



## A Message from Mr. Carpenter

**5...4...3...2...1...Lift off!** Like a rocket ship taking flight, the 2020-21 school year roared off the launchpad last week to embark on a new school year unlike any we've ever seen before. While the many changes imposed by the current pandemic will require still more time to get used to, our teachers and students have done a terrific job in adjusting to the new reality of daily school life. I want to offer my huge thanks to everyone—faculty, students, and parents alike—for making these first few Opening Days so successful. After almost six months of an empty building, it is great to finally have students back on campus!

During these uncertain times, the greatest gift we have this year may well be the simple privilege of coming together on campus four days a week, which makes us unique among all schools in the area. This is why the 'Community Pledge' that each family signed to start the year is so important. Our ability to continue offering on-campus learning is by no means guaranteed, and will depend largely on the combined efforts of all of us to do our part to mitigate preventable risk in order to protect the larger health of our school community.

In thinking about this, I turned to the dictionary to look up the word 'community', and here is what I found: 'A community is a group of people that live near one another and generally have the same interests in common. Communities usually share something in common, assist and support one another in times of need, and work together to make their community a better place.' I can't think of a better way to describe the promise of what lies before us this school year. Indeed, if you divide the composite word 'community' into its separate parts, you get two words--'common' and 'unity.' Thus, a community is something that we all share in common, and that helps to unite us all together. My hope is that we will have lots of time this year to explore what it truly means to be a part of Academy High, and the opportunity—and responsibility-- we all have to make this the very best school it can be.

Until then, be safe, and know how grateful we are here at school to be on this road together.

## Upcoming Dates

- 9/7 Labor Day - **NO SCHOOL**
- 9/24 Parent-Teacher Conferences
- 9/25 Parent-Teacher Conferences - **NO SCHOOL**

## Academy High Parents Association

We are looking forward to meeting all of you. Please consider getting involved in the Academy High Parents Association ("AHPA"), as a newly formed association we need your help, ideas, and enthusiasm. Parents, grandparents, and guardians are invited to join. Throughout the year, the AHPA will raise funds to host events that help to build a sense of community and enhance the experience for all of our students and families.

If you are interested in either being a Parent Representative for your student's grade, joining us, or have any questions, please contact Marli Pessin, AHPA Chair, at [schudeller@gmail.com](mailto:schudeller@gmail.com).

## Admissions

In a historic year of many 'firsts' (our first year with all four grade levels, our anticipated first formal accreditation and Strategic Plan, and our first Senior Class!), we are delighted to welcome 26 new Owls to Academy High, including the largest incoming freshman class of 19! We look forward to working with our Seniors to help define what 'Senior Year' looks like at Academy High, and to our largest Freshman Class as they begin their exciting four-year journey. Exciting times ahead, indeed!

A few spots are available in select grades. Academy High is currently offering Rolling Admissions for 20-21 Fall Enrollment, and a waiting list will form when classes fill.

**Please help us spread the word, as word-of-mouth by our current community is the greatest way to reach new families!**

## Accreditation Update

We are extremely excited to announce that our school accreditation process is confidently going forward, and our site visit from COGNIA, our accreditation body, is scheduled for September 9th-11th. Many thanks are owed to the Strategic Planning Committee for their work which gave us an ideal springboard to propel this important accreditation process forward. We are extremely grateful to Jordan Conerty, Sarah Laufenberg, Natasha Capell, and Mr. Carpenter for their tireless, detailed work this summer to prepare for the visit.

## Annual Board Retreat

Academy High's Board of Directors held its Annual Fall Retreat on Saturday, August 15th to gear up for the coming academic year. During our retreat, we also had the opportunity to welcome two new Board Members:

- Dr. Kashif Ahmed, Professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine
- Mr. Charles Burton, Director of Operations at Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club

The Board's guest speaker was Dr. Kelly Ritter from the University of Illinois College of English, who spoke on "Twenty-first Century College Prep: A Higher Education Perspective". Dr. Ritter discussed the University's Student Learning Outcomes, which overwhelmingly align with Academy High's '5-C's Plus 1'.

The Board discussed the Strategic Plan, which was approved later that week, and endorsed the Reopening Plan developed by the COVID Task Force.

An incredible amount of work was done by faculty and volunteers this summer, and the Board is most grateful for the dedication shown by this small but devoted community.

## Strategic Plan Finalized

We want to express our sincere thanks to students and families who participated in the Town Hall sessions this summer. Input from these sessions and the school's spring survey helped to shape the school's Strategic Plan, which will guide the growth of the school over the next five years. The Strategic Plan also served as a springboard for our Cognia accreditation visit, which is scheduled for two weeks from now. The document will be posted on the school's website very soon.

## Welcome Ekta Garg

Academy High is pleased to welcome Ekta Garg as our new Office Manager and Administrative Assistant. Ekta will oversee the Office of the Registrar as well as several other important administrative duties, including daily attendance. A talented freelance journalist and editor and parent of Suhani Garg '24 with extensive contacts in the local Champaign-Urbana media industry, Ms. Garg will also bring her considerable talents to the volunteer role as Marketing Committee Chair to help spread the good news about Academy High more widely in our local community. We thank Sarah Laufenberg for her tireless dedication in this capacity over the last three years as the school was established. To contact Ms. Garg regarding Registrar, daily attendance and other school issues, please contact her at [registrar@academyhigh.org](mailto:registrar@academyhigh.org). With general questions, please contact her at [egarg@academyhigh.org](mailto:egarg@academyhigh.org).

## Future Site Committee

The Future Site Committee is evaluating opportunities for Academy High's next site. Options include renting additional space, purchasing an existing building, or building a new facility. To help with this process, Academy High has reached out to local architect firm, BLLD Architects, that specializes in educational design. The Future Site Committee will be meeting with BLLD Architects in September to discuss next steps in the process.



The Academy High Parents Association welcomed back students and faculty with an outdoor pizza lunch!



As part of our remote learning Wednesdays, all grade levels will gather virtually for "Headline Wednesday." Each week, one student from each grade will give a brief presentation about a current event related to the topics students are discussing in their Social Studies classes. Headline Wednesday will be a wonderful opportunity for students to connect and learn from each other across grade levels. Mr. Conerty saw 57 students attend via Zoom for orientation during the first full week of school - nearly the full parliament of Academy High Owls!

## Attention Owls!

Do you have pictures that you'd like to share? We are always looking for great shots of Owls in action for our website and social media. If you would like to share, please e-mail them to [marketing@academyhigh.org](mailto:marketing@academyhigh.org)



## Academy High Merchandise Now Available!

Show your school spirit with Academy High merchandise! Purchase online at <https://academyhighgear.logosoftwear.com/>  
Happy shopping!



## Social Studies Graphic Novels



This school year each Social Studies class is going to engage at least one graphic novel along with its usual slate of primary sources, monographs, news articles, podcasts, and documentaries. Mr. Conerty has been hard at work (and thoroughly enjoying) the process of vetting graphic novels for classroom use over the summer. Stay tuned for more details on which texts make their way into students' hands this school year.

## Academy High Reopening Plan

Our reopening plan received approval from the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District. For more information, visit <https://academyhigh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Academy-High-Reopening-Plan-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

## Academy Modules

In addition to our core curriculum, Academy High offers a 'Modules' Electives program, a series of quarter- or semester-length 'mini-courses' that typically meet once or twice a week and provide students opportunities to explore new interests and/or deepen their study of a particular subject. We are excited this year to be expanding our offerings to provide students more choice and variety as well as a more substantive and structured learning experience in each course. First Quarter modules begin the week of August 31st.

## ACADEMIC MODULES

Students earn a letter grade which appears on their report card and transcript as a credit course.

### **Advanced Chemistry (11th-12th grade): Mrs. Capell; M/Th/Fr class schedule**

This course will follow the general second semester of a first-year general college chemistry class and is geared towards students interested in pursuing science and engineering. The topics include equilibrium, acid-base equilibria, solubility equilibria, thermodynamics, electrochemistry, properties of metals and nonmetals, and kinetics. In addition to regular content assessments, students will need to write lab reports and complete a forensics investigation with a final presentation of evidence.

### **Advanced Physics (12th grade): Ms. Shimek; M/Th 2nd Period**

This project-based course builds on the foundation students have acquired in their 11th grade required Physics course. In addition to regular content assessments, students will need to write lab reports and complete a final presentation.

## **ENRICHMENT MODULES**

Students receive a grade of Pass/Fail which appears on their report card and transcript.

### **General Programming (9th-12th)**

Ms. Taylor

W 1-2 p.m.

Students will spend two weeks on each language - HTML, JavaScript, C++, and Python. The first week explores what each language is, what it is usually used for and how to compile them, some language elements that are basic, facts about the language, examples, etc. The second week will focus on actual coding.

### **Humanities Studio (9th-12th)**

Dr. Brown

M/F 3:00 p.m.

This course offers students time and space to practice and develop your art, whether your medium is drama, a musical instrument, drawing, photography, sculpture, writing, videography...you get the idea! Some of your work will culminate in a performance or presentation, and some of your work will be inspired by a theme that we will select as a group. Objectives include developing creativity and producing pieces individually and collaboratively that are worthy of inclusion in a portfolio for career or college matriculation.

### **Expressive Arts/Art Instruction:**

Sasha Rubel

W 1-3 p.m.

We will meet Wednesdays from 1-3pm for Art Exploration via Zoom, taking a new direction with weekly art tutorials which emphasize basic concepts and principles of shading, perspective and line quality with drawing media including pencil, charcoal, colored pencil and ink pens. Our prime emphasis will continue to be exploration of art materials in a fun and fresh way that encourages hands-on experimentation and an open-ended, free-form approach using a broad range of media including paints, collage, art journaling and mixed media in a process-oriented approach. Students will share photos of artwork at various stages of progress with the module instructor and class with verbal participation encouraged.

### **Inventions: What Do You Do With An Idea?**

Benjamin Khachaturian

W 3-4 p.m.

This course will focus on heightening students' self-efficacy as they go about organizing and implementing their ideas. Students will learn to utilize various case studies, brainstorming, and collaboration to work on their ideas. Students will learn how to write and will practice writing business models based on the ideas they have. By the end, students will have at least one and perhaps multiple business or product ideas in which they have the knowledge and resources they need to move forward to start it!