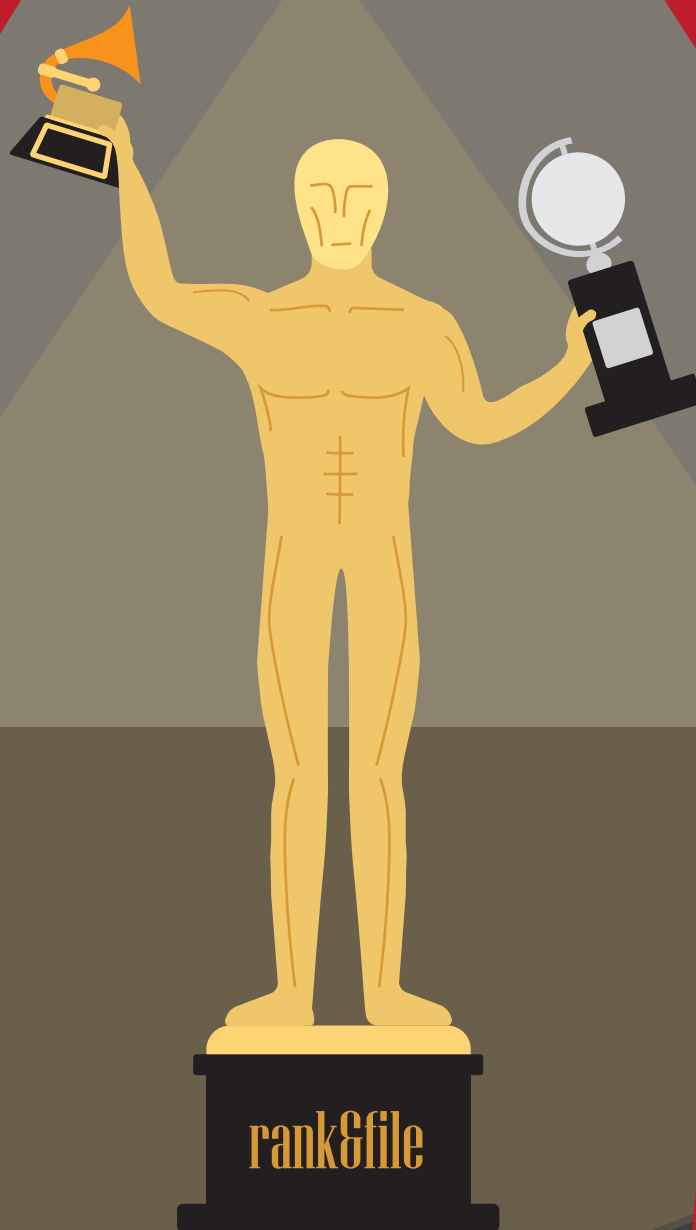


rank & file

March 2023
Volume 61, Issue 6



Award
Season
Pages 14-15



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ELEANOR LIANG/RANK&FILE

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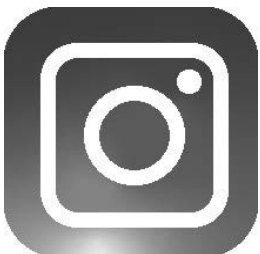
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Rank&File Podcast

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Letter from the Editor

Graded out of 100 or 4? This is a potential switch to the grading policy that FCPS is looking to make. There is already confusion surrounding the conversion of Fairfax County's 100% scale, the GPA scale and IB's grading scale. With so many different ways of grading, it's difficult for a student to understand their progress in a certain class. A new way of grading, such as standards-based grading, may be a necessary switch. All we ask for is consistency. Students are challenged in succeeding in their first period class when their second period has a completely different way of assessing progress. The same applies for two-year courses, specifically within the IB program.

As an IB school, many juniors have transitioned into starting the Diploma Programme in the second semester. The class of 2024 will begin embarking on their IB requirements which include CAS and TOK. The CAS project is junior year focused. Diploma candidates will have the opportunity to jump on a 10-hour long experience centered on creativity, action or service. This issue's center spread details a couple students' projects and the school-wide project. In addition to CAS, diploma candidates will start the Theory of Knowledge course in the second semester. The spread also includes some thoughts on this Diploma-required course.

Aitana Wells
Editor-In-Chief
Rank&File

Broadway actress shows the way to 'Xanadu'

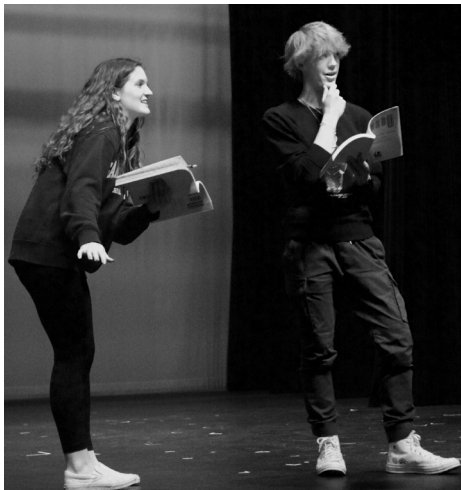
by rhea newnaha

Who better to help the student actors of "Xanadu" prepare for the musical than the original actress who starred in the Broadway production 16 years ago?

Theater director Bernie DeLeo set up a workshop with Broadway starlet Kerry Butler.

The two leads in the musical, senior Dale DeVinney and junior Sophia Welch, worked with Butler.

"Mr. DeLeo told me two weeks ago [about Butler's visit], and I couldn't tell everyone for a week," Welch said. "I ran



RHEA NEWNAHA/RANK&FILE

home to my mom and told her about everything. I was so excited."

Welch said she felt comfortable on stage performing for Butler, despite thinking she would be nervous. DeVinney agreed.

"Once it was all explained to me, [it was] very cool," DeVinney said. "[I was] super excited, and it lived up to expectations."

Seniors Sara Porjosh and Lia Davila were added onto the workshop to work with Butler towards its end.

"It wasn't as high stakes for me because I just got added on to the workshop," Porjosh said. "It was really fun to get feedback from somebody who had so much experience with the show."

DeLeo said he found value in the actors hearing Butler's process and receiving feedback.

"[The workshop provides] the two lead roles with how to approach this role from someone who created it," DeLeo said.

In 2020, the theater department canceled its production of "Xanadu" and chose to only make a video of the final dance number.

"We had a Zoom meeting on opening night of the show where we presented [the video] to everyone on Zoom, and

[Butler] dropped in to wish everybody good luck," DeLeo said.

Butler said watching the students rehearse was nostalgic of when she was on the show.

"The students did an excellent job," Butler wrote in an email shared with DeLeo. "They really made me laugh."



RHEA NEWNAHA/RANK&FILE

Kerry Butler played Clio/Kara in Broadway's production of "Xanadu" in 2007.

Butler also wrote that theater is a place where everyone can come together to enjoy a show and feel connected.

"I hope everyone will come see 'Xanadu,'" Butler wrote "I promise it will make you laugh and you will leave feeling a little happier."

Statesmen Theatre will present their production of "Xanadu" from May 4 through 6.

Litz expresses concerns over student behavior

by julius schmidt

Principal Jeffery Litz released an email on Feb. 8 focusing on "a recent uptick" of student misconduct, including students leaving the campus during lunch periods.

The email outlined consequences for these actions.

One student who also noticed this increase was junior Medhi Abbassi

"People are skipping way too much," Abbassi said. "It's becoming a habit."

In the weeks since Litz's email, several students interviewed by Rank&File said they felt like there has been more security enforcement.

"I have seen more security," sophomore Walid Bouaichaoui said. "Recently,

more people have been getting caught."

Despite this speculation, assistant principal Donnie Olajuwon said there has not been an increase in security personnel.

"Our security staff is the same size it was last year," Olajuwon said. "We have, however, put into place some new procedures which are meant to keep everyone safe."

According to Litz's email, students who are caught breaking the rules can expect punishments varying by grade.

"[Seniors] risk being removed from the senior trip and other end of year senior activities to include participation in the prom," Litz wrote.

Olajuwon mentioned upperclassmen were making up the majority of

students skipping, which Litz's email addressed.

"Should [juniors] go down this path, I will also remove privileges for [juniors] to include attending prom," the email said.

Litz's email also addressed the importance of underclassmen following a morally correct path to succeed in life.

"You need to be in class doing what your teachers and staff ask of you so that you can graduate on time, leave Marshall, and follow your dreams," the email said. "Make good choices."

While the email focused on punishments for upperclassmen, Litz said he is trying to set good examples for all grades.

"I simply want the very best for all of you," Litz wrote.

Chromebook pilot brings improvements

by melanie george

With our current school-issued laptops retiring at the end of this year, FCPS is looking into better options.

The FCPS central IT office chose Marshall as one of the schools piloting new Chromebooks this year. This means select students are testing out machines that may be used next school year.

"It's just a trial period to see whether or not those devices will work here," technology support specialist Robert Wagner said.

Wagner used a selection process involving random people from a report of those who had logged in to their FCPS laptops repeatedly for a number of days.

Wagner said this was to make sure the students piloting are actually using FCPS laptops.

"I think they're considering the Chromebook because once you log into the Chromebook, it logs you right into Chrome," he said, "and you know, since you're already using Google Drive and Gmail, it just makes it that much easier for the student."

For this version of the Chromebook, the students do not have access to Microsoft Office or the option to print to school printers.

"If [the FCPS IT central office] decides to move forward with that device, then they would have to explore a way for students to have access to at least Office through a virtual environment perhaps," he said.

The central office gives out weekly Google forms for the pilot students to check in and give feedback.

"You basically just say what software you had to use or what websites and stuff you had to use, and how your experience was with it," sophomore Toni Oluwehinmi said. "I'm assuming after we get them back, they'll have something more detailed that you have to fill out."

Oluwehinmi said other than it running smoother, the machine's battery life was a plus.

"I don't need to bring my charger to school anymore," she said. "The battery life is much better for the Chromebook. I think my computer has been on like 70 or 80 [percent] for like three days."

Sophomore Ellie Baldwin agreed that the Chromebooks are a big improvement.

"I'm happy to get one because the Dell laptops are getting really old," Baldwin said. "So it's kind of annoying to use one because it was breaking all the time."

Sophomore Kadyn Kalb agreed.

"I love the Chromebooks," she said. "They are easier to use than the Dell laptops, [and] they're slimmer and faster."

Junior Zoe Jones said there were some noticeable differences.

"The display is different than the Dell computer because a lot of the keys are different," she said. "I'd say definitely I don't like the fact that we can't do right click on anything, which is really weird."

Despite these, Jones agreed it was an improvement.

"Overall I think it's a good computer, [but it] just requires a bit of learning to get used to it," she said.

Whether FCPS decides to use Chromebooks next year is yet to be seen, but they are definitely in the running.



MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Sophomore Toni Oluwehinmi doing work at the library.

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Sports Review

Winter Post-Season Games

- 2/15 Boys Basketball beats McLean in District Semifinal 53-39
- 2/15 Girls Basketball falls to McLean in District Semifinal 43-38
- 2/17 Boys Basketball wins Liberty District Championship W&L 55-49
- 2/18 Boys Wrestling places 5th at 6A State Tournament
- 2/19 Girls Swim & Dive places 9th at 6A State Tournament
- 2/21 Boys Basketball beats Oakton in Regional Quarterfinal 73-55
- 2/23 Boys Basketball falls to Madison in Regional Semifinal 49-51

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Upcoming Spring Scrimmages and Games

- 3/1 Baseball Scrimmage at Chantilly
- 3/2 Boys Lacrosse Scrimmage vs. Hayfield
- 3/2 Girls Tennis Scrimmage vs. South Lakes
- 3/2 Girls Lacrosse Scrimmage at Hayfield
- 3/2 Boys Tennis Scrimmage at South Lakes
- 3/3 Girls Soccer Scrimmage vs. Falls Church
- 3/3 Boys Soccer Scrimmage at Falls Church
- 3/9 Boys Soccer Scrimmage vs. Meridian
- 3/9 Boys Tennis Scrimmage vs. West Springfield
- 3/9 Girls Soccer Scrimmage at Meridian
- 3/9 Softball Scrimmage at Chantilly
- 3/9 Girls Tennis Scrimmage at West Springfield
- 3/10 Girls Lacrosse Scrimmage vs. Meridian
- 3/10 Boys Lacrosse Scrimmage at Meridian
- 3/10 Softball Scrimmage at Falls Church
- 3/10 Baseball Scrimmage at Falls Church
- 3/13 Boys Soccer Game vs. Chantilly
- 3/13 Girls Tennis Match vs. Langley
- 3/13 Baseball Game at Edison
- 3/13 Girls Soccer Game at Chantilly
- 3/13 Softball Game at Edison
- 3/13 Boys Tennis Match at Langley
- 3/14 Boys Lacrosse Game vs. West Potomac
- 3/14 Girls Lacrosse Game at West Potomac
- 3/15 Track and Field Meet at W&L
- 3/21 Track and Field Meet at Yorktown

● page compiled by ben pyatt and aitana wells

VHSL 6A State Tournaments

Wrestling

- Owen Lebkisher, 1st (157lbs)
- Ben Levy, 2nd (120lbs)
- Soren Pirhoun, 3rd (285lbs)
- Sophie Mazhari, 2nd (146lbs)
- Oriana Piazza, 3rd (156lbs)

Swim

- Girls 50-yard Freestyle:
Julia Simpson, 1st
Sophia Cloutier, 3rd
- Girls 200-yard Medley
Relay: Team, 9th
- Girls 200-yard Freestyle
Relay: Team, 8th
- Girls 100-yard Breaststroke:
Emma Watts, 9th

New Football Coach

The football program has rehired head coach George Masten. He was previously an assistant coach from 2009 to 2013, then assumed the role of head coach from 2014 to 2017.

Since then, Masten has coached at Rockridge High School. While head coach at Marshall, he averaged a win percentage of 68%, winning the District Championship in 2017.

Athletes of the Month: January

Ryan Pourshojae, 12,
Boys Basketball



REBECCA PAZ/RANK&FILE

"Marshall basketball has introduced me to an inseparable brotherhood. Being awarded athlete of the month is a great feeling because it is a team award rather than a personal accolade. All of us work hard and push each other every single day to make everyone better, so this award is a team recognition for Marshall Basketball."

Girls 400-yard Freestyle Relay Team, Swim & Dive



PHOTO BY LEO CLOUTIER

These four outstanding athletes—senior Julia Simpson, junior Sophia Cloutier, sophomore Megan Ice and freshman Emma Watts—worked hard all season and competed in the state tournament for the 400-yard relay. The girls swim team finished fourth in districts and Simpson, Cloutier, Ice and Watts made it through regionals and punched their ticket to the state tournament.

These athletes were selected by the GCM Boosters for their outstanding performances in the month of January.

Overcoming Hurdles: District Champions

by **rachel ackerman and rebecca paz**

With athletes breaking both school and personal records, the boys winter track season was a success.

The broken records include the 4x200m team with Alexander Oliver, Christos Proctor, Gavin Sandall and Krish Bhalla. Other records were set by Sean Sanders in the 1000m and Proctor in the 55m.

Track coach Clifford Wong expressed his satisfaction with the championship-winning team's season.

"I was pleased with the results this season," he said. "The boy's team won the district team title, we won a few regional individual titles and collected eight All State

Honors."

The honors include seniors Seth Oliver, who placed in the 3200m; Sanders, who placed fourth in the 1600m; and Alexander Oliver, who placed sixth in the 500m.

"Seth Oliver set the second fastest time in school history for 3200m," Wong said. "Sanders was chasing his own school record in the 1600m."

"We had great leadership and lots of new athletes up and coming," Wong said. "This season we have our largest team with 204 athletes starting the season."

Junior Ethan Moore, a winter track athlete, expressed his excitement of his team's success. He acknowledged the dedication and commitment from him and his teammates.

"It was so much fun to win districts as a team," Moore said. "I just put in work and trained as hard as I could."

Sophomore Hong-An Pho participated in both hurdles and sprints. He attributed the team's success to the team mentality.

"Coach Wong also contributed a lot, giving a lot of pep talks," Pho said.

The senior class played a key role in the team's success.

"We had a great group of seniors who led the team and worked hard in practices and at meets to make sure the team was successful," Wong said.

Pho agreed with his coach about the role of senior leadership. He expressed the positive effect not only seniors have had on other athletes.

"There were a lot of different people that were stepping up, telling people to focus or to push harder and helping out," Pho said.

Although he recognized the impact the seniors have had on the team, he credited the team's success to a variety of people.

"We just welcome everyone and keep the kids accountable to themselves and the team," Wong said. "They took up the challenge to become better than the previous team and themselves."

With high morale from their big win, the boys team looked forward to success in future seasons.

"If we put hard work and effort, then we can achieve great things," Pho said.

Nothin' but Net: JV girls basketball goes undefeated

by **maddie bishop and sophie hauber**

The JV girls basketball team went 16-0 this season.

The team credits their success to a combination of team chemistry, skill and their coaches.

"We had really good team chemistry," sophomore and captain Chloe Cole said. "We all got along really well, and we're just really good."

Freshman Lauren Olson believes that their companionship influenced how they played.

"We work together well, and there's a lot of team bonding," Olson said.

Head coach Douglas Sawitzky said the mindsets of the players were a large contributor to a successful team.

"The girls' work ethic—you know, they came, worked hard, did what was asked of them every practice and pushed themselves," said Sawitzky, who also serves as a school counselor.

Cole and her teammates shed light on the efforts made by the coaches

throughout the season.

"Coach Sawitzky was so amazing, and Coach Burton was so inspirational," Cole said. "They were just really good coaches, and they knew what they were doing."



ART BY JULIUS SCHMIDT

Sophomore Fiona Rodham, the team's captain, commented on the coaching changes from last year, which gave the athletes an advantage.

"The plays that [Coach Sawitzky] came up with and the amount of work he put

into scouting the other team—he knew who was gonna be the shooter, which was basic stuff for a basketball team," Rodham said. "We didn't really have that at the JV level last year."

Despite their strong season, the team was worried they might break their streak for a few games.

"There was some concern with the Yorktown game and the W&L game," freshman Natalie Grim said.

Rodham said she was surprised by the results of this year's team.

"Marshall wasn't supposed to be good," Rodham said. "So it was kind of a big shock when we were finally done."

Sawitzky compared the success of this season to last year's freshman team.

"I think we had three girls who were on the 0-16 freshman team last year and then went to a 16-0 team," Sawitzky said. "I think that's a cool fact for those three."

The coaches and players overall said they enjoyed their undefeated season.

"We loved every minute of it," Grim said.

New girls tennis coach takes to the courts



ELEANOR LIANG/RANK&FILE

Freshman Gloria Lee serves the ball at tennis tryouts.

by mona farah and eleanor liang

For months, an unfilled coaching position was the only thing keeping players from forming the girls varsity tennis team.

Chandra Soucek accepted

girls varsity tennis head coach position after former coach Arlene Fitz-Patrick's resignation.

Team members who met her at tryouts hope her extensive coaching experience will help them improve this season.

"I think she's very positive and uplifting," sophomore team member Rishika Jain said. "She's a little bit strict but nice."

Sophomore team member Simran Allana agreed.

"I really like her," Allana said. "From what I've seen, she gives good feedback."

Soucek said she coached tennis off and on for around 20 years. She has been playing tennis since an early age.

"I played my first tournament when I was nine, and I started playing when I was six," Soucek said.

She played Division 1 collegiate tennis at San Jose State and the University of Colorado Boulder.

Soucek hopes to help the team understand more not only about tennis, but the principles of playing a sport.

"[I've had] a lot of failure and a lot of success," she said. "[I want them to be] good sports about winning and good sports about losing."

Soucek said she wants players to prioritize being in the moment when playing.

"I want them all in on the court," she said. "It's hard to shut things out, but you've got to just try to zero in and concentrate."

The team consists of 14 players: two juniors, eight sophomores and four freshmen, but no seniors.

"I didn't really think

about [having no seniors]," Soucek said. "I think it just means that we can have tons of growth."

She said she hopes the underclassmen on the team continue to improve.

"By the time our freshmen are seniors [or] our sophomores are seniors, we're going to have a sense of depth on our team that we don't have right now," Soucek said.

She said she is optimistic about this season.

"I'm looking forward to getting to know the girls better," Soucek said. "Why they like the game, what brings them out every day."

She anticipates a good season, despite wins or losses.

"The most important thing is to have fun," she said. "I want all [the] girls to have fun."

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** Begins in May immediately after JV season is concluded

GSA meets with Litz to discuss issues

by **virgil dongre** and **rebecca paz**

From gender neutral bathrooms to respecting pronouns and everything in between, the GSA is fighting for equal rights.

The Gender Sexuality Alliance held two meetings over the last two months with Principal Litz to resolve certain issues, including changing the locks of gender-neutral bathrooms for students.

There are two such facilities in C hall and one in the student services office.

“The lock on the bathroom often auto locks,” GSA president and junior Zoe Mazur said. “So if someone closes it if there’s no one in there, it will lock people out.”

Mazur said the GSA’s last meeting with Litz on Feb. 27

focused heavily on access to the bathrooms.

“I am aware that the county has been investigating the locks on the single gender neutral bathrooms to come up with a lock that is better suited for [their] function,” Litz said at the meeting. “I [have] safety concerns about someone going in that bathroom, locking the door and potentially harming themselves.”

Litz also updated the GSA on potential developments to resolve the issue.

“I know that the county is working on the locks to fix that particular issue,” he said. “Hopefully by next time we meet next month, I’ll be able to give you something a little bit more concrete.”

Mazur said they can appreciate how some faculty

work to be accommodating for LGBTQ+ students.

“I also see how much pushback they receive from the county or the school board,” Mazur said. “It definitely gives me confidence that a lot of the faculty is on our side. They’re hearing us, and they’re doing their best, but it’s just complicated.”

Mazur also said that most teachers are respectful of their pronouns.

“For the most part, if I outright say them, they’ll respect it,” Mazur said. “I do know that other people have shared with me that they have had bad experiences with faculty that are not understanding.”

Litz’s collaborations with the GSA have been somewhat helpful, Mazur said, but Mazur is still frustrated

— especially when it comes to the gender neutral bathrooms.

“I feel like students shouldn’t have to fight this hard just to have this be something that’s possible,” Mazur said.

They also said there were students who used the bathrooms to hang out or skip class, which they said was harmful to queer students.

“Taking advantage of these important resources feels like they don’t recognize their privilege,” Mazur said. “They’re taking advantage of it while simultaneously making things harder for people who genuinely need access to them.”

The next meeting between the GSA and Litz will happen next month during Learn.



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Creating Change Through CAS

Four juniors discuss their IB “Creativity, Activity and Service” projects, which span from junior to senior year



ESTHER LEE/RANK&FILE

Poetry in Partnership

Manahil Jawaid’s CAS project allows her to dive deeper into her passion for writing.

Jawaid merged her love for writing and poetry to create a writing workshop that will run for two weeks. During the workshop Jawaid and other members will write and produce poetry together.

“So essentially I [will] grab any of the poetry writers, anyone that I know,” Jawaid said. “We all just bring our poetry and edit one another’s.”

At the end of the two weeks, Jawaid said she intends to compile all the works of poetry produced into a collection.

She said she drew inspiration from her longtime love of writing dating back to sixth grade and wanting a way to incorporate her hobby into her school work.

“I felt like it was a way for me to reconnect and a bunch of my friends are like kind of writers,” Jawaid said. “So I feel like it’s my personal payoff that I’m getting for the cost [of the] project.”



RHEA NEWNAHA/RANK&FILE

Cow-tastic Charity

For Cordy Norris, a drawing of a cow is the perfect CAS project foundation.

Norris said she drew an image of a cow with five legs a few years ago, and since then it’s become well-known among her friends.

“My friends for ages have been saying, ‘what if you made shirts?’” Norris said. “So I was like, ‘you know what? Let’s do it.’”

Norris said encouragement from friends and a desire to create a positive impact inspired her to create a t-shirt organization called ‘Five Legged Cow’ alongside a classmate and fellow junior. They plan to donate their profits to Wolf Trap Animal Rescue.

“I just wanted to do something that was going to be fun and also benefit other people,” Norris said.

If the opportunity to expand and diversify merchandise becomes possible, Norris said she hopes to continue the business post-high school.

“We’ve had a lot of interest about maybe creating other things like hoodies and bags,” Norris said. “So if it comes to that, then I’d love to continue doing it.”

ESTHER LEE/RANK&FILE



Magic Through Music

Skander Amri and Lucas Gimm united to explore their shared passion for music production.

The pair created the Music Production Club this year with the goal of encouraging collaboration among all musically-inclined students.

“Everyone can bounce off each other’s ideas and create something cool and awesome,” Gimm said.

Amri and Gimm said they hope to reach many people across and beyond the Marshall community to share their passion with others.

“We want to spread the art of making music and the knowledge of it to more people across margins,” Amri said.

Creating and sharing mini-lectures on music production have also been part of the pair’s process.

“After we’re done presenting them, we’re going to watch [the students] do their own example of it,” Amri said. “And through the course of that they’re going to make their own like kind of tracks and then we’re going to compile them to make like an album at the end. That’s our goal.”

“School-wide CAS Project”: Students refurb outdoor classroom

by emma mobley and julius schmidt

Class of 2019 graduate Kathryn Dela Cruz’ CAS project will continue to help Marshall.

According to her CAS reflections, Cruz’s project was to build at least one table in a courtyard to make it more welcoming and available to the students. Fairfax County recently granted \$1,000 for the project.

IB Theory of Knowledge and English Literature HL 2 teacher Hendrick Booz has overseen the continuation of the project.

“Mr. Litz has already had the county come out and inspect for power,” Booz said. “We’re looking at awnings and things like that, but it looks like COVID-19 put a wrinkle on a bunch of those little things.”

The outdoor classroom would fit

within the courtyard across from the library, also known as the native species garden. Booz said his intention is to get students in his classes to help clean out the courtyards as they prepare the area to be ready for learning.

“They would gradually work as a whole school,” Booz said. “We move it from just the diploma candidates to the whole school.”



ART BY JULIUS SCHMIDT

TOK Thoughts

Theory of Knowledge is the second semester of junior year and first semester of senior year. Here’s a pre- and post-TOK review from junior Krish Bhalla and senior Kian Nolan.

Describe your TOK experience

Krish: It’s so rule-oriented: you need to follow the rules exactly to get a good grade.

Kian: I feel enlightened and accomplished.

Will TOK help outside the classroom?

Krish: I think TOK teaches you how to be extroverted, and it helps your communication skills a lot.

Kian: Reading about stuff with different perspectives, and that sort of thing is helpful after graduation.

Favorite/least favorite aspects?

Krish: I like the seminars.

Kian: The TOK essay was whack. I think getting started on it is difficult.

New FCPS Grading Policy Changes

Here's what you need to know:

● compiled by virgil dongre and miles feliciano

Students have often criticized class grading policy, but it seems some administrators are listening.

In 2022, the local High School Principals Association, led by Principal Jeffrey Litz, oversaw the most recent changes to Fairfax County's grade policy to focus more on content mastery than punishing student behavior, with student focus groups for feedback.

"The whole process has happened in spurts and stutters, I would say, over the past at least seven or eight years in various schools," Litz said.

The county has made changes to its grading systems in the past. In fact, a county-wide meeting in 2015 led to the implementation of FCPS's current 50 to 100 point grading scale.

Yet, Litz and 29 other principals from all FCPS high schools were still troubled by the inconsistency with grading policy across schools.

"[We] all had a conversation about the fact that we very much believe that a student in one school should have similar grading policies to every other high school," Litz said. "I shouldn't take English 9 at Marshall and be graded completely differently from someone taking English nine at Madison."

Litz also said the 100-point scale has unfair limitations.

"If we use the 100-point scale, there are 63 ways to get an F and 10 ways to get an A," Litz said. "In a utopian world we wouldn't even use a 100-point scale in this building."

Instructional Technology

Coach Rachel Baxter helped organize focus groups with students in an effort for the central office to collect student feedback on grading.

"This was organized by people in central office that are working to streamline grading policies in FCPS, which is one of the goals of our new superintendent," Baxter said. "I was just the point person that got the students and helped central office facilitate."

Though she did not create the focus groups, she made sure they were inclusive.

"I tried to get a really good balance of students from all grades," Baxter said. "Students taking IB and honors courses, students with IEPs and 504 plans, students who are English learners."

Baxter also said certain

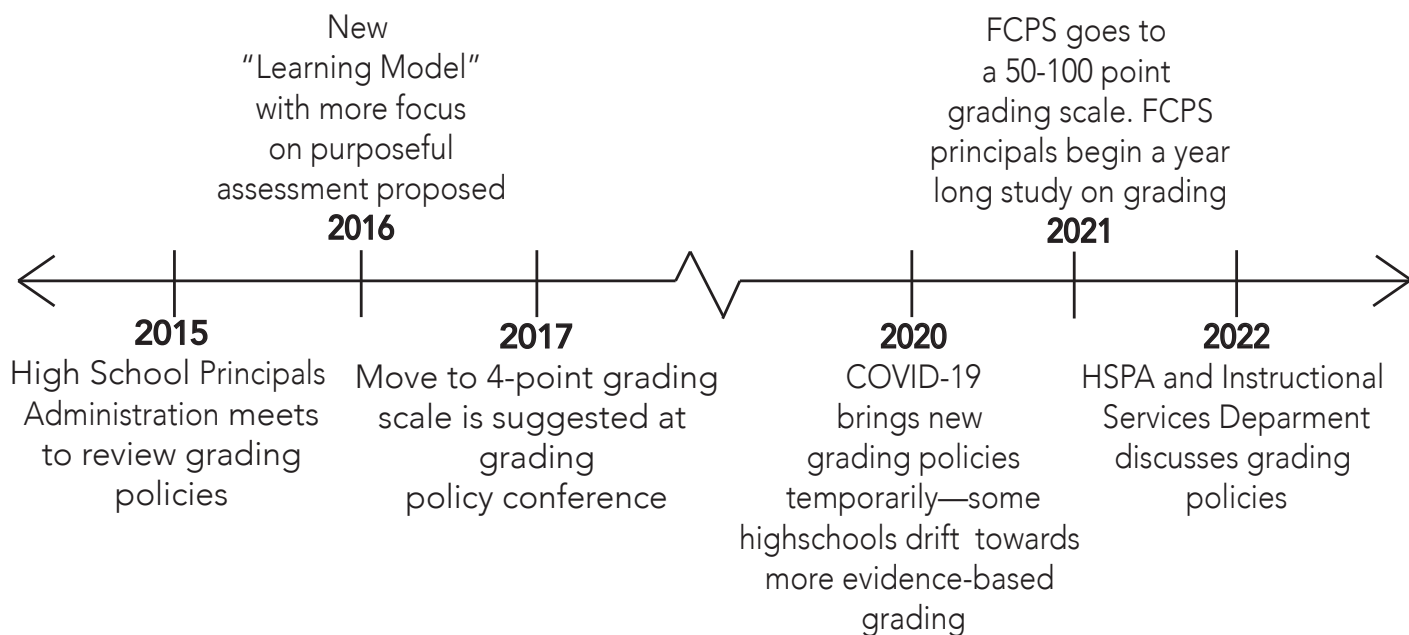
policies like remediating an exam up to an 80% and grade penalties for late work muddle the point of grades.

"If grades are only meant to communicate a student's level of mastery as it relates to that content area, then when we start throwing in things like the 80% rule that sort of muddies what a grade actually means," she said. "And then I would argue it becomes meaningless, because we're trying to throw all of these different things into a grade."

A consistent thread throughout the focus groups was the variety of assignments teachers provided for students, Baxter said.

"Students like having different ways and multiple opportunities to show mastery," she said. "Not every student

Timeline of Grading Policy Changes



is going to prefer or enjoy projects or tests or quizzes or papers. But they like having some flexibility to be able to show their teachers that they understand a concept in a way that makes sense for them, and if they don't get it the first time they really like the opportunity to try again."

One potential change from the 100-point scale is to a 4-point scale, based on a rubric to better grade mastery.

"In an ideal world, a 4-point grading scale would be implemented in a way where your teacher would just put in a whole number

for your assignment grade," Baxter said.

Baxter also said students discussed the divergence of having to either learn the material or get good grades.

"There was a lot of discussion in one of the groups about the disconnect that exists between wanting to learn and wanting to get good grades," she said.

This difference is part of the reason that a 4-point scale is more appealing for schools.

"I would want to utilize a standards based rolling gradebook using a 4-point

scale," Litz said. "I think [that] communicates to kids most clearly what material they have mastered and what material they still need to work on."

Litz also said he had held two focus groups with students to hear their opinions.

"So I think anything that we do, we have to keep in mind what the student experience is like," Litz said. "That doesn't mean that kids are always going to like the way we do things or how we choose to do things."

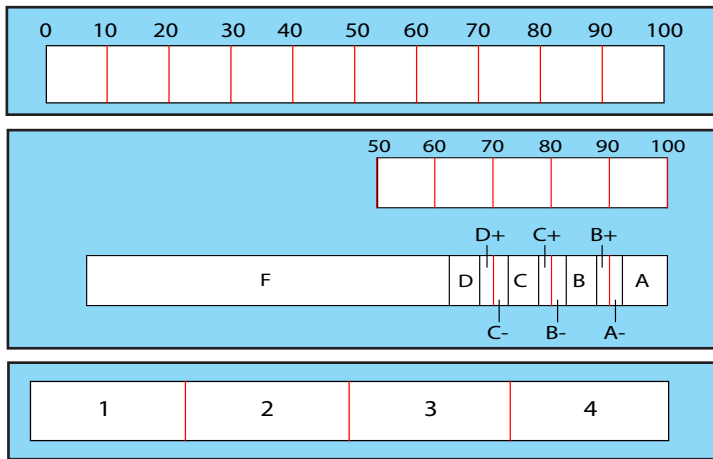
In addition to easing pressure on students, Litz

said the county wants to retain teacher autonomy in making some decisions about grades.

"Those grades mean something," Litz said. "They should mean what that student knows and is able to do, but that doesn't mean that we can't measure it in an equitable manner"

After the focus groups conclude and research is completed, the Principals Association will present their findings to the county board to demonstrate the benefits of the new grading policies.

Grading Systems Scale:

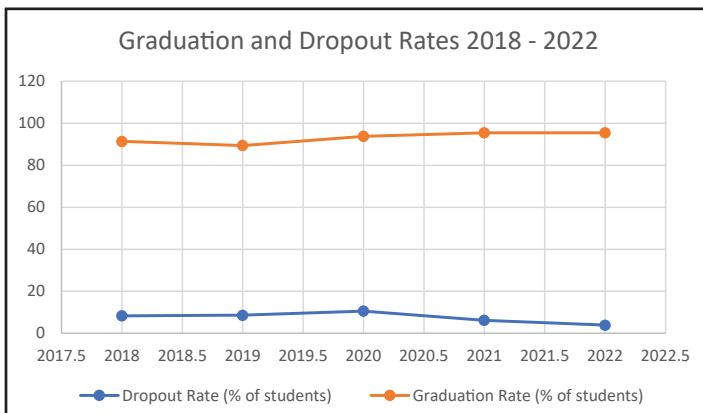


Previous scale (2021)
0-100 points

Current grading system
50-100 points
A-F grade distribution

A proposed grading system
True 4-point scale (no decimals)

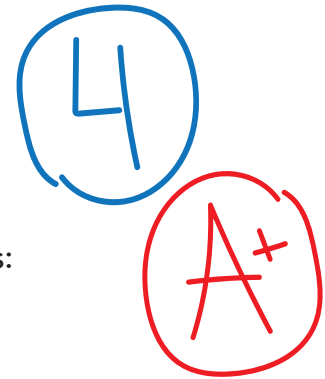
Graph of Recent Dropout/Graduation Rates:



Key Points:

Dropout Rates:
2018: 8.3%
2022: 3.9%

Graduation Rates:
2018: 91.4%
2022: 95.5%



ART BY REBECCA PAZ

SOURCE: SLIDES FROM NOV. 15 2022 FCPS SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION

Awards Season Speculations & Considerations

From student and staff opinions to important updates, take a look into what's what for this season of the most prestigious creative awards



What do we think? Our sneaking suspicions...

Rank&File staff voted on which nominees we believe are most likely to win some of the categories in this year's Academy Awards.

Michelle Yeoh

Actress in a Leading Role

Other nominees: Cate Blanchett, Ana de Armas, Andrea Riseborough, Michelle Williams

Austin Butler

Actor in a Leading Role

Other nominees: Colin Farrell, Brendan Fraser, Paul Mescal, Bill Nighy

Puss in Boots: The Last Wish

Animated Feature Film

Other nominees: Pinocchio, Marcel the Shell with Shoes On, The Sea Beast, Turning Red

Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert

Directing

Other nominees: Martin McDonagh, Steven Spielberg, Todd Field, Ruben Ostlund

Everything Everywhere All at Once

Animated Feature Film

Other nominees: All Quiet..., Avatar..., The Banshees..., Elvis, The Fablemans, Tár, Top Gun: Maverick, Triangle of Sadness, Women Talking

IB AnthrOSCARS!

Social studies teacher and self-proclaimed movie-lover Olivia Tate has her own predictions for the illustrious Academy Awards—and she's encouraging her students to share theirs.

Government and IB Anthropology students in Tate's classes are likely familiar with her "What's Making Me Happy This Week" slideshows. She said there's often at least one movie on the list. With Oscars results approaching on March 12, she decided this year to print prediction sheets for herself and anyone else interested in

evaluating the best films of the season.

Tate also said she found the sheet online.

"I'm not in the business of doing hard work sometimes," she said. "And you can quote me on that one."

However, Tate has put in the work elsewhere. This year, she said she has seen all of the Best Picture nominees along with several movies in the running for other awards.

"I love watching movies," she said. "I have my own little friend film club, and that's been really helpful in

watching those movies."

Tate said she loves "Everything Everywhere All at Once," but her favorite film this year is "Women Talking."

"I just think about it all the time," she said.

In addition to the main event, Tate said she's anticipating the best Actress in a Leading Role and Animated Short Film awards.

For anyone interested in joining the (friendly) competition of who can guess the most Academy Award recipients correctly, prediction sheets lie waiting in A113.

Non-binary Broadway star abstains from Tony's consideration

As awards season approaches, Broadway stars, film directors and music producers alike await the results. However, for people like Broadway performer Justin David Sullivan, it's not so simple.

"As a non-binary performer playing a non-binary principal role on Broadway, I have been asked by many what I plan on doing about this year's award season nomination categories," Sullivan, who plays Juliet's friend May in "& Juliet", posted on Instagram Feb. 2. "I felt I had no choice but to abstain from being considered."

Sullivan, who uses he/him, she/her and they/them pronouns,

referenced the Tony Awards' restrictive "Lead Actress/Lead Actor" categories and lack of awards which are "more inclusive of gender expansive or trans non-binary performers" like himself.

"& Juliet" was nominated for the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Broadway Production and has received a burst of praise from reviewers in the 2023 season. The show's West End production also earned six 2020 WhatsOnStage Awards.

But Sullivan, arguably the heart of a show which lives off the generous and hesitant-romantic energy of Juliet's best friend, will not receive such

accolades this time around.

"I was told I had no other option but to choose between one of the two gendered categories in which I would be eligible," Sullivan wrote. "I could not in good faith move forward with denying any part of my identity to conform to a system and structure that does not hold space for people like me."

Rank&File's December issue featured a review on the positive queer representation in Sullivan's bright jukebox musical. Ironically, the awards season will not include the queer joy of "& Juliet."

Nominations for the 2022-2023 Tony Awards will be announced May 2.

Video: Can students guess the Grammy's song of the year?



• written & compiled by reyna berry

Watch on our website, gcmnews.net



The Art of Barefooting

by rhea newnaha

The music department's Disney World field trip sparked an idea in senior Alex Curcio's head: going barefoot.

Curcio said that similar to his five senses, being barefoot helps him connect with reality and use his body the way it was naturally designed, all to become more aware of the world around him.

"I took my shoes off while we were waiting in line to go home on buses," Curcio said, referencing the trip. "I found that even though it was hard concrete and it was kind of cold outside, I enjoyed it, and something just told me that I felt more alive and more human."

Curcio said he found barefoot walking and running can help reduce long-term injuries because the body is being used the way it was intended.

Curcio has been wearing zero-drop sandals, shoes with minimal cushioning and zero arch support when he's not barefoot.

"I started talking to my chiropractor about barefooting and the benefits to the skeletal system, and then I started to consider the more philosophical or spiritual aspects of it," Curcio said.

In addition to barefooting, Curcio

has found he doesn't need certain material products. For example, Curcio always used face wash to handle his acne, but after he stopped it, he said he noticed no change in his skin.

"I've sort of been figuring out I don't really need [some things] and that everything that I really need or want to have, I have already inside of me or built into my body," Curcio said.

Curcio's mother, Jana Curcio, said she fully supports her son's decision.

"He challenges me to be always looking for ways to simplify life, use less goods that impact our environment, be authentic, true to oneself and less concerned with what people think," she said.

Curcio said the biggest challenge he faced on his barefoot trek is having to explain his decision to others.

"The biggest thing is all the question-answering I have to do at school," Curcio said. "People are very interested, and I noticed that people look at me differently now."

Curcio said he acknowledges that not everyone will agree with his barefoot lifestyle.

"On some level, I will accept that some people just get uncomfortable when they see barefoot people," Curcio said. "I relinquish that freedom to them for their feeling of comfort, which I hope makes them feel better."

Curcio's girlfriend, senior Liliانا Martinez, said she was worried how others would treat Curcio after

learning he was going barefoot, but always has been supportive of his choice.

"He has gotten some negativity, unfortunately, and I think that was my biggest concern," Martinez said.

Senior Naveen Wineland said he was curious about his friend's decision but understood once he heard his reasoning.

"I agree with his overall philosophy, that it's a good idea to be closer with nature," Wineland said. "However, I don't think it's a good idea to practice that philosophy by risking your feet on disgusting school floors."

Curcio said principal Jeffery Litz sent him an email saying his barefooting could lead to disciplinary consequences.

However, Curcio plans to continue. "I'll just have to wear my sandals more," Curcio said. "The only time I wear them is just when I'm going through the halls."

Curcio said he frequently asks himself how often he can go barefoot throughout his day.

"I'd say that for the foreseeable future," Curcio said, "I will be trying to be barefoot as much as possible, so get used to seeing my toes."



Barefooting: The Pros and Cons

PROS

- Walking and running on different types of surfaces can help healthy foot development
- Reduces back pain and decreases impact on joints

CONS

- Walking on hard surfaces can alter the biomechanics of walking and running
- Could lead to arthritic changes and a decrease in foot function

This information came from an article by The New Zealand Medical Journal

Read more at tinyurl.com/tnzmj

Senioritis: "Sonnet 1"

by virgil dongre

Thy senior's affliction cannot be hid -
Despite those many efforts made with haste;
Attempts of leaving school early we bid,
As worship to thee; wanting to be 'based.'
Of thy origins I shall not be coy;
Thy sleeps 'til letters us seniors receive
Spreading from wind to wind of joy
Thy pestilence more rapid and free;
But lo! Our seniors' sloth shall quickly fade;
Cheer as thy ailments are lost on us students
For once fresh feet graze beneath campus
shade

Our school days shall again be most prudent;
Yet out of reach from thus, now I can see
As long as college lives, so then shall thee.

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Editorial: A 4-point scale is not equitable

Grading policies have always been the bane of existence for both teachers and students. We can never seem to find the strategy that works best for everyone—or even the majority. But there must be some miracle, perfect way to grade mastery of material, right?

Uh. No.

And there never will be. Trying to find one will only complicate things more.

Some opponents to the current grading scale, composed of points from 50 to 100 where anything below a 64% constitutes an F, say it offers far more ways to fail than succeed. Instead, they present idealistic solutions like the four-point scale that is often used in elementary schools.

A 4-point grading scale (unlike the 4-point GPA system FCPS already employs, in which students can earn a 2.3 or 3.75 or what have you) does

not include any intermediary decimal grades. There is simply: 1, 2, 3 and 4 (and sometimes 0). Grades are based on standards for the course, not percentage calculations.

Theoretically, solutions like this provide a balance between the so-called ways to fail and ways to succeed. Instead of 63 failing grades, there's just one. And yet...what does it look like in practice?

Two members of our editorial staff have recently lived through four-point grading scales. Though they are well-intentioned, they often make students feel like they are failing more often. When there are only four benchmarks for mastery, what happens when you don't receive the highest mark? Suddenly you're in the bottom 75%. And if you score a 2? You've only gone down two "points," but half the grading band.

And the system has technical flaws,

too. How would math teachers grade only using standards? How can we expect them to differentiate between demonstrated mastery worthy of a "4" versus a "3," without falling back on the percentage grading that has been an integral part of their department for so long? There's a reason 4-point grading is more prevalent in elementary schools, where simpler content makes it easy to draw a line between "proficient" or "not proficient."

In high school, nothing is simple. Our current grading system is not equitable, and certainly not perfect. We're just not sure any of the proposed solutions would be much better.

We'd love to live in a utopia where grades only serve to help students improve, but sadly that's not our reality. The county needs to support students in the world we live in right now, not an idealized version we might never see.

What do we do? The teacher shortage isn't simple

by reyna berry

Several teachers I know have left or are planning to leave at the end of this year. It's a little scary. Even as a senior, I don't like the idea of the pool for such an important profession dwindling. At the same time, I know the workload for educators is intense—especially at an IB school. But what are we going to do about the continued teacher (and substitute!) shortage?

In a report to the Virginia Governor and General Assembly in 2022, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission wrote that decreased job satisfaction in teachers was partly due to the demands of pandemic teaching. The Commission also found staff members were

exhausted by the socio-emotional demands of the job during 2022.

Even a year later, I observe these same effects in the teachers around me. They are exhausted. And all we seem to do as students is complain about teachers; there is no way that has no impact on their willingness to teach. That increased dissatisfaction is not going away with time, and we all have to come to terms with the fact that a world with too few teachers will continue to be our reality.

Honestly, our teachers are doing the best they possibly can. And we can't afford to think they're not.

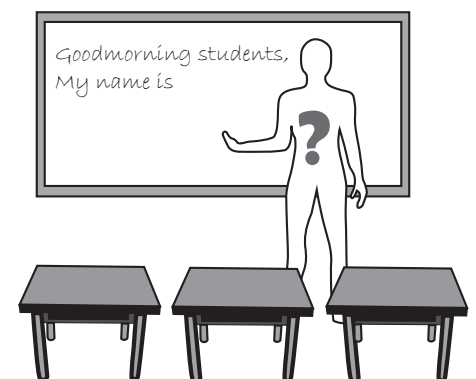
I've had disagreements with teachers in the past, but if they all were to leave, where would we be? There

are also a few teachers here who have told me they are unhappy, and who deserve more than anyone to find a career that gives them more joy than they find here. I want that for them. And simultaneously, I worry for future generations of students. It's not that I imagine some apocalypse with classrooms full of tumbleweed, but I wouldn't be surprised if more and more teaching will be carried out by substitutes without mastery of the content.

I believe students have the right to stand up for themselves if they are being treated unfairly. That is non-negotiable. But as students,

it's also important to keep in mind the full context of our situation. What we say, and what we do, has consequences. (And besides that, our educators are people—common human decency applies.)

At the end of the day, I would rather have a teacher with an annoying grading policy than no teacher at all.



ART BY MONA FARAH, REBECCA PAZ AND MAHA JIWANI

A love letter to the library

by eleanor mcaden and emma mobley

In a mess of dreariness lies a diamond in the rough: the library. It's bright, fresh and beautiful. "Home of the Statesmen" reads in big letters overlooking the space, and it truly is our home. The carpeted floors and relaxed atmosphere add an element of coziness which is lacking in pretty much every other area of the school. Best nap space? The library, easy.

Our safe haven is divided into three sections: Individual study, group study and the main area. The individual study area radiates warmth and calm,



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY AITANA WELLS

Seniors Emma Mobley and Eleanor Mcaden stand in for librarians Kristin Ronan and Elizabeth Toledo.

practically begging you to focus on the task at hand, or, even better, close your eyes for a brief moment of peace.

In fact, the library seems like an old, wise friend you go to for advice when you're at your worst, a fun time when you're at your best and a nap when you're tired.

The group study area flaunts fun-shaped tables which are conducive to creativity and collaboration. If our staff worked from the library, this magazine would probably be infinitely better and worth hundreds of dollars a piece.

The middle section is assembled with books and desks, and it's hard to decipher what is more interesting: the stories sleeping soundly within the hundreds of books available, or the student art sitting on top of the shelves.

The highlight of the whole joint? The Lego and puzzle tables. Although a newer addition, these activities are easily one of the top library spots. The puzzles bring people together for non-academic fun, and you get to pick a new puzzle after completing one!

Our only complaint is the strict no-snack rule; it's a major downfall but one we're willing to concede for the cleanliness of the space.

Lastly, librarians Kristin Ronan and Elizabeth Toledo are wonderful, and they are always ready to help if you ask. Or if you just want a good conversation partner.

Actually, if you haven't been to the library, go. Go now! Run!

Go because it is the best place to hang out in the whole building. Your only other option is really a classroom, which is why the library deserves all the Statesmen love.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY AITANA WELLS

Ronan and Toledo blend in with students at the Lego building station.

Spending periods in a classroom after being in the library is like being dragged to jail. The library breathes life into the student body. It makes us feel free.

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