the Advisory Olympics will come to an end, and the advisory, grade level, and individual with the most points will win prizes including dressdown passes and a catered lunch.

Ms. Bradley, the director of middle school, and Ms. Reed, the assistant director of middle school, have big plans to kick off this year's Advisory Olympics.

“I believe there is so much power in the choices we make every day. In a community, when we collectively make productive choices, we all benefit from it,” Ms. Bradley expressed. “Due to the pandemic, we have been disconnected for some time and missed an opportunity to get better at working together, supporting each other, advocating for ourselves, and celebrating all of the moments that support student growth. Ms. Reed and I hope that this leadership initiative is an experience that will bring us together and highlight all the good we see everyday. If students have any thoughts about how this is going they can send them our way!”

Middle schoolers have strong opinions on the Advisory Olympics, some think it's fun and efficient, while others think it's not working as planned.

Some were excited about the Olympics and the chance to compete between students and advisories. “The [Advisory Olympics] are a fun way to get people to work better,” seventh grader Kieran Kalsi explained. “It's a good way to endorse helping out in school.”

“I think that the advisory Olympics is a great way to get students to benefit their community,” sixth grader Eden Claire expressed. “I try to participate as often as possible and I have seen others trying as well. After the advisory Olympics I think that some will still try to do well while others will decide that they don't want to anymore.”

Others had doubts that the points would be fairly offered and that the tallies would be very motivating.

“I think that a lot of teachers aren’t actually putting in points,” seventh grader Nora O’Donovan stated. “I think that it is unfair.”

“I don't think [the Advisory Olympics] really inspire anyone to do better in themselves,” eighth grader Tate Meier expressed. “People don’t really think about them when they are going about their day.” When asked whether or not he thought students should be rewarded for actions they should do everyday anyway, Tate answered “I think that you should be recognized for your merit-worthy behavior, but not every day.”

Walking in a Winter Wellness Day

By: Quinn Frankiewicz, 6th grade and Ruby Churches, eighth grade

Why are the two weeks before Winter Break so stressful? You are about to see family, there will be a lot of activities, and it can be frantic sometimes. Teachers are giving more work before the break to wrap up each unit.

Ms. Bradley, Mr. Kelly, Ms. Brady, Ms. Reed, and Ms. Kovach decided to have a Wellness Day and organized various activities, culminating in a half day of time to relax, play, do activities, and hang out with your friends on December 8. Wellness Day took place at school and outside the building, plus the Upper School activities took place all over the city and over Zoom. This allowed students a chance to relax before Winter Break.

History teacher Mullings and science teacher Ms. Crespo ran a Family Feud session. Ms. Silva ran a session on Music for the Soul. The STEM club had activities with science teacher Ms. Dobler, Mr. Starnes did board games, and English teacher Mr. Bane did Minute to Win It challenges. English teacher Mr. Green ran field games, while others made cookies, listened to music, made crafts, and watched Home Alone.

“Everyone is in the zone,” said Ms. Silva. “There is a little talking, but it is all about the playlists. For the second half, we did ‘Name That Tune,’ which is a music guessing game. And everyone ended up joining in, even those who said they would sit out.

“I went to Home Alone,” said 8th grader Jack Levin. “This month was more fun because it was not as strict as last time. The popcorn was tasty, and the plot was exciting. I love Wellness Day. It was not boring at all, and I want to see Home Alone 2 next time.”

“I did Jeopardy, then reading, then Music for the Soul,” said Adrian Barbin, a sixth grader. “I liked at the beginning how I started playing Jeopardy, and then went slower and slower, ending with music. Wellness day gives you a break in the middle of the week. It is not as much stress for Wednesday. Usually Wednesday we are hoping we are almost done, but we just started.”

“I did the Avatar the Last Airbender Club,” said eighth grader Stella Martin. “We did an Avatar BuzzFeed Quiz, then we watched an Avatar episode and filled out an Avatar bingo card. I would like it on a Friday. Wednesday is awkwardly in the middle. It should be a Friday thing, since you think it is the end of the week, but then tomorrow there is school.”

“I signed up for a cookie baking club,” said ninth grade Xander Perry. “Ms. Dreux is running it. It is in room 012. I chose in person not Zoom, because I don’t like being over the camera.”

In the Minute to Win It Club, English teacher Mr. Bane flicked marshmallows from a spoon and students tried to catch them in a cup, going against the clock to see how many they could get in 60 seconds. “Next we will play Junk in the Trunk, you put ping pong balls in the tissue boxes around your butt and the goal is to shake them all out,” said Mr. Bane. Everyone has to look a bit ridiculous in this game, and everyone plays every game. This is an excellent group for sportsmanship. The big challenge this year is you can’t do anything with breathing like using a straw or keeping a feather in the air. Covid changes everything a bit.”

Alice Day, a 5th grader, was making ornaments for a Christmas Tree or a doorknob. “We used recycled paper from a book, and a piece of wood.” The session was run by Ms. Coleman.

Mr. Starnes had a board games day. “It has been great to see kids play physical games, as opposed to games on their phone and Chromebooks, and get back to their roots. I think this one has been better than the last one, since the groups are smaller and less loud.”

Ms. Dobler ran a Stem Challenge Club. “Their goal was to build the tallest wall using note cards, no glue, no tape, no nothing, just 100 note cards.” The winners of the challenge were eighth graders Milo Harris, Mira Soskis, and seventh grader Sadie Wortman, who built the highest one.

“It’s a solid hurray,” said eighth grader Thalia Ehrenpreis, who did Jeopardy, Avatar, and Music for the Soul.





Students play a game and create a tower during Wellness day.
Photos Credit: Ruby Churches

Eighth grades at Mr. Byrd's Wellness Wednesday session, called Finding Peace With PuzzlesBest.



Seventh Grade Service

By: Sadie Greenhalgh and Ry Shapiro, seventh grade

On Monday, November 8, the seventh grade took various field trips for their Youth Empowerment Seminar class, to complete service for their community. Youth Empowerment Seminar (Y.E.S.) encourages students to be their best selves and empowers them to do good for their community. The seventh grade was split into six groups, with around fifteen students and two chaperones in most groups.

“I was the one who chose the activities,” Mr. Green, who helped create the Y.E.S. program and served as a chaperone of group two explained. “I wanted the service options to touch different segments of our communities’ needs like homelessness, poverty, hunger and the environment to name a few. I also aimed to give every kid an opportunity to do service on and off campus. The final consideration was to ensure factors out of the kids control such as allergies or vaccination status would not impact their ability to participate in the service day.”

Ms. Goldstein, one of the chaperones of group six, when asked if she thought the trip was successful, answered, “Yes! 100% yes. I thought it was a great mix of purpose and service while also allowing space for us to have fun and enjoy each other. It was a great trip! One particular highlight was the van ride - I think kids really appreciate my taste in music. I feel that it was a great day and wouldn’t have changed a thing, maybe next time we can go to different organizations to make our impact even bigger.”

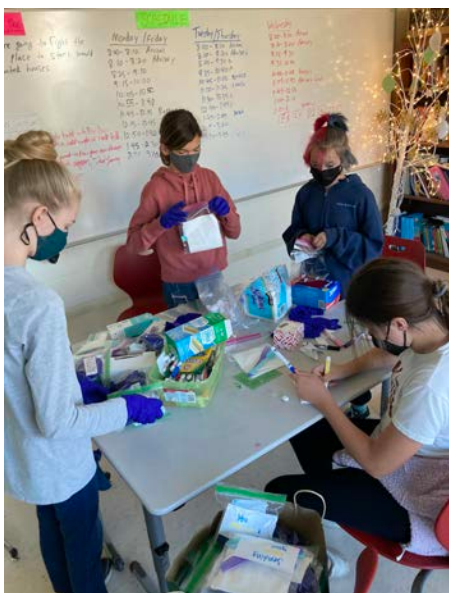
“I think that many of the students gained a greater appreciation of the needs of people and pets who experience adversity in their lives,” Dr. Bonner, one of the chaperones of group one expressed. “Many [students] commented on the sheer number of resources on display at one site that many families find useful under challenging circumstances. There was a lot of team-building, too!”

Mr. Wills, the seventh grade Ancient Civilizations and chaperone of group 5, when asked what we can improve on in order to have a better experience next time responded, “I think that for our second opportunity to perform community service, perhaps the seventh graders can work with local agencies that provide social services for homeless women and their children, like N Street Village or agencies that work with the homeless community, like Martha’s Table, and help them by distributing meals at a shelter or soup kitchen.”

Students had missed experiences on the day, appreciating the setting but knowing that community service is challenging.

“It was fun, and I liked volunteering at different places,” seventh grader Selah Brown commented. “It made me feel like I was actually impacting someone.”

“Honestly service day wasn't that bad. We got to dress down and we got to go to places. I made dog treats with my friends, but cleaning up English ivy was scary,” seventh grader Dewi Briscoe said. “People kept saying it was poisonous or putting it in people's faces. I also had to go home early because I got hit in the head with a dead tree, but besides that it was okay.”



Seventh graders making dog treats for the Humane Rescue Alliance, kits for people in need, and pulling up English Ivy in the Rock Creek.

Editorial: Very Few Vegetarian Options

By: Zoe Wood, seventh grade

Does Washington Latin provide adequate lunch options for vegetarians? Washington Latin serves three main meals with a side. On most days, there is only one lunch option for the vegetarians who get school lunch, despite the reliance on school lunch many have. As the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) stated, “school lunch is critical to students' well-being.”

Students and some teachers who receive school lunch have mixed opinions on school lunch, some enjoying it everyday, and some skipping days because of the choices.

“I feel like the lunch options for vegetarians could be more varied,” said seventh grader Sadie Greenhalgh. “I think it's unfair how the options for meat-eaters are interesting, and differ every day. Sometimes, it feels like we are getting the same things over and over again. And it's good, but not the healthiest, like pizza or cheese panada.”

Students and some teachers who receive school lunch have mixed opinions on school lunch, some enjoying it everyday, and some skipping days because of the choices.

“Some of the vegetarian options are very good (especially when there are leftovers, as some of the entrees -- looking at you, black bean wrap -- are tasty but not very filling),” stated upper school English teacher Mr. Day. “The various empanada-ish hot pocket entrees are really good. Others (hi, cheese sandwich; hi pb+j) are less so, but with all but one or two many improvements can be made with some combination of salt, black pepper, mustard, and hot sauce (especially hot sauce!) -- all of which I keep at school.”

“Generally I enjoy the school lunches that I get, but I've skipped lunch entirely countless times because of how bad the vegetarian option is,” expressed freshman Olie Paterson. And, “at a certain point there's no reason to even wait in line just for something with no real nutritional value.”

“For the most part, no, I did not like school lunch,” explained former Washington Latin student Ganesh Bojwani. “I've been a vegetarian my whole life and the days when I needed to get school lunch felt like a challenge. There aren't many good options as a vegetarian.”

“I think there should be another vegetarian option to pick from each day, so we are not forced to eat something we don't like,” stated sophomore Ellie Anderson.

Ms. Fleming, the director of operations, has her own thoughts about the school lunch. She is careful to make sure the school is provided with healthy options that follow national health guidelines.

“Providing food for all students who want school meals is very important to me,” Ms. Fleming expressed. “Our menu is designed to include at least one vegetarian option every day and often two, and there are always fresh fruits and vegetables available as well. I work closely with our food service vendor to identify any new offerings on their menu (vegetarian or otherwise) and we will usually at least try new items once to see how students and faculty react. I regularly provide feedback on menu items --especially new items -- based on comments from students and faculty.

In the end most students also said that the school lunch needs a change!

“We need a larger variety of vegetarian options and ones that are up to the same quality as the meat options,” said Bhojwani.

“We need some changes, it needs to be more well-rounded. There should always be a complete meal available regardless of whether or not you eat meat,” explained Paterson.

“I think the school lunch is good, but a change I would like is variety for vegetarians would be greatly appreciated,” added Greenhalgh.

Even some of the students that are not vegetarian have an idea for a change in the school lunch.

“I think vegetarians should have more than one option for food because we have so many vegetarians at our school they should have at least three options so there is more variety, ” said seventh grader Chatman Nichols.

Ms. Fleming added some new information regarding the school lunch saying, “Our current contract goes through the end of this school year (June of 2022). We may consider changing vendors for the 2022-23 school year (starting in August 2022) but no decisions have been made yet.”



A pile of school lunches. Photo Credit: Zoe Wood



Seniors at the Senior Thanksgiving Potluck .





Upper schoolers working on their Catapult Project for physics.



Upper schoolers during Spirit Week.



Middle schoolers in theater class.



Upper schoolers stepping in the courtyard.