

rank&file

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**Theater places first
in district VHSL
competition**

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Letter from the Editor

This point in time marks a symbolic halfway point in many ways. Obviously we have reached the halfway point of our academic calendar, and this is also the halfway point for Rank&File in terms of our number of issues this year. At this point in the year it can be easy to start coasting and begin counting down the days until the final bell of the year, particularly for seniors like me.

At this stage, we can either adopt a glass half-full or glass half-empty approach. If you choose to look ahead with the mindset that we're halfway to the end, that may well push you

to stay motivated through the end of the year. I find it important to look back at all the things that have happened already this year. Much has happened in these first two quarters, but we also still have two quarters left for much to happen. As a publication, we will continue to make this halfway point in the year the halfway point in our journey towards this year's peak, not the point at which we begin our descent.

Theo Schmidt
Editor in Chief
Rank&File

Theater's 'The Captain of the Bible Quiz Team' places first in district VHSL competition

by rebecca paz

On Jan. 22, the theater department performed in the annual VHSL One-Acts competition under a new name: the "Bible Quiz Team."

"['The Captain of the Bible Quiz Team'] is basically a one-person show, a 34-minute monologue with some minor characters interacting," theater director Bernie DeLeo said. "The one person carrying the load as the young pastor, Luke Batarseh, is phenomenal."

This one-person show consists of Batarseh, a senior, as Pastor Landry Sorensen on stage and a number of others spread out through the audience interacting and chiming in at times.

"Being able to engage the audience in the performance is so exciting," Batarseh said.

Batarseh said the heavy reliance on him as the lead actor brought new challenges.

"Even the prospect of performing an entire play almost by myself is super intimidating just for memorization and fatigue on stage," he said. "Despite the challenge, I have had a much deeper connection to the script and character that I play than I have ever had before."

Statesmen Theatre won first place in the district round and will move on to the regional round with Batarseh



BRIAN HEATH

Senior Luke Batarseh stands at the altar in one-act performance on Jan. 22.

winning best actor.

"It is so delightful to have all of the hard work with the show pay off and to get recognized for it," Batarseh said. "I was never really looking for a victory so much as just enjoying my time on stage, but the affirmation from the judges is nonetheless amazing."

Although Marshall has hosted for over 10 years, and won the district, regional and state rounds in the past, this year was the first with new COVID regulations in place.

"Usually anyone can watch the entire festival all day," DeLeo said. "But due to the spiking Omicron variant, only

family members could come watch each play and each school left after they performed."

These regulations restricted each school's ability to watch their opponents perform, and students from watching their own school compete.

"I hope that we can perform the show at some point in the future where friends and other people from around the school can come see the show," Batarseh said.

Batarseh and the cast will look to continue the theatre department's winning ways in February's regional competition.



BRIAN HEATH

Luke Batarseh stars as Pastor Landry in the theater department's production of "The Captain of the Bible Quiz Team."

The Sea, the Sky and Spinning Stars:

An Exploration into the Virtual Science Fair

Junior Saemee Kim: Chemicals for Sanitization

Every day, junior Saemee Kim and her family used antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer without a second thought. Then, Kim said something caught her eye on one of the packages.

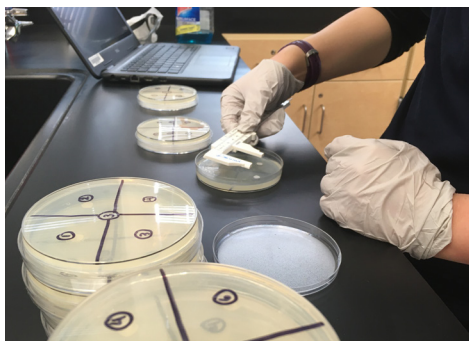
"My family started using this brand of wipes that had a very prominent label saying 'made without Benzalkonium chloride,'" Kim said, "and I was like, 'Why in the world is this brand advertising that it's not using a chemical I've never heard of before?'"

Kim explored this mystery chemical, testing the efficiency of different concentrations of Benzalkonium chloride, water and ethyl alcohol on the growth of bacteria.

Kim said the project was important to her because it was all about better understanding the products we use.

"With COVID," she said, "we're using all these sanitizing chemicals, but which ones are actually effective? What is a good mixture?"

After analysis of her experiment, she discovered that the solutions using Benzalkonium chloride were more effective than just ethyl alcohol.



REYNA BERRY/RANK&FILE

Junior Saemee Kim measures bacteria.

Junior Shaunak Sinha: Alt. Energy from Waves

Ocean waves are a powerful source of renewable energy—but less researched than their solar, wind and hydroelectric counterparts.

Junior Shaunak Sinha aimed to better understand how tools like wave converters, machines that harness energy from the movement of waves, can be most effective. To do this, he employed a computing program called a neural network to find locations where wave energy is most powerful.

"For me," Sinha said, "Environmental science [is] like a big thing."

He said he hopes this research can aid the effective placement of wave energy converters.

"If you know the optimized place where you can put [the converter], then it has maximum efficiency," he said.

This way, environmental scientists can more easily understand the power and applications of wave energy.

Junior Julia Simpson: Spin Rate of Pulsar Stars

Pulsars: rapidly spinning, radioactive stars as big as large cities that inhabit the universe. For students like junior Julia Simpson, these phenomena are fascinating.

The Pulsar Search Colaboratory is a project that teaches students about "big data" collection. Simpson was introduced to the program by her IB Physics teacher Amy Speegle, who said the student was instantly intrigued.

"[It] really sparked my interest in pulsars," Simpson said, referring to a measure of how fast the pulsar spins. "I began to wonder if distance from the galactic center could affect pulse

period. I couldn't find any information so I thought: why not do it for Science Fair?"

Using measurements from the Australia Telescope National Facility Pulsar Catalog, Simpson calculated the distance between different pulsars and the center of the galaxy, and discovered those closer to the galaxy's edges spun faster.

"The results are not exactly what I expected, but are pretty close," she said. "I could see this project being used in education or data collection about pulsars, or possibly on formation of galaxies. Pulse periods can be used to determine age, so it might be useful for that."

Junior Aleksei Bosnjak: Gravity and Pendulums

Grandfather clocks are everywhere: historical dramas, scientific videos, antique shops. However, the physics of such objects can be complicated.

Junior Aleksei Bosnjak decided to investigate how pendulums, like those in grandfather clocks, would behave in wind tunnels.

"The goal is to hopefully find a formula on how to calculate the period of a pendulum, which is the time it takes to swing left and then back right," Bosnjak said.

Bosnjak said his project has applications not only in the present, but also the future.

"When our space

industry increases and we travel to different planets, one of the things we want to figure out is the gravitational pull," he said.

If there were strong winds on the hypothetical planet, scientists would be able to use research like Bosnjak's to understand this unfamiliar gravity.

Bosnjak said he wants to pursue this field of research but, ironically, that he originally chose the project because his other ideas for the science fair weren't approved.

"This idea got approved and I decided to stick with it," he said. "The clock was ticking."

• compiled by reyna berry

Business consultant Jeff Clare embarks on new teaching career in second semester

by emma mobley and rishi vanka

New business teacher Jeff Clare said he's excited to fulfill his 15-year-long dream of teaching by stepping foot into the business department.

Clare transitioned from co-teacher to teacher, taking over former business teacher Andrea Livick's classes at the end of the semester.

"I had my own consulting business for a number of years," Clare said. "So when I was doing all that stuff, I wasn't really excited. At some point, I decided I want to change."

He said the COVID-19 pandemic inspired him to help out his community by teaching.

"An opportunity came up again because we hit this unbelievable health crisis where there's a real need for teachers," Clare said. "This was an opportunity for me to do something for not only students to try to help them, but for the community in general."

Clare first met Livick at an interview for a career switcher program to become a teacher.

A few weeks later, Clare got a phone call from Livick asking if he would be interested in replacing her in the middle of the year.

"I'm excited about it, it's kind of the basics of business," Clare said. "It's pulling it all together. I am comfortable with

the work. It's just a matter of putting it in a way that people are going to get it right away."

Although he said he is overwhelmed with getting to know everyone, Clare also said he is excited to begin his teaching career and wants his students to feel free to talk to him.



RISHI VANKA/RANK&FILE

Business teacher Andrea Livick helps sophomore Abdullah Jaradat during class as replacement, Jeff Clare, observes.

Kanisha Parks: Teaching from Dallas to D-Hall

by marie kah and justin sun

Writing is a skill that some either enjoy while others think as a chore.

To English teacher Kanisha Parks, language and literature shaped her childhood from a student often getting into trouble, to an aspiring writer.

"In first grade, I got in trouble a lot and actually got suspended 13 times in first grade," Parks said. "[I was] a little bit of a troublemaker; in second grade, my teacher discovered that I had a knack for writing. She would give me writing assignments on the side, and it really changed my life. I only got suspended twice that year."

After establishing her passion for writing, Parks chose to become an English teacher with several jobs prior to Marshall.

"I taught at a magnet school in Augusta, Georgia," she said. "Then I taught at [the] Barack Obama Male Leadership

Academy in Dallas."

Later, Parks decided to move from Texas to Virginia.

"I came to Marshall because I got engaged," Parks said. "My boyfriend and I were long distance and decided that living here would be better than him moving to Dallas."

Transitioning to a new school in January provided challenges.

"Coming into school in the middle of the year is really hard," she said. "Getting used to new systems and things, especially in the middle of a grading period is really hard." She said she thinks it is challenging for everyone "just because, you know, we're living in a new normal. It's going to continue to look different every single year, I think for a long time."

Challenges aside, Parks said working at Marshall has allowed her to experience new things.

She said she is excited to work with a team and she has "never worked with

a team as [her] other schools were really small."

To Parks, who writes and edits content on the side, writing is more than a job that one completes every day. She has turned it into a hobby and enriches herself with literature outside of the classroom.

"I have my own writing editing business called Good Report Editorial Firm," Parks said. I think that's a fun fact, because it just shows that obviously, we're not just teaching skills that don't have real world application.

Reflecting back to her second grade discovery, Parks expressed her appreciation for choosing the path of literature at a young age.

"Writing is an amazing skill that will allow you to do so many things in any field really," she said. "I think just knowing that I am a working writer, in addition to teaching, can show them that you don't have to be just one thing."

New IB Global Politics class compares US government to others around the world

by melanie george

Given her background in law, social studies teacher Patricia Coppolino said she wanted to go back to her roots.

The new IB Global Politics course, which will be available to students next year, introduces a social studies course built around current events.

Coppolino said teaching government is “kind of the reason that I got into teaching to begin with. It just brings together a lot of interests that I’ve always had.”

Global politics focuses on the structure of the U.S. government compared to other governments around the world, analyzing relationships between countries as well as factoring in international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

“The course is actually divided into four sections,” she said. “You look at four topics: power sovereignty and

international relations, human rights, development and peace and conflict.”

The class also focuses on immigration patterns, which Coppolino said can be relevant to students today.

“I think it also helps a lot of students understand their own family stories,” she said. “If your family came here from somewhere else, there’s usually a reason why. A lot of times those reasons are rooted in some of these concepts that we’ve talked about.”

A highlight of the course is the Internal Assessment (IA), which Coppolino said is focused on real world interactions, from working with immigration groups in Washington, D.C. or getting an internship with a global development company.

“In this case, [the IA is] very wide open,” Coppolino said. “There’s a lot of different ways to approach it, but the expectation is that you’re going to go out

and do something in the real world, and then make that the center of your IA.”

Social Studies teacher David Gassmann said global politics is a potential next step after taking U.S. and Virginia Government in sophomore year.

“I think part of the thinking behind offering IB Global Politics is that it takes some of the themes from US/VA Government and finishes that pattern,” Gassmann said. He said global politics answers how policy affects countries’ interactions.

He said the class applies to how governments work and interact with each other, and it looks at people solving current issues.

Gassmann said although economics and government “touch on this too, global politics could be interesting with more direct connections to current events. I love World War Two as much as the next guy, but we pretty much solved that one.”

LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Literature elective aims to further unite Statesmen community

by rhea newnaha

The word “queer” brings different reactions from different audiences, but through her new LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Literature course, English teacher Apoorva Johri said she hopes to help students unravel what the word truly means.

Johri said there is a common lack of queer literature in the standard English curriculum, and she plans to address it through her new class.

“I think there is often a general state of homophobia that we all absorb, whether we want to or not,” Johri said. “As an adult, coming into adulthood, I’ve had to do a lot of learning and unlearning. I think that it would be really cool for this sort of learning and unlearning to be happening when you were a high schooler.”

Through exploring different literary forms, the class aims to delve into how queer people are represented all around

the world.

“We really begin to look at how you take back a word that’s been used as a slur and make it a word that’s empowering now,” Johri said.

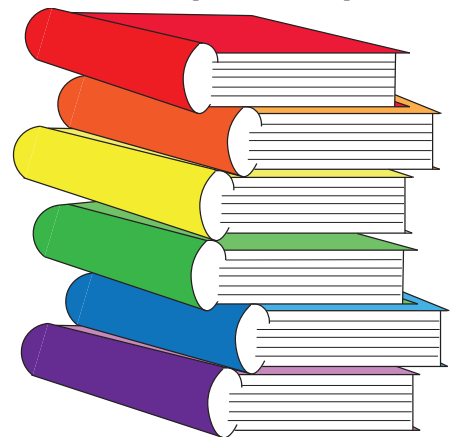
English teacher Margaret Hemmingson said she too believes diverse voices are crucial to understanding any community, and is excited the school is giving students a chance to see themselves in literature.

“I think that it’s great that we have this course being offered to give a more complete picture because I think if you read one book that has a black main character, [that] doesn’t mean you know everything about the community,” Hemmingson said. “It’s good to read more, to get a more complete picture of the community that the literature comes from.”

Hemmingson said she wished she could have taken the class during her time as a Statesman because of the outlet it provides for students to explore the community and express themselves.

“It’s not only for queer students but also for allies [and] for people who just want to read more free literature,” she said. “You don’t have to be gay or bi or trans or anything to take this class and enjoy it and get something out of it.”

Both teachers have said they are excited to welcome the new course, and they hope students use it to understand what the word “queer” encompasses.



ART BY REBECCA PAZ AND RISHI VANKA

COVID-19 Protocols Explained

Our one stop shop to understanding evolving COVID-19 procedures

• compiled by reyna berry and kirtana sathishkumar

If you show symptoms of COVID-19:

Contact the assistant principals or COVID-19 case manager Katie Hogan through phone, email, or go to the clinic or office. They will send you home with information on what to do next.

The following information was compiled through the FCPS and CDC websites and an interview with assistant principal Paula Meoli. Please note that the current COVID-19 protocols here are subject to change as the CDC will continue to update its guidelines in accordance with the pandemic.

Return to school after meeting the following criteria:

If your symptoms have improved, you have not had a fever without fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours and have at least one of the following:

- Note from physician after a clinical evaluation that the symptoms are not from COVID-19 and clearing the student's return
- 10 days of isolation
- Proof of a negative

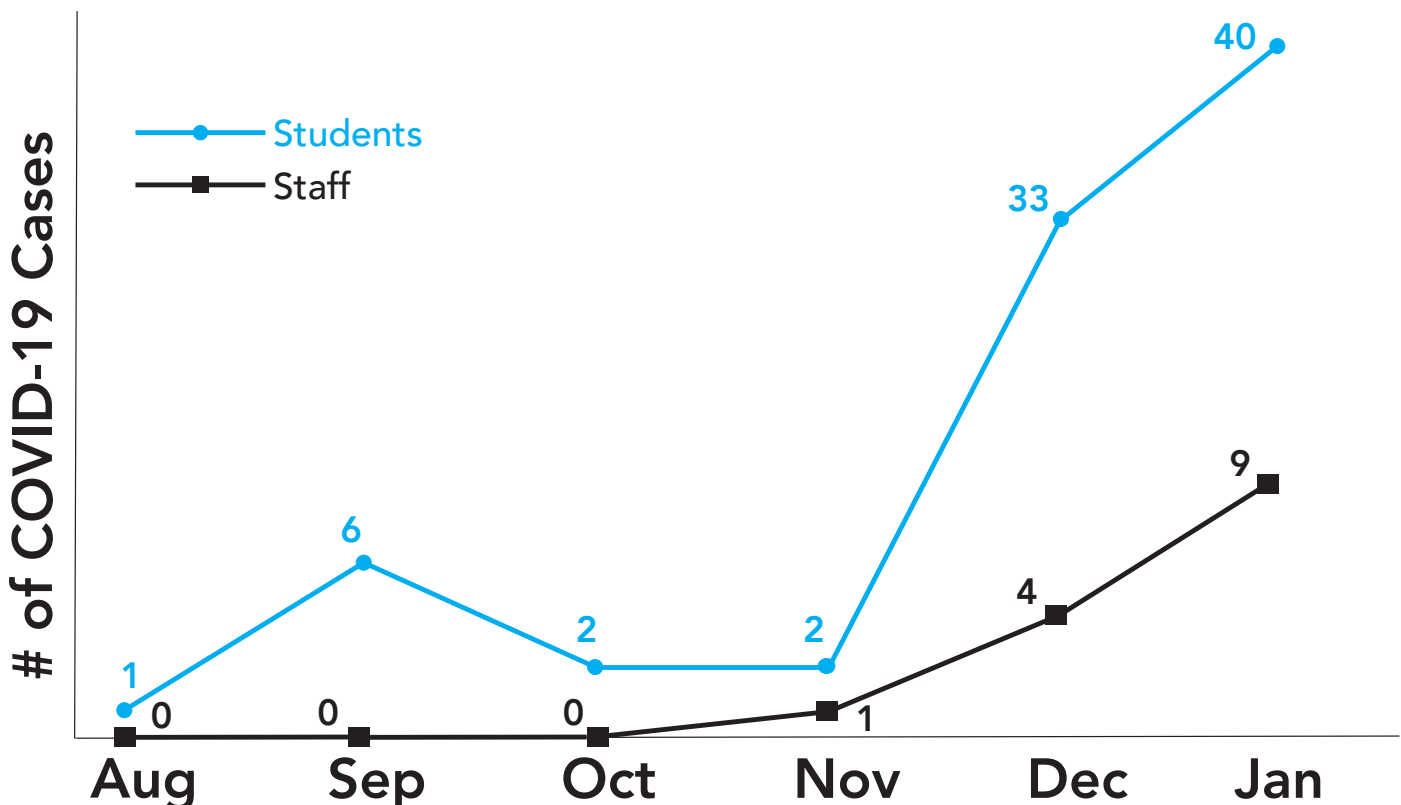
COVID-19 test

If you test positive:

If you test negative:

You may return to school.

Marshall COVID-19 Positive Cases Throughout School Year



Graph by Kirtana Sathishkumar, Information derived from the COVID-19 Health Metrics dashboard on the FCPS website.

COVID-19 positive students can return to school after meeting the following criteria:

- Completed at least 10 days of isolation starting from the day symptoms appeared or 10 days since testing positive for asymptomatic students
- Fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication
- Improved symptoms
- Submitted FCPS Isolation Letter with the return date to their attending school

For students who are required to wear a mask:

- Completed 5 days of quarantine
- Are asymptomatic
- Submitted FCPS Pause Letter with the return date to school

Once in school, you need to wear a mask for days 6-10 when around others.

Administration identifies close contacts

Administration uses seating charts to determine who might be a close contact. Families of those students are notified and will receive a letter telling them what to do next.

If you are a close contact:

Close contacts who are required to quarantine are able to return to school when all the criteria for one of the two options are met:

For students who are exempted from wearing a mask:

- Completed ten days of quarantine
- Submitted FCPS Pause Letter with the return date to school

Before returning:

Parents/guardians must fill out the COVID Contact Vaccination Verification Survey. The Fairfax County Health Department will determine if student meets the criteria and if yes, will clear the student for in-person learning.

Fact: To be considered as fully vaccinated, students under 18 need two vaccine doses, but those 18 and above are required to have the booster as well.

Some students are exempt from quarantine if they:

- Meet the CDC criteria (are fully vaccinated or tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days)
- Wear a mask for 10 days
- Are asymptomatic

Students keep up with schoolwork in self-isolation

On day three of quarantine, positive and paused students can see direct instruction because of teachers live-streaming class, assistant principal Paula Meoli said.

However, science teacher Andrew Litterst said virtual lessons are not as easy of an alternative for some classes.

"Some classes, it's very

easy to stream or record," Litterst said. "Other classes, it's a little bit more difficult, especially some of the more hands-on kinds of classes, science classes in particular."

Litterst said students have been catching up with missing work like they would with any other ordinary sick day.

"From my experience, students that did end up

missing school have been pretty diligent about coming and asking about what they may have missed in their time off," Litterst said. "Just being available for students, approaching them if they forget to ask you with any missing work, I think has been beneficial for a lot of teachers and students."

Senior Anh Nguyen-Pho, who tested positive for

COVID-19 over break and missed five days of school, said she was able to keep up with her classes.

"The procedure of [being] in Zoom while class normally goes on made it not too much of a problem to keep up with a class," Nguyen-Pho said.

She said experience from virtual learning last year made the process easier.

Letters to the Editor

I am writing to speak about the recent protest at Marshall prior to the winter break. For context, I joined MSA in the tenth grade, but hadn't been much involved until I became a social media officer this semester. To my surprise, I found MSA to have a very welcoming, enjoyable atmosphere and an outlet to express my identity. As a Muslim student at Marshall, I sometimes felt that my beliefs, as well as those of many others, seemed overshadowed. Especially since typical Muslim holidays weren't recognized. Furthermore, many "religious observance days" were a dumbed down way to acknowledge diversity at Marshall, while simultaneously, not following through with these promises (several Statesmen have complained about teachers continuing to assign work on the observance days). This led me to assume that there wouldn't be much support for the event, but I thought wrong. At the protest, many students, regardless of racial or religious background, came to support our cause, a sentiment I felt very grateful to. These walk-outs demonstrated that even though FCPS may give a pass to heinous behavior, we students will never tolerate racist and xenophobic actions. MSA will continue to promote civic service. Currently, we have Volunteer opportunities linked in our Instagram bio (@gcm.msa). Though I will graduate this year, I hope the underclassmen at MSA continue to support respect in the following years to come.

- senior and MSA Social Media Officer Maha Azam



REBECCA PAZ/RANK&FILE

Students attend a walk out on Dec. 17 in protest of Islamophobia displayed at Fairfax High School.

Toxic masculinity is the societal pressure that inflicts negative behaviors and attitudes onto men and forces them to adapt. It is present in every aspect of life, from not showing vulnerability to following certain physical appearance standards, deeming qualities as "gay," or staunch opposition to open-ended talks about mental health. This idea dictates the idea of manliness where men "have" to be more strong rather than sensitive, that they cannot express emotion or display traits or enjoy activities that are typically considered to be "feminine." Some of these ridiculed behaviors simply include crying or not possessing violent tendencies when it comes to confrontation.

Toxic masculinity can be inherently harmful to men, especially young boys and those of the Marshall community because they are pressured to follow a certain narrative. This narrative is seared into the minds of young men from early childhood and follows them into adulthood. Toxic masculinity can even normalize developing eating disorders due to unrealistic expectations of men's physique.

Yet, these negative habits affect all genders. Toxic masculinity encourages misogyny and the mistreatment of women, which can lead to unhealthy platonic and romantic relationships, violence against women, unequal opportunities for women in the workplace and so much more.

As a Marshall community, we should redefine the meaning of masculinity as something that does not subtract from the worth of men and boys, but as a trait that only reaffirms their character. We need to actively discourage men from falling into the cycle of toxic masculinity. Regardless of one's gender, this is an issue that requires everyone's attention and action.

- Students Demand Action Club

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 "This led me to assume that there wouldn't be much support for the event, but I thought wrong. At the protest, many students, regardless of racial or religious background, came to support our cause, a sentiment I felt very grateful to."

- senior and MSA Social Media Officer Maha Azam
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Point-Counterpoint: Mask Mandate Battle

Glenn Youngkin defies state law for political points

by matt savage

An executive order has to be worth more than the piece of paper it's written on.

Youngkin's day-one executive order banning mask mandates ought to be thrown in the trash. It isn't just reckless, it's illegal. The General Assembly's SB1303, written by Republicans and with bipartisan support in 2021, through the support of every Republican in both the House and the Senate, requires school districts to follow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines on COVID-19 mitigation to "the maximum extent practicable." The CDC guidelines are quite clear: universal masking is requisite to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Youngkin's executive order is in deliberate defiance of this state law. I know the concept of government is quite foreign to our new governor, but he'll need to learn that we have three branches of government. If the governor doesn't like a law, he can work with the legislature to change it, but he cannot unilaterally rescind laws passed by the legislature. Virginia elected a governor in November, not a king.

Youngkin is playing fast and loose with the health and safety of students, teachers and their families in order to score partisan political points. He's also broken from his "appeal to the centrist voter" approach that brought him an electoral victory in November. On the campaign trail, Youngkin made clear that he would repeal Governor Ralph Northam's order requiring masks in schools but maintained that the issue of whether to require masks would be left to each school district. In other words, the pledge was that if Fairfax County wanted to require masks for students, we could, and if neighboring Fauquier County didn't want to require masks, it could as well.

FCPS is in no position to bash partisan policy

by theo schmidt

The "appeal to the centrist voter" which Glenn Youngkin campaigned so hard on is intertwined with the partisan actions of school boards. Politically influenced curriculum aside, delayed return-to-school efforts were a major misstep by local boards, particularly in Fairfax County.

Despite pushback from groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics, who is local chapters FCPS now uses for medical expertise in their town halls, the county did not return to school until its hand was forced by the aforementioned SB1303 bill. Even students with severe disabilities, unable to participate in virtual learning and with parents working during the day, were kept out of school all the way until Feb. 16. The vast majority of students only returned between March 2 and 16, conveniently nine days after SB1303 passed the second of Virginia's legislative chambers, requiring in-person learning in 2021.

Notably, then-governor Northam and the recently inaugurated President Biden also started showing strong support for a return to school. With those endorsements, the FCPS school board, which features 12 members all endorsed by the Fairfax County Democratic Committee, finally agreed to the consensus the experts had reached half a year earlier.

Politics have influenced county policy throughout the pandemic, to the detriment of the students schools exist to educate and the parents funding them. Removing masking policies is not what FCPS needs at this time, but county leadership has no merit in crying foul over politically motivated decisions by the new governor or demanding he "listen to the experts." After all, those partisan actions affecting our education are what swayed voters to put him into office.

Editorial: Snow day memories are under attack

There are few childhood moments more sacred than waking up, refreshing a Twitter feed and running outside to build a snowman. But hold onto your hats, because snow days are under attack.

The Virginia General Assembly passed legislation in early 2021 that allowed school districts to convert snow days into virtual learning days. When the bill was introduced, it slipped and slid down the slopes of the legislature, but then came to an abrupt halt when certain members of the House of Delegates began raising concerns that the bill would permanently end snow days as we know it. In response, the bill was watered down just a little with a limit that schools can only use no more than ten virtual learning days per school

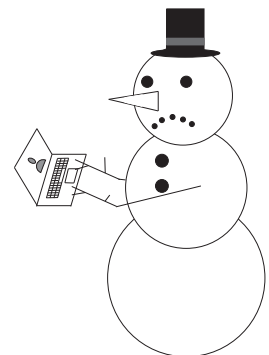
year. The legislation picked up the pace, passing the House 75-25 and the Senate unanimously, and was signed into law by then-Governor Ralph Northam.

Especially coming towards two years of isolation during a deadly pandemic, students need the mental health holiday that comes with a snow day: the opportunity to sleep in, drink hot chocolate and participate in a snowball fight with neighborhood kids. Despite what some politicians in Richmond may think, teachers, administrators and parents can't merely flip a switch and expect lesson plans to convert to Zoom.

It's ironic, as well, that last year's legislation to end snowdays was written and supported by Republicans. The same Republicans who rightfully raised the alarm about the negative impacts of

virtual learning also voted to make some aspects of virtual learning permanent, well beyond the pandemic.

The children of Virginia are asking, "Do you want to build a snowman?" and Virginia politicians have replied with a firm "No."



ART BY JOSIE HAMILTON, RISHI VANKA, REBECCA PAZ/RANK&FILE

Junior introduces Slam Poetry Club, hopes to grow student writing community

by aitana wells

After attending an influential summer camp, junior Jackson Dabich wants to introduce his classmates to slam poetry.

The writing community has offered Dabich the opportunity to be in a supportive and encouraging environment, which he finds to be a really great thing.

"I really just wanted to build a writing community," Dabich, the club's president, said. "I did this camp over the summer and I felt that everyone is so supportive of your writing, it's a really great thing. I kind of wanted to bring some of that to Marshall."

Dabich said he first had the idea of creating the slam poetry club in October. After three weeks of procrastination, he began acting on it.

"We just had an interest meeting and I think we're going to start to have more meetings during third

quarter," Dabich said. "It's just that school's a little crazy right now. Meetings will probably be held once or two times a month."

Dabich said he envisioned each club meeting will consist of prompt guided writing, looking at slam poetry videos, and planning for open mic nights.

For the open mic nights, "we're going to try to go to cafes and book an hour [to] two hours where people can share their work and stuff that they've been working on," Dabich said. "We're going to try to get National English Honor Society points for it, to get more people to show up."

Through meetings and open mic nights, the leadership board of the Slam Poetry Club will aim to influence writing and build a strong writing community.

The club will try "to get as many people to join and maybe try to get more people interested in writing too," Dabich said.

Table Talk with Counselor Kirtner: Student Support Groups and Secrets to a Productive Semester

• compiled by melanie george

ART BY ELEANOR MCADEN



• How can Student Support Groups help with mental health?

Our hope is that by doing a group, we can accommodate six to ten kids at a time on a particular subject. Also, interaction with peers who experienced the same thing is super powerful. It gives a chance for kids to learn from each other at the same time.

• What's the biggest mistake a student makes when starting a new semester?

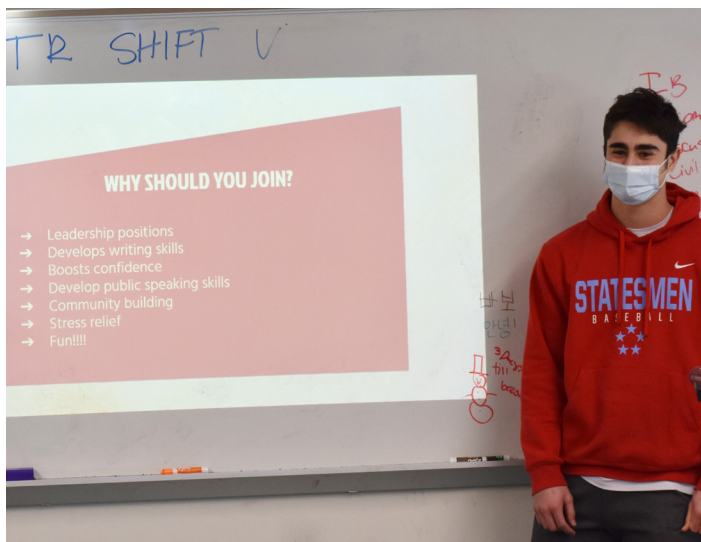
I think sometimes we think that just because it's a new semester, suddenly the slate is wiped clean, and it's just this magic restart, and in a lot of ways, it can be, but only if [we change] our behaviors and the things that might have been holding us back.

• How can students get into a productive lifestyle?

Through small changes, and just looking at it again. It's not, "Oh, I have to change everything that I've ever done in order to be a better student." It's, "What's that one or two habits that you could create or change that might slowly influence you over time?"

• What's the secret to a productive, yet healthy routine?

Organization, priorities and balance. It's not to say that you should take all that fun off the table because, especially right now we need fun. Our brains are not designed to work at 100% capacity 100% of the time. So you should be going out with your friends. You should be going to sports events. You should be exercising. You should be doing those things. Taking them off the table promotes the more unhealthy side.



ANNABELLE WEAVER/COLUMBIAN

Slam Poetry Club vice president and junior Joseph Long presents on the group during a Dec. 16 interest meeting.

New junior shooting guard journeys from Dubai

After 11 years on boys teams, Minnah El-Berier aims to take her skill to the girls' court.



COURTESY OF MINNAH EL-BERIER

Junior shooting guard Minnah El-Berier warms up for a basketball game.

by marie kah

Junior Minnah El-Berier's move to Virginia this summer from Dubai brought her closer to her family and the IB curriculum, but it also led her to the girls basketball team.

El-Berier has played basketball for almost 11 years, most of which was spent playing with boys teams, putting her at the receiving end of sexism.

"In Dubai, they don't have very strong girls teams," El-Berier said. "I've played with boys teams most of my life, which can be frustrating for obvious reasons."

El-Berier said the experience gave her the opportunity to improve and learn how to face future challenges on the court.

"I learned that I shouldn't take offense to it, and actually get better and block the words out," El-Berier said.

Though not being able to play with girls had its struggles, El-Berier said it

helped her game.

"However, playing with guys helped with building my confidence as a player," El-Berier said.

Getting to finally play basketball with girls meant big adjustments for El-Berier.

"Being able to come to Marshall and being part of a really good girls team reassured me of worries I had while moving," El-Berier said. "Though it was an adjustment playing different plays with different people than usual I was happy to finally be able to play with other girls."

El-Berier has also gotten involved with other student organizations such as the Black Student Union.

"I immediately joined the Black Student Union because I wanted to be able to connect with other black Marshall students because at my other school there was a large black population, and I wanted a sense of community in a new area," El-Berier said.

Film class returns in coming school year

by rhea newnaha

English teacher Pierce Bello will revive the Film Studies course next year, but this time without its IB designation.

Bello said student interest in the class dwindled due to the IB workload, so rather than coming back as an IB course, the class will be an elective.

"I just fundamentally believe there should be a film study class at every high school, and that kids do genuinely geek out and are interested in learning about movies," Bello said. "So I wanted to resurrect a film class back from the dead."

Bello said he hopes the elective will help students appreciate films from different time periods and different parts of the world.

"I like to have kids also watch movies that are outside of their comfort zone, and maybe movies that kids aren't always gonna likely see on their own," Bello said. "I've had some kids watch a foreign movie and say that's the first

movie [they've seen with] subtitles."

Bello said he encourages students with various interests to consider it.

"I got a lot of IB theater kids who basically want to learn about film," Bello said. "I've had some musicians take the class and they really geek out on sound."

Film club co-president and senior Ian Lee said the class teaches skills that also apply to academic courses.

"There are so many literary and technical elements that are used when you bring movies to a classroom environment and break them down," Lee said. "Students practice critical thinking skills that will help them in their other classes."

Both Bello and Lee said they are excited for students to sharpen their textual analysis skills as well as see film in a new light.

"At the end of the day, watching movies is fun," Lee said. "It's great that students have the option to explore the world of film, while also growing as students."

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Swim team strokes to victory, breaks record

by josie hamilton and aitana wells

The girls swim team broke a 27-year-old school record in the 200-meter medley relay at Cub Run RECenter against Westfield on Jan. 14 with a time of 1:55.79.

The relay team was made up of freshman Kate McDermott, sophomore Bella Spignardo, sophomore Sophia Cloutier and junior Julia Simpson.

"The 200 medley relay is a race where each member swims [50 meters]," McDermott said. "I swam a 50 backstroke to start the relay. Then Bella swam a 50 breaststroke, Sophia swam a 50 butterfly and Julia swam a 50 freestyle."

McDermott said the girls team is fast this year because of its many new underclassmen club swimmers.

"My role in breaking the record was [at] the beginning of the relay to start us off strong," she said.

The swimmers said they grew closer due to their shared goal.

"I definitely became closer friends with Bella, Sophia and Julia because of our relay," McDermott said. "Breaking the record was very exciting for the whole Marshall swim team. I don't think the team has broken a relay record in a long time."

McDermott said her team was not focused on breaking the record before the race.

"I didn't know we were even close to the record time, so it was a huge surprise when Bella told me we broke it," she said.

Head swim coach Steven LeDuc said he was also impressed with the girls' accomplishment.

"That is something I don't think I have ever seen in a dual meet," LeDuc said in an email to the swim program. "I have a feeling that they are not done breaking records yet."

Spignardo agreed.

"Breaking a record in the first event of the meet really boosted Marshall Swim's spirit as the meet continued," Spignardo said.

"I have a feeling that they are not done breaking records yet."

- head swim coach Steven DeLuc

The swimmers said they were motivated for the event because of the performance of the opposing team.

"I think we swam so well because the other team also had a fast relay, and that competition pushed us to swim our best and beat them," McDermott said.

As their season nears its end, LeDuc said he remains confident that the girls team will continue to impress, even hinting the team could continue to break records in the remaining weeks.

LeDuc's prediction was validated on Jan. 29 when the swim team broke four additional records, including the earlier 200-meter relay record with a time of 1:54.15.



COURTESY OF BELLA SPIGNARDO

Freshman Kate McDermott, sophomore Bella Spignardo, sophomore Sophia Cloutier and junior Julia Simpson pose for a photo after breaking a 27-year-old school record in the 200-meter medley with a time of 1:55.79. The team went on to shave over a second off that record two weeks later.

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Ribosomes and reptiles: Schell's lifelong hobbies

by ben pyatt and aitana wells

Cody Schell, honors and IB biology teacher, grew up in New York with a creek behind his house that he visited frequently.

At age 10, he began finding garter snakes and other species there. This is where his interest for snakes and other wildlife blossomed.

"[Snakes] are obviously really unique compared to a lot of different animals," Schell said. "I know they freak some people out a little bit, but I just always found them really interesting."

Schell has owned snakes since he was 12 years old but didn't start breeding them until later on.

"I breed, right now, ball pythons and boa constrictors, and then I also have some reticulated pythons, specifically

some dwarf, super dwarf cross reticulated pythons that I'm hoping to also be breeding starting next year."

For now, it remains a hobby for Schell. However, Schell said caring for roughly

40 different snakes takes time.

"I offer food once a week to most of them," he said. "In general, spending time cleaning cages and making sure every one has clean water is

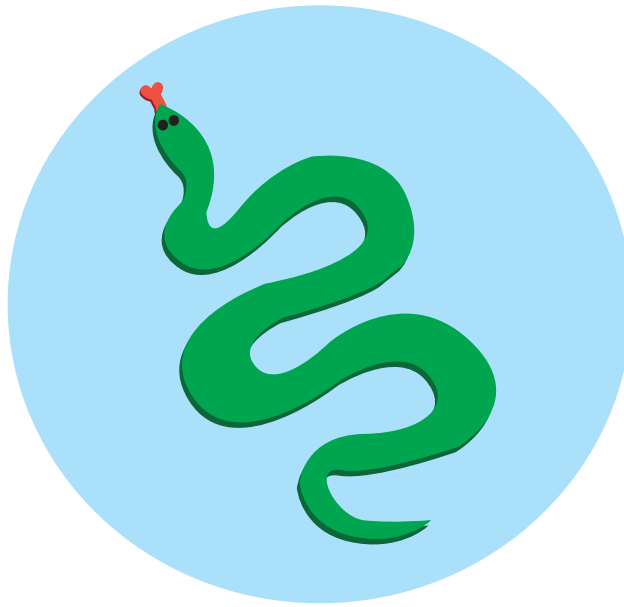
a pretty significant amount of time, but that gives me a chance to interact with them, make sure they're healthy, and I enjoy that part of it."

The money made from breeding pays for the care of the snakes, including things like cages, new beds and food.

"I could see that income [made from snake breeding] changing, but I don't necessarily have a desire to stop teaching," Schell said. "If it ends up being something that's super successful for some reason, I mean, I wouldn't not like it."

Schell said he plans to continue tending to snakes for as long as he can.

"As long as I'm healthy enough to keep doing it and take good care of the animals, make sure they have a happy, healthy life as long as I'm able to provide that, I think I'll keep it up," Schell said.



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