

# rank & file

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RHEA NEWNAHA/RANK&FILE

# rank&file

volume 59 issue 2

George C. Marshall HS  
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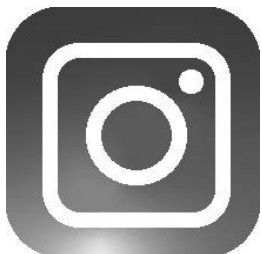
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## *Letter from the Editor*

When I left newspaper production after school on March 12, 2020, I fully expected our staff to deliver new issues to Marshall classes the following week. After that fateful turning point in all our lives, 20 months have now passed since *Rank&File* last distributed a physical issue to our student body. In that time, the publication has undergone several changes, most notably a transition from newspaper to newsmagazine. While we were sorely disappointed to only publish four fully-online issues last year, this new school year presents a number of opportunities which have come out of the pandemic-induced hardships.

Out of our staff of 16, just two staff members have seen their bylines on a printed edition of the *Rank&File*. Despite the hardships and challenges we all have seen since March of 2020, this return to school gifts us opportunities across our school once again.

Let this issue be a reminder of what we have gone through as a community over the last year and a half, but also how far we have come.

Theo Schmidt  
Editor-in-Chief



Students board buses in the front parking lot after school as drivers work around tight schedules on Sept. 23.

# America faces its latest shortage: bus drivers

by reyna berry

A bus rolls up to Door 1 and students pile out. “Thank you!” “Have a good day!” they call, and wave to their driver. He smiles back—and then prepares to double back for a second run.

For bus driver Jamal Moujtahid, the return to school has meant extra shifts. Still, one of his favorite parts of the job continues to be these interactions with students, as well as the unique experiences it provides.

“I love to be around students, different cultures,” Moujtahid said. “I like to discover a new area around Fairfax County, [or the] DC area—I love field trips.”

Moujtahid said driving buses is fun, but he takes his job seriously.

“The most difficult thing is to stay focused all the time so I can take kids to school and back to their houses safely,” he said.

Junior Kylie Steinfadt, who takes Moujtahid’s bus, said she appreciates the drivers.

“[Moujtahid] always says good morning to me,” said Steinfadt. “He’s [also] good about rules and keeping everyone safe on the bus.”

Steinfadt said the buses usually arrive on time, too. However, there have been issues with delays recently, due to an extreme shortage of bus drivers in FCPS.

A section on the Marshall website explains the delays, saying the few active

drivers often have to double back during their runs to pick up students from different routes.

This, along with other issues arising from similar shortages around the country, has left thousands of students potentially without transportation to schools, according to ABC News. Additionally, the shortage has put a lot of pressure on bus drivers to complete pick-ups and drop-offs as quickly as possible.

“Before [the pandemic], we’d have enough time to use the bathroom, clean the bus and walk,” Moujtahid said. “[Now], I barely have time to use the bathroom between runs.”

Another student on Moujtahid’s bus, junior John Kronzer, said he sympathizes with the drivers during this county-wide shortage.

“Their pay went down,” Kronzer said. “And [Moujtahid] was still driving. I totally would have understood if he’d just quit.”

Pay decrease seems to be an idea repeated through the school, though Moujtahid said the rumor is not exactly correct.

“Actually, we didn’t get a raise for a couple years,” he said. “[The] salary didn’t go down, but it doesn’t go up enough.”

The pay for bus drivers has only recently increased, in response to the shortage, and FCPS has even added a \$3,000 sign-on bonus for new drivers to incentivize application.

However, these perks don’t

necessarily apply to long-time employees.

Therefore, there is both a lack of willing new employers, and dissatisfaction in the senior ranks.

In addition, Moujtahid said many drivers have recently retired or quit because they couldn’t keep up with the split schedule bus driving demands, exacerbating the shortage.

“[There are] few [work] hours in the morning and few hours in the afternoon,” Moujtahid said.

“We only get paid for the hours we drive. Unless you have a shuttle or field trip, you’re always going to have that gap from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM without pay.”

To fill this gap, Moujtahid said he has to work part time elsewhere.

“For 13 years I’ve been working seven days a week,” he said. “I don’t have a choice. I have a mortgage and expenses to pay, [and] driving for FCPS doesn’t cover all my monthly expenses.”

Moujtahid said he hopes students, and everyone, pays more attention to bus drivers in the future.

“Bus driving is the most difficult job out there,” he said. “We transport students, and we are responsible for their lives.”

It is appreciation for this vital job that the pandemic has prompted, whether in administration as they hang signs for new employees; or in students, standing at their bus stop and waiting to say hello to their bus drivers.

# Leadership class works to plan the first Homecoming after long two year absence

by emma mobley and marie kah

For many students, Homecoming on Oct. 16 will mark the first schoolwide social event after 18 long months of social isolation.

In the past, Homecoming consisted of a dance held in the auxiliary gym with games and snacks in the cafeteria, but with COVID-19 restrictions, there is no certainty what Homecoming will look like.

"You know when you're in a virtual school setting for 18 months, it's very hard to feel that sense of school spirit," Leadership adviser Andrew Litterst said. "A couple of years ago, it was through the roof. But school for the last two years has been just a website that you open in the background while playing Minecraft."

With many underclassmen not having experienced any sort of organized school event, Litterst said the Planning

Committee has shown worry in student participation and attendance in Homecoming week festivities and to the dance.

Litterst said they're still deciding on the details.

"On Monday, in Leadership, we're going to figure out if we want the dance portion inside and the other activities outside or if we want to flip that."

Litterst said COVID-19 precautions still have to be taken into consideration while planning for the dance.

"You'll have to wear masks [and] we're going to encourage social distancing, with the understanding that it is a homecoming dance, [and you] can't just stay six feet apart if you're trying to dance," Litterst said.

The leadership classes and Planning Committee have made it an early priority to re-establish Marshall school spirit, Litterst said.



"Everything we're planning is going to be over the top in a good way," Leadership student and sophomore Samia Sayd said. "We hope to have prizes and other exciting new things that will encourage all grades, especially upperclassmen, to come to the dance."

# Running back Nakia Wilson credits his early season success to his parents, teammates

by ben pyatt

When Varsity football player Nakia Wilson ran four touchdowns and 170 yards in a come-from-behind overtime win against Hayfield, it wasn't the first time Wilson turned heads.

The running back produced at least 100 yards and a touchdown in each of the first five games this season, over 850 yards, and averaged seven yards per carry. Despite his notable stat sheet, Wilson said he did not always love football.

"I liked watching it," Wilson said. "But playing it, I didn't think it was for me. Then my dad got me into it, and I fell in love."

Wilson attributes staying with football to his mother.

"She's just taught me to stick through everything, keep

going, keep doing what I'm doing," he said. "I used to suck at football. I actually started on the D-line and O-line, then I moved to running back three to four years ago."

Junior year is widely regarded as the most important in the athletic recruiting process, something Wilson has taken note of.

"I want to get a few offers, so I can start the recruiting process early," Wilson said. "I'm always trying to get better, so whatever I do this season, I want to double it, triple it next year and do a lot better."

Despite his tremendous on-field success, Wilson remains dedicated to his academics as well.

"I want to be a mechanical engineer and get my grades at a good spot so I can go study mechanics in



RHEA NEWNAHA/RANK&FILE

Running back Nakia Wilson sprints down the field on a 43-yard run during the first quarter of the Hayfield game.

college," he said.

Wilson said his biggest role model in his process was not a favorite NFL player, but instead a former football teammate.

"Someone I really looked up to was Matthew Shutello," Wilson said. "He was the starter before me and I really looked up to him. He was a great player."



# Distance-learning cheating leaves lingering consequences

by will blackburn, justin sun and eleanor mcaden

Junior Eujin Lee said in the previous year, she noticed a lack of motivation in her orchestra class. One student claimed they hadn't touched their instrument all year.

With the county allowing students to leave their cameras off throughout the year, the prevention of cheating was nearly impossible.

"There was no way for me to see what you were doing at home, and so [cheating] just had to be something that I let go," math teacher Carol

McCollum said. "Maybe we are using our notes, maybe we are using Google, maybe we are using Desmos, and it's out of my hands."

Lee said PE and Orchestra were the hardest classes to stay honest in, but she saw cheating among her classmates across the board.

"I can tell that many people played less than we would have [if we were in person]," Lee said. "I definitely feel like we would have been better if we were in school last year."

McCollum said when students are not making an effort, learning loses its value.

"[When you are challenged] you can reach the next level and do your best learning," McCollum said. "When you're cheating, you're really cheating yourself [out] of the opportunity to push yourself out of your comfort zone."

McCollum cited the pressure of grades as a key reason for the desire to cheat.

"I think grades are more important than learning to a lot of students," McCollum said. "I think that's just something our society values, [but] learning should be first and grades should be secondary."

McCollum said people fear failure, but it's also what they need.

"[Failure is] so hard," she said. "But I think our society just says, If you fail, you're weak, ... and I wish that wasn't the case. Failure is a part of life."

McCollum views this year as a time to restore what used to be, and she wants students to know that teachers are right there with them.

"All the teachers at Marshall want you guys to do well," McCollum said. "We want to help you pick up the pieces from last year."



ELEANOR MCADEN/RANK&FILE

Math teacher Carol McCollum grades papers from her classroom after school on Sep. 27. McCollum said she saw more cheating last year, but because she had no jurisdiction over what students do at home, she was forced to ignore the issue.

# The Four Eras of FTP

*Freshman Transition Program (FTP) pairs senior mentors with freshmen to help with their transition to high school. Here's how the program has evolved over the past four years, in the words of the Rank&File staff.*

## Class of 2022

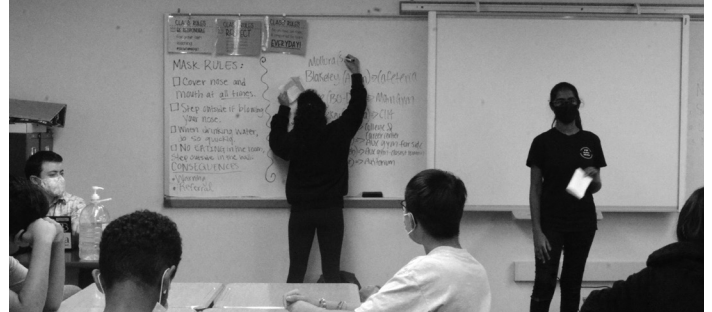
Theo Schmidt

When I went through FTP, things were done slightly differently than they are now. In those days, the FTP classes were separated by gender and our mentors gave us social advice as well as academic. Our first session was held at freshman orientation, before the first day of school, where our mentors encouraged us to attend and uphold school pride. The sessions were also heavy on icebreaker activities, which was helpful. It differed from Kilmer, where students were placed in houses based on their teachers and classes. This process allowed kids to be close with a small group of friends, but didn't open them up to the rest of the grade. So, when I came to Marshall and that all changed, and AAP classes were cut out, I had an opportunity to meet a lot of new people. In that regard, FTP's icebreakers were very helpful.

## Class of 2023

Emma Mobley

Three years ago, FTP was in the building, separated by gender, and maskless. Seniors would walk around in FTP shirts signalling it was their job to keep freshmen comfortable. Back when we would have Learn five days a week, this offered a small change in pace on Fridays. I knew some people in my class, which didn't make me try to meet new people. I don't think FTP did much in terms of helping me feel more comfortable at Marshall. We played silly games and talked about organizational habits to help us be more prepared, but nothing was memorable. I could never remember my seniors' names, but I did appreciate that they spent two Learns a week on trying to help us. I liked how we had a free space to talk for 45 minutes once a week where we weren't judged for being freshmen. The enthusiasm seemed a little faked, but now seeing advisory it was stellar.



JOSIE HAMILTON/RANK&FILE

Seniors Noor Samimi (left) and Akshitha Jupally (right) lead a discussion in their FTP group during Learn on Sept. 23.

## Class of 2024

Josie Hamilton

My senior mentors logged in during Learn and stared at a group of faceless names. They scanned through slideshows with helpful information about how to transition to high school—but a large majority of the information wasn't applicable as I hadn't ever stepped foot into the building. My senior mentors tried their best, but were unable to teach us our way around the school or create friendships (even though last year was the first co-ed year of FTP); we did a variety of activities and ice-breakers, but participation was rare.

## Class of 2025

Rebecca Paz

As a freshman this year, FTP can be a source of stress for me. The scripted, pre-planned lessons aren't too helpful; they taught studying tips the day I needed to actually study for a test, and I've missed club meetings on days they were teaching us to be more involved in school extracurriculars. I always try to participate in FTP but when you're put in a group and no one else talks, it's hard. While the intentions of FTP are good, I would much rather be able to use the Learn period that upperclassmen have, to access my teachers as deadlines pile up.





KIRTANA SATHISHKUMAR/RANK&amp;FILE

Social studies teacher Patricia Coppelino talks to her class about activities they could do during their advisory period.

# Advisory aims to foster stronger connections within Marshall community

by kirtana sathishkumar

The last five weeks have seen debates in hallways, classrooms and beyond over the debut of a new 40-minute class.

The class, Advisory, builds on the social-emotional learning time introduced last year.

Advisory co-leads Patrick McDonough and Katy Sokolove said the administration gathered student opinions in 2020 where some students said they wanted teachers to understand them “as whole humans” and support their social-emotional growth alongside their academic growth.

“Because we all dispersed as a community in March of 2020, it’s really important that we spend some conscious time on kids building relationships with each other and with adults in the building,” McDonough said.

Sokolove said Advisory is intentionally teacher-led right now, but she hopes in time it will be student-led and that students can work together to decide what they want to do during that time.

“It’s almost meant to expand the work of FTP,” Sokolove said. “We’re creating a space where freshmen and sophomores are able to talk to juniors and seniors and for [students] to be each other’s experts.”

Student organizations are already

reaching out to the Advisory co-leads with ideas they’d like to implement, and McDonough and Sokolove are helping them build their ideas into lessons.

“We had little input on the activities that take place in Advisory [right now],” Student Equity Team member and junior Francis Abradu-Otoo said. “But as the year progresses, we’ll look for student input to make Advisory more meaningful and engaging.”

*“We are absolutely open to working with student groups.”*

- Katy Sokolove  
Advisory Co-Lead

McDonough and Sokolove said people often tend to look through “an individual lens,” and some students don’t think Advisory is necessary because they’re already in an activity where they receive non-academic interactions.

“Well, what about the person in your Advisory that isn’t involved in a sport or a club?” Sokolove asked. “Part of our job as people is not just to take care of ourselves, and not just to look through the lens of what do I need, but to look a little bit outwards.”

Even from an individual lens, McDonough believes Advisory still benefits

students.

“If you’re a high achieving student or a 12th grader, there are real life skills to take away from learning to lead and share you skills with a group,” McDonough said.

The co-leads also said the teachers are “absolutely raving” about their Advisory students.

“The kids are struggling with that they’d rather be using that time differently, but overall, they’re being really gracious about it. And I think this just really confirms that they have a lot to offer each other,” Sokolove said.

McDonough and Sokolove hope students will suggest healthy ways to be together in Advisory rather than asking for homework time. They believe Marshall’s high productivity culture has not made it healthier.

“Productivity culture incrementally carves away at your non-academic or your non-work life,” McDonough said. “And that’s just not okay.”

Sokolove questions if Advisory is even the true source of students’ complaints.

“In the big scope of 10,080 minutes in a week, we’re taking 40 of them,” Sokolove said. “Is Advisory the problem? Or is it the amount of homework that kids are being given the problem? And isn’t that a better question to be asking?”



# Time-honored Marshall Mob lives on, revived by new senior leadership

by ben pyatt and aitana wells

The Marshall Mob has been a standing tradition for 10 years.

The Mob is the foundation of Marshall students connecting with their inner Statesman. This year's candidates are seniors Matt Furlong and Ryleigh Siciliano.

"The Mob leaders are supposed to be the one girl and one guy that get chosen by the graduating class, in this case, the class of 2021," Furlong said. "I was friends with the guy and that's how I got the job."

Ahmed Ahmed was the leader the previous year. However, due to COVID-19,

the lack of spirit had reached a tipping point, and this year's Mob leaders are ready for a change.

Furlong said he's proud of what the Mob has accomplished so far.

"From what I've seen and heard, Marshall's football attendance has been bigger than it was for the past couple of years," Furlong said. "But we still have work to do."

Their responsibilities consist of having a social media presence for the Marshall student body.

"I run the Mob's Twitter and Instagram," Siciliano said. "I create all of the spirit themes for every football game. I stand at the front of the Mob and lead the chants

and get the Mob hype."

Not only is the title passed along, but the social media accounts, the chants and the legacy.

Furlong said he has no clue where the Mob chants came from.

"Ever since I was a freshman [and] even before that, they've been there. I use the same chants that were used before me, so on and so on," Furlong said.

When their reign as Mob leader comes to an end, they are in charge of picking which juniors to take the throne.

"I still need to see who has the most spirit and who I think will take it seriously, so as of now, I don't know," Furlong said.

## HOMECOMING GAME DETAILS:

Opponent:

**Yorktown**

Date:

**Oct. 15**

Time:

**07:00 PM**

Place:

**Jimmie Miller  
Stadium**



BEN PYATT/RANK&FILE

Sophomore Sam Morales and seniors Irfaan Sadeque, Matt Furlong, Nour Abudiab, Subhi Mekki and Jose Argueta celebrate junior Nakia Wilson's second touchdown on Sept. 2. The Marshall Mob made the trip to McLean clad in neon attire to support the football team. The Statesmen ultimately went on to win the game by a score of 46 to 14.

Opinion:

# Advisory negatively affects student mental health

by marie kah

I leave my house at about 7:30 every morning and don't return home until 6:30 p.m. every single day. My schedule consists of five IB classes and varsity volleyball practice from 4 to 6 p.m., five days a week. I barely have time to do my homework let alone do extra studying for some of my more rigorous courses.

My last school year with five days a week in person and Learn was my freshman year, two years ago. Back then, Learn was a time to either get all my work in, meet and get to know my teachers, or just take a much needed break in the middle of a stressful day. It was an essential part of my daily life.

Last year's Learn schedule did not make sense to me, but I wasn't too held up on it since I was at home most of the time and had plenty of time to do my work. Returning to in-person school, I was excited to have my daily mandated homework and study time going into my junior year, the year I felt I needed it the most.

Learning about advisory, however, brought me an instant feeling of dread. A major resource and homework helper had been snatched away from me, and I couldn't say or do anything to bring it back.

I heard multiple excuses for why we now had advisory, but the one I heard most was it was enacted as a "de-stress" time for students to help their mental health. To me, that explanation sounds repugnant. A major factor in my mental health condition is how overwhelmed I am at any given time due to schoolwork.

Not having Learn has caused issues for me as we returned to school. My course load immediately caused me to have more workload than I had initially expected. During the second week of school, the homework I would have usually done in Learn was completed at 1 a.m.

Limiting a major resource that most students utilize as a means to help themselves be successful not only hurts individuals but hurts the Marshall community as a whole.

I understand that advisory is mandated by the county, but there needs to be more opportunities for students to get schoolwork out of the way besides during their time after-school, when they also have sports, extracurriculars and other obligations.

"I don't like that I don't have time to do homework during that time. We do useless activities."

Junior Christiana Pareja

"It is a fun break throughout my classes. I get to meet new people. It is a safe space."

Freshman Kush Desai

"I want time for just Learn. It gives me more time for work, so I have free time at home. #BringBackLearn2021."

Junior Elizabeth Windt



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Editorial:

# FCPS should require students to get vaccinated

Measles, mumps, chickenpox, Hepatitis, HPV: these are all viruses and diseases FCPS students are required to be immunized against. We should add COVID-19 to this list.

Last month, Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest school district in the nation, became one of the first school divisions to announce a vaccine requirement for all students ages 12 and up. With COVID-19 infections soaring in the region across all age groups, and the

first reported Fairfax County death of someone under age 18 to COVID-19, FCPS should follow suit and require middle and high school students to provide proof of vaccination or submit to weekly testing.

Over the last century, the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the constitutionality of vaccine mandates for contagious diseases, both in schools and in public places. President Joe Biden has required companies with at least 100 employees to

require vaccination, a mandate affecting some 80 million working Americans.

Vaccines are the reason we no longer fear smallpox, or polio, or measles, or rubella, or tetanus.

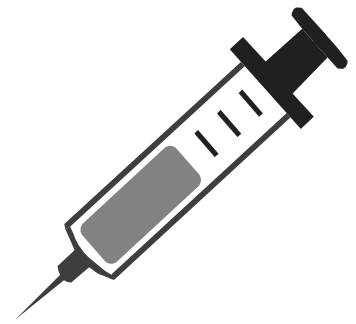
The science is clear: vaccines are the light at the end of the tunnel in our long twilight fight against this virus.

We can only defeat COVID-19 if all Americans get vaccinated, and that includes students. FCPS has required teachers and administrative staff to be vaccinated. But

the fact of the matter is that unvaccinated students pose a threat even to the vaccinated.

It's likely that school districts like FCPS will take the more shy approach of waiting out the virus before adding the COVID vaccine to their list of required immunizations. But that would be too little, too late.

We cannot afford to be timid or slow. Now is the time to act and protect the FCPS community.



## Rank & Profile: Steinberg finds joy in teaching and pickleball

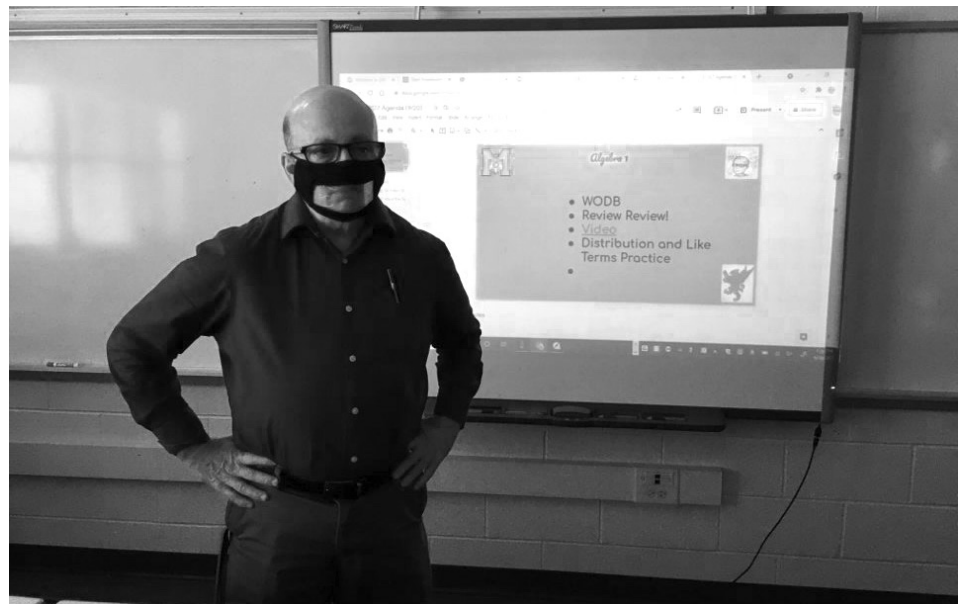
by reyna berry

Teaching has always been the passion of the new math teacher Mark Steinberg—but it wasn't always his profession.

Before his teaching career, Steinberg had been a reporter, editor and website programmer for various news outlets, worked in information technology development and even served as a project manager in Silicon Valley.

His experience focused mainly on math and technology, so when Steinberg returned to teaching, he found himself drawn to the math department. He now teaches five Algebra 1 classes in the special education program.

"It's important to have [the students] active in their learning," Steinberg said. "I try to use a variety of activities, so math is maybe a little more fun



REYNA BERRY/RANK&FILE

Math teacher Mark Steinberg stands in front of his Algebra 1 classroom. than they're used to."

Steinberg said the most challenging part of teaching is when students don't believe in themselves. The Algebra SOL, a graduation requirement, can especially be a barrier.

"I have kids who've never passed an SOL, pass the Algebra 1 SOL," Steinberg said. "To give them that gift, that they don't have to worry about their math SOL anymore ... it just makes me

so happy."

Aside from teaching, Steinberg finds happiness in pickleball.

"I joke with my kids," Steinberg said. "I tell them, 'pickleball has changed my life.'"

Pickleball isn't the only thing that's changed Steinberg's life, he said. Returning to the classroom has too.

"Teaching ... is a passion," Steinberg said. "I just love it."

# Performing Arts Unpaused

by rhea newnaha  
and rishi vanka

After bouncing back from a year online, the music department has proven it can't be silenced.

The virtual setting forced students to take their musical education into their own hands and adapt to COVID's demands.

"[Last year], we experimented with new things in band such as recording yourself at home [and] sending in the MP3 file to sound edit an ensemble together," marching band drum major and senior Kelly George said.

One of the challenges the band faced was playing alone.

"We couldn't really all play at the same time with our mics on, so we couldn't really hear anyone else in the ensemble like we do when we normally do band in person."

Senior Krishna Girish Kumar said the isolation from his peers made him feel separate from the orchestra.

"Not having a director in front of me demotivated me to actually practice," Girish Kumar said. "If I'm not motivated to play the instrument, ... it defeats the purpose of Orchestra."

Orchestra director Catherine Bond said her program struggled with the inability to hold in-person concerts.

"Our performances are

our unit tests," Bond said. "When you don't have those intermediate goals, it can really take away from the momentum and motivation of the student and the teacher."

The music departments also suffered a loss of students last year.

"I think a lot of students dropped [choir] because it was almost kind of depressing, just sitting in your room and singing by yourself," choir student and sophomore Sophia Welch said.

But now that school is back in-person, Welch has a different message.

"If you love to sing, and it's something you really enjoy, you should keep pursuing it," Welch said. "You're going to find [choir kids] in your classes now who share that same connection with you, and you're really going to build friendships with them."

Choir director Kelli Pierson was no stranger to the stress of online learning.

"We missed our art form," Pierson said. "We desperately wanted to hear live voices around us again, and have the incredible feeling of success when we achieve something we have been working so hard towards."

However, Pierson said she believes virtual learning had some positive moments.

"We all learned new things about ourselves and



RHEA NEWNAHA/RANK&FILE

Senior Henry Smith rehearses for the orchestra department's first fall concert back since school shut down.

grew in ways we never thought we could," Pierson said, "We made the best of a really difficult moment in history."

Bond said the orchestra department hopes to present a concert this year, even if it has to be virtual.

"We have a plan to livestream our fall concert," Bond said. "If for some reason, [the health department] says we can't have people in the building, then we can move forward with everything as planned."

To abide with COVID guidelines, Bond cancelled the orchestra's tradition of playing pop songs at their fall concert.

"Normally, for the concert, we try to do some pop

tunes, but trying to get all 112 orchestra students onstage together probably wasn't the best idea with COVID," Bond said. "Hopefully for [the winter concert] we can do it."

Now that the ensemble is back together, Bond plans to make the most of it.

It's a tradition for seniors to play Johann Pachelbel's "Canon in D major" at their spring concert, but due to the last two years being virtual, this couldn't happen. Nevertheless, Bond plans to give those seniors a redo.

"I'm hoping we can have [the classes of 2022, 2021 and 2020] all come back and play with the orchestra to play their final hurrah because they missed it," Bond said.

20:21

-20:22





# Lights, Camera, Action: Take Two



MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Juniors Emily Paz and Benjamin Campagnuolo stand on stage during a rehearsal for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" on Sept. 28.

by melanie george

The theatre department has no shortage of solutions adjusting to whatever COVID guidelines throw at them.

After being forced to adapt to the virtual year, the program can begin to rebuild relationships which may have stalled behind a screen.

"Virtual theatre was a challenge, but theatre happens whether you have a stage or not," theatre teacher and director Bernard DeLeo said.

DeLeo said he wanted to use Zoom for its strength, to the approval of theatre student and junior Rainn Afif.

"If we use virtual theatre as an attempt to recreate live theatre, it will never be worth anything," Afif said. "However, if we accept it as it is and utilize that form, then it can be something truly wonderful."

The theatre department put on a live online improv show, radio show, recorded show and live show, abiding with COVID guidelines.

"[We used] different methods, but [with] the same sense of connection and the same sense of common purpose—making art together," DeLeo said.

Assistant Director Olivia Tate said making relationships suffered as a result of virtual theatre.

"I felt like actors didn't get time to really bond because being on the screen is so formal, and if you speak, everyone hears you," Tate said.

Co-president of the Thespian Honors Society and senior AJ Hernandez-Sotore agreed.

"My favorite memories have been cast parties or backstage hijinx, and ... as a senior, I really want to make sure the underclassmen can have memories like that," she said.

With the theatre department back in-person, DeLeo said he hopes this year will help rebuild the department's relationships.

"I'm thrilled to be back and working with kids because it's electric. It's just fantastic," DeLeo said.

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# Return to school renews safety debate

by reyna berry & rhea newnaha

**B**linds down, lights off, in the corner, huddle. When Sophomore Lily Young experienced a lockdown drill in 8th grade, she was angry—it didn't feel safe.

Young created MORA in 2019, a student group aiming to implement a multi-options response in lieu of the current lockdown drill.

"The drill was [created] to keep students safe from an outside shooting, like drive-by shootings," Young said. "So that's why you're told to turn off the lights, lock the door, crouch in a corner: because then you're below the window. So if bullets come through the windows, they probably won't get you."

But this isn't as effective against in-building shootings, Young said.

"Locking doors that have glass windows is ineffective and sitting all huddled in the corners is ineffective, because they can just shoot through the glass," Young said. "And they don't even have to step into the room at that point, you're all in a corner, they can just get [everyone], so it's not safe for anybody."

Young said an approach called "ALICE" is more effective at keeping students safe.

The procedure stands for "Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evade," and its multi-options response approach includes attacking an intruder if possible, in addition to hiding.

Safety and Security Specialist Steve Williams said he had considered the potential advantages of similar methods.

"[People] always talk about 'fight or flight,'" Williams said. "And I think a lot of people would rather fight than be shot in the back on the way out."

A 2018 study from the Journal of School Violence supported ALICE's effectiveness. In the simulation, 74% of participants were shot with traditional lockdown procedures, while 25% were shot during a multi-options response drill.

"A situation like [a school shooting] is very unpredictable," Young said. "You don't know where the [shooter] is. You need to have multiple options on how to react, because it's just so unsafe to just have one option and then hope that

saves people."

Young said she and other MORA representatives have been talking to administrators about the changes they want, but haven't made much progress.

Jim McLain, Security Coordinator for the FCPS Office of Safety and Security, said the Office has assessed the ALICE procedure – and found it insufficient.

"We believe that these strategies [like ALICE], in their totality, are better suited for adults that are responsible to make their own decisions in stressful environments," McLain said.

McLain also pointed to a study by Safe Havens International, saying it further describes the limitations of ALICE.

"[It] indicates that employees who had completed options-based training opted to attack in situations where it was not the best option," McLain said.

An article from the American Society for Industrial Security on the study said that even trained adults can miss more than 50% of steps in procedures like ALICE.

Additionally, Williams said his own

impulse to attack isn't necessarily what's best for everyone.

"[It's] probably training for being a deputy for all those years," Williams said. "The officer, he's not going to run away, he's going to go towards the incident. [But] I'm not saying either is a great choice."

In fact, Williams said statistics from school shootings support the current hide-first mentality.

"The reason we do what we do is ... the people who get saved were locked in and crunched in corners and away from doors and behind walls," he said. "We're [just] trying to protect you all."

McLain said his department is still open to change and that they will continue to strive for student safety.

"We must be diverse in our approach and never become complacent in the area of safety," McLain said. "As you can see, we are looking at all angles here with eyes wide open, ... and we will continue to move down this road of re-view and improvement"



REYNA BERRY/RANK&FILE

Among winding corridors and classrooms lies the hallway leading down to the security office, staffed by Safety and Security Specialist Steve Williams.



# Evolution of the Senior Courtyard

*New COVID-19 guidelines have increased the number of outdoor lunches and inserted underclassmen into the senior courtyard*

by melanie george

The swift changes of lunch guidelines mirror the uncertainty for the future of COVID and a senior tradition.

Last year, lunch was at the same time for everyone, but that all changed when some students went hybrid in the spring. Now, students can eat lunch without social distancing, but FCPS recommends that as many students as possible eat outside.

While fully virtual last year, students like sophomore Kerstin Quach adjusted to the isolation by having lunch on Discord with friends.

"[My friends and I] were all close even before COVID started, so I don't think COVID affected our friendship that much," Quach said. "Hanging out on Discord only made our relationship better."

Sophomore Jonathan Brough had a different experience while being a hybrid student in the spring with the cafeteria's individual desks six feet apart.

"It made [me] feel more isolated in addition to wearing masks and keeping six feet apart," Brough said.

The isolation induced much less conversation.

"It didn't really feel like school without all the noise," Brough said. "It felt a little dead."

Brough said although he felt safer last year, he would pick this year's arrangement over last year's isolation any day.

"Being able to talk to people now



WILL BLACKBURN/RANK&FILE

Groups of students sit at picnic tables in the senior courtyard during lunch, after FCPS encouraged students to eat outside based on COVID-19 guidelines.

is far better than the sense of comfort brought by having fewer students and being spaced out," he said.

FCPS, however, recommends students sit outside to compensate for the number of maskless faces in cafeterias.

But with more students eating outside to social distance, the exclusive senior courtyard holds less and less value.

"The courtyard was practically revered," senior Alex Thrasher said. "My friends and I would walk past it and constantly talk about when we would be able to sit out there."

A "new normal" took away senior privilege and tradition.

"Every grade looked forward to eating out there because it somehow solidified the fact that we had worked our way to senior year and waited for this immense honor of having our own separate place," Thrasher said.

Thrasher said there were pros and cons to giving up the courtyard.

"Obviously with COVID, it's better to have kids sitting outside and eating, but it's such a huge let down for seniors," Thrasher said. "This place that we have looked forward to for so long has now just been opened to everyone, and it feels in a way like it has lost a bit of the magic it used to have."



"A lot of people like me looked forward to being able to eat here and feel 'Wow, we really worked hard for this,' but then I see sometimes seniors have to be eating on the grass or on the pavement because there aren't enough tables because other classes are eating in the senior courtyard."

- Senior Aria Osborne on the Senior Courtyard

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