

HALSEY CELEBRATES DIVERSITY

NEWS FOR THE HALSEY HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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Celebrating Culture with Culinary Creations



As we head home for the holidays, some students are thousands of miles from their extended families. That's especially true for many Halsey students who have just moved to Elizabeth from far away places. Jaqueline Dixon figured a taste of home would help anyone who might be feeling homesick during the holiday season.

Dixon is the faculty advisor for the Multicultural Club and an ESL teacher at Halsey. "I had students make a video showing how they cook a traditional holiday dish from their native countries," she said. "Food is a way of connecting to the other students and connecting with someone else's culture."

She used this project to expose students to other cultures and traditions and teach language and communication skills. "I asked that they look presentable, look at the camera, describe the ingredients, and actually cook the dish." The club, which meets twice a month, is made up of twenty students from a mix of over twenty countries. Most are in Halsey's bilingual program. Languages spoken in the club include Portuguese, Spanish, Tamil, Arabic, and French.

What were some of these culinary creations? Lasagna from Brazil with a twist, a bean puree from El Salvador, platanos and pork from the Dominican Republic, and curried noodles from Sri Lanka. "I was happy with the results. I was surprised how well these high school students can cook," Dixon said.

She hopes these videos and other projects in the Multicultural Club will help spread awareness of other countries and cultures in the school. "It's important to be open minded about other cultures. Our kids don't get to travel as much as they like to. So how do we expose them to culture? By bringing them together. It's also important for us teachers to show it to them. They need to be exposed to it more here at Halsey."

My name is Julian Perez. I am from El Salvador. I made a typical dish from my country. It doesn't have an official name, but people there call it bread with black rice, fried plantain and liquefied beans. It contains bread, rice, bean soup, blended beans, onion, green chili, banana, oil, salt and chicken consommé.



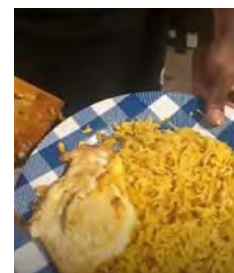
[Click picture for video](#)

Hello, my name is Diogo Sandy. I made this video with my brother, Danillo. We are both from Brazil. We made a traditional lasagna dish but with a Brazilian twist. The ingredients we used were ground meat with spices (that we cannot tell you about because it is a family secret), tomato sauce, dry lasagna noodles, sliced ham, and mozzarella cheese.



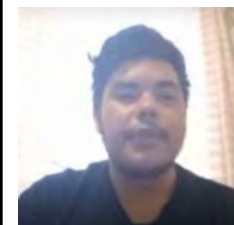
[Click picture for video](#)

Hello, my name is Santhi Nagarasa. I made a curry noodle dish with an egg from Sri Lanka.



[Click picture for video](#)

My name is Mateo Passo. I am from Ecuador. The cultural music from my country is based on different cultures from Europe and Africa. It is typically a combination of Cumbia music and music made with wind instruments and singing. It is similar to traditional Colombian music. The music is mainly for dancing with a partner.



[Click picture for video](#)

Student Voices

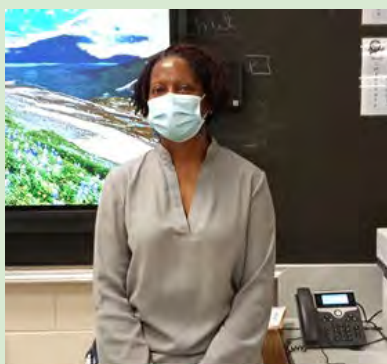
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Does Your Mind Need A Day Off? How About Taking A Mental Health Day

By Lesly Hernandez and Demoni Gause

For most of last school year, we were all at home, isolated from the world. Many students have still not returned to what they would call normality. Online school made some tired, made it difficult to focus, and did not give students enough motivation to complete work. COVID-19 is still around and we are all wearing masks. All this is making us feel mentally drained. Should schools have mental health days to help students deal with this anxiety?



Lisa Perry, Y.E.S. Program Director
Photo by Jerick Portillo

Lisa Perry, Halsey's YES (Youth Enrichment Services) Program Director and a licensed social worker and therapist likes the idea. "I support it because there could be a lot of things going on at home. The student could also be suffering from mental health problems," she said. "However, a system must be worked out to get a note from a doctor or nurse so that students don't take advantage of it."

Recent research shows students are stressed at school. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health problem during their school years. The National Association of School Psychologists said serious mental health problems, such as self-injurious behaviors and suicide, are on the rise, particularly among youth.

Mental health issues have skyrocketed to the top of the list because of how we all spent the last year and a half. "If you had a preexisting mental health problem, the pandemic most likely made it worse," said Perry. "Today, students are feeling anxious and annoyed from the uncertainty. People are feeling on edge."

Would having mental health days help? [A recent poll](#) of 61 Halsey students conducted by Mr. Hill's journalism classes showed that 92 percent believed that having mental health days would be a good idea. Most felt having 3-6 mental health days a year should be made available to students who need them.

"In my opinion, mental health is especially important, and there are many students who do not know how to fight with their own minds," said senior Marvin Reyes Sosa who was part of the poll. "I think there should be days off to take a break for mental health."

However, the poll also showed that 82 percent said students would probably take advantage of it and abuse their rights. Senior Jerick Portillo said taking some simple steps could solve this problem. "The school could have a "mental health" icon on the PowerSchool attendance. Once a student uses all of their days, they wouldn't be able to take advantage of it anymore." Senior Leyanis Vasquez Diaz had another suggestion. "To validate the person's request to take days off, have them bring in a note from a doctor or psychologist."

Whether mental health days become a reality is still up for debate. But mental health experts like Perry say it's good that we're talking about this issue. "Having those mental health days will help normalize and spread awareness of mental health."



Teacher Spotlight

All About Adachi: From Math to Marriage

By Margery Benitez

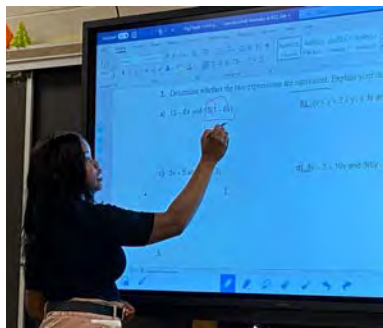


Photo by Victoria Reyes

Her energy is contagious. Her passion is all about math. When she was a little girl, she had a gift for numbers. Now that she's all grown up, she shares this gift with students at Halsey.

For the past six years, Theresa Adachi has been teaching math at Halsey. This year, it's all about algebra. We talked to her about why she got into teaching, the challenges of teaching online, and her upcoming wedding to the man of her dreams.

How does it feel to be back in person, teaching? I like it. It's so much better than virtual learning. I missed the interaction I had with my students.

What were some of the challenges you faced while teaching virtually? Trying to see if my students actually understood what I was teaching them. They learn better in person because we get to meet, one on one.

Did it feel like a lost year? For the students who paid attention, who took what was being delivered to them seriously, it was not a lost year. It was a loss for those who didn't take it seriously. I did not have control over these students when we were virtual. I couldn't take their phones away. They could have been on their phones or watching TV. I had no control over that.

Do you think forming a connection with your students helps them learn better in your class? Absolutely. I feel like it has a benefit in terms of classroom management. It helps them do better when you form that connection.

What made you want to teach math? Which college did you go to? I always knew I wanted to be a math teacher. It was the only subject that came easily to me. I went to Montclair State.

If you could teach any other subject, which subject would it be? Wow, that's hard to answer. I don't see myself teaching anything other than math. I would like to teach another grade level, like a college class.

How long have you been teaching? Would you ever consider teaching at another school? I started teaching at Halsey straight out of college, six years ago. And I want to stay here. The main reason why I want to continue teaching here is because of my students. I'm going back to school for education and literacy. I eventually want to be a math coach or maybe a supervisor.



Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Hopefully, I will still be in education. But I don't necessarily see myself in a classroom full time. What I'd like to be is a math coach or supervisor. I want to expand my role in the profession.

What are some hobbies you like to do outside of school? I love to travel and to try new food. I'm a foodie. I also love to dance and watch Nigerian movies.

Do you miss Nigeria? Yes! I've been here for over 20 years. I came to the United States when I was 8 years old. I actually went back over the summer. That's where I got engaged.

Do you have the wedding day planned? My fiancé and I don't have everything planned just yet. What we do know is we're looking to get married in the summer.



Halsey Gives Back

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Halsey's "Can" Do Spirit Brings Food To The Needy

By Quanasia Robinson

Halsey's annual can drive surpassed all expectations this year. **Students collected 4,718 cans of food for those in need for the holiday season.** Donations went to St. Joseph's Social Service Center in Elizabeth which distributes food to clients in the community.

Halsey students donated, helped box, and packed the cans to be delivered. Despite busy schedules and concerns about the pandemic, they took time out of their day to donate and give back to those in need. The drive was coordinated by Halsey teacher Brandi Donnelly.

"The students really stepped up to the plate with this year's canned food drive," Donnelly said. **"I was overwhelmed with pride as the students donated and packed up all the cans.** Ms. Billingsley and I dropped off the cans at St. Joe's. The volunteers at St. Joe's were so grateful for Halsey's donations. 4,718 cans will help feed a lot of people in our community over the holiday months," stated Donnelly proudly.



Annual Homecoming Court Pageant

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Honoring Halsey's Homecoming King And Queen

It's an annual autumn tradition where we celebrate royalty and show off our school spirit.

At this year's 2021 Homecoming Court event on October 22nd, homecoming kings and queens from the district's seven high schools were honored by adoring parents, friends, classmates, teachers and administrators.

The festivities began with a crowning ceremony at the Thomas A. Edison Career & Technology Academy's cafeteria. It ended with a procession of the royal couples at William's Field during the Elizabeth versus Bridgewater Raritan football game. The Elizabeth High School Marching Band and Elizabeth Cheerleaders were also there showing their school spirit. Last year's homecoming event was canceled due to the pandemic.

Representing Halsey Academy were Homecoming King Ovy Garcia and Queen Jennifer Bravo. What was it like to be in the spotlight? Bravo tells us.



Getting The Royal Treatment

by Jennifer Bravo

I was picked as the homecoming queen back in the spring of 2021. We were all still doing virtual school. As the day approached I got more and more stressed and nervous about what I was getting into.

Honestly, that night was a bit of a blur. There were hundreds of people in the bleachers including my mom and sister. Our principal, Mr. Van Vliet, members of the Elizabeth Board of Education and politicians were also there. By my side was Homecoming King Ovy Garcia.

At the end of the night, I realized I had a lot of fun. Not only had I met homecoming kings and queens from other schools in person, I also felt happy and thankful for being able to represent all of us Halsey students that night under the bright lights of Williams Field.

