

# THE MLWGS Jabberwock

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## New Exam Policy Garners Mixed Response

By Radhika Srivastava  
and Reshini Premaratne

For years now, Maggie Walker has allowed students taking AP classes to exempt out of final exams should they receive a B for the second semester and an A cumulative grade for the year.

Originally, the updated policy applied to all students, including current seniors. It outlines that students only need to maintain at least a B cumulative grade for the year and take the AP exam administered by College Board to exempt from final exams. However, as of January 29, 2015, only students in the Class of 2016 and below will be required to adhere to the updated policy.

The change in the exam policy, which grandfathers in current seniors, was almost entirely a student accomplishment.

"I was really impressed with the efforts of our class as a whole. We, along with our parents, began an email campaign to Dr. McGee," says Ben Wong ('15), Senior Class Co-President.

"Administration listened to what the students said and then decided the policy could wait until next year," says Ms. Sheppard, Class of 2015 Sponsor.

"One of our goals in persuading administration that the policy should be changed was to establish dialogue about the issue that should have been established a long time ago," says Wong.

There were several reasons why there was disagreement about the policy.

"Administration officially implemented the policy by updating the 2014-15 handbook, but the failure to distribute physical copies of the handbook or send out a school-wide email as well as the failure to even mention the change in the handbook quiz allowed the new exam policy to slip under our radar," says Wong.

"Our staff is reasonably divided on this," says Dr. McGee, Director of

### Dual Enrollment Courses

1<sup>st</sup> Semester – No student may exempt 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester – No student may exempt

### AP Courses

1<sup>st</sup> Semester – No student may exempt

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester

AP Classes- If you have a B for the semester and a B cumulative average (all grade levels)

### Semester Long Courses

Seniors-If have an A for the semester Underclassmen – May not exempt

### All Other Year Long Courses

1<sup>st</sup> Semester –

Seniors- If have A for semester Underclassmen –May not exempt

2<sup>nd</sup> Semester –

Seniors- If have B for semester and have B for cumulative average

Underclassmen – May not exempt

### Please note:

VCU courses are dual enrollment classes. Dual enrollment course fees are anticipated to be \$30 per VCU credit hour.

*Italicized courses are Fall / Spring Paired Semester Courses*

All students wishing to exempt the final exam in AP courses must take the AP exam in addition to earning at least a B average for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester and a B cumulative average for the year.

**The two exam policies, arranged side by side, help clarify the specific changes that were made. Photo by Srishti Sanya**

MLWGS. While he conceded that the timing and notification method were substandard, he added that "from the educational perspective, having no expectation of a summative assessment on college level coursework is wobbly logic."

However, members of the student body do not think that is necessary.

"I don't think it matters if we're in line with college-level curricula standards," says Wong. "Rather, what matters is the value of education all students ultimately take away from their classes over the course of the entire year. The truth is, we can't objectively measure the impact of a course on a student."

Even though the new policy does not apply to current seniors, there is still concern regarding future senior classes.

Students have raised concerns that college tuition is on the rise, and seniors, who already spend large sums of money on college application fees and the like, should not have to spend hundreds of dollars taking AP exams that their chosen school may not accept.

Wong says he fears that "unless the school subsidizes every student's AP

exams, able seniors will continue to pay their way to exemption while unable seniors face an insurmountable, and undue, financial burden."

Allison Fegler ('16) says that "The school seems to be trying to bring up our AP score average by implementing this policy; but, I think it will actually have the adverse effect."

The Class of 2015 was ultimately successful in pushing off implementation of the policy this year.

But, teachers and students alike agree that it is yet to be seen how future senior classes and administration will respond to the continued disparity regarding the exam exemption policy.

## In Today's Issue

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# Seniors Have Earned Exam Exemption

By Pranay Vissa

We've taken assessments for a long time. If you begin to debate what actually defines an assessment, it may feel like our knowledge has been assessed every single day. A test is the most obvious form of an assessment. It may even come in the shape of a quiz. But are essays not assessments? After all, they assess our ability to synthesize information and produce a constructive composition. Are projects not a form of assessments? They bring individual students together to create something cohesive on the subject at hand. In fact, many teachers toss in questions regarding a previous lesson, even while on a different subject entirely. Is that not a form of an assessment?

I am by no means advocating for a dissolution of exams completely. Summative assessments are pivotal to the final grades of most students. For better or for worse, the final grades of freshman, sophomores, and juniors can be the culmination of an intense weekend of cramming or a lackluster few hours of skimming a textbook.

But after years of assessments of all sizes, we must ask ourselves whether a summative exam during the final week of the final year of our high school career really does any justice to the assessments we would have taken throughout the months prior. At such times, summative assessments lose value and begin to adopt an air of triviality.

The exam policy doesn't seem to advocate for a drop in academic performance. In fact, students must have a B average and fewer than five absences in a given class during the second semester. Neither an AP exam nor a final exam can capture the months of effort required to maintain those pre-requisites for exam exemption. Establishing such requirements for exam exemption serves to only encourage second-semester seniors to keep up their grades.

But the bottom line is that senior exam exemptions ought to be just that. The definition of an exemption is a release from an obligation. An either-or policy doesn't actually serve the same purpose as a complete exemption. In many ways, the first semester exams for seniors are high-stakes final exams. Students work laboriously for five months to put themselves in a position to deliver on a two hour assessment. But seniors can only after that critical period, for the first time in their high school journeys, actually take a conclusive sigh of relief.

At Maggie Walker, being a "second-semester senior" is a privilege. It is the labor of their previous seven semesters that allows them to earn that right. Second semester will surely have its own share of success and struggle. The last few weeks of school are the final moments to spend with the friends that have accompanied them throughout their journey. Those last weeks are assessments themselves, testing emotional and mental resolve. Let the seniors go. It's about time they have some fun.

Have an opinion?

WRITE A LETTER TO  
THE EDITOR

[themlwgsjabberwock@gmail.com](mailto:themlwgsjabberwock@gmail.com)



## THE MLWGS Jabberwock

### Editorial Policy:

The MLWGS Jabberwock covers news events related to the school community and provides a forum for students to share their ideas. Statements expressed by columnists or in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff. However, all editorials are the combined work of both the Editor-in-Chief and her staff.

All members of the MLWGS community are invited to submit letters to the editor on any topic, although the publication of all letters is not guaranteed. The newspaper reserves the right to edit letters for grammar, language and length. Please e-mail letters to [themlwgsjabberwock@gmail.com](mailto:themlwgsjabberwock@gmail.com).

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# Exam Policy Places Burden on Students

## Dear Editor:

Second semester began with a sigh of relief from the Class of 2015, after students learned that the traditional exam exemption policy was temporarily reinstated for their final term at Maggie Walker.

After a surprising announcement from school administration that any students not taking an AP test (regardless of whether or not the college they plan to attend will take the credit) would have to take the final exam, concerned students, parents, and teachers sprang into action to address the unpredicted alteration.

Firstly, we offer many thanks to all who voiced their concerns regarding the new policy--your actions truly contributed to the change. Thanks also goes to our administrators, who were receptive to suggestions and understanding of the flaws in the policy implementation.

As SCA Co-Presidents, however, we feel as though the work on this policy is not yet complete due to both the inequality which will impact successive classes and the light it sheds on other school policy decisions.

**“Parents, students, and faculty alike simply feel misguided and uninformed when it comes to such vital issues as the school’s operating budget, personnel matters, or academic policy.”**

All parties interested in the resolution of this issue have expressed deep disappointment that this policy would allow students to exempt from the final examination of an AP class by paying a \$91 fee, regardless of the results of their AP exam.

Fundamentally, this pressures students who have been admitted into a college

which they know will not take their exam credit to pay for the exam anyway. Students could elect simply to take the final exam, but families who can comfortably afford to pay their student’s way out of the test may simply choose this “easy way out,” and the student’s score on the exam will be of no consequence to his or her final grade in the course.

**“Thanks also goes to our administrators, who were receptive to suggestions and understanding of the flaws in the policy implementation.”**

While we recognize and greatly appreciate the funds that Maggie Walker has reserved for the examination fees of students who cannot afford these tests, the majority of students fall between the extremes of qualifying for school aid and being able to spend hundreds of dollars without any significant financial burden. There is an intrinsic inequality in being able to “buy out” of a final examination.

Although we consider this recently-unveiled exam policy to be an issue of concern in and of itself, it nonetheless reflects a broader lack of transparency with regard to important administrative decisions at Maggie Walker. Parents, students, and faculty alike simply feel misguided and uninformed when it comes to such vital issues as the school’s operating budget, personnel matters, or academic policy.

Serious concerns from members of the Maggie Walker community are rarely addressed publicly: many students and parents feel that their questions are either put off indefinitely or only partially addressed. While we understand that an administrator’s job at a nationally-respected high school brings with it a busy schedule and immense responsibility, this school’s success is founded upon the ways in which it responds to the

unique needs of its student body.

As a result, we urge the administration to take advantage of this opportunity to be open and responsive to the concerns of the Maggie Walker community.

Altogether, the recent uproar over exam exemptions has offered an excellent opportunity for Maggie Walker to scrutinize more carefully the ways in which it develops and implements important policies.

While we appreciate the temporary stay which administration has granted on behalf of the Class of 2015, this exemption protocol cannot simply lie dormant until next February, when the Class of 2016 will face AP registration with collegiate concerns in mind.

We urge that open deliberation on a future policy change begin immediately, so that the concerns of students, parents, and educators may be appropriately incorporated into the revision of this policy.

**“Fundamentally, this pressures students who have been admitted into a college which they know will not take their exam credit to pay for the exam anyway.”**

Again, we thank the administration at Maggie Walker for their support and consideration in this matter, and we look forward to taking an active role in upcoming reform of this policy.

On behalf of all current and future Maggie Walker students,  
Ellie Palazzolo and  
Raleigh Browne,  
SCA Co-Presidents

By Preston Hausser and Claire Mendelson

## Girls Basketball



Walker 9 6 10 10 35

Although the game remained tied until halftime, the Lady Rebels pulled away by the end of the game. Cynthia Ong ('15) scored 13 points and Mariah Macon ('15) added 9.



Freeman 9 6 11 11 37



Walker 20 16 5 7 48

The Lady Dragons outscored the Vikings by 20 points in the first half of their prime-time match-up. Cynthia Ong scored 20 points and grabbed 5 steals, while Katie Rogers ('17) and Natalie Weinberg ('16) added 6 points each for Walker. The girls improved to 4-9 with the win.



TJHS 10 6 6 14 36

## Boys Basketball



Walker 10 8 15 11 44

Despite mounting a furious 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter comeback, the Green Dragons lost a difficult game to Freeman. Zachary Jacobs ('16) came close to his season-high by dropping 27 points, and Shalin Shah ('15) added two three pointers as Walker dropped to 4-10.



Freeman 12 21 8 16 57



Walker 7 7 10 12 36

Walker held the Vikings to only 42 points and almost came back to win it in the end. Jacobs added 21 points for the Green Dragons and Ben Bowers ('15) came through with a season high 10 points.



TJHS 10 6 13 13 42



Walker 10 10 14 11 45

In a game that came down to the wire, the Maggie Walker boys were defeated only by three points against the Confederates. Jacobs scored 20 points and Bowers notched 11 against a big Lee-Davis team. The Green Dragons dropped to 4-13 with the loss.



Lee Davis 5 17 15 11 48

## Indoor Track

The track team has continued to improve throughout the season and is preparing for post-season competition. MLWGS has a much smaller track team in comparison to their competitors and specializes in distance as opposed to sprinting. With so few sprinters, the team is often unable to enter runners in many events, making it more difficult to place at invitationals. Despite this obstacle, the track team has represented MLWGS well in individual events at recent meets in the past few weeks.

At the St. Christopher's Invitational, the team faced off against competitive schools. Emma Call ('16) came in first in the 1600m run, and Ryan Buscaglia ('17) took fifth in the 1000m run.



The Varsity Invitational at Virginia Tech featured many PRs and several times fast enough to set a new school record. Call, with a first place finish in the 1000m run, and the boys' 4x400m relay team both set new school records.

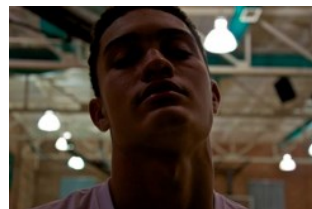
Emma Call ('16) sprints ahead of competition in the 1600m event.  
*Photo courtesy of va.milesplit.com*

## Wrestling

Maggie Walker Wrestling achieved a few great finishes at different tournaments over the past few weeks. A few strong wrestlers have acquired solid records over the course of the season, including Frankie Celentano ('16), who currently sits at 28-5 in his weight division. On top of weekly matches, the team has traveled to Amelia, Strasburg and JR Tucker for tournaments. At Amelia, Celentano and Joe Paul ('18) claimed first place finishes, while Chris Solden ('15) and Ned Cooper ('18) placed second. As a team, Walker wrestling placed fourth. In Strasburg, the Dragons defeated Stonewall Jackson High School from Quicksburg. At Tucker, Solden placed second, Celentano placed third and Nick Jones ('15) placed fourth.

## Athlete of the Issue:

### Zachary Jacobs



Junior Zachary Jacobs has been a valuable asset to the MLWGS basketball program since his freshman year. A scoring machine, he leads the team on both offense and defense. *Photo courtesy of Zachary Jacobs*

**Q: How long have you played basketball?**

A: 11 years

**Q: What's your favorite memory while playing basketball?**

A: First in-game dunk

**Q: What is an obstacle you've had to overcome in basketball?**

A: Usually being the tallest person on the floor, and playing center, but needing to develop the skills as a small forward or wing to play on a higher level

**Q: What is your favorite class this year?**

A: Trig with Mrs. Hill

**Q: What are your goals for this season?**

A: Winning season as a team, 25 ppg as a player

**Q: What is your favorite part of being on the basketball team at Maggie Walker?**

A: To be able to spend time doing something I love with a great group of guys

**Q: If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?**

A: To be able to do all the things I want to do, but don't have time for. like sleeping and practice.

## Coming Up in Dragon Athletics

The girls and boys varsity basketball teams will compete against Hermitage at home at 5:30 and 7:00. On Friday the basketball teams will face off against J.R. Tucker, also at home. The wrestling team will head to King William High School on Saturday to compete in the Varsity Conference Tournament.