

THE MLWGS Jabberwock

Volume XII, Issue 8

www.mlwgsjabberwock.org

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

Stuck in the Rat Race to Nowhere

By Tyler Walker

MLWGS teachers viewed a screening of *Race to Nowhere*, a 2010 documentary detailing the effects of stress on the well-being of students, on February 16. The documentary was cut short because of impending snow, but it was completed during a faculty meeting on March 3rd.

The film, inspired by the director's child who was diagnosed with a stress-induced illness from juggling too many scholastic commitments, questions today's education system which emphasizes the pressure put on high achievement in academics, sports, the arts, and community service in order to get into a good university.

Although the teachers haven't had a group dialogue over the film yet, its showing has already caused discussion throughout the school. Mr. Harold Houghton sent an email to his Physics students asking if halving the amount of homework - a example from an AP Biology teacher in the film - would impact their education.

Carley Leckie ('15), who responded to the email, said that "there are often times when I find it unnecessary to do the homework because I either feel comfortable with the material or have other important things to do."

“The documentary doesn't address the fundamental problem—a culture obsessed with credentials.”

Mr. Matthew McGuire, however, cautioned against just focusing on the "abolition of homework" to lower teen stress, pointing out that few students wouldn't advocate for reduced stress. While teachers should avoid busywork, he said, assignments outside of the class-



The movie poster depicts a student lining up at the start line of a race in a school hallway. Photo courtesy of racetonowhere.com.

room are still beneficial. He did agree that teenagers being overscheduled is a problem.

Mr. McGuire also warned that "the documentary doesn't address the fundamental problem — a culture obsessed with credentials." Instead of trying to get A's in every class to have the best possible transcript, students should contextualize their grades based on interests. "A student into drama shouldn't feel forced to do well in AP Government...I don't feel offended if they only put in the effort to get a B in my class."

Many students, when questioned, responded that they would like less homework. Afnan Enayet ('15) contended that "less homework would let me be able to practice playing guitar more...which I haven't been able to do since sophomore year."

Maggie Maccabe ('18) said she feels "overwhelmed trying to manage dance practice with over two hours of homework a night plus studying."

The end of the film makes several recommendations to reduce stress, like limiting the number of AP's a student can take. This, of course, runs the risk of a student feeling as if they were denied acceptance to a college for not being able to take enough AP courses.

Guidance counselor Mr. Karl Zweerink, who spearheaded the showing of the film with Ms. Penny Deck, said that "we need more data" before the blame for teen stress is put on homework or any other factor. "Every student has a unique situation, but Maggie Walker gives students more flexibility in creating a four year program," he added.

However, in a system where tens of thousands of students are looking to get into increasingly competitive and expensive universities, it is difficult to say what kind of flexibility is appropriate for a high school student's schedule of academics, extracurriculars, and social events while still appealing to college admissions offices.

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An Impractical Extended Schedule

As we ease back into the regular routine of a school week after several missed days due to the weather, it is necessary to consider not just the legal requirement but also the academic and human impact the days off have had on students.

The MLWGS community recently received an email stating that “To date we have missed 8 school days due to weather (14, 27 January, 17-20 and 26, 27 February). We made up one of these days on Wednesday, 28 January and our school calendar includes 4 built in snow days. Therefore, there are currently 3 school days to be made up.” As we all know, the contingency plan for making up those days is to add on 15 minutes to the school day from March 4 to May 15.

However, this small adjustment, while it fulfils the requirements, does little to add practical value to the classroom experience. When added up and divided out, this means that each class is extended by slightly less than 4 minutes, barely enough time to fit any more meaningful instructional material into the daily class agenda.

In addition, the extended schedule could pose an unnecessary burden in other aspects of student life; for example, many students may have siblings they have to care

for in the morning or immediately after school, and upperclassmen, especially, may hold after-school jobs for which their shifts start with just barely enough time for them to make it to work with the regular schedule, let alone the extended schedule. Keeping students in school for longer each day only meets the logistical requirement of make up days without considering what is best for the students.

Instead, maybe it would be possible to designate built-in makeup days later in the year for next year, in late March, April, or even May. Another option that many schools around the country have implemented is to hold “online school” on snow days, having teachers hold live chats or assign lectures for students to watch over the internet during the time they would normally be in school. While it is clear that the decision to extend the schedule was made with students’ best interests at heart, alternatives to make up the time may be better options to ensure quality learning time.

— SM

Have an opinion?

WRITE A LETTER TO
THE EDITOR

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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.

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GSMUN Alters Food Festival Plans

By Sam Martin

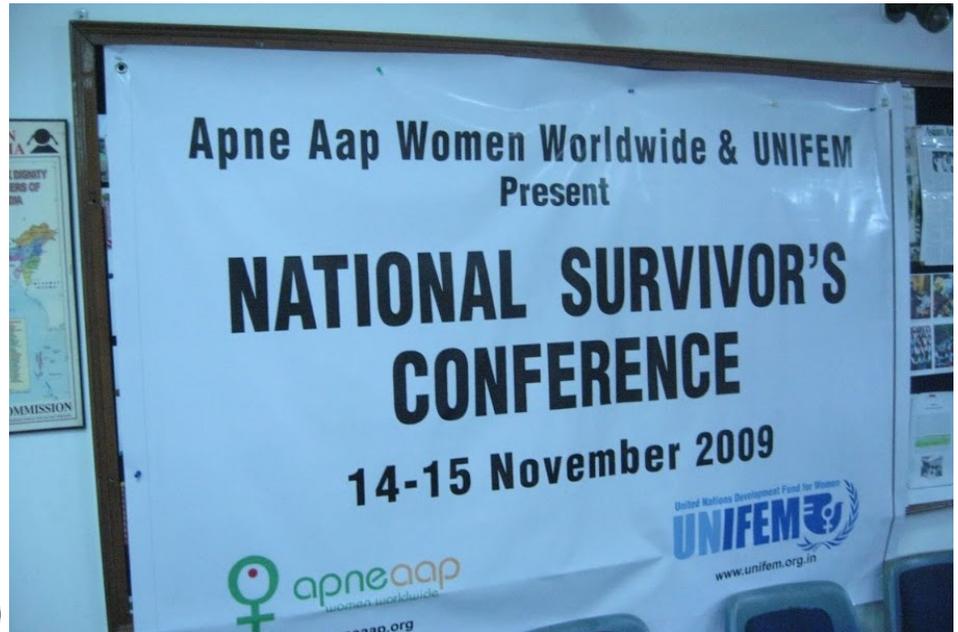
GSMUN's planned international food festival has been cancelled due to concerns surrounding a similar, conflicting event to be held by the International Languages Department. The festival, which would have been the second such fundraiser for the club, has instead been replaced by a benefit concert to be held March 6th in the MLWGS Black Box.

“We decided that we didn't want to take away from the other planned International Food Festival.”

“We had originally planned to have an international food festival just like last year,” said Anant Kharkar ('15), GSMUN's Director of Specialized Committees, originally responsible for plan-



Go & Tell, or GOAT, the group which will be headlining the GSMUN concert, performed earlier this year at The Camel. Pictured: Matthew Rucker ('15) and Justin Wilck ('15) Photo courtesy of GOAT.



Proceeds from the benefit concert will go to the charity Apne Aap, dedicated to empowering women and ending human trafficking. Photo courtesy of Apne Aap.

ning the event, “but couldn't get a date.”

“We decided that we didn't want to take away from the other planned International Food Festival,” added Tallie Hausser ('15), who is in charge of the concert. “Instead, we decided to add the international food aspect onto the benefit concert in order to provide food for the attendees and raise some more money for Apne Aap.” Both events were initially planned to be separate, according to Hausser, who added that the International Languages Department's festival will also be held in March, but are now being combined.

“The benefit concert had already been approved, so we decided to kind of fuse the food festival plans with the benefit concert,” said Kharkar, “basically meaning that there'll be international food at the concert.”

Performers will include MLWGS artists Alex Norman ('16), Daruma, Voodoo Lily, and Go & Tell (GOAT).

“The money raised will go to GSMUN's affiliate charity for the year, Apne Aap, a charity based in India that works to fight human trafficking and to provide services to victims of human trafficking in India,” said Hausser. “The mission of the charity is to empower

women and to provide them with their ‘four essential rights:’ the right to legal protection, education, a dignified livelihood, and safe and independent housing.”

“Overall, I think that the event will be a great opportunity to celebrate Youth Art Month,” Hausser continued, noting that the MLWGS Art Department's Youth Art Month show will open directly beforehand.

“We are hoping for a big turnout of Maggie Walker students. . . the musicians are definitely very dedicated to raising money for this cause!”

“We are hoping for a big turnout of Maggie Walker students along with their friends and families, and the musicians are definitely very dedicated to raising money for this cause!”

Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Facts

Opinion

By Parth Kotak

Last week, an Oklahoma House committee passed House Bill 1380 with 11 votes for, and 4 votes against. This bill, proposed by Daniel Fisher (R), plans to cut funding for the Advanced Placement United States History course.

As well as it is that the politicians are thinking of the tortured souls of students in their state (read: sarcasm), Fisher's motives for cutting funding are quite ridiculous: Fisher and his fellow Republicans (all 11 for are Republicans; all 4 against are Democrats) believe that the modern APUSH curriculum exaggerates and focuses excessively on the negative aspects of U.S. History (e.g. race riots, the Trail of Tears) while covering up or playing down "American exceptionalism," the belief America is inherently different or better than other nations.

Rather than, say, emphasize the

“Despite accusing the Common Core of purporting liberal ideas, Fisher’s new U.S. History curriculum does just that for conservatives.”

heroism of the American soldiers during World War II, Fisher believes that the Japanese internment is discussed in far too much detail. Protests against the “radically revisionist” doctrine of APUSH finds its roots in a former history teacher, Larry Krieger, who complained that the curriculum presented the



founding fathers as “bigots” and the Manifest Destiny as a philosophy “built on a belief in white racial superiority and a sense of American cultural superiority,” rather than “the belief that America had a mission to spread democracy and new technology across the continent.”

First of all, the College Board recommends only a framework, or recommended topics to cover, not how to actually teach these topics. The way a teacher depicts America is entirely out of the Board's hands. Secondly, we learn from criticism, not idle praise. By recognizing the mistakes made in the past, we can make strides in the right direction in the future. An air-brushed picture of U.S. History only leaves U.S. a nation full of blithe mannequins.

Fisher, a member of the Black Robe Regiment, believes that the U.S.'s separation of church and state should not exist based on the divinely inspired U.S. Constitution. The Representative's solution for U.S. History designates that 58 documents should form the base of the academic framework; while many of these are perfectly normal documents, including the U.S. Constitution and the Gettysburg Address, the list has a conservative and religious bent—three of Reagan's and one of Bush 43's speeches are included with nothing from any Democratic president since LBJ.

Listed under the inspirations for the U.S. Constitution are the Ten Commandments which Fisher would have considered a core document in the study of a nation created with a clear split between Church and State (see 1797 Treaty of Tripoli). Despite accusing the Common Core of purporting liberal ideas, Fisher's new U.S. History curriculum does just that for conservatives.

In response to Oklahoma receiving a “D” grade for K-12 achievement, Tricia Pemberton, a spokeswoman for the Oklahoma State Department of Education, said, “That's why we have set the bar higher, because we consistently perform below the national average on [national] exams.”

Hardly a surprising statement given Oklahoma's stance towards national education standards. Last year, the Sooner State also banned the Common Core standards in House Bill 3399, mandating that the state create its own standards.

Be it the Republicans' fears of fed-

“We learn from criticism, not idle praise. By recognizing the mistakes made in the past, we can make strides in the right direction in the future.”

eral intrusion on states' rights or a conspiracy theory that APUSH is a liberal plot, the fact remains that some people in our nation would sacrifice higher education for politics' sake, which is frightening.

Teacher Feature: Coach Jeff Hall

By Helen Li

HL: For students who don't take art here at Maggie Walker- like me- we don't know your artistic style. I was hoping that you could talk about your artistic style and goals as an artist.

JH: I just did the "5 Day Art Challenge." Go friend me on Facebook; I basically went through and kind of hit where I've gone through these 22 odd years and college. And I was shocked! You forget what you made years ago. I have, though, been going through a transition, going back to some of my earlier work which deals with codes, you know, code-breaking and that sort of thing. I had a show two years ago, or a year-and-a-half ago called "Decode RVA," which was great fun. Basically, the whole show was a bunch of clues that acted as an interactive scavenger hunt for people all over the city of Richmond. The key unlocked a painting in my show. So I'm really interested in contemporary digital culture and its effect on the arts because what does it mean when images are so cheap and free and readily available? How do you have value in a world where you're not giving anything more than a two-second glance when you're scrolling through? My main goal, actually, is to continue making art that is meaningful to me. One of the things I like about this job is that it affords me the opportunity to make the work that I *want* to make, without needing to sell it [laughs] in order to make a living.

HL: So, you talk a lot about technology, what role do you think technology should play in our classrooms?

JH: In the art classroom, I have two approaches. First, I have what I do in my more traditional art classrooms, which is I use it for instruction. We use it for discussion. We use it to do things like build podcasts for galleries, gallery tours. So if we go up to the National Gallery we'll build a podcast and the kids will research the pieces ahead of time. And they can go through and take each other's tour of the show. So not really using it to make art, as much as to make the learning that we are



Coach Jeff Hall, art teacher at Maggie Walker, helps hang students' artwork around the building. Photo by Srishti Sanya.

doing relevant and real-world, in particular for things like Art History, which can seem really detached from the real world. The class, my Digital Art class, is all about making art using the computer as your tool. So that is Photoshop®, Illustrator®, you know, video and all of those things.

HL: What do you hope to teach your students besides these art skills?

JH: So I think having a creative element in your life, be it drawing or painting, video or music, sculpture, whatever, even cooking, [is really important]. I believe that everyone is creative, I really do. I went to college to be a physics major. But I had one art teacher, my one art class in my senior year, the only art class I ever took. It was my senior year at Midlothian High School. I had a teacher who changed my life- I always tell him. So I went to University of Richmond to be a physics major and got my minor. And so I want to create! I believe that the arts add, in this crazy world that we live in, in particular the world that *you* guys live in, that the arts allow for an application of all the other things that we learn from all of our classes.

Like, what am I going to do with

math and Russian? Oh. I can make art about those things! And they overlap.

Meaning is one, in their life. The second is problem-solving: creative problem-solving. Most of the problems that we face as a society and culture, the solutions are not going to be found in a step-by-step linear fashion. You are going to have to attack the problem from a lot of different directions and in ways that you wouldn't normally think about attacking them. And one of the things that I hope we teach our students is understanding that there are a lot of solutions to every problem and there's not always a right answer. At this school, this frustrates the heck out of people because they want a right answer. In art, it's not clear cut. You know, there's a good answer, there might be a better answer. But there's thousands, maybe millions of answers. So being able to think through a problem creatively and come up with multiple solutions and choose the one that you think is going to be the best- *that* is something that I want my students to be able to have, because they can apply that anywhere in life.

By Preston Hausser and Claire Mendelson

Girls Basketball

 Walker 9 6 7 5 27

 Hermitage 4 11 5 20 40

The Lady Dragons held a close game with the Hermitage Panthers on February 4th. Tied at the half, the Lady Panthers pulled away at halftime to win by 13. Cynthia Ong ('15) scored 11 points, while Mariko Lewis ('17) and Katie Rogers ('17) added 7 and 5 points respectively.

 Walker 2 4 20 10 27

 Marshal 18 14 15 20 67

Against a relatively elite Lady Justices' basketball team, the Green Dragons mounted a furious 2nd half comeback, but still fell short and moved to 4-14 on the season. Cynthia Ong ('15) scored 14 points and Ashley Rice ('16) added 8 points for MLWGS. Ellie Palazzolo ('15) also scored 5 points.

Boys Basketball

 Walker 6 5 8 6 25

 Deep Run 14 21 19 16 70

In a disappointing loss, the Green Dragons looked to Zach Jacobs ('16) to lead the team against a very talented Deep Run squad. Jacobs scored 15 points and Kyle Trapp ('15) added 6 points to the tally. Walker moves to 4-14 on the season following the loss.

 Walker 1 0 0 0 1

 Tucker 0 0 0 0 0

After a game ending in an altercation between J.R. Tucker and Thomas Jefferson earlier in the week, Tucker forfeited its game against MLWGS. The Dragons improved to 5-15 on the season and snapped their 10-game losing streak.

 Walker 11 15 11 9 46

 Freeman 12 14 29 14 69

In their season finale, Jacobs led the team with 22 points, 9 of which came from beyond the arc. Thomas Snead ('16) added 6 and Ben Bowers ('15) helped the Walker cause with another 8 points. MLWGS ended the regular season with a 5-17 record and a number 3 seed in the conference tournament.

Basketball Playoffs

After a major snowstorm during the week of the conference tournament, Conference 33 decided to cancel its annual basketball tournament. Instead, the top 4 seeds from the boys and the girls moved on to regionals, including both MLWGS teams. On February 24th, both teams ended their seasons in the first round of the regional tournament. The boys fell to Prince Edward 79-48, ending their season with a 5-18 record. The girls were defeated 58-19 at Bluestone, finishing with a 4-17 record for the season.

Wrestling

Maggie Walker Wrestling started out their post-season journey with a strong showing at the Conference 33 meet. Joe Paul ('18), Frankie Celentano ('16), Parker Matthew ('16) and Chris Soldan ('15) all won first place in their weight classes. Nick Jones ('15) won second place in his respective class, while Ned Cooper ('18), Julian Vaughn ('17), Gordon Hadley ('16) and Nate Ashburn ('15) achieved third place. Celentano was recognized as MVP of the tournament. As a team, MLWGS placed third.

The Dragons had another strong performance at regionals and three wrestlers qualified to represent the school at the state tournament in Salem, VA. Celentano finished third, Paul finished second, and Soldan finished first, making him Maggie Walker's first-ever regional champion. At the state tournament, Soldan and Paul finished fourth in their respective weight classes, closing out a strong season for the MLWGS wrestling program.

Swimming

The MLWGS swim team had a successful season under the leadership of new coach Deanna Gulick ('10). At the Southern 2A regional tournament the boys' team came in first place with strong performances in relay and individual events. The girls were narrowly defeated by George Mason High School, but claimed second place overall. 29 swimmers from both the girls' and boys' teams qualified to compete at states.

In addition to swimming, MLWGS was also well-represented in diving events. The regional dive meet was held separately from the regional swim meet where Allie Bekenstein ('18) won the girls dive competition. On February 20 Bekenstein competed at the VHSL 2A Swim and Dive State Championships and placed first in the 1 meter dive competition, outscoring the second place finish by over 80 points.

The rest of the swim team traveled to Christiansburg, VA to compete in the state competition on February 24. The season ended with success for both teams, who achieved second place overall. It was a record-breaking performance for the team, and the girls' 200 medley relay team, swum by Gabriela Monasterio ('16), Lauren Parker ('16), Ellie Deglau ('15), and Emma Bilski ('16), broke the Virginia 2A state record. After such a successful season this year, the MLWGS swim team will look to continue build a stronger team and vie for future state championships.



The MLWGS swim team celebrates a victory at the regional tournament. Photo courtesy of Tricia Horning.