

rank&file

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Dive team
perseveres

Page 8



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Rank&File Podcast

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Letter from the Editor

The Rank&File presents its first issue of the new year. The class of 2023 is into its year of graduation and now into their final semester of high school. As for the classes returning next school year, new changes in history and sexual content standards will be implemented for future years. This issue features in-depth articles on both changes affecting students in 2023-24, and an opinion on Section 390.

While these external influences loom over FCPS, we are inclined to monitor our internal struggles. In our NoVA high school community, Wakefield recently experienced a loss from a suspected overdose. In response to the incident, officials administered Narcan. Growing up in the midst of an opioid epidemic has tangible effects on our community and can affect anyone, regardless of demographics. Rank&File sends its condolences to the Wakefield Community. The article "Overdose at Wakefield High School" on page four details the incident in Arlington and offers some facts about the overall crisis.

Aitana Wells
Editor-In-Chief
Rank&File

Overdose reported at Wakefield High School

by **eleanor mcaden and emma mobley**

A student at Wakefield High School died last week after being hospitalized for a suspected drug overdose.

On the morning of Jan. 31, Arlington County Police responded to a report of a student found unconscious in a school bathroom.

Dispatch audio revealed that Narcan, a medication to counter the effects of opioids, was administered to the student.

"We've trained all of our school nurses, and they have Narcan on them, or naloxone, and all of our school safety coordinators have also been trained and carry it," Dr. Darrell Sampson, executive director of student services for Arlington Public Schools, said in an interview with news station WJLA. Sampson was among the officials who

responded to the incident, according to WJLA.

Marshall's school health aide Katie Hogan said she has been trained to administer Narcan and that the medication is held in the nurse's office in case it should ever be needed.

"We understand that this news may be concerning, and we want to assure you that the safety and well-being of our students are our top priority," Wakefield principal Dr. Chris Wilmore said in a message to families. "If you have concerns about your child, please contact your child's school counselor, our school psychologist, or our school social worker."

In addition to the hospitalized student, Arlington police reported that four other students were evaluated at the scene.

Last week's incident comes amid an ongoing opioid crisis in

America that has had a notable impact on younger adults.

Marshall's substance abuse prevention specialist Allyson Jacobi said she was unable to comment on the Wakefield incident without administrative approval.

Wakefield canceled classes Friday following the incident as well as a lockdown triggered two days later by a suspected intruder.

- Drug Enforcement Agency lab testing reveals four out of every 10 pills with fentanyl contain a lethal dose
- Those aged 18 to 34 have the highest rates of fatal and non-fatal overdoses in the Fairfax Health District
- See [dea.gov](https://www.dea.gov) for more information

New science class aims to support IB science students throughout the science fair process

by **eleanor liang**

For those seeking extra science fair support next year, the new Science Research class may be what they are looking for.

The class is a single semester, honors level course designed to help students doing science research, specifically those in IB Physics 1 or IB Biology 1 since those courses both require participating in the science fair.

Physics teacher Janet Kahn said she felt the need to offer a class to help with science fair because she and her colleagues noticed a lack of support for students taking part in it.

"Basically we have this problem that IB Physics 1 and IB Biology 1 are really

intense academic courses with a lot of curriculum," she said. "It's a big challenge to fit in the science fair in our classes that we teach and students in junior year are often overwhelmed with the step up to all IB classes."

The goal of the class is to help more students create more successful projects.

"We've always had students who have done successful projects, but I'm going to say that it is a little bit accidental," she said. "We'd like to do a more purposeful job of helping students."

Kahn said one of the things she hopes to help students with is choosing a topic for their project.

"I think the hardest part for many students is coming up with something that they

care about and that's still a challenge even with support," she said. "But hopefully by giving class time, we can help people to find projects that they're excited about."

Kahn said participation in the science fair is an essential part of the IB curriculum.

"In order to be an IB science student, you have to be able to do science as well as learn about it," she said. "Rather than just thinking about science as this body of knowledge that exists for us to learn, instead you need to [be] doing it yourself and then sharing your results."

The course is intended to be taken to replace the semester free period many IB students have from taking

Theory of Knowledge.

"Usually, IB Diploma candidates have that semester off, and many of them do spend their time in the library," she said. "It's not a bad way to have some extra time for homework, but we have found that there just isn't enough support for students in doing their science fair project."

Kahn encourages any students planning on taking a class with a science fair requirement to sign up for the Science Research class.

"I'm expecting that students in the class will do very well in the fair because they put the time into making a project that should help them to connect with judges and have meaningful results," she said.

Stress management in senior courtyard

by rhea newnaha

The end of the semester brings stress for many students, but this year, it also brought some furry friends.

Marshall Minds Matter teamed with Alliance of Therapy Dogs to bring dogs to the senior courtyard to help with stress.

"It's really important for us all to find healthy coping mechanisms," said MMM president and senior Sara Porjosh. "[Therapy dogs are] a really great option."

Senior Kylie Henigan said she was drawn to the event because of the strong animal presence in her life.

"I've done a lot of work with animals, and we're training one of my dogs to be a therapy dog, so I found this event really interesting," Henigan said.

Like Henigan, sophomore Julia Elliot Ortega and her three sisters were attracted to the event due to their history with dogs.

"When we heard there were dogs, we just really wanted to come because we love dogs," Elliot Ortega said. "We have one and we've had dogs all throughout our life."

MMM social media manager and junior Claire Anderson said dogs can provide comfort.

"Animals are just a good outlet to get more emotional support because they're loving," Anderson said. "They make you feel good, and when you're kind of in a bad place, a cute animal's gonna bring you up no matter what."

MMM vice president AJ Oliver agreed.

"It's being able to focus on something other than your schoolwork and other stressful things and just being around a calming presence like a dog," Oliver said. "It brings a lot of joy."

Based on the turnout from the event, Oliver said the MMM club will look into hosting a similar event later in the school year.

Watch our video on the event

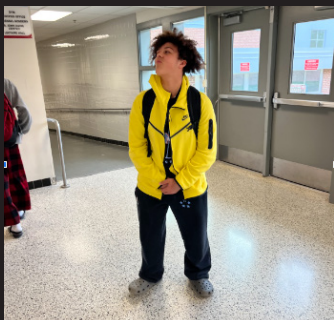


ELEANOR LIANG/RANK&FILE

Therapy dog teams are trained through a testing and observation process to obtain their certification.

Rank&Style: Holiday fashion decks the halls

• compiled by maddie bishop, ben pyatt and julius schmidt



Freshman Taye Mihrete poses in the hallway, wearing his new yellow Nike Tech Fleece.

Mihrete used Christmas money to buy himself a Tech Fleece from Nike, opting to buy one in yellow. His purchase garnered attention across grade levels.

"It gave me attention," he said. "Now more people know me."

Sophomore Sofia Campagnuolo shows off her new flare leggings she got for Christmas.

"I wear them a lot, and I have a lot of different pairs," she said.

Campagnuolo said she likes the versatility of the leggings.

"I love how they are always a great fit and if you want to be comfy but can't be in sweatpants they're a great choice," she said. "The material is soft and they don't bunch up as the day goes on and they never slide down."

Campagnuolo said she wasn't pleased with some of the other items she received.

"I got some really ugly things," she said, "but I've returned most of them."



Sophomore Nate Bishop holds his new fishing rod while sporting matching fish slides he received.

His parents gave Bishop the fish slides for Christmas even though he didn't ask for them.

"[My parents] just thought I would like them," he said. After winter break, Bishop said he wore them as a joke in the hallways.

"A lot of people laughed and this one girl thought they were terrible," he said.



Senior Cayley Sullivan received Ugg boots for Christmas.

"I like that they're comfortable and they're good for the winter because they are furry," Sullivan said.

She said when she receives gifts she dislikes she doesn't feel obligated to keep them.

"If I don't like a gift I feel comfortable telling my mom," she said. "I feel like I have received gifts that I wouldn't

necessarily wear, and I think I'd return it."



Sports Review

Gymnastics

1/9 meet at Marshall placed second
1/26 meet at West Springfield
placed first
1/30 liberty district championship
meet placed third

Girls Basketball

District Rank: 6th
1/13 W 52-41 @ Yorktown
1/17 L 27-41 vs. Langley
1/20 L 17-36 @ McLean
1/27 W 53-44 @ W&L
2/1 L 37-44 vs. Wakefield

Swim & Dive

1/13 W @ W&L
1/14 W @ Wakefield
1/20 L @ Yorktown

Wrestling

1/11 vs Langley and Wakefield
1/18 vs McLean and W&L
1/25 vs Herndon

Boys Basketball

District Rank: 1st
1/13 W 48-33 vs. Yorktown
1/17 W 52-45 @ Langley
1/20 W 50-30 @ McLean
1/31 L 38-47 vs. W&L
2/1 W 61-53 @ Wakefield

Winter Track

1/7 Meet at Westfield Girls
placed 3rd, Boys placed 4th.

Sports Preview

2/2-3 Winter Track Districts
2/3 Boys Basketball vs Herndon
2/3 Girls Basketball @ Herndon
2/3 Wrestling Regionals
2/8 Gymnastics Regionals
The scores of these events were
not available before the publishing
of this issue.

Boys Basketball

2/6 @ Yorktown
2/9 vs Langley
2/13 District Quarterfinals
2/15 District Semifinals
2/17 District Final

Gymnastics

11/28 meet at Marshall placed third
12/6 meet at Mclean placed second

Swim & Dive

2/10-11 Swim and Dive Regionals
2/18 Swim and Dive States

Girls Basketball

2/6 vs Yorktown
2/9 @ Langley

R&F Statesmen Spotlight

Rishab Saravan, 9
JV Boys Basketball



AADIT MANIVANNAN/COLUMBIAN

Freshman Rishab Saravan spent most of his season on the Freshman team, leading them and only losing one game. Recently after a conversation with the Marshall coaches, he has moved up to JV. Averaging 12 points a game on the Freshman team, the coaches and Saravan decided that JV would be a higher level for him to practice and play at to better prepare him for his future in the basketball program.

Kate McDermott, 10
Swim and Dive



COURTESY OF KATE MCDERMOTT

Sophomore Kate McDermott, has made a splash since last year on Marshall's Swim and Dive team. Winning four meets this the season, which is the best Marshall has had in years, McDermott has also gotten her best time at multiple meets. She made regionals in 100m breaststroke and 200m individual medley.

These athletes were hand-selected by the Rank&File staff for their outstanding performances this month.

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LATE PEANUT BUTTER | MINT CHOCOLATE CHIP | OREO |
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Dive team perseveres: Jumping into a season without a coach

by rachel ackerman, eleanor liang and rebecca paz

Can a team succeed without a coach? The dive team is without formal leadership this year, providing challenges for the team.

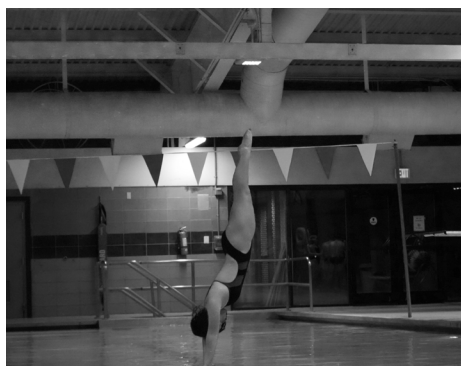
Athletic director Joe Swarm believes the struggle to fill coaching positions is not unique to the FCPS community, but instead represents a larger national issue.

"As I understand, there is a coaching and teaching shortage throughout FCPS," said Swarm. "In fact, I think this is on a national scale."

He says he has heard of the shortage from different schools.

"I am constantly hearing from other schools who are hoping for any candidate to come forward in some of our sports," Swarm said.

Previously, coaches expressed interest in the occupation due to their love of the game and its atmosphere. Swarm said other factors are influencing the desire to coach.



ELEANOR LIANG/RANK&FILE

Freshman Dani Rothman completes a pike dive at a home meet against Wakefield High School.

"I believe the poor treatment, combined with the meager earnings of these individuals have resulted in the devaluing of doing it for the love of the game," Swarm said.

Swarm said Marshall coaches don't do the job for the money, but it is still a consideration.



ELEANOR LIANG/RANK&FILE

Freshman Michael DeSando executes a twister.

"It does not make it easy when they have not seen a raise in coaching stipends in the 21st century," he said. "It makes me appreciate and know how extremely fortunate we are to have incredible coaches here at Marshall."

He said he volunteered to be an athletic administrator representative for a job fair coming up to get more coaches to

~~~~~  
"As I understand, there is a coaching and teaching shortage throughout FCPS. In fact, I think this is on a national scale."  
~~~~~

- Director of student activities Joe Swarm

~~~~~  
join Marshall's school division. He is also looking for support in the larger community.

"I am hopeful that our community and others in FCPS take a good hard look at what is important—and if having athletic programs is on that list, then support them," Swarm said.

Divers on the team said the lack of a dive coach has caused difficulties at practices and meets. Swarm agreed, saying the problems were magnified because teams from other schools who use the same pool were also missing coaches.

"In the past we have always had a dive coach, and if one of the other two schools did not, they joined us," Swarm said.

In the absence of other leadership, parent volunteer Shannon Ice, alongside the dive coach from Falls Church High School, stepped up to support the team. Still, freshman diver Rebecca Rothman said hearing opinions from two separate coaching figures can be confusing.

"If we had a full time coach that was with us, they would be able to give us consistent, rather than two [different] types of feedback," Rothman said.

With many people, including upper-classmen, stepping up, the team persisted through the season and made it to districts. Rothman said divers like senior Tatum Scarborough have been huge role models.



ELEANOR LIANG/RANK&FILE

Freshman Dani Rothman hurdles to complete her pike dive.

"Not having a coach definitely made [the season] tougher," Scarborough said.

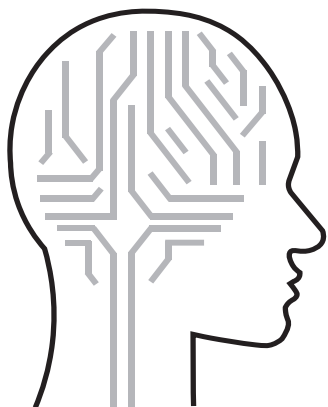
Still, Scarborough said there wasn't a huge difference between this season and last year because of the Falls Church High School coach.

Scarborough said she noticed the increased interest in students joining dive is rising. Swarm said he hopes to find a coach for the team for future seasons.

"I always hope that more people want to join the coaching ranks because I believe we have an amazing group of student athletes to work with here in our community," Swarm said.

# The New Reality

Artificial intelligence in schools causes concerns for the future of teaching



ART BY REBECCA PAZ  
AND RISHI VANKA

by rhea newnaha

To some, software like ChatGPT is a new way to get work done; for others, it represents a growing fear that teaching is becoming obsolete.

ChatGPT is a software that generates writing from prompts submitted by users to assist with tasks like writing emails, recipes and essays.

English teacher Matthew Horne said since their first assignment this year, students have used the technology for schoolwork in his classes. He also said student AI use has made him question if his job is still useful.

"I take days off to grade at this job because it's just too much work to do," Horne said. "And to think that it's not actually ultimately valuable because some students don't care about learning to write, they just care about the grade, is extremely frustrating."

Junior Aman Chhina said that stress is a main factor in students turning to an AI for help.

"Of course, it would be better for the student to stay on top of their work and make sure they have time

to complete it, but their circumstances might [make it] difficult to get all their work done," Chhina said. "Plus, we're all human. Sometimes we let work build up and try to take an easy way out."

English teacher Claire Tinsley said she agrees that students are stressed but shares Horne's concerns.

"When I first read about ChatGPT, I really kind of panicked because I thought 'Oh my god, I'm not gonna have a job,'" Tinsley said. "This is what I've worked so hard for and what I love to do and what I am passionate about, and people decide that actually, 'We don't need people to teach us writing because we can just have this computer do it.'"

Biology and IB Environmental Systems and Studies teacher Luke Konopka said although he understands these fears, he doesn't think ChatGPT will discard the value of his coworkers.

"The PowerPoint did not replace the teacher," Konopka said. "The calculator did not replace the teacher either. The laptops that we got last year also did not replace the teacher, so I don't see any reason or any fear in that AI is going to replace teaching at all."

Horne expressed misgivings over AI's use as an aid.

"[AI is] doing a lot of thinking for you," he said. "My fear is, if we value just the end product of having a good paper that gets a good grade, we will lose the ability to think critically," he said.

Junior Anjali Seshadri said these critical thinking

skills are essential in the modern day.

"We give up our ability to function as engaged members of society," Seshadri said, referring to reliance on AI technology. "Do we really expect a generation brought up on AI to have the focus or determination to prevent a climate crisis?"

Still, teachers and students said they are aware of the benefits of software like ChatGPT.

"I love ChatGPT," Horne said. "I play with it all the time. There's all sorts of fun things you can do and you can program it, but I don't think that's the main way my students are using it."

Seshadri also said ChatGPT can make life easier.

"If school is about busy work and good grades, AI can definitely help you out," Seshadri said. "Obviously, that's

not what the education system should be for, but here we are."

Tinsley said she's not asking students to produce perfect work, but rather work that is their own.

"I really want my English students to take away that there's value to sharing and expressing your own voice," Tinsley said. "Not every single thing that you express needs to be like a world-shattering idea or something that's so brilliant."

Regardless of the pros and cons of this new technology, Konopka said he thinks it is here to stay.

"As technology evolves, society needs to evolve with it," Konopka said. "It's a big benefit to learn how to use [AI], learn how to teach with it, and to also make sure that students know how to use it as they go forward in their lives."

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*"'ChatGPT has been a game changer for our company,' says John Doe, CEO of a leading tech firm. 'It allows us to provide instant and accurate responses to customer inquiries.'"*

# Rank&File researches course selection

• compiled by rachel ackerman, sophie hauber, esther lee and rebecca paz  
photos courtesy of rylie morris and arjun bhide

## Students share favorite and least favorite classes

### Freshman Rylie Morris



#### Best

Ceramics because I'm with my friends, and I get to make cool things.

#### Worst

Spanish because it's really hard.

### Sophomore Arjun Bhide



#### Best

Criminal Justice because I learn about police work and crime scene investigation.

#### Worst

Government because the topic is boring.

### Junior Chloe Kim



#### Best

I like my IB Art class a lot. The teacher is nice, and I really like that we get a lot of freedom to do our own projects.

#### Worst

I am not a fan of physics at all.

### Senior Michael Chun



#### Best

My favorite class is Prob & Stat because it's easy.

#### Worst

IB Geography because I don't care about the subject.

## Students share IB program perspectives

by maha jiwani

As course selection approaches, many students consider whether to pursue the IB diploma.

The diploma is known for its academic rigor, but IB co-coordinator Matt Axelrod said it shouldn't be a deterrent to the program.

"IB requires students to really do writing, whether that's research papers [or] long-form essays," Axelrod said. "It is the best preparation for college."

He also said the rigor of the program can be its downside.

"It's just a lot, so some students are like 'I have a lot going on in my life and so they take multiple IB courses but not the

full thing," Axelrod said.

However, IB co-coordinator Abeer El-Baz said the workload is not a problem if students are organized. She also said there are other options if students can't keep up with the tight deadlines.

"You can also approach your teachers," El-Baz said. "Maybe you can have an extension here or there in the assignments that obviously can be extended."

Axelrod and El-Baz said the diploma helps ease the transition from high school to college.

"It's the best preparation for university study," Axelrod said. "Students are able to learn a lot of different sorts of areas of knowledge."

### IB Requirements

**Theory of Knowledge:** Cross-curricular course, taken in the spring of junior year and the fall of senior year, which explores how knowers know what they know.

**Extended Essay:** 3,000-4,000 word essay on a topic of the student's choice that is started in year one and completed in year two.

**CAS:** Two-year experience including a service project to appeal to creativity, activity and service.

## Seniors share advice on course registration

With four years of experience to base their ideas on, seniors can lend a helping hand in the course registration process.

"Take classes you are interested in," Zoe Thompson said. "And that aren't hard. And prioritize assignments to help stay organized and finish them."

Similarly, Zena Soufi said she recommends

productivity and said students should use class time effectively.

"That's the one thing I've always prioritized," Soufi said. "After school there's so many other things you can do, and you really don't want to have basic assignments taking time away from enjoying high school."

On the college front, Kayla Awad said she thinks students should

start looking into their options starting in sophomore year.

"Once you're a senior there's nothing left you can do to choose your path," Awad said. "So try to allow yourself to explore more in order to find where you want to start the next chapter of your life."

Soufi also said she recommends asking upperclassmen or teachers

for help.

"I know it is scary at first to ask a teacher/upperclassmen for help but they'll probably explain it differently than how you were taught, and that might be all the help you need," she said.

Last but not least, Joseph Long only had one thing to say:

"Don't procrastinate or you'll be \*\*\*\*\*," Long said.

## Table Talk: Before and after the IB Diploma

Sophomore Nia Gouvis

Past student Olivia Viskupic

### How do you feel about the IB Program?

I think it's a good way to earn college credit and also to get seen by good colleges. I do know that is demanding and challenging, but I'm willing to do that.

The IB program was a lot of work, but it definitely prepared me for the courses I am taking in college.

### How did you come to the decision to pursue the diploma?

My parents and I have talked about it a lot before, but I've really wanted to do it ever since elementary school. My mom did it when she was in high school.

I took the IB diploma because I wanted an academically rigorous course load. My parents and friends influenced my decision, but ultimately I decided that I wanted to do the diploma.

### What have you heard about it?

I've heard lots of negative stuff about it because a lot of people say that it's really demanding and unnecessary. But I've also heard that it just helps you get noticed by colleges and it prepares you for college because of the workload.

Freshman and sophomore year I got a lot of information about the diploma and varying IB classes from the upperclassmen on the cross country team.

# Seniors reflect on college application experience

● compiled by marie kah and aitana wells

## Power in Numbers

**G**PA, SATs, supplemental essays, letters of recommendation... These are just a few steps that many Marshall students take when applying to colleges in the U.S.

Sara Porjosh applied to 16 colleges due to the low acceptance rate for her major, vocal performance.

"I didn't really enjoy the application process," she said. "It got really stressful knowing that I had to make myself seem like the ideal student, and I tried to perfect every part of my application."

Nya Tefferi also applied to more than 10 colleges.

"Each college I applied to required me to think about location, price, my major and an ability to study abroad," Tefferi said. "With deciding where to apply, a priority for me was the ability to do international study, so I could gain relevant knowledge in my major."

Porjosh said her essays were the strongest aspect of her application.

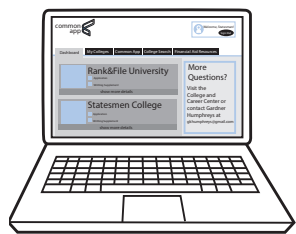
"I actually liked writing my supplementals," Porjosh said. "I felt like the supplementals were the one thing about my application that allowed colleges to see who I was as a person."

On the other hand, Porjosh felt that her SAT scores wouldn't enhance her application.

"I wasn't a fan of the SAT process; I don't think my scores really reflected me as a student," she said. "I think the SAT is an outdated way of measuring the potential success of a student."

Tefferi said a wide range of schools allowed her to see a variety of merit scholarships.

"Having a lot of options for me to choose from is better than not knowing what benefits and opportunities I could have gotten in applying to other schools," she said.



ART BY RACHEL ACKERMAN  
AND AITANA WELLS

*"Create a spreadsheet or organizer of every school with details about each choice and their requirements."*

- senior  
Nawfal Elwannas

*"Procrastination is your worst enemy. Don't wait until it's due to submit it; submit it when it's done."*

- senior  
Kaden Hughes

*"When you start getting college emails, keep track of the schools that try to entice you personally through scholarship offers or a free and/or streamlined application."*

- senior AJ Oliver

## To Europe and Beyond

**D**eron Kajubi has lived most of his life outside the U.S. and therefore has applied to five universities in the U.K. and plans on applying to a few in the Netherlands.

Outside of the U.S., the college application differs. The abroad system weighs IB scores more heavily than quarter grades.

"Your teachers have to predict grades for you," Kajubi said. "For the U.K., based on your predicted grades and the essays you write, the school might give you an offer."

Kajubi said for schools outside the U.S., applications have a different focus.

"It's a lot easier because you don't have all these supplemental essays," he said. "If you have an IB diploma, you don't have to go outside of school to do an SAT or ACT or stuff like that. In terms of essays, I think it's easier for the U.K. because you write one essay for all five."

After each application process, there is an additional process of waiting for the decision.

"I'm hoping that the work eventually pays off at the end of the college decision process," Tefferi said.

## Less is More

**C**harlie McDermott applied to two colleges, one early decision and one rolling decision.

"I applied to UVA and Indiana because my first choice school was UVA, so I applied there [early decision], and I applied to Indiana, because they respond quickly, as a safety," McDermott said.

McDermott said he was accepted into UVA, but if he had been rejected or deferred he would have applied to more schools after hearing back from the university.

To manage time, McDermott said he completed his applications during the summer and wrote the supplemental essays during the school year.

"I didn't really enjoy writing the essays, but I didn't dislike the process either," he said. "It was just something I had to do."

He also said he only took one SAT before submitting a score he was content with.

"I don't think those tests are a good representation of a student," McDermott said. "Standardized testing is not something used outside of schools, and people without a lot of time or money can't be on an equal playing field with people who have a lot of resources."

# Rank&Roundtable: One Act Plays

Every year, five theater students are given the opportunity to direct their own original one act: a short 15-minute production during the One Act Festival. Follow along with this discussion between four of five directors as they talk about their inspiration for their shows.

● compiled by rhea newnaha

## Kaden Hughes, 12 ("Dating Blind"):

I just wanted to write something that I thought was funny. I was watching "Friends" when I wrote the script for "Dating Blind," so there's a lot of "Friends" aspects in it. Being an actor, I just wrote what I would say.

## Han Nguyen, 10 ("Over Coffee"):

I really like to do that. I based my play off of "Gilmore Girls" because I was watching it at the time. It was really fun, but I wrote a comedy because emotions weird me out. I don't really like writing anything that's super dramatic. Whenever there's uncomfortable situations, I just make jokes. So that's kind of what I did.

## Lia Davila, 12 ("Trapped in Denial"):

I think comedy is a lot harder to write because you don't know how your jokes are gonna land.

**Kaden:** I commend [Lia] for writing a drama because I feel like it's hard to go inside that sort of headspace on an upsetting thing. You know what I mean?

## Ben Campagnuolo, 12 ("Murder Murder"):

I do. Last year I wrote a drama, and the challenge was not only putting the play on stage, but working myself to put on the vulnerable piece of theater that I wrote and share it with others. That was my big struggle. I knew I wanted to write another play, so I wrote a comedy just off of something that I liked, which was "Knives Out." It's nothing like that, but I just took the murder mystery comedy, and I kind of just tried to do something fun with it.

**Lia:** I think it's interesting that one thing we all have [is] a piece of inspiration.

**Han:** What was yours?

**Lia:** Well, I read this book. It was called "The Best Day Ever," and it had this writing thing called an unreliable narrator. It's a first person perspective, but the guy that's the main character is actually a bad guy. You don't know it, and you don't find out until the end. But I sort of liked that idea where there was a character that for a really long time you think is good, and then ends up being really bad, so I kind of ran with that.

Watch the full discussion and an exclusive sit-down with director and senior Rayan Afif on our Podcast!



## Sticker seller gives profits to rights organization

by melanie george

Sophomore Ella Greher is using her craft prowess to support Iran in the wake of violence and protests.

American media focused mainly on the issue after Iran's morality police killed women's rights activist Mahsa Amini in September, but conflict in the nation has continued to rise since. Greher



MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Sophomore Ella Greher organizes her stickers.

said it is imperative now more than ever to help.

"Around the time I was thinking of making stickers, my mom sent me a really sobering article," she said.

The article was about a woman who asked a doctor about suicide options because police violence against the protestors was so severe.

"That just kind of spoke to me, and I just felt like I had to do something," Greher said.

She decided to make stickers and give the profits to United for Iran, which is unique for how they use the money they receive.

"They use it for technology because the government is so strict and harsh that they shut down the internet and applications, so [United for Iran] wants to make sure

that people can still communicate," Greher said. "I think that's really important."

She said she raised \$41 in January. Her aim is to not only support those in Iran, but also connect to her own heritage.

"I always identified as white and didn't talk much about my Middle Eastern heritage," she said. "Seeing my friends explore their heritage inspired me to do that [too]."

She sells the stickers to students through word of mouth and also to Middle Eastern people in public places like grocery stores.

These stickers have helped her build relationships with her community and her family.

"When I'm making them, there's a part of me that [hopes] my grandpa would



PHOTO BY ELLA GREHER

"Women, life, freedom" is a slogan for the protests.

be proud of me even though I never met him," she said.

Greher said the results of the protests are yet to be seen, and that analysis of their progress is mixed.

"Right now, I've been hearing two separate things, which is there's hope for overthrowing the government, but also that protests are fizzling out because the government crackdown is so hard and harsh," Greher said. "It's more important now than ever to support them."



ART BY ELEANOR MCADEN/RANK&FILE

# New History Standards, New Concerns

by virgil dongre and aitana wells

In Nov. 2022, after two rejected drafts, VDOE was asked by the Virginia Board of Education to create a third draft of the K-12 Social Studies Standards.

Released in Jan. 2023, these standards aimed to include elements of the prior two drafted standards.

The head of the History Department and IB History of the Americas teacher Roy Wood said he took part in the creation of the original draft standards two years ago. He and other teachers from across the county came together in a virtual meeting in Aug. 2021 to start the process.

"We were given free rein to kind of rewrite the program of studies for World History 2 as we saw fit," he said. "I solicited input from the rest of the people in this department that teach World History 2 or have taught it, and we created what we thought [was] really well rounded, less eurocentric."

Wood said one change was focusing away from the Standards of Learning.

"In years past, the standards have been tied directly to the SOL test," Wood said. "Many teachers—and I can't speak for anybody but myself here—[think] the SOL test is a waste of time. It's a trivia test."

Wood also signed a non-disclosure agreement forbidding further comment

of the work he and other teachers did on the draft.

"I remember that we focused our discussion around the program of studies that has existed before using the 2015 standards", Wood said. "And we kind of used those as a framework from which to build out the ideas we had about world history."

////////////////////  
*"We need to learn the cold, hard truth—not some version our parents think we should know."*

- junior Diana Colon

////////////////////  
This draft of the document was later rewritten. Concern from the public rose when the second draft, 300 pages shorter than the first, was released in November 2022.

A Board member and the former Virginia Secretary of Education, Anne Holton, noted the recurrence of Ronald Reagan throughout the new draft and the absence of Barack Obama.

Other critics pointed to the draft's descriptions of Native Americans as America's "first immigrants" and the inclusion of historically inaccurate information.

"The idea to call Native Americans

the first immigrants is not only inaccurate, it's insulting," junior Diana Colon said. "We treated them poorly in history, and we need to know that to get better because quite frankly, we're still treating them poorly."

Within the civics guidelines from kindergarten to third grade, learning patriotic songs was listed as a standard.

"You can't force your opinions and beliefs on other people," Colon said. "We need to learn the cold hard truth, not some version our parents think we should know."

Draft three of the standards was proposed in Jan. 2023.

The Virginia Department of Education website states this draft aims to "incorporate content from earlier drafts and include new content to tell a more complete story about how the past has shaped the commonwealth, the nation and the world."

VDOE also released an estimated timeline of next steps for the History and Social Science Standards: between February and March of 2023 public hearings and comments on draft standards will take place.

In April, the standards will be adopted, and in August a curriculum framework based on the standards will be presented.

# Parents given more power in the classroom

## New state law requires notification of sexually explicit content

by eleanor mcaden

In April 2022, the Virginia Senate adopted Senate Bill 656, which addresses sexual content in school instructional materials.

At the crux of the legislation, parent involvement in what materials their child sees is increased.

The bill states schools must construct policies to identify sexually explicit content in instructional materials, notify parents about the identified materials and provide alternative options.

In response to community concerns, the FCPS policy adapted in compliance with the bill includes a reassurance that content cannot be designated as “sexually explicit” just due to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters.

English teacher Matthew Horne said he foresees the bill will have two effects.

“One, it’s going to get more students to opt out,” Horne said. “Two, it’s going to make teachers fearful of teaching any books that step on that line, because it’s another step; they have to do another battle; they’re going to have more emails.”

Horne said this burden is placed on those who are

already overworked.

“Morale is at an all time low in this job, and teachers are leaving at an all time high rate,” he said.

LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Literature teacher Apoorva Johri said she wonders what

*“I am concerned about how all of this is going to impact classes like LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Literature, because historically, we know that a lot of queer literature and queer media has been misconceived as being sexually explicit.”*

- LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Literature teacher Apoorva Johri

the bill means for her class.

“I am concerned about how all of this is going to impact classes like LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Literature, what that class might end up looking like and the contents of that class,” Johri said.

Johri placed these concerns within the context of what she saw as longstanding misunderstandings.

“I think just historically, we know that a lot of queer literature and queer media has been misconceived as being sexually explicit.”

Amid concerns for the future of LGBTQ+ characters

in school books, FCPS issued policy 3290.

The new county policy protects against the “the designation of instructional material as sexually explicit based solely upon the sexual orientation of the characters

contained therein.”

English teacher Martha Noone said she was initially concerned about the Senate bill.

However, these worries were quelled for Noone by a staff meeting last week, which clarified the bill’s reference to

“homosexuality” and the implications of policy 3290.

“We found we were all kind of incensed initially because [the words in the policy seemed] very targeted,” Noone said. “However, by the time we were done with the meeting, they assured us it was just to be a list under the umbrella.”

Although some curriculum changes could follow, these changes may ultimately affect students.

Junior Zoe Mazur expressed concern with the bill’s impact on parent involvement in students’ education.

“I think it’s a huge oversight, a breach of the power that parents should have over their kids and over other people’s kids,” Mazur said.

Bill 656 is the newest installment in the ongoing debate over parents’ stake in K-12 educational content. The full impact of the bill is yet to be seen.

For more information on these stories, check out the documents below.



Read additional information on the new history standards



Read additional information on the new sexual content policy



Have an opinion or issue you feel passionate about? Let us know by filling out the google form!

# What makes a good sequel?

## 'Avatar: The Way of Water,' a cinematic disappointment

by ben pyatt

The cinematography and visual effects in "Avatar: The Way of Water" were nothing short of breathtaking. Unfortunately, that's the only positive feedback I have for the film. Quite simply, the movie was too long for the story. With a three-hour movie, the slower parts need to serve a purpose, whether it be contextual or for a better understanding of the characters. "The Way of Water" had slow points that only added context to insignificant elements in the movie.

At the beginning of the movie, we find out that somehow, Rick Quaritch has been reborn after being killed in the original "Avatar" film. This

happened without any explanation in the original movie, leaving me wondering if the writers ran out of ideas and decided to just magically resuscitate Quaritch as if he is some evil Jesus. At the start of the movie, seeing Jake Sully and his family living near the water was somewhat confusing. Then, the film shows us the struggles of Sully's children, who feel like outcasts for being different from the water-based avatars, which I didn't find a need for. It seemed like they took the record-breaking, legendary film, the original "Avatar," and changed it into a coming of age, teen struggle movie.

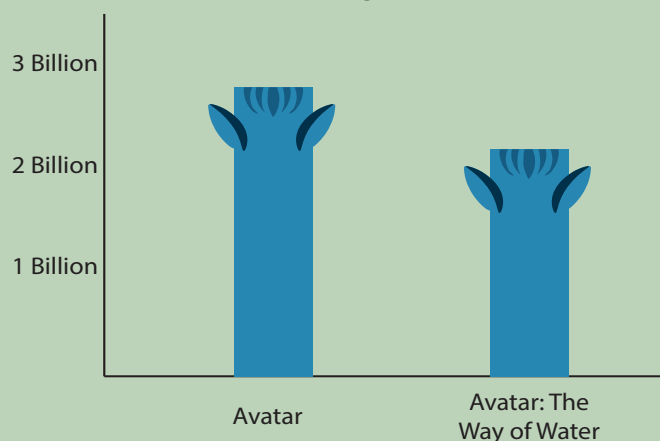
The first "Avatar" is a shorter, more meaningful, action-packed piece of cinema

that will forever be remembered. The only aspect that its sequel does better is the visuals, but it took the creators 13 years to create the sequel, which is more than enough time for technology to improve, and for the animators

to better their already excellent film.

In my opinion, this is an example of a terrible writer's block despite a need to produce a new movie leading to the mediocre sequel "Avatar: The Way of Water."

Box Office Earnings Avatar Movies



## 'Glass Onion,' a comedic twist on the original mystery

by eleanor mcaden

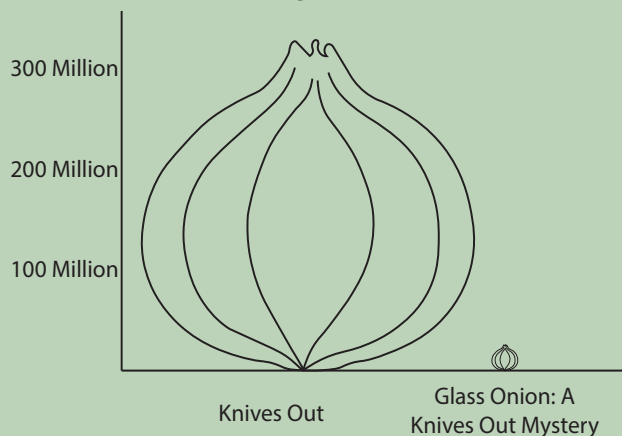
When I heard about "Glass Onion" I thought, "The Beatles song?" After some Googling I found that yes, it is named after the Beatles song! In an interview, writer and director Rian Johnson said he didn't have a title for the movie but knew the central metaphor involved something complicated with the center in plain sight. So, he looked up "glass" on a music app and quickly realized "Glass Onion" would be the perfect title. After that fun discovery, my second thought was about the rest of the title. Its full title is "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery." I wondered, "Is this a sequel? Is it completely different, but with our guy

Benoit Blanc?" The movie promotion looked pretty different from "Knives Out", and as a lover of the first one, I approached the next with squinted eyes and a good deal of curiosity. Upon watching, I immediately knew it was going to be different. Its tone was lighter and more comedic while pushing a lesson in greed and the realities of being someone with that much money—the movie shows it can push you to some pretty lethal places. Although these differences are pronounced, at its core the movie still has the Agatha-Christie type murder mystery with plenty of twists and turns. Overall, I enjoyed it, but I do know some die hard "Knives Out" fans who did not enjoy the obvious

tone change. I completely understand this point of view, but I have to say they may be comparing apples to oranges, or, as my lovely friend and

fellow Rank&Filer Reyna said, knives and onions. The truth is, these movies are different. You can't go into it with expectations. Knives are not onions.

Box Office Earnings Knives Out Movies



"Glass Onion" released on Netflix instead of theaters, so that is a potential reason statistics are lower for the sequel.

# 'Puss in Boots: The Last Wish,' the latest masterpiece

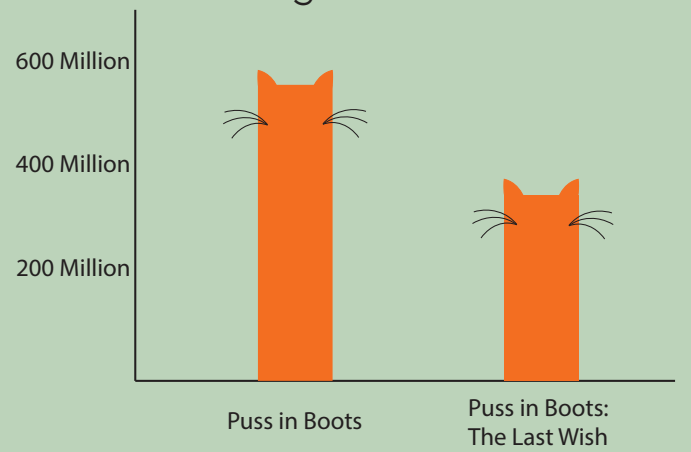
by rishi vanka

When I first watched "Puss In Boots: The Last Wish," I didn't have very high expectations. I thought I'd watch it and leave, completely unaffected. I was so wrong. This movie was incredible, from the characters to the fight scenes to the animation. Unlike the Shrek movies in the shared universe, the Puss in Boots movies are more family-friendly, but I never felt like I was watching a movie made for six-year-olds. Instead, I found myself rooting for the characters.

The movie doesn't feel like other family-friendly movies I've seen before because it allows these important messages to grow naturally and without unnecessarily repeating them. The first movie doesn't do this as well, instead leaning on the message from Humpty Dumpty's nursery rhyme to repeatedly warn against greed. "The Last Wish" instead lets its characters learn to trust each other more and allows the audience to form their own opinions of its themes.

If you've heard anything about this movie, you've definitely heard about the villains. They are all amazing in unique ways. Goldilocks and the Three Bears show personal growth while starting as a very funny family. Jack Horner's design takes up the screen (literally) in every scene he's in. Then there's the main one, who I'm going to call "The Wolf" to avoid spoilers. There are few characters whose impact you truly feel even if they aren't in a scene, and he's one of them. It works so well because of how affected Puss is. He experiences real anxiety in several scenes, and The Wolf's actions directly cause his character to grow. By the end of the movie, Puss is a better person, and it's largely because of his villain. He learns to appreciate the life he has instead of turning on the people he loves, and becomes part of a family. "Puss In Boots: The Last Wish" is a great movie for anyone of any age, creating exciting opportunities for the Shrek franchise.

## Box Office Earnings Puss in Boots Movies



ART BY MAHA JIWANI, ELEANOR LIANG AND RISHI VANKA

## Satire: Cross Grade Escapades



by virgil dongre and eleanor mcaden

Before this poem starts, I shall clarify and say,  
Even I will be stirring on Valentine's Day.  
So stranger, fret little; I don't hate romance—  
I hate it when students give dating a chance.

I see them in the halls, their hands tied in a knot,  
A new couple, a senior with another—what?  
A sophomore, you say? Well, do not be surprised  
that cross-grade dating will continue to thrive,

For people shall find love in all different places,  
From glaciers to towns to those dark scary spaces.  
You'll read it in books, You'll see it in movies,  
You'll find in poems, developing though these

Affairs of the heart—and whilst you may be dreaming,  
The mind is beguiled; your emotions are scheming  
To be closer to those whom you do not hate.  
But why date a student who's new to 10th grade?

Don't object to my slander, I have more to say;  
(Again) to clarify, I like Valentine's Day.  
If you have found love, then I'm happy for you!  
Yet, you've always had people your age to choose.

Now, no romance is doomed by a age gap so small;  
But come to your senses, stop hand-holding in halls.  
When you're off to college and leaving next spring,  
The freshman nearby should not be your first fling.

And Virgil, you argue, with this please do you cease,  
They're couples in love, who do you try to appease?  
None, dear reader, for cross-grade dating is odd.  
Dating is for naught—it is just a facade.

I am not jealous; the green-eyed monster is dead.  
Who'd want to date me after what I've just said?  
But I suppose, in the end, if you have found love;  
The small age gap is stupid when push comes to shove.

So whilst moonlight dies, should Cupid come and visit,  
Let him know (kindly) that I want no part of it.  
Let this holiday teach us all a new thing;  
Cross grade dating is weird, and so I must sing.



## Sweaters for the Editors

by eleanor mcaden

It's 7:49 am on a Monday, and you've just woken up. Showering before school is not an option, but then you remember: it's winter. You can throw on a hoodie or sweater and run out the door.

Here lies the beauty and superiority of winter fashion. It's cozy, cute and, most importantly, convenient.

Cold weather lowers the social expectation to dress up. Winter clothes are thought of as practical, not lazy. Some even consider sweaters as upscale. Think Steve Jobs and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson—both super famous geniuses—yet their infamous black turtle necks are adored, not frowned upon.

This practicality extends to headwear. Beanies are an indispensable resource for all the greasy hair machines and bedheaders out there. Wearing a cap indoors is sometimes thought of as rude, but beanies don't fully share that reputation.

Sweaters are vessels for creative expression and an easy outfit option. Unfortunately, warm weather clothes don't boast the same stats. It's all cute, no convenience.

## Editorial

See Page 15 for more info on SB 656 and FCPS's response

# Section 390: Is sexuality 'sexually explicit'?

This writer doesn't think so. But a new bill may allow some Virginia public schools to designate references to homosexuality in instructional materials as "sexually explicit content."

Senate Bill 656 was signed into Virginia law by Governor Youngkin on April 6, 2022, requiring Virginia public school boards to create policies "for ensuring parental notification of any instructional material that includes sexually explicit content" and providing alternative materials upon request.

Virginia school boards are meant to have adopted these policies by Jan. 1, 2023. However, the final version of the Department of Education's model policies, on which school boards are meant to base their own, have not been released to the general public as of Jan. 2023.

There has, of course, been a draft.

Many of the comments posted to the VDOE website during the public comment period for this draft (called the "Model Policies Concerning Instructional Materials with Sexually Explicit Content") expressed worry that LGBTQ+ content would be targeted as a result. And there may be merit to these concerns.

SB 656 cites Code of Virginia 2.2-2827, which we will call "section 2827," for its definition of "sexually explicit content." This section includes the vital and potentially controversial phrasing: "...a lewd exhibition of nudity, as nudity is defined in § 18.2-390, sexual excitement, sexual conduct or sadomasochistic abuse, as also defined in § 18.2-390..."

So this definition cites another definition. Hooray.

Section 390, in turn, says "sexual conduct" means "actual or explicitly simulated acts of ... homosexuality, sexual intercourse, or physical contact in an act of apparent sexual stimulation." Homosexuality. Hm.

But the phrasing of section 2827 is less than perfect. Does the section 390 definition apply to all of "nudity, sexual excitement, sexual conduct and sadomasochistic abuse" or just the first and last words? That's the big question. And whether or not "homosexuality" is classified as sexually explicit depends on your answer.

According to a retired attorney when presented with the document, "a fair reading of that section is that it incorporates the three definitions for sexual excitement, sexual conduct and sadomasochistic abuse set forth in section 390" – and therefore, lumps "homosexuality" with other "sexually explicit content."

Or, more specifically, "acts of homosexuality," whatever that means. Do we need, you know, another definition inside the definition's definition?

Yes, the law really is this convoluted. But what does it all mean?

Well, theoretically, if an instructional material which was not sexually explicit but did include references to homosexuality was to be used or required for a class (depending on how you define "instructional materials"...but let's not get into that), parents would have to be notified and they would have the right to request alternate material for their student.

The bill does not call for censorship of any kind.

Additionally, the Fairfax County Public Schools-specific policy created in response to SB 656 (available to read on Boarddocs.com under code label 3290) protects the kind of hypothetical non-sexual queer content referenced above. However, this stipulation applies only to FCPS—not Virginia as a whole.

Pride Liberation Project, a youth-led queer advocacy organization in Virginia, thanked FCPS for their decision to clarify queerness as not inherently sexual.

"Nothing about our existence as queer students is inherently sexual, but SB 656 threatens to mislabel our community," the group told FFXnow. "We hope other school districts follow FCPS' lead and protect the limited queer representation in our classrooms."

Some school boards, like those for Arlington Public Schools and Loudoun County Public Schools have joined FCPS in specifically protecting queer content. It is unclear if others will follow.

What kind of workload will the new requirement place on teachers? How will students with alternative material participate in class without being exposed to the content to which their parents object? What does this mean for queer students outside of counties like FCPS? Will they be able to discuss books that represent them in an educational setting? Will they not?

There are still a lot of questions. And there will always be definitions hidden by ambiguous phrases and inartful references to tertiary laws that leave us more confused than before.

# Perspectives: Speaking of the Speaker...

by virgil dongre

Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy was elected to the position on Jan. 7, 2023. To get there, he had to make "lots of concessions" to far-right members of the party which "worked relentlessly to weaken the power he'll have as speaker," according to NPR.

This seems like a positive for cooperation across parties, because now Republicans and Democrats have to compromise to get anything done. According to CNN, "The GOP ... can afford to lose only four votes on any measure." Thus, the parties must cooperate, right?

Well, not quite. McCarthy named Ohio representative Jim Jordan to be chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Jordan refused to comply with a subpoena issued by the Jan. 6 Committee, a spokesman for the representative calling it "another partisan and political stunt"

made by said committee. Hardly the mark of a politician (or a staff) who wishes to cooperate across the aisle with the Committee with seven Democrats and two Republicans.

Another example is shown with McCarthy's blockage of Democratic

House Members Adam Schiff and Eric Swalwell from keeping their seats on the House Intelligence Panel. The Panel is currently investigating "the origins of the COVID pandemic" and "the politicization of the government," according to NBC News.

It's unclear (to me, at least) what house members will take that place instead, but I doubt that McCarthy will elect non-hardline Republicans to the seats.

by mona farah

After 15 rounds and four days of deliberation, Kevin McCarthy finally received the votes he needed. The nation held its breath for what should've taken much less time. Since a Republican majority runs the House, you'd

think receiving a majority vote would be easy. Yet, Democratic competitor Hakim Jeffries was supported by all 212 Democratic

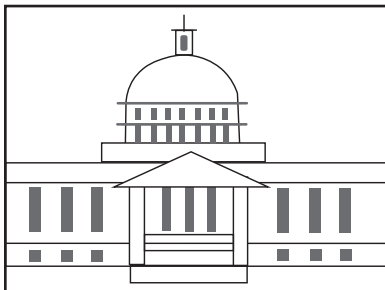
representatives; McCarthy had little party support.

Far-right representatives themselves are to blame. Disruptive behavior like far-right representative Matt Gaetz voting for Trump continues to drive Congress away from the bipartisanship we need.

When the U.S. government was founded, a pillar of

its creation was the two party system. However, the intention of this system was never for it to be as polarized as it is now. Over time, political polarization has only worsened. Issues such as the pandemic, police brutality and abortion received nation-wide attention in 2020. As people took sides on these issues, they aligned their morals closely with their party, thus moving them further out on the political spectrum. Now, it seems any opinion on these issues would categorize someone as a Democrat or Republican.

Political polarization led to Republicans and Democrats in government refusing to cooperate. This also caused conflicts within both parties, which lead to this prolonged election. Although McCarthy won the position, he needs to use his power to promote bipartisanship within the House. Otherwise, Congress, as well as the rest of the nation, will never be able to progress into the future.



ART BY REBECCA PAZ

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