

verdadera

School Spirit

August 2013

The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

Things to Consider:

- What is the purpose of school spirit?
 - Are there other forms of showing school spirit beyond attending school-hosted events?
 - Can competitive school spirit still be healthy?

Student Submissions

A mass of purple with hints of gold. A cacophony of screams echoing above the blaring music. Bodies pushed against each other in the heat of a crowded space. All eyes are turned to one person.

It seems crazy, it seems unnatural, and it seems insane, but it is exactly what it seems that brings all of us closer together. As a member of the class of 2013, I know that what attracts me to rallies, to postermaking, to late night and early morning setups, is the feeling of community, the feeling of passion and spirit that I honestly seldom find anywhere else. When working with a group of people who all have a common goal, in the end, it is not the goal that really matters, but the journey we undertake to get there. It is the hours we put in, after school and on the weekends, the friendships we

forge while leaning over a wooden elephant painting it gray, the united intake of breath we take when the Social Manager announces second place, it is in the moments that we continue to do this. The 6 AM labeling cans, the crowd of people in the rally court doing a dance routine in synchronization, the mob that cheers on our Powderpuff team, the nights we spend coming up with creative dress-up ideas. Yes, I know rally posters may seem like a waste of paper, and quad decs a waste of paint to the regular outsider. But for those of us in the know, in the moment, and in the class, they are a representation of our time, our effort, and our collective passion. So, take in a deep breath with us, suck in the hot air that surrounds you, and watch as our stories unfold.

"Hopefully, we can build a rivalry
and we'll be able to do this a lot.
Make a legacy, then retire as
champions".

~ Serena Williams

As an MV student, I don't really have that much school spirit, aside from Homecoming Week and the rallies, and sometimes the occasional "MV's better than Lynbrook" statement. I don't go to any of the sports games, and I don't dress up a lot of the times for dress-up days. Why? I don't know. But I will say that I feel that the culture here on campus revolving around school spirit is more for the popular people, like the ASB student body, on campus, not us mere wall flowers in HS. Also, the environment in MV is so cut-throat and competitive, that, oftentimes, I feel as if I shouldn't even be spirited for a school that I want to get out of. All my other friends at more relaxed high schools say they have a football-centric high school and or something-centric high school, which allows them to all have some iota of school spirit as a coming together of a common liking and bond, but Monta Vista is so academic-centric, it doesn't allow for all that. I care more about colleges and where I'm going to, than just relaxing and coming to enjoy MV. But that's just my two cents.

"I have never let my schooling
interfere with my education".

~ Mark Twain

MY vision of school spirit is a bit different than others. I believe that true school spirit comes not from the rallies, or dances, but from the feeling of community that we get from being at Monta Vista High School. There is a certain culture that comes from being a Monta Vista student, and for me, it is the comfort in knowing that others are just as sleep deprived as you, that we are all experiencing the same emotional ups and downs, and that at the end of the day, we are together striving to achieve our dreams. That for me is true school spirit.

"In everyone's life, at some point,
our inner fire goes out".

~ Albert Schweitzer

MONTA Vista doesn't have enough school spirit activities. On the times we do, it's exciting, because we get to take a break off of our busy schedules to unite as a school towards fun events, but I feel there are less and less of those days as the year goes by. I think we should have more school dances, more school dress-up days, more student representation in what we want to do. As a sophomore, I'm kind of getting bored. Like, okay, Homecoming, the most exciting week is over, now what? Just hide all those blue, purple, orange, and green shirts, just come off that spirit-high, and just revert back to our normal drudgery as MV students with no lives aside from the library. Because that's what's happening. We're all so stress-filled, having school spirit helps me relax. Being happy about being an MV student.

"The pressure people put on
themselves and the rivalry between
the teams is much more marked.
And I think that's a good thing. As
long as that rivalry remains within the
spirit of competition, it can only spur
everyone on".

~ Eric Cantona

I'VE seen first hand the so-called "rallies" and "school spirit" of other schools through IDC exchanges, and all I can say is: dem schools got nothing on us. I think what I love about Monta Vista most are the rallies—they're super competitive and competition is just so...Monta Vista. Some of my quiet, anti-social friends even go to rallies just so they can cry/laugh with the class when we win/lose (hopefully win)—and I really think that's saying something about how awesome our rallies are.

I heard some rumors from Leadership students about admin removing the competition factor, and I know that's equivalent to saying good bye to true, fiery, passionate school-spirit. What makes our rallies so unique and so school spirited is the competition, which makes the class feel united as a whole. It's unpractical to expect us to have this overall "school spirit" without some incentive. As an upperclassman, don't expect me to feel bonded with the freshmen I never interact with unless we have an enemy in common (like Lynbrook). During homecoming week, I felt the school spirit as all the

seniors in my classes came together and got pumped up for the week, and I began to interact with people in 2013 I never even spoke with before.

My younger brother now moans to me about how in Lawson, they removed the competitive factor of their "Color Clash" (exactly like a rally, something I really enjoyed in middle school). Now he compares their Color Clashes as "forced herding in of students into the gym and 30 minutes of pointless, forced cheering". Sucks for him, but he'll come to Monta Vista and learn what a real rally and real school spirit are like.

"Look around. There are no enemies here. There's just good, old-fashioned rivalry".

~ Bob Wells

SCHOOL spirit? Sometimes at rallies and the like I feel as though it is just pure competition. No real pride for our class or school, just a hopeless effort to be someone else. To win ourselves another badge. We are always trying to win a prize at Monta Vista. Whether in grades, sports, popularity, or anything else.

Everyone is so excited to be a second semester senior. Why? They aren't leaving much behind. We are all so ready to go off to college to let go of the invisible ties that keep us here. In truth those ties are probably more invisible than we think them to be. Nonexistent might be a better description."

"Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work".

~ John F. Kennedy

MY cousin just graduated from Dartmouth. I wish one day to go to a school like that. No, not just because its an Ivy or because of its prestigious ranking.

Its because when we go out, no matter where or when, if she is adorning her snug Dartmouth sweater someone will approach her with the phrase: "You went to Dartmouth? Me too, class of [insert year here]" Then the conversation will rage

for 10 minutes to once an entire dinner across the space between our tables.

The feeling of interconnectedness amongst these students, the love for their school, their shared passion is the ultimate display of school spirit. I think having a feeling like that would be really cool.

"Where there is unity there is always victory".

~ Publilius Syrus

I used to attend rallies and school-sponsored events (like blue pearl, quiz bowl, etc). Last year, however, I just stopped attending all these events. People think its because I got rejected from the leadership program after applying and I'm being embittered but no: that was just a wake up call. I think the rejection really opened my eyes and made me realize my own, different path. The way I see it, I have better things to do with my life. While classmates are wasting their times pointlessly cheering and getting angry over "school spirit", I can be studying and spending peaceful, quiet time with myself. Rally days: I spend the time studying or chilling with friends. So yeah, go attend those school events and wear that obnoxious shade of purple and gold all you want, but I'm going to spend my time productively—chilling with friends and being the ones to have the real fun.

"The things that have been most valuable to me I did not learn in school".

~Will Smith

As a sophomore attending Monta Vista High School I don't feel the urge to attend any rallies at all. I see rallies as stupid and not fun at all. People just lose their voices and waste money only to end up in the predestined place that is always expected. I don't even think it unites MV at all. Classes just get mad at each other if one class does better than them and people even resort to keying people's cars and insulting each other. I feel like rallies break us up more than unifies us. It's funny to think about because we all see school spirit as something that brings us all together. I don't go to rallies and I choose to just hang around in the rally court or in

the library. I use my time much better in these 30 minutes than those people who go.

"I have been up against tough competition all my life. I wouldn't know how to get along without it".

~ Walt Disney

I really think that school spirit is an important part of my life. I feel connected to my fellow 2014-ers as we all dress up in our class colors and scream at the top of our lungs in order to win. This past rally was really fun for me. As incoming juniors at the Homecoming rally we felt the pressure to "continue the streak" and to win 1st place over the seniors. My friends and I decked out in light green and painted our faces and wore ridiculous outfits. While it was all fun, we ended up losing and getting 2nd place by a mere point. I mean, it's not a huge deal because it was expected that the seniors would win 1st as it is there last year here. However, I felt as if all our hard work had gone to waste. As a class we worked so hard to earn spirit points and to complete rally decorations only to lose by one point. I don't know why but it made me feel discouraged and I felt as if the rally point system was unfair. But, I guess next year we will take 1st and I'll feel motivated to cheer once more.

"We're all just playing our own game. I don't see it as a rivalry. We're just trying to play our best".

~ Michelle Wie

IF it wasn't for school spirit I don't know how I would survive high school. I live for rallies. Whether its Welcome Back Rally, or the infamous Homecoming Rally, the Winter Rally, or the Farewell Rally; I can't even describe how thankful I am that our school has these activities. Rallies are my way to cut back and just let go – just forget about my troubles and devote all my attention to winning. Rallies are such essential times for friendship. From cutting shirts together, to shopping for the fooddrive, to spraying each other's face, to poster-making together and to screaming at the tops of your lungs with each other; rallies have made me make new friends and become ever more

closer with my current ones. This year's Homecoming Rally probably embodied the prefect rally to the greatest extent. School up until this point was getting quite hectic, there were lots of tests and stress was high. However, on the first day of Homecoming week, everything was forgotten. That whole week was dedicated to working for your class. I remember putting in more effort into class decorations than my homework. That week was one of the most tiring weeks of my life however I don't regret a single minute of it. I think for a school like Monta Vista, rallies and school spirit is necessary. We, the students, need some sort of outlet to escape from all the academic pressure we receive. To me, rallies are something to look forward too and a way to spend time with my friends and that's why I need school spirit.

"Continuous effort - not strength or intelligence - is the key to unlocking our potential".

~ Winston Churchill

I don't particularly understand school spirit. I mean taking it literally would mean that you have a lot of spirit for your school. So like a love for your gym building or the campus? Or are you referring to the spirit of the actual school...but I don't think buildings have souls, feel free to prove me wrong of course. All jokes aside, school spirit is a waste of energy. I never understood the need to spike your hair and paint your face so that you can go in a giant room and yell to your heart's content along with a couple hundred other people (and it's a tad bit barbaric don't you think?) doing the same thing. People always ask me if I have school spirit but why would I have spirit for a school for which I don't know the majority of the 2600 people who attend. I just know my friends and classmates, sure I'll represent them but I can't pretend to know my whole class and so I can't represent them. At Monta Vista, school spirit is big; I've seen people come together at Homecoming year after year, which I think is great, but it's always short-lived. Rallies come along, people get excited and come together but all that falls apart right after. I think school spirit does a good job of bringing people together for a short amount of time, but I don't find the use in

unity unless its long-term and so personally I don't think school spirit is anything great.

"I'm about unity."

~ Alveda King

FOR me, school spirit was something that kept me going. When school seemed unbearable and my life seemed uncontrollable, school spirit kept me grounded and motivated. I viewed my school as a separate entity, removed from myself, and working to benefit it made me feel good about myself. Though I saw it separated from me, it set up a kind of parallel. I felt that if I could benefit my school, I could benefit myself. People indulge in school spirit for many different reasons--for fun, social responsibilities, new opportunities, etc. For me, it served as an inspiration and motivation to reflect my care onto something. Eventually, school spirit helped me translate the affection I had for my school to myself and though it could be interpreted as a selfish act, I used it as a source of self-help.

"The deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless ... beyond speech ... beyond concept".

~ Thomas Merton

As a Monta Vista Alumni, school spirit was never a big deal to me. I was all for MOnta Vista winning in sports and competitions, and I went and helped out in rallys and float building a couple times but was never very enthusiastic about it. Since then, I have realized the importance of these activities, as they teach participants to be proud and passionate of the school they attend and the contributions they can make, bringing people together as they work towards a common goal of glorifying their school. To do well for yourself it is important to enjoy what you're doing and to drive yourself, and participating in these spirit building activities is an easy way to learn team skills that will be surprisingly useful to your life as you move forward, regardless of what you do.

"United we stand, divided we fall."

~ Patrick Henry

WHEN I think school spirit, I think of things like rallies and homecoming games, and to be honest, I don't really go to either because let's face it - do any of us really know what happens? I've been to a few when I was a freshman and all I remember are a bunch of people screaming and jumping up and down for whatever that was happening in the middle of the gym. I guess I can see why some people find it nice to let go for thirty minutes and unite together with their peers and cheering them on, but I'm not really that enthused by that sort of thing. I hang out with people who also don't really go to games or rallies either so there's another influence as to why I lack some school spirit. And I'm sure that in years to come, I won't be looking back and regretting that one time I didn't go to a rally - besides, I can just do that when I'm a senior. But if this is what defines "having school spirit" then I'm perfectly content not having any.

"No institution can function smoothly if there is disunity among its members."

~ Atharva Veda

I'M a senior at right now and this is probably the only year I've ever seen everyone so pumped up with school spirit. I'm usually the kind of person who just goes with the flow, so I was all riled up for the rally and homecoming, and just like everybody else, I was posting comments on the facebook group for homecoming. Of course now everything has died down, but during that week, there was a lot going down in those groups and there was a lot of rivalry between the classes even when it seemed like people were trying to be open minded and supportive of the lower classmen, they were still lashing out at them and boasting about how we were the best. And I won't lie and say that I hadn't commented on those posts cheering them on with other people because I did, and looking back I realize how terrible that was. I guess mob mentality sort of took over and everyone just got caught up in the heat of the moment, but hopefully we'll be able to stay away from that the next time around, since this is my last year and I really just want to have fun more than anything. And I don't know about you guys, but I'm

kind of getting sick of hashtags too so maybe we can stay away from #hashtagging #every #word #we #say.

"Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved".

~ Mattie Stepanek

I never really understood why everyone cared so much about rallies. I went to the first one in freshman year, and didn't get it. I stood there, surrounded by similarly confused freshmen, trying to find out what the big deal was. We were all graduating the same year, but why did that unite us? What's the big deal? I felt no real sense of unity, and never went to a rally after. I don't buy into all this school spirit, and class warfare. I will never understand why people take rallies so seriously...

"I do not conceive of any reality at all as without genuine unity."

~ Gottfried Leibniz

I remember my first rally. It made me feel like I was part of the Monta Vista family. I felt a surge of school pride, and understood why people took so much pride in being a Matador. Even though people always complain about Monta Vista; about all the hard classes, mean teachers, unfair grades, they were all happy and taking pride in their school. Every year the rallies seem to get more and more intense. The first year a few people took it seriously, and the rest followed. Sophomore year more people started to really get involved and cheered even louder. Junior year was very intense, and we even won a rally! Senior year we took it very seriously, and some people even teared up. Its interesting how these four years seem to bring us all together, and our pride increases every year.

"Something similar is still true of the courses followed by manifold intuitions which together make up the unity of one continuous consciousness of one and the same object."

~ Edmund Husserl

NOT going to lie, I use rally times to go to the library and study. What is the point of yelling and screaming for something that doesn't really matter? It's "class bonding" sure, but I already have my solid group of friends. I don't know kids in my class, yeah, but I'm not going to go out of my way to get to know people who don't even know me. And I don't think one rally or two rallies or even all the rallies will get me to "bond" with the entire class. What they MEAN is being attached to your graduating year. Loving 2013. I do love 2013. Just what 2013 means to me. Which is me and my friends hanging out every day, living my life the way it is till I graduate.

"Individuality or Unity? I say there's room for both."

~ Brian Celio

SCHOOL spirit is not just rallies! It's like dress up days and carnival games, and the homecoming football game when everyone (alumni, students, teachers, community members) came and it wasn't just about announcing who won Homecoming. I never understood why people don't enjoy school spirit. They really do! Whether its going to basketball games or participating in school wide events, or even just going to a dance, I think that can be called spirit. I used to be kind of skeptical about it all too but very early on I realized that I was being judgmental about how all these school spirited people are meaninglessly preppy and have nothing better to do. But actually, they're just having fun with the time they have in high school, doing something different and fun in the 7 and a half hours of school we have. I get that maybe that "fun" isn't everyone else's type of fun, but I think "school spirit" covers more than just rallies and that everyone can find something they enjoy that counts as spirit.

"We are convinced of the fundamental unity of the human family."

~ Hans Kung

OKAY no offense, but I think that school spirit is so stupid. We spend tons and tons of money on things like posters, pom-poms and other random

things. And barely anyone cares. If it was up to me I would just use that money for something everyone would enjoy (like food). I mean I'm pretty sure everyone would appreciate some nice real food instead of being forced to march into a cramped, noisy environment where only about 10% of the people are enjoying themselves. Just my two cents.

"The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize."

~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

SCHOOL spirit is honestly what I live for. In this place of academic competitiveness, of stressful days and hard-earned breaks, having those moments to decompress, yell, scream, and just flip out like crazy is what keeps me going. It's like everything else just presses on top of you until it comes times for rallies. There's that week where posters are being made and everyone's getting prepped for those 30 minutes of craziness. And of course Homecoming is even better because there's almost a solid month of preparation! Going to weekly Homecoming Decorations kept me from going insane. It was like a small light in the gloom and doom of Monta Vista. Of course there have been times where there's been this great controversy over the level of competitiveness but for me, I think it's worth it. I mean if people are going to be stupid enough to waste friendships over something like that and not be mature people about it, then it's their problem. I don't think everyone else should have to deal with that.

"Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city."

~ George Burns

RALLIES are the most screwed up competitions ever. The student body already knows the outcome-seniors will win. Then the juniors will place second, sophomores-third, and freshman-LAST. As a sophomore, I don't find it very enjoyable because this outcome is always inevitable. No matter how hard you try, how loud you are, or how class spirited you are, seniors will always win. I understand that it's the senior's last year at high school and all, but its so depressing to see your class placed as 2nd, 3rd, or 4th when you know that your class deserved that 1st place after all the hard work.

"Two things scare me. The first is getting hurt. But that's not nearly as scary as the second, which is losing."

~ Lance Armstrong

I believe that school spirit just makes high school much more enjoyable; it's part of the high school experience. I think that school spirit plays an even bigger role in MVHS, especially since this school is so competitive and stress-oriented. It just lets us get rid of all the crap in our heads after weeks of stressing over grades. I don't find events like rallies very fun or interesting, but I attend them because it is pretty much an obligation as a matador.

"Truth and honor n'er fail,
Loyalty will 'ere prevail,
Strong ideals will never die,
Hail to thee 'ole MV High!".

~ Monta Vista Alma Mater

More stories at www.mvhsverdadera.org

A WORD FROM THE PROFESSIONAL

with Kimberly Lowenthal, School Psychologist at Fremont High School

I recently had the pleasure of meeting and working with the talented Verdadera team to discuss the topic of “School Spirit”. A lively reading followed by discussion revealed mixed opinions from students about the importance of school spirit. However, what struck me most that evening is that the students’ opinions seemed to revolve around the activities designed to increase school spirit, such as rallies or homecoming, rather than the concept of school spirit itself.

School Spirit is defined by MacMillan dictionary as the feeling of being proud and enthusiastic about the school that you go to. The students who submitted essays on this topic were missing the big picture; they were evaluating the value of tangible high school events (rallies, sports games), rather than debating whether the students of Monta Vista High School possess the quality of school spirit. Are MV students proud to be matadors? Are they enthusiastic about their high school? Do students have a sense of ownership and pride in their high school, or are they just going through the motions? These are some of question I posed to the Verdadera team, which led to an honest, thoughtful discussion motions? These are some of question I posed to the Verdadera team, which led to an honest, thoughtful discussion about what school spirit really means at Monta Vista High School.

School Spirit should not be considered without first exploring the culture and identity of the school in question. According to the students represented by the Verdadera team, the culture of Monta Vista is primarily one of high achievement, and with that high pressure. The students are driven, rigorous workers, with a college bound mentality. This culture creates a mindset of school being an obligation, or a stepping-stone to the rest of your life. Students reflected that everything they engage in at Monta Vista is geared towards getting out of high school and moving on to bigger and better things (college, your career of choice). The downside to this perception of high school is that it fails to build pride and enthusiasm, as students are working hard for the future, while forgetting to stop and enjoy the present.

Another topic of discussion was the cost and value of competition in a high school. Academic pressure inherently lends itself to competition, the pressure to be at the top of your class, to have the best SAT scores, and to go to the highest ranked college. Perhaps that is why MV students are so drawn (either passionately for, or against) to the class competition aspects of rallies, as the majority of entries in this edition of Verdadera revealed. The culture of MV breeds this spirit of competition. Competition between individuals can be divisive, however, when used properly, competition can be a powerful tool to building connections and school spirit as well. Monta Vista is currently successfully employing the spirit of competition to build connectedness in the form of class competitions at rallies. Student representatives at Verdadera expressed the pride they feel for their respective classes. They passionately discussed drive to do better than last year and beat the other classes bonded students with their graduation class. Through competition against an outside force, such as a rival high school, Monta Vista could use this same energy to develop a cohesive school spirit as a whole student body.

In exploring factors that could make students at Monta Vista feel connected, as opposed to competing against one another, one student astutely pointed out a beautiful silver lining to the school’s stressful, achievement-oriented culture. She reflected that when she feels the most connected, enthusiastic, and proud of her school, is when she is bonding with other MV students over just these struggles. She feels connected when she sees her friends in late night chat rooms studying for exams, when previous AP students pass down old notebooks to help new students, and when friends support each other through the pressure to do it all and be the best at everything you do. For this particular student, who appeared to speak for many, these are the ways in which she finds connections with other students, and feels connected to the culture of her high school. These challenges build connection through common struggle and the

feeling that only other students who share this experience can truly understand and support one another. Is this way of connecting any less valuable than cheering at football games?

Of course, not all students do connect to this culture of academic challenge; some connect through sports, leadership, clubs, or relationships with other students and staff. The important message to take away is that school spirit can be found in a variety of ways. It's not simply in cheering at rallies, painting floats, or beating other sports teams...though these activities may help some to find it. It is in identifying with the culture of your high school, and connecting with the students and staff you interact with daily. School spirit is about connectedness, culture, pride, and community. There are many ways to achieve the feeling of being proud and enthusiastic about your high school, but cultivating this sense of "spirit" is essential to having a positive high school experience.

For Students...

The high school experience is important, unique, and valuable. I challenge you to try and relax about the future, and enjoy the present while you can. High school is a valuable phase in your life, one that can never be revisited or recreated. Find what connects and inspires you, and focus on being present in the moment. There is no "right" activity for developing school spirit, so explore your options and find something that fits you and inspires you. Participating in high school life in a way that feels comfortable to you can help make you feel more proud and enthusiastic about your school, create lasting memories, and help you become a well-rounded, balanced adult. Years later you won't remember whether you got a 90% or a 92% on that math test, but you will remember choir concerts, band trips, camps, rallies, sports games, dances, late night talks with friends. These are the memories that make us proud to be from Monta Vista.

For Parents...

Allow and encourage your students to participate in extra-curricular activities and other opportunities to get involved outside of the classroom. And not just for the sake of the college resume, for the intrinsic sake of enjoying the activity itself and developing a connection with their high school and meaningful memories. If your student has not yet developed an area of interest, challenge them to try new things until they find something that feels right for them. While achievement and preparing for the future has value, the high school experience is more than a stepping-stone to the next chapter. It is an important phase of growing up to be a successful, well-rounded adult. Additionally, research has found that students who participate in extracurricular activities actually achieve better educational outcomes than non-participants even after controlling for social class, gender, and intellect (Eccles et.al., 2003). Encourage and support your student to seek a healthy balance in their high school life by living in the present, and not to focus exclusively on studying or living only for the future.

Kimberly Lowenthal grew up in Cupertino, California where she attended Monta Vista High School (Go Matadors!). She attended the University of Southern California for undergraduate college, where she studied Psychology with a minor in Cinema-Television. She began her career as a behavioral therapist in Los Angeles, before moving back to the bay area to work on a research study to help people quit smoking cigarettes with Stanford University. Kimberly received a MS in School Psychology from San Francisco State in 2010. She is currently a School Psychologist at Fremont High School.



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