

Hello everyone, I hope you are all having a good time so far.

The only clear memory I have of my first day of highschool is walking into Ms.Hinton's math class zoning in on miss maddy cilley over there, thinking "I know her" and planting myself next to her. We've been besties ever since. And she's been kicking all our butts in school ever since too. Little smarty pants. Gotta love her. You see, maddy would never brag about herself, so throughout the years I made that my job.

Neither of us have had the time to do much at conval other than the school work because all other time has been spent at the dance studio. This means that my conval school spirit never really came from sports. I applaud the extremely talented athletes in our class however, you guys are all amazing. For me, conval's spirit comes from the art and music departments.

After being remote due to covid, coming back to conval for the last two weeks helped me open my eyes to my favorite parts of the building. It also brought up many memories.

If you've walked through the conval halls, you will notice the beautiful art that adorns them. Pieces that have been painted by students throughout generations connecting room to room department to department, with a thick blue strip of paint between them. A few of those paintings really stick out to me.

My tasc room, which is for sure the best tasc, is an art room. The wonderfully kind and generous Ms.G my tasc teacher. Outside her doors someone has painted art supplies. I always loved the way ink and glue drips onto the lockers.

If you follow the strip towards Mr.Putnam's room, you'll see famous paintings redone by students. The Degas was done by my sister, Bria. Every time I walked past it with maddy I would say "My sister painted that", and eventually maddy started joining in on that statement.

There is a book painted on the wall by the english rooms, and the blue strip flows in one side as a pen, and out the other with symbols from To Kill a Mockingbird, Into the Wild, Shakespeare and other famous literature.

I've had English in many of the classrooms around that painted book, but I spent the most time in room 216. 3 semesters to be exact. First, it was Mrs. Moore's room, then Mr. Lambert's. Both of those teachers have a lively spirit so maddy and I, along with some other comrades, were allowed to build a lot of blanket forts in there. I'm not going to give you any more context for that, just use your imagination.

Down the stairs you've got Bowman's room, I spent 3 semesters learning history and gaining a larger perspective from him. If you keep walking you'll soon pass the German rooms with Frau Hodgdon and Frau Concanon; between the two of them, 50% of my highschool career included singing and dancing in German classrooms. Across the hall is one of my favorite rooms, room 104, home of Ms. Milne. For 5 semesters I spent my mornings with her learning about chemistry and biology, as well as just life and what we can all do to make a difference. Her guidance helped me decide to go into environmental studies in college. Without her encouragement and support I don't think I would be standing up here today. ConVal is going miss you Ms. Milne, your impact is immeasurable and you deserve a wonderful retirement. The art nearest these four rooms on the 100s level consists of bubble looking students socializing on the wall. I think it is quite fitting for the corner of the building I spent the most time in.

Now, there are some math rooms with a bit of art, some calculations and recognizable symbols, but math was never my favorite subject, sorry Mr. Fletcher.

To designate the social studies department, there is a beautiful black and white painting of the Tank Man protesting in China. I remember when Mr. Heider taught us about him in AP World and the meaning of that piece changed from being an interesting idea and possible abstract political statement to a tribute showing the impact of one individual's bravery and strength.

On the other end of the Tank Man hallway you can find good ol' Mr. Moore in the choir room. The back wall of his room houses a mural of colorful song streaming from a shadowy

head like water. In flowing letters it reads "If there is a load you have to bear that you can't carry, lean on me".

While there is a lot more art around the building, this is where our mental tour will end. Art. I think we can all agree it is a large part of our everyday culture. Our communities have never shied away from the artistic expression that connects us and fills our hearts. It is the same at ConVal.

Yes, the hallways are connected by art, as I am sure I have beaten into your heads by now, but so are the people. Everyone who has taken an art class at ConVal, whether visual or performing, you will know just how welcoming and calming those classrooms can be.

Going to choir was always like stepping into a sacred little world free from the stress of rigorous classes and full of joy. ConVal's art is ConVal's joy. ConVal's art is ConVal's support.

Not only does art connect the people in the building, but the generations past. My sister was not the only one who added to the walls. Names and dates go along with every painting. So many of us have siblings or parents who have been through conval before us. Even some of our teachers used to go here. Each class left their own mark. Sage Kingsbury-Evans left the class of 2021 mark outside of Ms.G's classroom. It has scenes of people in rooms. The bold color and lines portray normal and potent moments all of us can relate to. It is very well done.

The art department has allowed us to express ourselves and just as Mr.Moore's mural says, helped us carry our loads. While all the staff at conval are supportive, I think many of us graduates would agree there is just something about art and music teachers that make it easy to lean on them. Maybe it is because art makes us vulnerable.

Anyways, thank you to my friends who made school fun. Thank you to my family for everything. Thank you to the Health and Wellness teachers for keeping us from sitting on our butts all day, to the world language teachers for widening our perspective on the world, to the English teachers for helping us effectively communicate not only in essays but in life, to the math teachers for the problem solving skills, to the history teachers for making sure we don't

repeat past mistakes, to the science teachers for pushing us to focus on issues bigger than ourselves, and last but not least, to all the art teachers for supporting us and keeping ConVal's soul alive and joyful.