

A photograph of a soccer game at night. In the foreground, a player in a light blue jersey with "STATESMEN 12" on the back is kicking a soccer ball. To his left, a player in a white jersey is also visible. In the background, other players in white and blue jerseys are running on the field. The stadium lights are on, and the background shows bleachers.

rank & file

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See Athletes of
the Month: March

Page 7



Girls Lacrosse huddles before taking the field during their first scrimmage on February 29

REBECCA PAZ/RANK&FILE

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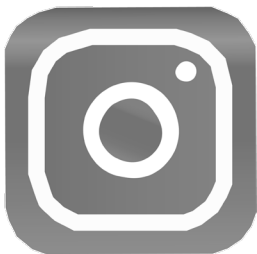
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Rank&File Podcast

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Letter from the Editor

Despite the school year (finally) winding down, Rank&File is not. We have topped our reviews from the last issue with an in-depth look on Ariana Grande's new album and the best and absolute worst movies of the year. However, the story closest to my heart is our three and a half page spread about Special Education's Team Taught system and how it only applies to core classes.

Like many students, my addiction to The New York Times' word games only grows with the beta release of Strands. We asked for student opinion in our feature entitled, "The World of Words." To be honest, Connections is still my favorite addiction.

Seniors, for those choosing to pursue higher education, I wish you good luck for the decisions to come and congratulations for those of you might have already committed. But no matter what your plans are next year, we have so many lasts coming up this year: our last spring break, our last prom and my last Rank&File Letter in April. I hope you take the time to enjoy them.

Melanie George
Editor-in-Chief
Rank&File

Making a Marshall Mark in the community

by rishi vanka

Marshall Mark, a newly reintroduced program, allows seniors to spend their final two weeks of high school outside of the building at an internship or job. English teacher Hendrick Booz and Career Experience Specialist Shelli Farquharson reintroduced the program this year for the first time since the pandemic. Marshall Mark was inspired by similar programs at surrounding high schools in the county.

"I heard about Langley Leap, which is one of the first ones around here that we were able to model the program after," Booz said.

He said that after Marshall Mark was first implemented in 2017, the program saw steady growth.

"We started out with about 50 kids, then it jumped to 100 plus and then 180 in the third year and then the pandemic hit," he said. "We were on track that year for about 300 of the 550 seniors, so hopefully this year, we can get back in the hundreds."

Although Booz has high hopes for the year, he noted one of the main factors that could hurt students' applications.

"Ideally, you have decent attendance," he said. "We're trying our best to promote [Marshall Mark] starting next year, for the freshmen, and each year you do a little bit more [research]. That's what some of the stronger schools in the area do, but we want to make seniors aware of it again."

Booz believes Marshall Mark may help attendance issues in the future.

"It really did help attendance in the previous years because people were like, 'I really want to do Marshall Mark,'" he said. "There [are] some kids who have 115, 170, 200 attendance issues, so we're counting both excused and unexcused [absences] and tardies."

Before the pandemic, Booz said that the program was popular among seniors. While some students continued to work at their existing jobs to save money, others used their two weeks for other projects.

"One young lady started a microfinancing organization for women in Kenya and then ended up, that summer, going there," he said. "Another young lady was an intern at CNN, and ended up pitching a story that they produced."

For future years, Booz said he wants to introduce Marshall Mark to freshmen and have them learn more about the program over the next four years to increase participation.

"I think that we can tie this to Advisory," he said. "We can begin having kids research things that they might want to do, putting feelers out: 'What is an internship? What are some professional things you can do?'"

Booz said introducing the program earlier would also help to combat attendance issues.

"By junior year, people will be like, look, I know that it's senior year. I'm going to miss some classes, I'm going to be late from time to time, but I'm going to work on my attendance," he said. "Getting here five to 10 minutes late

doesn't necessarily mean a ton, educationally, until you compound it day after day after day after day after day."

Senior Nate Neuman said he is interested in Marshall Mark and believes that other students should consider applying.

"Some people have never had to fit a job into their daily routine before," he said. "It's good to get used to having that type of commitment in your lifestyle. By doing this, I feel like [Marshall] is incentivizing students to be prepared for what they would need in their future, if they want to have money saved up, even if they're going to college."

Neuman said that he has already decided what he wants to do over the two weeks.

"I really want to apply to Meadowlark Gardens because that was on the list of example jobs that [Marshall] accepts, and I thought it would be really nice to get some gardening experience," he said.

The example jobs list that Neuman found is located in the Marshall Mark Internship Program website.

"Obviously, there are benefits of missing school and also getting paid," he said. "I think it would be nice because I don't think I would get a career in gardening, but I think it's a hobby I want to have as an adult, so it's a skill that I can learn and develop in."

Marshall Mark begins on May 13 and ends on May 24. The application is due on April 4.

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Miracle or Medical Anomaly?

Unusual pregnancy of a stingray creates stir in science: teachers and students react

by **simon barnes and zoe jones**

On Feb. 8 In North Carolina, it was announced that a female stingray named Charlotte living inside the Team ECCO Aquarium was found to be pregnant. However, Charlotte has not been in contact with any male stingrays for the past eight years. With the discovery of her pregnancy following the introduction of two male sharks to her tank, people speculate whether Charlotte's pregnancy is a result of cross-breeding or parthenogenesis, a form of asexual reproduction.

With the range of possibilities surrounding her pregnancy, students and teachers shared their perspectives on the situation.

"I think it is parthenogenesis because, first of all, although [stingrays and sharks] are related in some way, they're not the same species," senior Marina Josipovic said.

Biology teacher Michael Osborn reasoned that the stingray and shark would be incompatible.

"It's like taking one computer program that makes a game, with one computer program that runs a complex business strategy, and they're just not going to work together," Osborn said. "DNA is often the same way. They're just too dissimilar."

Biology teacher Amy Camire agreed.

"My gut instinct is that their chromosomes are just too different to have resulted in this successful of a pregnancy," Camire said. "When two species attempt to mate, typically their chromosomes don't line up the way we need

them to in order to successfully create an embryo in the first place."

Osborn explained the likelihood of parthenogenesis.

"It has been seen in fish in Mexico and in a variety of lizard species," Osborn said. "It is not the first time it's been witnessed in nature."

Josipovic shared her optimism.

"According to scientific documentation, there's never been a parthenogenetic stingray, so it would be incredible for that to happen," Josipovic said.

Environmental Systems and Societies teacher Tyler Fox shared his hopes.

"Parthenogenesis is a rare occurrence, but it could happen," Fox said. "So, I'm less inclined to think that it's a miracle although, I'm still kind of hoping for shark-ray pups. That would be insane and I want to adopt them."

Senior Luke Viskupic agreed, and expressed his doubt that the idea of "shark-rays," that became popular across the internet, will occur.

"I don't know that it would produce viable offspring because sharks and stingrays are in the same family or genus, but they're not closely related enough," Viskupic said.

Viskupic expressed his skepticism about the reality of the situation.

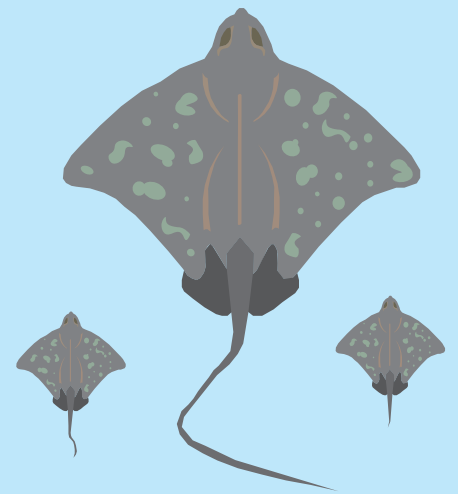
"It feels like the aquarium is just trying to make money and so they're making a bigger deal out of it than it is," Viskupic said.

For those hoping to see potential shark-ray hybrids, not all hope is lost. Though unlikely, Osborn described a lingering possibility for them to be born.

"There are lion-tiger combinations and zebra-horse combinations, so this hybrid would just be a maybe a rare, but possible combination that we personally haven't seen before," Osborn said.

Regardless of the results of the pregnancy, Camire discussed the new knowledge that may be gained from this occurrence.

"It would definitely force us to look deeper into the genetics of the shark and the ray, and see what genes are on what chromosomes and how they were able to accomplish it," Camire said.



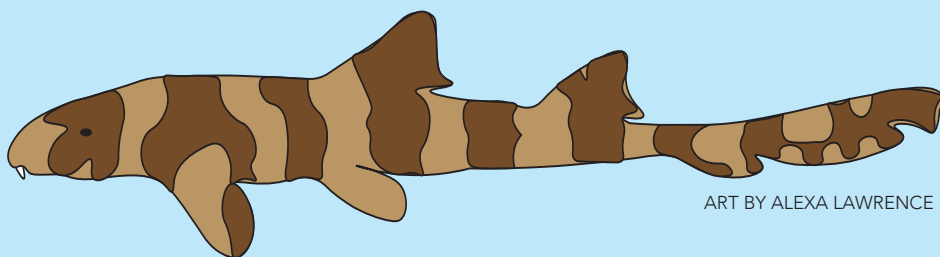
ART BY ZOE JONES

She said she finds the whole situation fascinating.

"It has brought to light how, scientifically, the concept of sex is mutable and changeable and it is not as absolute as people want to believe or as simple as people learned in sixth grade," Camire said.

Osborn believes that regardless of the outcome, the product of this birth will be an exciting moment for all scientists.

"I mean science, to me, is exciting, and it never ceases to amaze," Osborn said. "Seeing maybe for the first time parthenogenesis from a new creature is exciting."



ART BY ALEXA LAWRENCE

New lawsuits against VDOE Model Policies

by **keira locey and mira karnik**

In July 2023, the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) 2023 Model Policies, which have caused controversy since they were revealed in September, were put into effect in Virginia schools.

The policies have been protested by transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) students, allies of the LGBTQ+ community and activists because of their recommendations and the scaling back of protections for trans and GNC students. These include the ability to use their chosen name or pronouns, use their desired bathrooms and play on sports teams that correspond with their gender identity.

Junior Asher Wise commented on the effects of the policies.

"The idea of not having a safe space at school where you can be yourself is terrifying," Wise said.

FCPS rejected the model policies in support of trans and GNC students. Some districts have complied.

On Feb. 15, 2024, the American sports

Civil Liberties Union of Virginia (ACLU VA) filed two lawsuits against the VDOE on behalf of two transgender students in counties that implemented the policies. One student had been denied participation on the girl's sports team, while another had a teacher refuse to use her correct first name.

The ACLU VA claims that these policies "do not comply with the 2020 state law requiring VDOE to develop model policies ensuring inclusive and equitable treatment of transgender and nonbinary students in Virginia public schools."

Marshall students expressed their thoughts on the policies.

One transgender sophomore who requested to remain anonymous shared their perspective.

"I heavily dislike these policies as this affects a lot of 'stealth' transgender folks such as myself"

This student was gratified, though not surprised, by Superintendent Reid's decision to not implement the policies in FCPS. Regarding this, a freshman who

also requested to remain anonymous expressed their perspective .

"I was very pleased that the Superintendent protected trans kids in this way," they said.

After the death of 16 year old non-binary student after being assaulted by three other students in a bathroom they were required to use., Nex Benedict, in Oklahoma on Feb. 8, 2024, some people in the nation call for support of trans and GNC students from adults.

Instructional Technology coach and GSA sponsor Rachel Baxter commented on the importance of being a trusted figure to students.

"The most important thing when supporting queer students is to listen, and be a person they can trust to come to, if something happens," Baxter said.

Baxter offered advice to teachers, counselors and administrators.

"Teachers and counselors can listen and make it clear that they support their students and embrace all parts of their identity," Baxter said.

NCAA 'sets' new rules for women's volleyball

by **maddie bishop**

On Tuesday Feb. 20, the NCAA implemented new changes to the rules for the coming women's volleyball coming season.

One of the rules that has caused a stir in the volleyball community is the new setting rule. The new rule states that players are now allowed to have contact with the ball more than once on a single attempt, as long as it is being set to a teammate. For anyone who doesn't know, a team gets three touches, a pass, set and attack on their side. However, this new rule allows for setters to double the ball.

Upon first hearing about the setting rule, senior Samia Sayd was opposed to the change.

"I didn't like the rule at first because any setter can do whatever and if it's an important point in a game and somebody doubles really badly, it's annoying when you don't get the point," Sayd said. "[Calls

against doubling] have always been a thing and it's kind of crazy to change it really late in the game when all of the rules have already been made."

Although Sayd didn't like it at first, she said it leaves little room for referee opinion.

"I like the [new] rule for some parts," she said. "A lot of people have said it's good because it was a subjective rule and some refs like to decide to call doubles while some don't."

On the other hand, Varsity girl's volleyball head coach Mike Carroll wasn't surprised by this new rule.

"It's been something that has been discussed and debated for a few years now and I know, last year, a lot of off-season leagues were sampling it," Carroll said. "It's something that I saw coming"

Carroll said this new rule will promote consistency without erasing necessary skills it takes to set.

"I think it allows for more continuous

play, and it's one less thing for referees to be subjective about," Carroll said. "I really think that it doesn't take any skill out of the game. At the end of the day, you still have to be good at setting because your hitters aren't going to want to hit a ball that was doubled."

As a club level referee, Carroll said he doesn't find doubles to greatly impact outcomes of games.

"[For] the past couple tournaments, I've kind of not been calling doubles anyway unless they're egregious," Carroll said. "I don't think it really changes the game that much anyway."

While this new rule has not been extended to VHSL or club volleyball, Carroll said he thinks it will be expanded upon in the future.

"I think our sport has a strong tendency of following what college level does and it might happen pretty soon at the club level," he said. "I think it might take a few years to trickle down to high school."

Fresh off the bat: JV softball is back in action

by **layla mohran and maha jiwani**

As the 2024 spring sports season gets underway, the softball program expands with increased interest from student athletes and introduces a new junior varsity softball team.

Sophomore Sofia Barro shared her excitement to join the softball program.

"I was absolutely stoked about it," Barro said. "Last year they only had a varsity, so I was hoping this year we could get a JV team, and luckily we got the opportunity to get girls into the sport and to join JV."

With the addition of a JV team, there are more spots on the roster to be filled by student athletes, regardless of prior experience. Senior Brooke Bundy shared her emotions.

"I was kind of surprised just because everyone joked around, like obviously I'll make it [since I'm] a senior," Bundy said.

Unsure of her decision to join the

team, Bundy waited until after attending one team practice to make her decision.

"I definitely wanted to play because the team dynamic worked really well," she said. "It was pretty easy to get into the groove and know what I was supposed to do. It's been easier to adapt to than I was expecting," Bundy said.

Barro said she enjoys the community-building aspect.

"My favorite experience has been meeting new people and bonding with my team," Barro said. "Getting to be a part of a team of amazing girls is really a blessing. I was incredibly happy to know I would get a chance to play."

Along with new opportunities for athletes to play, new varsity softball head coach Joseph Mills takes on his first season leading the softball program at Marshall.

"Last season I was the varsity assistant coach at Fairfax and for the past 6 years I have coached travel softball for the

ShenVal Swarm," he said.

With the introduction of two new JV coaches, Mills mentioned the developing talent in the program as a whole.

"[JV] Coach Sinnett won two national championships at Virginia Wesleyan University and brings so much knowledge and experience to the program," he said. "Assistant Coach Briana Harbison played and was a graduate assistant coach at Randolph University, and brings so much experience to the field."

Mills shared his hope to see program-wide improvement this season.

"My hope is that we win at least one game," Mills said. "The 2023 season was hard for the girls and my goal for the 2024 season is to rebuild this program and bring back the success it had in the mid 2000's. I also hope that, at the end of the year my seniors look back and feel like this was the best season they had playing softball at Marshall."

ART BY RHEA NEWNAHA

Athletes of the Month: March

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

Drew Clague, 10 Boys Soccer

Sophomore Drew Clague went from JV last season to starting off his first year on varsity as an outside midfielder with three goals so far.

In order to set himself apart from other athletes, Clague said he put in a lot of preparation.

"I worked hard, practiced when I could and tried new things while controlling the ball at my feet," he said.

Reflecting on his first goal of the season, Clague shared his reaction.

"I was excited and relieved at the same time, I didn't really know how to react," he said. "I was almost in shock."

Clague said it boosted his self-esteem on the field.



NADINE DRACHENKO/RANK&FILE

"After my first goal I was much more confident because I knew I could play at the level everyone else was at," he said. "My second goal was better than the first and it was a great feeling to give the team a brace."

When asked about his future goals for the season, Clague responded, "Win games."

Bella Johnson, 9 Girls Soccer

Freshman Bella Johnson scored a hat trick in the girls soccer's 5-1 win against Alexandria City. Her success at the beginning of the season is evident, as she scored a goal in each of the first team's scrimmages against Fairfax and Falls Church.

Being new to varsity, Johnson said she enjoys the team aspect.

"My favorite part of playing is definitely interacting with my teammates and then seeing all of our chemistry on the field and how it corresponds to our scoring goals and winning games," Johnson said.

Johnson said she hopes to continue to contribute to the team's success.



STEPHAN LAM/COLUMBIAN

"I want to help my team do well in districts and maybe even make it to States," she said.

She said her biggest accomplishment so far has been being scouted by the Youth National Team Identification Centers and she hopes to go on and play in college.

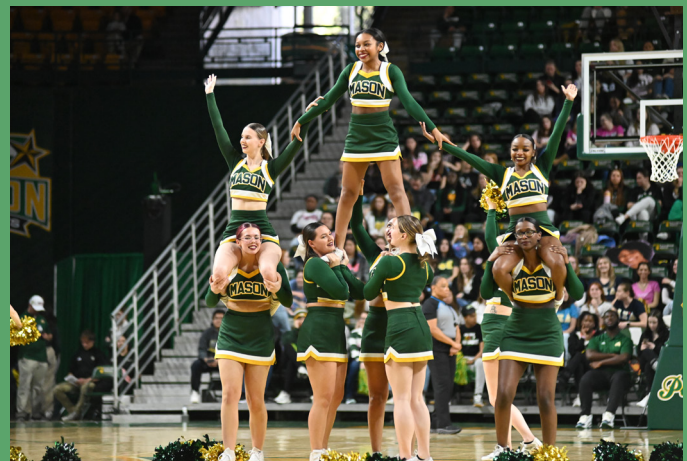
Photo Essay: George Mason Women's Basketball

On Feb. 17, George Mason University- competed against George Washington University in their 25th women's basketball game of the season. George Mason's victory maintained their place as fourth in the Atlantic 10 standings.

- page compiled by maddie bishop, layla mohran and zoe jones



George Mason's Zahirah Walton, catches a pass, blocking George Washington's Kamari Sims from possessing the ball.



The George Mason Cheer team waves to fans during halftime.



After a close third quarter, George Mason plays tight defense. In the last few minutes of the game, the lead continued to switch between the teams, with George Mason pulling out the victory in a 60-57 win.

Freshman Kade McKeever places 6th in State Wrestling Tournament



by rhea newnaha

Freshman year holds many firsts for many students. For trans athlete and JV Girls wrestler Kade McKeever, it included his first state tournament.

McKeever received sixth place at the VHSL Girls 6A State Wrestling Championship after placing first in both the regional and district competitions for the Liberty District.

“When I won in the finals round, I heard this man scream through a microphone at the top of his lungs, ‘and your 2024 JV regionals champion, Kade McKeever from George C. Marshall,’” he said. “That was really cool.”

McKeever’s wrestling journey was influenced by his history of competing in combat sports and watching the Disney Channel.

“My favorite show on Disney Channel growing up was ‘Kickin’ It,’ and I thought those people were really cool,” he said.

McKeever’s father mentioned the idea of pursuing martial arts, leading McKeever down a road that would land him in a state competition for women’s wrestling.

After receiving a black belt earlier this year, McKeever said he wanted to pursue wrestling to continue challenging himself.

“I came to a few [wrestling] green days, when I was doing field hockey, and I was like, hey, I really like the sport,” McKeever said. “The coaches are great and the people are just fantastic.”

McKeever said the thing he’s proudest of is how far he has come over the course of his first season with the team.

“It was really cool to see such growth from the very first JV jamboree that we went to, when I got pinned in 30 seconds, to being able to place sixth [at states],” he said.

While wrestling is a very physical sport, McKeever said he thinks the mental aspect of the sport is not talked about enough.

“There were a lot of times when I didn’t have the mindset to wrestle. Practices were really tough, and obviously conditioning is not fun,” he said.

However, despite the uphill battle, McKeever said he was able to overcome the mental roadblocks when it came to it.

“I have a bad problem of going into a match and [telling myself] I’m going to lose because I get intimidated by the opponent, but then I get onto the mat and I pin them in two minutes,” he said.

McKeever believes taking the season one match at a time helps him stay focused.

“That’s what I had to do for states, because if you’re just going to be like, oh, I have four more matches and I only need two more wins, but if I lose one, then I’m out, then you’re gonna psych yourself out,” McKeever said. “That’s a lot of math.”

McKeever believes his coaches’ guidance helped him maintain clarity during matches.

“One of my coaches says everyone’s beatable,” McKeever said. “There’s no one who’s going to be the exact same as you—they’re always going to be better than you or they’re going to be worse than you. You have to go into it like, I got this. I can do this.”

McKeever said despite his eventual loss at states, he is proud of his performance.

“I still proved that I can do anything that I try my hardest at,” he said. “You just have to do your best, and if you lose, you lose, but you just come back harder for your next match.”

Along with McKeever’s individual success, he is happy to see the growing number of women in wrestling, noticing the increase of around 200 to 400 female wrestlers at competitions this year.

“What’s great about it is we’re proving that we’re here,” McKeever said. “We want to wrestle. We want it to be taken seriously. We want to prove that we can do the sport, and not, just because we’re girls, we’re weak.”

McKeever said he feels a deeper sense of community in the sport with the growing number of wrestlers.

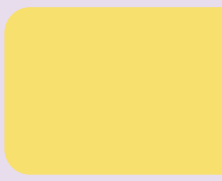
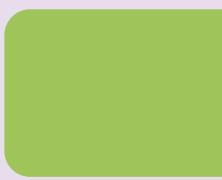
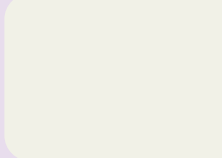
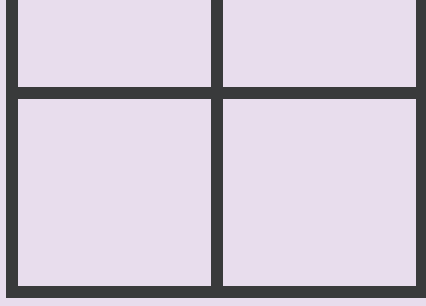
“I feel like there’s a lot more camaraderie between us compared to guys wrestling, because we’re all in a similar boat,” McKeever said. “We’re being told like, oh, you can’t really wrestle as good as the guys.”

McKeever said he wants to continue pursuing wrestling in college.

“My favorite college girls team is the Iowa Women’s Wrestling team,” he said. “They’re creating such good exposure for young female athletes and wrestlers specifically. If I could get on that team, it’d be fantastic.”

McKeever said he hopes that by the time he is looking to pursue higher education, the number of women’s wrestling teams will have tripled, further paving a path for women’s wrestling.

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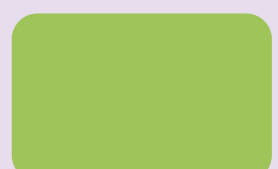
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W O R L D

OF

¹ **W O R D S**

Students and faculty share their perspectives on New York Times games



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"Mr. Booz played games with us during return [periods] for TOK. For one of our classes, Ms. Noone gave us 10 minutes to just do the Connections and stuff in class. It was kind of cool."

– Tyler Burbano, 12

"As a junior, I feel like a lot of our classes are very self-study type and we just get an assignment and we just do it, or they are discussion based. Normally I'm just sitting there and I like to pull [a game] up to keep my hands busy."

– Apoorva Navale, 11

"I think the Strands game might be the best one so far."

– Roshan Jones, 12

"I think it's a nice little warm up to my day, it really gets my brain going. I understand that if you're doing it instead of paying attention, that's a problem."

– Roshan Jones, 12

"A few teachers do play with us but only during free work time."

– Simryn Tolani, 11

"We use Wordle as a tool for reading support. It helps us solidify new concepts and expand vocabulary. Ms. Champe Mitchell is a huge fan of games, so it was an obvious choice for our Literacy classes."

– Instructional Assistant Heather Paz

● spread compiled by mona farah, sophie hauber, eleanor liang and rebecca paz

‘What, Like It’s Hard?’

An inside look into Statesman Theatre’s spring production

DeLeo’s plan to ‘go out with a bang’

by georgia streett

This year, Statesman theater brings “Legally Blonde” to the stage. The production will be theater teacher Bernie DeLeo’s last, as he will be retiring at the end of this year.

DeLeo said he wants his final show to be unforgettable.

“For the past three years, I’ve done shows that kids have never heard of,” he said. “I really wanted to go out with a bang and I wanted to do a show that they were excited about.”

DeLeo shared his feelings toward the musical as the time he has dedicated to it adds up to more than 80 hours per week.

“I really enjoy it, but it was more for them than for me,” DeLeo said. “The kids are great; the kids are having a ball.”

Junior Jacob Lee as Emmet Forrest is the lead male role and Elle Woods’ love interest in the musical.

“It’s hard to put into words how much I enjoy it,”

Lee said.

Lee noted that although very enjoyable, the process of putting the show together can be stressful.

“I know that the rehearsals are really difficult and tiring,” Lee said. “But, once [the show] starts coming together, it becomes one of the greatest feelings. I do hope that everyone [appreciates the effort] and the people watching know how much work was put in.”

DeLeo hopes that because “Legally Blonde” is more popular than other musicals he has done in the past, it will bring in a large audience.

“Any one of these [musicals] that are based on movies are hard because a movie can switch from place to place to place,” DeLeo said. “We’re going all out. We’re building tons of scenery, tons of costumes and tons of sets.”

DeLeo explained he wants to set up next year’s theater teacher with a strong foundation of resources.

“I wanted to try to do



ALEXA LAWRENCE/RANK&FILE

Senior Sophia Welch practices her lines for her role as the lead Elle Woods during rehearsal on March 13.

something that was popular where I could make a lot of money so [the incoming theater teacher] could have it in the bank account, because the box office is what pays for sets and costumes,” DeLeo said.

Another of DeLeo’s goals is to increase the size of the department in years to come.

“[I hope] we get a lot of people from outside the department who try out,” DeLeo said. “I wanted to stock the pond with more bodies

who are interested in theater and might sign up for theater and have a good experience.”

Lee shared his hope that the musical brings in more theater students.

“I’m really looking forward to building this community and being a part of [a group of] people who work hard and are similar to myself,” Lee said.

The musical will debut at the end of April and there will be shows into early May.

Orchestra and band students join forces with professional musicians

by **Juline Salahi and Georgia Streett**

For the theater production at Marshall of “Legally Blonde,” a pit orchestra will provide the music.

Last year’s production, “Xanadu,” had a four-person pit band, however, this year, the production will have around 20 musicians participating.

“The challenge of this piece is that there is a rock musical component, classic musical theater component and marching band music,” theater teacher Bernie DeLeo said.

DeLeo hopes professional musicians and live music will enhance the performance.

“It’s a fullness of sound that you want,” DeLeo said. “You’ve got electric guitars, and you’ve got drums.”

The theater department has hired three professional keyboardists, a guitarist and a bass player.

“You really need to have a professional because the [music cues] come in fast and furious,” DeLeo said.

DeLeo stressed the importance of having a professional musician in the mix.

“It’s just something a student can’t really do unless you’ve done it before,”

he said.

The rest of the pit band will consist of school band and orchestra students in addition to the professionals. Band teacher Paul Vesilind will make the recommendations for the student musicians who will be a part of the pit orchestra.

“He knows all the band people,” DeLeo said. “There’s clarinets, there’s woodwinds, there’s trumpets, there’s trombones, again, there’s a marching band segment [in the musical].”

Senior violinist Holly Kim will perform alongside the professional band this year. Kim shared her excitement to be a part of the pit orchestra.

“It’s kind of my dream coming true,” Kim said.

Kim has been looking forward to playing in a musical at Marshall for many years.

“I’m just really happy to be doing the violin part, because I’ve been wanting to do a pit orchestra since I watched Marshall do ‘The Sound of Music,’” she said. “I was really brought to tears by the violinists and the orchestra that played.”

Kim hopes to bring the same type of emotional response to “Legally Blonde.”

“Live theater needs live musicians in order to do an accurate and good production of the musical the way the writers intended it to be performed,” Kim said.

DeLeo also highlighted the importance of having live music.

“The music is a character,” DeLeo said. “The music conveys emotion, it conveys mood, it conveys attitude. It informs the audience how to feel.”

DeLeo and Kim agreed that the depth of live music will add to the show.

“It’s so difficult for actors and performers to match up to a track rather than the live music itself,” Kim said. “Live music has so many more traits, musicality and technical skill, than any track that could’ve been used to back up the actresses and actors.”

Junior Jacob Lee emphasizes how helpful it can be to have live musicians.

“Music has to adapt to whatever goes on the stage,” Lee said. “If someone pauses for too long, then the live music would have to do that too. It’s much better than having prerecorded music, actors are able to have more freedom with their stylistic choices.”

Photo ✨ Essay! ✨



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Legally Blonde: 'I'm taking the dog' to the stage

by georgia streett

Imagine seeing real dogs onstage at the performance of Marshall's "Legally Blonde" musical. That's theater teacher Bernie DeLeo's plan for this year's spring musical.

"You can't do stuffed animals," DeLeo said. "You have to have a live dog."

There are two dogs in "Legally Blonde": Bruiser the Chihuahua, and Rufus the Bulldog.

"I've done a show with a dog before," DeLeo said. "What happens with dogs is that the dog comes in, nobody looks at the dog and nobody interacts with the dog."

DeLeo explained the reasoning behind this is to keep the dogs calm and focused on their role in the musical.

"The only people that can interact with the dog are the characters and the

dog wrangler," DeLeo said.

Each dog will have a dog wrangler who is responsible for taking care of the dog while it is at school.

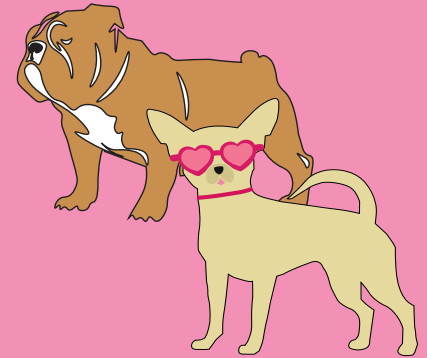
"That person just stays with the dog," DeLeo said. "We will get some bedding and fence off an area."

DeLeo explains that the dog wrangler will have to take the dogs on walks, feed them and bring them backstage for their cues.

"The dog has to come in, so we have to train the dog with some treats," DeLeo said. "The dog will be like, there's that setting, there's that person, they've got a treat in their hand."

The dogs have to learn how to do the tricks by themselves, without direction from the characters.

"It's hard, but boy, audiences go berserk when there is a dog onstage," DeLeo



ART BY RACHEL ACKERMAN AND ALEXA LAWRENCE

said.

He is willing to take the risk of using live animals, since "Legally Blonde" will be his last show at Marshall, and he wants to make the performance memorable.

"Going out with a bang and doing it right," he said.

Team Taught: Why not electives?

● spread compiled by nadine drachenko and melanie george

A Team Taught class consists of one general education teacher and one teacher with Special Education and/or English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) certification to support students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or ESOL students. Team Taught classes help strive towards a least restrictive environment. This system only applies to core classes.

What is a 'least restrictive environment?'

Class environments can include General Education, Co-taught general education and self-contained classes.

"A restrictive environment means smaller classes," student services director Cindy Blakeley said. "Not what everyone else is doing."

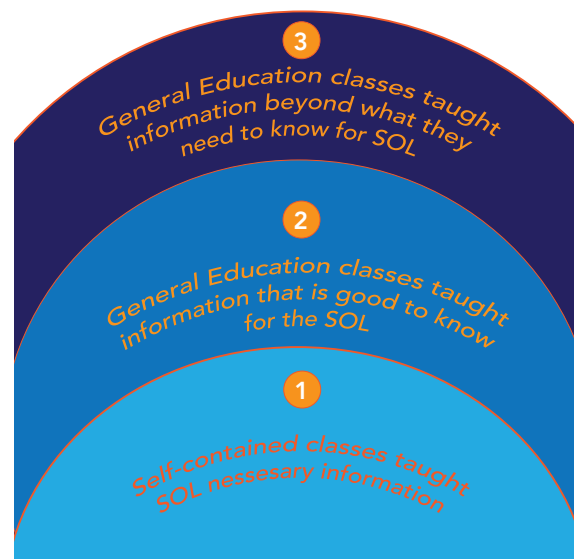
The goal is the least restrictive environment for the student.

"I want to make sure that we have more kids in our team classes than in our sheltered classes because they deserve to have the most academically rigorous and supportive education possible,"

Principal Jeff Litz said.

The most restrictive environment is a self-contained class with no more than 15 students per class. A restrictive environment allows for more support and personalized instruction with the main priority to teach absolutely necessary parts of the curriculum.

"Self-contained teachers mostly spend their time on what's in the middle of the target to make sure that kids get what they need to be able to be successful on the SOLs or what have you," Litz said.



ART BY RHEA NEWNAHA

How does team teaching work?

The administration team starts talking about registration for the following school year in November. This discussion includes reviewing the master schedule.

“What do we really like? What do we not like?” Principal Jeff Litz said. “Where do we feel like we gave enough support to kids who need it? Where do we feel like we didn’t give enough support to kids?”

Every March, FCPS sends an estimate of the number of students attending Marshall the next school year, including the number of students with IEPs. Based on the number of students with IEPs, FCPS provides a number of Special Education teachers available.

Student services director Cindy Blakeley said team teaching applies for students with IEPs and ESOL plans,

and the scaffolding of the class may be different for each teacher. Each teacher determines the grade for their students.

Staffing decisions are always based on what classes students sign up for and the nature of their IEPs.

“Parents have input, the student has input, we look at grades, transcript, history, SOLs,” Special Education department chair Nikita Parmar said. “Students are just never really placed at random. There’s always a discussion.”

Though there are no team classes in Academy classes, Special Education specialists support any student with an IEP.

“That doesn’t exactly look like a team class, but it actually has all the same kinds of support as a team class,” Blakeley said.

Team taught staffing is prioritized

through graduation class requirements for students with IEPs.

“So if we were going to team an art class, then that means one fewer teamed math or English. You don’t get more,” Blakeley said. “We’re really looking at those core classes for the sake of students.”

With knowledge of funding and scheduling roadblocks, Special Education department chair Nikita Parmar’s ideal would be co-teaching for every class, with or without the IEP plans.

“If it were up to me, I would want every class to be co-taught because I think it also helps students on the General Education roster,” Parmar said. “It provides two perspectives, two different styles of learning and teaching and opportunities for a reduced student to teacher ratio and support.”

Why is co-teaching world language a challenge?

Despite a language credit being necessary for all diplomas, co-teaching options do not treat it the same as other core classes.

Student services director Cindy Blakeley said another challenge lies in world languages specifically.

“World languages are the toughest ones. It’s been talked about, and the big questions are who in the world would be appropriate to teach that?” Blakeley said. “And then how in the world could we differentiate it?”

A team teacher not only has a Special Education certification but, generally, they also need expertise in their respective content area, which Blakeley said is rare for world languages.

Blakeley said taking into consideration a student’s area of need in world languages and still meeting the objectives of the course are difficult.

“Maybe speaking is really a challenge [for a student],” Blakeley said. “Well, how can you be in a world language class without speaking?”

Blakeley said the curriculum of a class cannot be modified in any way, which is why the extra attention is important.

“That’s why it’s helpful to have one teacher that’s really focusing on a few students in the class to really be sure they’re not dropping any balls,” Blakeley said.

Scheduling can always be challenging, so working in co-taught world languages would create more roadblocks.

Most departments have common planning, where each teacher has the same planning period, Blakeley said.

“That becomes complicated if the team teacher is teaming with more than one subject,” Blakeley said. “That’s a lot more complicated, and I don’t want that to drive what kids get.”

It also comes down to what is even possible, as a student with an IEP may have to have some classes with extra support and some without it.

“Let’s say there’s these specialized

considerations. If you are going to do a hierarchy of what’s most important for that student, maybe it’s their academy class, maybe it’s their passion for their career,” Blakeley said. “We’re going to try to figure out something, but not every iteration is possible.”

Any scheduling takes a lot of trial and error, Blakeley said.

“I take this summer with a specific level of intensity to try to meet the needs of students,” Blakeley said. “That’s when my competitive spirit comes out.”



ART BY NADINE DRACHENKO

What is in the works to improve team teaching?

At Marshall, students can have an IEP and still be successful in an IB class, which is unique to other schools.

"That is something I don't want to say we started, but [we are] certainly one of the biggest schools in the world that does that," Principal Jeff Litz said.

Categorizing students as either a student with an IEP or a student in IB classes is not conducive to a successful learning environment, he said.

"We all have our

strengths," Litz said. "We all have our areas of need and our areas of growth. We need to look for ways to do that without pegging kids with a label," said.

As for FCPS, two years ago, administration contracted the American Institute of Research to do an education study.

This study showed that FCPS has too many students in sheltered and self-contained classes and not enough in teamed classes.

To work towards a least restrictive environment,

FCPS recently introduced a Least Restrictive Environment Data Collection Tool. This worksheet includes leading questions about the need for support.

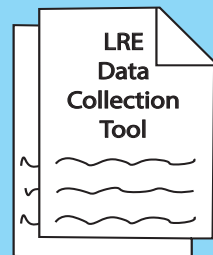
"That tool was designed to make sure that we're really making the decisions that we need to be making," Litz said.

Special Education department chair Nikita Parmar said this tool may not be a solution.

"It's a little redundant because everything is in the IEP already," Parmar said. "What is their eligibility?

What deficits do they have? What levels of support do they require? It depends on the student's overall scope," she said.

Scope includes testing data, history, to see in what plan a student is more successful.



ART BY NADINE DRACHENKO

Will world languages ever be co-taught?

Passing the four-year anniversary of Covid-19, these buzzwords still pervade every discussion: lack of money and lack of staffing.

"We're to the point now financially where we're squeezing blood from a turnip," Litz said.

Hiring a teacher with school funds means Litz can no longer use it elsewhere.

"I have to think about the 200 plus kids in our building with IEPs in total and how I am going to get the most bang for my buck."

The staff shortage is growing.

According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred in education declined by 22% from 2005-2006 to 2018-2019.

"Unless they start paying teachers significantly more, and we as an American society value teachers in the field of education more, I don't see our numbers going up anytime soon," Litz said.

Litz said this issue requires the administration



"I see a future where every teacher that comes out of the teaching university or college is going to be Special Education and ESOL certified."

- Principal Jeff Litz



to seek other ways to support students, including but not limited to classes such as Strategies for Success and Success Prep classes.

"I see a future where

every teacher that comes out of the teaching university or college is going to be Special Education and ESOL certified," Litz said.

For the near future, Superintendent Michelle Reid and administration presented some solutions in FCPS' 2025 Proposed

Budget.

The school system will receive a market scale adjustment of 6% for all employees a 10.5% increase in budget overall.

"[It] is unprecedented

that a superintendent has asked for a double-digit increase," Litz said.

Though an expansion of co-taught classes seems distant, Litz said students deserve to have the most academically rigorous and supportive education possible.

"I have this very ingrained belief that there's no such thing as a kid who can't do something academically," Litz said. "It's just a matter of the amount of support that you're able to provide to them, and their willingness to meet those goals."

In the meantime, Parmar shared some advice for world language and other elective teachers in need of support.

"We're all very collaborative," she said. "So just ask questions when you don't know or need help."

World language and other elective teachers face challenges without extra support

by nadine drachenko

Though world language and other elective classes do not apply to the team taught system, all diplomas require world language credits, increasing the degree to which they could benefit from team support.

Due to many factors, world language and elective classes have not been included in this system. Team-taught classes as an option for students with IEPs are federally required exclusively for core classes, causing a struggle for some elective teachers who don't have the option of this teaching system. Teachers of these classes have had to adapt in terms of embedding the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) into their classrooms. Even with having to find ways to manage the classroom alone, some teachers note the effort it takes to provide for every student.

Money and staffing are some challenges of supplying support for the system, but with its establishment only in select classes, some believe the obstacle comes when students transition from a team-taught class to an elective. French teacher and world language department chair Matthew Hanlon agreed with this.

"It's really tricky," he said. "We have students in language classes where all of their core classes are team taught, and then they're in a language class with 25 to 30 students and [only] one teacher."

Spanish teacher Silvia Montes mentioned, the added discrepancies primarily target language speakers transitioning between levels.

"In the more advanced Spanish classes," she said, "students are expected to remember all the content from the previous levels, but if a student does not have a good foundation because they didn't have that one-on-one attention that they have in their English class, they don't have the same opportunity to be successful."

Montes expressed the overwhelming feeling from trying to meet the needs of all of her students.

"When students need a lot from you,"

Montes said, "it's very overwhelming not to give them 100% of you in that exact moment in the class, because you have so many students and a lot of them need that one-on-one attention and that time for extra support."

Hanlon and Spanish and guitar director Matthew Kulikosky both have noticed that despite the obstacles of having to navigate their classrooms on their own, establishing their own strategic ways of providing for all student abilities is a priority of theirs. Hanlon said these strategies take a certain effort, but they do prove beneficial.

Kulikovsky mentioned his strategic approach is allowing flexibility for assignment deadlines.



ART BY NADINE DRACHENKO

"So as long as they're doing the practice, it doesn't matter to me a ton whether they do it on Tuesday, or whether they do it on Wednesday, just as long as it's done in sort of an organized fashion," he said.

Hanlon has applied this teaching technique to his lesson plans, through a self-made structural strategy that he recognizes as "self pacing". He has created lesson plans that each of his students must complete individually. Hanlon said that one of the best features of this strategy is the variety of learning needs of students are met in a way resembling team teaching.

"I've essentially cloned myself so that I can be like the team teacher, working

one-on-one with students at the same time," he said.

Kulikovsky recognized there are still limitations with the amount of time that may be put into strategizing.

"[Teachers] do things that have an adverse effect on our health, on our family lives, on lots of different aspects of our lives," Kulikosky said. "A challenge in this profession is knowing that there's more that can be done and never being able to do everything that you think you could do or you wish you could do. That's something that you just have to come to terms with as an educator, that you're going to do the best that you can."

Team taught teachers also find challenges with presenting lessons through necessary learning modalities.

"A challenge is that lessons must be presented in a way that meets the needs of a variety of learning styles," Solomon said.

A teacher needs to address their students with a visual aid, verbal instruction and kinesthetic, manual notes.

Considering the effort put into a teamed class, geometry teacher and partner to Solomon, Carol Ann McCollum emphasized the need for wide learning accessibility in all classes, including accommodating learners who don't have learning disabilities.

"I still experience a wide spectrum of learners. I have kids that could teach themselves geometry, and then I have kids that are still identifying sides and angles of a triangle, but it's not labeled as a team taught class," McCollum said. "Many students don't have IEPs or 504s, but that need still exists within a standard level class, even though it's not labeled or pegged as one."

Teachers recognize the constraints of doing their jobs in a way that benefits their students and maximizes their time.

Despite this, Kulikosky acknowledged that balancing all of this is part of a non-team taught teacher's way to adapt.

"It's just a big balancing act," Kulikosky said.



A New Era of Ari:

Yes, 'eternal sunshine' is a new Ari era, and?

by **nadine drachenko** and **natalia wells**

Nearly four years after her "Positions" album, Ariana Grande released her newest album, "eternal sunshine," on March 8, giving listeners a perspective into how she has grown and found her own sunlight.

"Positions" followed the start of her relationship with her ex-husband Dalton Gomez, releasing 14 tracks that left listeners with bits and pieces of her new-found romance. After her divorce from Gomez in October 2023, "eternal sunshine" is now her album of healing. With 13 tracks, Grande has vocalized her emotions and let listeners know how she has dealt with the recent shifts in her life.

Grande's music career had been put on hold post-"Positions" by her acting and entrepreneurship work: filming the movie "Wicked" and shaping her cosmetic brand "r.e.m beauty." Some fans had lost hope that Grande would release another album because there was a long period of time without mention

of how she would return to music.

When Grande's first single from the album "yes, and?" released Jan. 12 of, she gave life to her listeners who were hoping for new music. In the first shot of this song's music video, there are statues in varied poses scattered on the floor of a warehouse. Fans theorize that the statues represent the poses of Grande's past album covers, with "eternal sunshine's" cover pose in the middle among the others.

This image embodies Grande in her new stage of life, with the sunlight of healing in the middle as her present, being revolved around by her past eras. Not only does this image and song reflect the recent reworkings of her inner self, but the entire album is one symbol of how she is now the best she has ever felt in her own skin. All of her trials and tribulations of finding herself and finally making it to that point are evident through the grace she presents in this album.

Where her past albums have been poppy and upbeat, this album is more of a redirection into an R&B-like pop

genre. Songs like "true story" and "the boy is mine" express this new style she is trying on, and have been shown tremendous support and popularity from the fanbase.

It's safe to say that music listeners are a fan of Grande's new era, causing "eternal sunshine" to meet a milestone of being the most streamed album on Spotify in one day so far in 2024. Her music career is looking up to the sun right now, but will this comeback last eternally? Let's hope so.



ART BY NADINE DRACHENKO

Nadine's 'imperfect for you' review:

"imperfect for you" is the sweet, comforting and relatable sound of arguably the best song on "eternal sunshine." When I say arguably, I am arguing against myself and the many songs competing in my head for number one.

Ariana Grande's distressed lyrics and the occasional strange-sounding melodies ironically make one beautiful masterpiece. Within the first few seconds, I was

taken aback by the guitar that begins the song. It was unexpected from Grande who typically starts with a pop route, so hearing the instrument shifted my familiarity with what I've always known about her music style.

Some of the lyrics themselves are emotionally broken but sung with mesmerizing meaning: "Usually I'm f***ed up, anxious, too much, but I'll love you like you need me to." This

recurring idea is that our imperfections are meant to be accepted; Grande holds the hands of all listeners who need this relief of reassurance.

The lyric, "imperfect for you," is sung with a peculiar melody to the rest of the song, but binds well to the title about imperfection. Its misfitting sound was something I didn't know I had to differ from all songs I've heard before with expected

instrumentals. This one was carefully curated to break what listeners want to hear, making it unique to its sisters on the album.

Lastly, when starting with the guitar, Grande shifted back to her pop roots throughout the rest of the song, which I found gave it her originality and made an interesting concoction of a tune. All I can say overall is that "imperfect for you" is perfect for me and my ears.



Natalia's 'yes, and?' review:

"yes, and?" is one of Ariana Grande's most popular pop anthem songs and a track in her new album "eternal sunshine."

This is one of the best songs in the album because of her unique idea of using the words, "yes, and?" to react to the hate that she and others go through as celebrities. The beat matches perfectly with the lyrics of her song and it gives off good, confident vibes.

In her lyrics, Grande wanted to hit back at the haters who have bashed her personal and dating life. In the song, Grande expressed her response to these negative comments by saying, "Don't comment on my body, do not reply" and, "Your business is yours and mine is mine." I love the way Grande wrote these lyrics because she is making it clear that no one has the right to

comment on her body and that she is entitled to make her own decisions in her private life.

Another one of my favorite parts of the song was when Grande sang, "Boy, come on, put your lipstick on (no one can tell you nothin'), Come on and walk this way through the fire (don't care what's on their mind)." I think she was trying to spread a rhetorical message that everyone should have confidence in themselves no matter what others think. I am convinced that Grande didn't just create this song to talk about herself, she also made this song for everyone to try to have her same mindset: that you shouldn't care what others think.

This song reminds me of her previous pop hit, "thank u, next" because of her giving her opinion and not holding

back. Overall, this song is a bop and a good listen when I wanna feel like a baddie.



ART BY NADINE DRACHENKO



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'Dune: Part Two': They've Dune it again

by rishi vanka

If this movie had been released three months ago, it would've won every Oscar by a mile. Somehow, it would've won "Best Short Film" in spite of its two hour and 46 minute runtime, and "Best Documentary," despite being entirely fictional. If you think that I'm exaggerating, you haven't watched "Dune: Part Two."

This movie genuinely felt like the most interesting documentary that I've ever seen. Director Denis Villeneuve (thank you to my French teacher because I know how to pronounce this) created the first adaptation of author Frank Herbert's novel that actually shows the author's intended message: the potential dangers of a messiah.

The first book, written in 1965, showed how Paul Atreides (unfortunately my French teacher can't help with this pronunciation) was gradually corrupted by a religious movement in his name to unleash war across the galaxy, resulting in the death of billions.

However, the previous movie and TV adaptations showed Paul solely as a heroic figure, without any of the flaws that make him so interesting. In "Dune: Part Two," we see his tragic journey from savior to warmonger, and the movie's seemingly daunting runtime lets this transformation happen naturally. Nothing about his change feels forced or even surprising. Of course he and his followers would think he is the messiah. The



Screenshot from the "Dune: Part Two" trailer courtesy of Warner Bros., reproduced under fair use

sandworm scene made me believe that he was too.

Apart from the story, everything about "Dune: Part Two" is as good as you could expect from a movie with a near \$200-million budget. This is a movie that you have to watch in theaters. Everything about it was so large in scale, that I felt like I was in the desert with the characters, staring down a giant sandworm. With large-scale blockbusters like this one, the story is often lacking and the characters don't feel well-developed. That was not the case here. A large part of the movie focuses on developing Paul's relationship with the Fremen (the native people who live on Dune). These scenes don't feel slow, which was a common complaint about the ending of the first movie, which realistically could've ended around 20 minutes earlier.

Villeneuve improved the movie's pacing and found entertaining ways to show scenes that were really two people talking. Thanks to beautiful shots of the desert and some of the loudest (and best) music I've heard in a movie, every dialogue scene easily gained as much

attention as every explosion. At times, I felt more concerned about Paul's relationship with the Fremen than I did about any physical danger he could be in. Much of this was because of Timothée Chalamet's incredible performance.

Seriously, the transformation he made from the first to second movie was phenomenal. This wasn't a physical change, it was the way in which he commanded attention throughout his scenes. If I was a Fremen, I would've believed that Paul was a messiah too. Chalamet made me believe. He transformed from a relatable teenager into a military leader and a savior.

I genuinely can't find anything to complain about with this movie, other than how loud it was in the theater. Still, I have no regrets. Even the guy sitting next to me had his jaw dropped for at least half of the movie. You have to see "Dune: Part Two." This is our generation's "The Empire Strikes Back," and, between the two, I'd rather watch "Dune" again.

Final Rating: 9.9/10 (I'm taking 0.1 off because everything was so loud and my weak ears hurt the day after).



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- Jason

'Madame Web,' more like 'Bad-ame Web'

by **simon barnes**

Here is a short list of things that could have been made with this movie's \$80 million budget:

1. 8,888,888 copies of Spider Man 2
2. Enough food to feed 160,000 families for a month
3. 281 Ferrari F8 Tributos

My favorite part of "Madame Web" is the roughly two-second sequence towards the beginning where it seems as though the main character was killed. Unfortunately for me and every other poor soul who suffered through this utter travesty, that is not the case. Every frame of this movie left me mentally and physically drained, barely able to stay awake long enough to withstand its grueling two hour runtime.

Every single character is so poorly written that watching them attempt to interact with each other took years off my life. Every time a new character was introduced, all I could hope was that there wouldn't be a worse character introduced later on. Every single time, I was wrong. Whenever a character utters a line of dialogue, it is unfailingly the most incomprehensible drivel ever put to paper. Standout lines like, "Either I peed myself, or my water broke," and, "When you take on the responsibility, great power will come," only scratch the surface of horrors that "Madame Web" has in store for viewers. The three girls that Dakota Johnson's character attempts to save throughout the story are some especially glaring examples of this. Their brutally out-of-touch writing is one of many examples of Marvel



ART BY RHEA NEWNAHA

writers' alienation from their audience.

On the topic of characters, by far the most irritatingly awkward part of this movie is the villain, a "spider-guy" named Ezekiel, whose terrible writing is only matched by the laughable performance by Tahar Rahim. Ezekiel is an empty shell of a character, devoid of purpose and meaning. He exists purely to draw the plot forward, something he barely manages to do.

To call this movie's convoluted, wretched mess of a story a "plot" is an insult to every screenwriter who ever touched a pen. Scenes transition from one to another in no logical order and characters act and speak in ways that have zero purpose entirely. To add insult to injury, despite being an action movie, fight scenes are scarce, and those that are present are lackluster at best, and disgraceful at their worst.

If the writing, acting and characters aren't good enough reasons to hate this movie, maybe the directing is. Every frame of this disastrous dumpster fire of a movie is the most visually unappealing

filth ever put on the big screen. Shoddy camerawork, aimless directing and weak framing all come together to create a movie with the visual quality of a sixth grader's iMovie.

As idiotic and comically flawed as this movie is, it has one of my favorite endings of all time. In the greatest instance of product placement I've ever seen, the main villain is killed by a falling Pepsi-Cola sign, which would have come as a surprise if it wasn't shown in every other shot for the previous five minutes.

I hate this movie. I've always been a big believer in the idea that "no time is ever wasted," but all of that changed when I watched this pathetic excuse for a movie. I will regret the time I wasted watching this abomination until the day I die. The director was given a cast of Dakota Johnson, Sydney Sweeney, Emma Roberts and Adam Scott and was still unable to create a movie worth watching. It's a failure of unimaginable proportions. I wish I could say that it's "so bad it's good," but it's not. "Madame Web" is genuinely just awful.



Watch the video to the left for an inside look at the Math Honor Society's Pi Day celebration!



CHLOE WANG/COLUMBIAN

'Not even water?' No, not even water.

Ramadan is a holiday filled with lasting memories which brings spiritual rejuvenation often overlooked by non-Muslims

by **layla mohran**

Ramadan is a 30 day holiday celebrated by Muslims all around the world. When most people hear Ramadan, they think of fasting. This entails no drinking or eating of any sort from sunrise to sunset. Though fasting is a huge part of the Ramadan celebration, it's not the main purpose or benefit of the holiday.

Ramadan is a time to grow as a person and spend time with the people you love as you learn more about spirituality and faith. Fasting isn't easy, but by the end of the first week, your body is completely used to it. Along with it, within the first few days, you adjust to the sleep schedule of waking up before the sun rises to eat your pre-fasting meal and staying up to do late-night prayers. My favorite part of Ramadan is staying up all night with my friends and siblings to get to go to IHOP at five in the morning. I also love staying at the mosque at night with my friends and eating so much to the point where I can't breathe.

Fasting always reminds me to constantly be grateful for all the food,

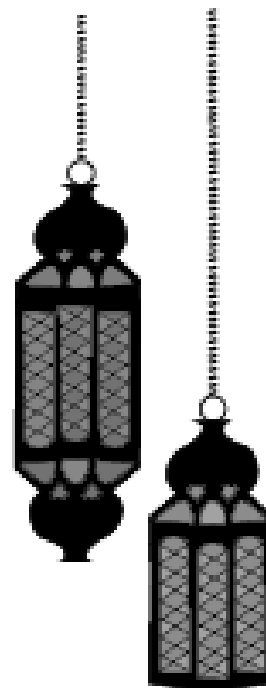
water and other blessings I've been provided with. I learn to not take even the littlest things for granted. After the month of Ramadan is over and I can return to eating at any time, it is a strange feeling. However, it helps me realize that I have the privilege to eat whenever, which in turn serves as a reminder that not everybody in the world has the blessing of a meal on their plate.

The thing that makes Ramadan so unique is the length of it. Not many other holidays are 30 days long. This is why all the good habits we build during Ramadan are so important because when we do them for 30 days straight, they become a part of our routine and not just something we do once a year.

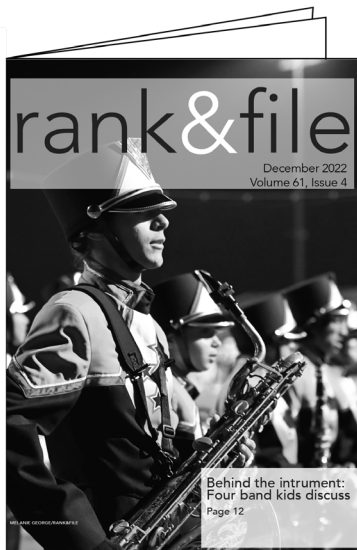
Many traditions that are very important to the meaning of Ramadan include breaking your fast with a date. Dates are delicious fruits and are the perfect way to break your fast.

Another thing that makes Ramadan so special is the wait for Eid. Eid is the celebratory holiday after Ramadan is over. We buy new clothes and toys and receive so much money from our relatives. That's why the last half of Ramadan is spent decorating, buying and

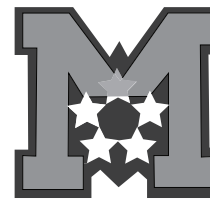
preparing for Eid. The excitement is unmatched. I remember lying awake all night as a kid the day before Eid wondering what gifts I would receive and envisioning myself in a new dress the next morning.



ART BY SOPHIE HAUBER AND REBECCA PAZ



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Simon Says: TOK is for everyone

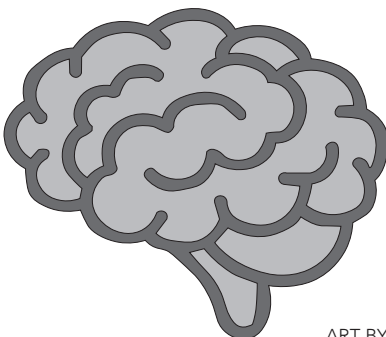
Theory of Knowledge is a course solely available to IB diploma candidates but could be useful for all students because it evaluates human nature and real world situations

by **simon barnes**

Across IB schools, the class IB Theory of Knowledge (TOK) stands as a hallmark of the journey of IB Diploma candidates. However, it shouldn't. At least, not in its current form.

Barring non-IB students from taking TOK creates a disparity between the education that students at Marshall receive. High achieving students are unable to participate in the class, despite being successful and academically oriented, causing them to get a disproportionately worse education.

Despite this, there are advantages to this system, and it doesn't exist for no reason. Keeping TOK exclusive to IB Diploma candidates creates more appropriately sized classes and keeps the discussion at a high level. This is very important to the integrity of the class and



ART BY GEORGIA STREETT

should be maintained, but much effort should be made to minimize the inequality that this system creates.

I understand the difficulty that would come with this integration, and I don't think this class should be open to just anyone. In fact, making an entirely new class that taught the same material that was not IB would be a similarly effective course of action. It would keep the class's content alive while not affecting the education of IB students.

It's less important that we teach IB and non-IB

students in the same classes, but the knowledge given to TOK students should be knowledge that is available to all.

Our world is changing. Artificial Intelligence is becoming an increasingly dominant force in our culture, forever changing our education system and giving children with limited critical thinking skills access to incredibly advanced systems that they have no idea how to control.

As AI takes a stronger hold over students' education, the TOK class, which

teaches critical and scientific thinking, becomes more and more important. If TOK remains exclusive to IB Diploma students, we give countless students a tremendous disadvantage.

If humanity has any desire to become greater than our current state, the IB system must be changed or we will forever linger in placidity, unable to resist as AI chokes the soul out of education and the entire English language.

The current IB system is unequal and ignorant of the reality of the world, creating a vast intellectual disparity between the student body. Non-IB students are deprived of an immensely important resource that becomes even more critical with each passing day. For Marshall, America, the world, and you, change must be made.

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