

THE COURIER



VOLUME 90, NUMBER 2

WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK 10605

MARCH 2014

The longest running middle school newspaper in the United States!

Friendly or Dangerous Apps?

Alyssa Cuomo

Many teens and even adults use various social networks and apps. Some think it's all fun and that there's no harm in it, but some abuse their privileges and use the social networks and apps negatively.

For example, Ask.fm is a social network where others can ask you questions personally or anonymously. It's cool to see the responses to questions, but some people feel the need to send hateful comments anonymously, leaving the other person feeling down about themselves and wondering who would write such a thing. Often, friends of the person getting bullied by someone anonymously would defend them and give them encouraging words. Ask.fm has been responsible for suicides, since the anonymous bullying was so severe and not able to be caught. Hanna Smith, a 14 year old girl from the UK, was a victim of bullying on Ask.fm and committed suicide because of it. Ask.fm can be okay for friendly purposes, but is it really necessary to make someone feel so bad that they need to end their life to end the misery?

Snapchat is another app where you can send a picture or a video to one or various people for a maximum of 10 seconds. Teenagers view this as an opportunity to send inappropriate pictures to each other, since you can't save the picture and it's deleted after you open it. But what some don't know is that you have the ability to screenshot a snapchat



and you can share it on other social media sites. A screenshot is when you press certain buttons on your phone; it saves the image that is displayed on your phone. This can be dangerous because if you send a snapchat that you don't want to be seen, the other person can screenshot it and send it to other people. If your snapchat was screenshot by a user, you get a notification that tells you so. Snapchat is fun and quirky, but if it's used in an inappropriate way, it can go from fun to scary.

Furthermore, Instagram is a social network where you can take pictures of anything, add a description and share them with your followers. On Instagram, you can choose who you want to follow and who can follow you if you set your profile to private. If you post a picture, anyone can comment on it, whether it's a good or a bad comment. You're able to delete or block the comment or the person. There are many cases where there are fake accounts. People fake being others and sometimes get away with

it, but it's fairly easy to figure out if the person is real or not. Additionally, there is a new update on Instagram where you can send a direct picture or message to certain people. This can be risky because that person can share what you sent them or they can make fun of you. Instagram is great for sharing special moments or celebrations with pictures. However, people should keep in mind that there are bad people using that app and there are certain risks and boundaries you should not cross.

Kik Messenger is a seemingly-harmless, yet dangerous app. Kik Messenger is where you can talk to other people in an easier way. You can also encounter fake accounts on Kik, which could be stalkers or pedophiles. Kik also has an age restriction on it for you to download, yet younger kids download it all the time by lying about their age. Many times, people advertise their Kik on Instagram, saying stuff like, "Kik me I'm bored" or telling you to "hit them up". Some people use Kik deliberately

to sext, or send nude pictures. When this happens with kids, it's referred to as child pornography. Kik is a nice app to talk to friends with, but it is also used for inappropriate purposes.

Whisper, an app that lets you confess your secrets and insecurities anonymously to each other, also has its dangers. It allows you to post a picture and insert text onto it. Users can also tag the location of their whispers. It's mostly popular with college students. In Washington State, Ronald Peterson III was arrested for the rape of a 12 year old girl, whom he met through the app Whisper. He has used the app to communicate with underage girls. He claimed to be 21 years old and the girl claimed to be 14 years old. Peterson eventually convinced the girl to meet at a hotel and she snuck out of her home to join him at a nearby hotel. This highlights that Whisper can be used as a tool for sexual predators. It's nice to let out your deepest secrets and insecurities, but is it really worth the risk?

All of these apps have the risk of being used negatively and the reality of some of these is quite frightening. People won't stop using these apps, no matter how dangerous they are. However, there are some advantages to these apps and social networks. You can get to know people or catch up with some whom you haven't talked to in a while. Social networks and apps are an amazing advance in technology, but keep in mind that there are various dangers and boundaries you shouldn't cross.

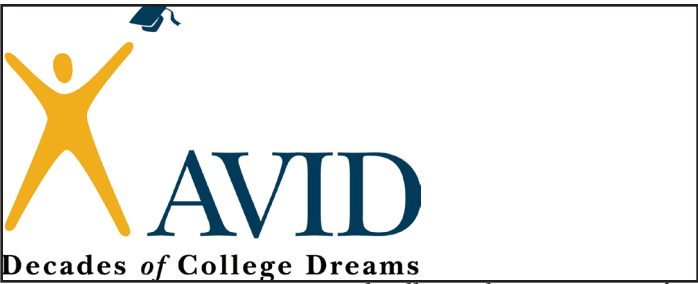
The Amazing AVID Experience

Lucas Konarski

AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, is a program that helps students learn while having fun and getting

ready for college. AVID focuses on the use of WICOR Strategies, which means Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading. Writing is encouraged as a way for students to enhance both their learning and their higher-order thinking skills. Inquiry involves teaching students to think critically and ask more complex questions. Collaboration offers students the opportunity to work together toward meaningful learning outcomes. Organization of both time and materials are taught to students so they can be successful. Reading to learn teaches students how to read effectively for maximum learning.

Mr. Spatafore, Mrs. Friedman, Ms. Holder, Mr. Cloherty and other Eastview teachers brought the AVID program to White Plains. This is the fourth year of AVID at Eastview, but the first year here at Highlands. According to Mrs. Friedman, "AVID helps students do their best to achieve their goals and think about



careers and colleges they can go to after high school." AVID programs and teaching strategies are in all the classes here on campus, but only 50 students in the 7th and 8th grades actually have an AVID elective period. .

The goal of AVID is to get students onto the honor roll or almost there. Another goal is to get more students into advanced classes. It was AVID which brought the one-binder-system, the Cornell notes and team huddle to White Plains. The one binder system was brought to Highlands for the students to be more organized and for students to have one place to keep all their materials. The Cornell notes are used not only to take notes, but also as a more efficient way to study and interact with the material. For the next few years, AVID wants to grow the program and bring more chances of college attendance and a future career for students.

A Full Spring Break

Richard Daronco

We won't lose three days of spring break after all. The White Plains School District explored several options as to how to make up time for the snow days lost over the winter months. The solution last year was to shorten spring break but many students did not to attend school during the vacation week.

"When we looked at the percentage of students who did not come to school during what was to be a vacation week the attendance was less than 40 percent. Knowing this I asked the principals and others to explore options. The best option presented and supported by most was to extend the day," said Tim Connors, Interim White Plains School Superintendent.

Under the extended day plan that was accepted by the district, the first period of the school day at Highlands will start at 7:42 am, instead of 7:46 am and dismissal will be at 2:46 pm. This schedule will be in effect from March 24th through May 30th.

Mr. Connors believes the best plan



ible with the February vacation," the Superintendent said.

Some Westchester school districts like Eastchester opted to take back school days during the February break. The cost for extending the schools days will be about the same as having employees come in for makeup snow days.

is to adjust the school calendar in the future so the district can plan for more snow days. "We are also looking at being flex-

Gym Should Be Mandatory

Alyssa Cuomo

Many kids and teenagers dislike PE class and wish that they didn't have to take the class. They don't want to put effort into the class or change their clothes. I know this because I've had these times too. In reality, PE class is actually very useful because most teenagers don't exercise on their own time and eat junk food. Also, they spend their time on the internet, playing video games or just watching TV constantly. It may be difficult having to change and all, but PE class isn't as bad as teenagers make it out to be.

I understand that some teens have little athletic ability, but in PE it's just a matter of you trying to do whatever you're supposed to be doing and getting a good grade because you tried. If you don't follow instructions or don't change, you end up getting a bad grade. So what if you think you're bad at sports? It's better to try and make it evident that you try even if you're not an athlete. PE is not about your athletic ability, it's about trying and following the instructions to do the best that you can. PE is what you make of it.

Every day, teenagers are bombarded with fast food ads and often fall

for it because they think the food looks great and delicious. Fast food chains often target teenagers since they fall for that stuff. Don't even try to deny that you've seen a fast food ad and just died at how good it looks. It happens. We're not informed enough to realize that fast food is incredibly bad for you. If you want to eat food bad for you, at least work it off.

Not exercising on your own can lead to many things. For example, diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and heart disease are most likely to come about if you don't exercise. Many kids don't exercise because they're lazy and don't really want to do anything. The percentage of obese or overweight kids of the ages of 10-17 in America is 31.3%. Obesity doesn't occur only from poor diet. It also occurs if you don't exercise. The statistics of obesity rises every year.

PE is actually a very important class that shouldn't be skipped or missed. You don't realize that it helps you in many ways. In order to keep yourself healthy throughout your teenage years, you should always participate in Physical Education.



Gym Should Not Be Mandatory

Rebecca Sparer

Looking forward to gym class? Some students really aren't. The bell rings and they enter the locker room, and although teachers might try to prevent locker incidents, they happen. Nobody can prevent getting bullied in the locker room; it's the perfect place to target others when there are no adults around. Even if they're not bullied in locker rooms, some kids are really insecure about changing clothes in front of others. They are uncomfortable, and it shouldn't be a requirement to change your clothes in front of other students.

That's just part of the issue. Gym class has been an uncomfortable, fearful, place for students for generations, and I honestly wonder why nothing has been done about the issue. In my opinion, you shouldn't be forced to play sports for a grade. If you're really not athletic and terrible at playing sports, you shouldn't have to participate if you're afraid of embarrassing yourself in front of kids. A lot of students that don't do well in gym class are bullied because of this, and it's not okay.

School is a place for academic learning, where you learn skills you can use later in life. If I really don't want to have an athletic career, I could be spending the time in gym class learning something else that could help me later in life. School is a place where you have to try your best academically, but I think it's unfair to be graded on our

athletic ability.

Although some people say that gym class is needed because some kids don't get enough exercise and would become obese, that's their parents' issue. If you ask me, people are making too much of a big deal about the obesity issue in America. Kids are becoming self-conscious because the government is weaseling into their problems. Some kids are just obese and there's no way to prevent it, and it's not a big deal. If we tried to make all the people in America skinny, how many people do you think would develop eating disorders? About 8 million already have them, but with everyone trying, I feel like that number would increase drastically. I'm not saying that people shouldn't exercise, I'm just saying that before TV and movies and magazines, people didn't have as many issues with appearance. Now that the government is making such a big deal out of obesity, it has made people very self-conscious.

I would say a brighter solution for gym class that it would be completely based on participation and not athletic ability, but you can't blame kids for not wanting to participate if they're untalented. Maybe gym class could be optional, and you could take another educational class instead of gym. I doubt this idea will ever become a reality, but I hope something will be done about the issue soon.

Students Take Aim at Acing the Revolutionary War

Lucas Konarski

FLEX social studies, also known as living history, is a very fun class in which the students reenact and produce things and events of the Revolutionary War here in the USA. This class is taught by Mrs. Friedman, room 209, and Mr. Iasiello, room 302. We have learned how to cook things the continental soldiers cooked. Some things were weird tasting but some were actually very tasty, like the Johnny cakes. Johnny cakes are like pancakes, but made with cornmeal and water. Recently we have been learning how to march, fire a musket, and follow commands from generals. We now also know all the supplies the soldiers needed to survive during the war. We got to use toy muskets to practice our skills. We also pretended to use the powder, musket ball, and rammer. At the end of the quarter, "Sargent" Ryan came to teach us some marching commands and he brought us a lot of things the soldiers used. He divided us into four regiments and chose someone to command each one of them. It was a lot of fun, even though we had to go outside in the cold. A part of our final exam is to show our teachers our abilities in marching and firing a musket. I really enjoy this flex experience because it allows us to do some activities soldiers did back then and it was also very fun to be put into their time.



THE COURIER

White Plains Middle School

EDITORIAL BOARD AND STAFF

Editors-in-Chief

Alyssa Cuomo
John Petrozzi

Copyeditor

Danny DeGenaro

Layout Editor

OPEN

Sports Editor

Austin Antico

Photography Editor

Melanie Varela

Staff and Contributors

Rebecca Sparer, Nikolas O'Hanlon, Richard Daronco,
Emily Brooks, Stachys Aho

Advisor

Rachel Miller

Editorial Policy

Editorials reflect the opinion of the editorial board and, unless otherwise noted, are written by members of the staff. The editorial board solicits responsible commentaries and letters-to-the-editor, but reserves the right to edit for style, grammar, or space limitations. Letters and commentaries containing obscenity or libelous comments will not be published. All letters must be signed or they will not be published, however your name can be withheld upon request.

Layout Help

Phyllis DeGenaro



Office Manager

Stachys Aho

Circulation Editors

Lena Salino
Kelly Marx

Managing Editors

Sarah Salino
Amy Rosenblatt

Associate Editor

Lucas Konarski

Webmaster

Ms. Goudreau

Is it Really Chicken?

We have all been in that position where we awkwardly poke our school lunch with a plastic fork and say, “I think it’s some sort of meat.” Sadly, we rarely know the truth. Our school lunch staff is trying to push healthy foods now more than ever. Sometimes, this means disgusting insults to cuisine such as the veggie burger, the over-dressed salad, and that pulled pork that oddly enough tastes lemony. The fact is, various layers of red tape, money, and nutrition are holding us back from the day we’re served a well-seasoned filet mignon at school.

Before I chew up the lunch system, we need to establish the fact we are eating at a public school cafeteria, not the Ritz Carlton. However, I still expect to at least look at a meal and not lose my last one. Our lunches fail a major component of food, presentation. Presentation simply means how good the food looks on a plate. Our cafeteria half throws food on your tray, conforming it into some of the most visually unappealing lumps of food ever seen. The salads in plastic boxes, one of my personal favorite school meals, are quite the opposite. They look like a person actually took the time to organize it into the basic shape of a salad, and it tastes quite good. Whoever makes those should show the other staff how to present food. My point is, make our food look good.

More important than presentation, we need good tasting food. Veggie burgers, bad salads, and fake mac n’ cheese have to go. I hereby demand that in their place, we bring back the fried chicken (We have only had it once this year)! What happened? Who is responsible? If you’re serving lunch and everyone is avoiding it, don’t bother making it anymore! After veggie burger day, take a look in the trashcans. You will see a graveyard overflowing with whole, uneaten, or once bitten monstrosities! On fried chicken day,

Yes, it is Chicken

In reference to the previous editorial, I disagree with most of those statements. The veggie burger, for example is only a way to try to make vegetables more enjoyable, and easy to eat so that students will get more nutrients. The salad is honestly not overdressed, because it’s only oil and vinegar. If students add more dressing, then it can be a little much. The pulled pork may just taste lemony because the recipe includes lemon juice.

In addition, the school has over 1,300 mouths to feed every day. If the food looks a little sloppy, and in my opinion it really doesn’t, it’s probably because the cafeteria staff works long hours. They are trying to quickly prepare and serve food to all the students at Highlands, as well as the teachers.

I have actually found the cafeteria food to be very good. When I hear they are serving mac and cheese I jump on the line and feel an urge to run to the front. The comment about needing “to see the school nurse and/or psycholo-

gist” is rude and also not true. On top of that, even if the salad had barely any veggies it would still have nutrients. The fruit is also perfectly fine. I eat fruit from the cafeteria almost every day, and I have never had any problems. Also, the school needs to sell cheap meals because most people can’t afford to pay for lunches already, let alone pay even more.

The most likely reason that people don’t feel full at school is that they aren’t eating vegetables. I might sound crazy, but vegetables have fiber which keeps you feeling full. To stay full all day, eat veggies, have breakfast, and be sure to load your tray with healthful foods at lunch. Don’t eat just snacks!

Finally, I would like to say that there are simple solutions to all the problems in the cafeteria. There is no need to make changes to the lunch system. There are reasons for everything that occurs, and read above to see them. I think the school does just fine.

In the end, school lunches are lacking the quality and nutrition needed to keep us working at 100% through the afternoon. My suggestion to those responsible for feeding us: spend more money on better ingredients, spend more time on presentation, give us more of the food we want, and less of what we don’t.

gist” is rude and also not true. On top of that, even if the salad had barely any veggies it would still have nutrients. The fruit is also perfectly fine. I eat fruit from the cafeteria almost every day, and I have never had any problems. Also, the school needs to sell cheap meals because most people can’t afford to pay for lunches already, let alone pay even more.

The most likely reason that people don’t feel full at school is that they aren’t eating vegetables. I might sound crazy, but vegetables have fiber which keeps you feeling full. To stay full all day, eat veggies, have breakfast, and be sure to load your tray with healthful foods at lunch. Don’t eat just snacks!

Finally, I would like to say that there are simple solutions to all the problems in the cafeteria. There is no need to make changes to the lunch system. There are reasons for everything that occurs, and read above to see them. I think the school does just fine.

National Junior Honor Society

Melanie Varela

The National Junior Honor Society is a group of students in the 8th grade who are acknowledged for their great studious achievements. Many students don’t actually know much about this so I took some time to ask Ms. Fastenburg about the NJHS (National Junior Honor Society). The NJHS is for students who have metand exceeded rigorous expectations throughout their years in middle school. For a student to become a candidate for the NJHS there are 5 different attributes being looked for: Scholarship, Character, Citizenship, Leadership and Service. A student needs at least a 92% average or higher for 6th grade, 7th grade and the first quarter of 8th grade.

Candidates need to be respectful to both teachers and their peers, show responsibility, honesty and follow rules of the school. Candidates have to behave well in class, hallways, and other school situations. They should have a positive attitude and show concern for others. Candidates also must show leadership in promoting school activities and contribute to the improvement of their community, They must always be a positive influence on others. Candidates must participate in any form of community service activities in a willing manner, show cooperation, and be dependable. The candidate must be an overall well-rounded person.

How does NJHS help a student in their future? Being a part of the NJHS is the biggest honor a student could receive while being in middle school. Most students who are in the NJHS go into the National Honor Society in



high school. Another achievement the candidate will have is that they will be leaders in the high school in 9th grade. Some students worry that if they’re not in advanced classes they don’t have a chance, but this isn’t true. As long as the student has the five attributes being looked for, advanced classes don’t impact whether a candidate can be in the NJHS or not. The faculty committee involved with considering the candidates’ applications is made up of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers.

This year there are 131 candidates and the induction ceremony will be held April 9th. This ceromony is very special becuase of the fact that the candle lighting will represent the five qualities being looked for in a candidate. Members recieve a sash during graduation to wear over their gown. As this is the biggest honor in a student’s middle school journey, any NJHS inductee will make their school proud.

Spring!

E I J R V Z W E P B J P A B W X Y Z U D
V A E T E P P E K Q E I C X J P V A G R
X Q S C W Q U R A E W U Z R G B X T M M
J R A T N B H H Q R Z P A J I Y N W O U
C K F D E A P R I L T B M K B L T R X M
T R A D E R V R A G U H P Q P F I H Y O
S J L J W Q O K X N D K D C H R U F S T
G N I R P S S S N R O M E A D E W X J Q
M U U H V D O Y U F O W F B Y T X E J O
K W B G X A H A Q Z J G X U L T P N K V
U A R A I N F N R C J K H P C U R I N A
K Z E X H S E K R C O U G M H B Z H M N
I W E R A P R I L F O O L S D A Y S W H
C N A T B L O F U V E V T V T G F N M V
F C Y L Y G L G R A S S P L I J G U A X
Q K R A R O N R E V O S S A P R I S D E
S R Y P W M S I W S L X G C E I H F F H
S H A E Z L B N R Q J W M R T H L H S O
U D R Q H C R A M P M B L M R N H U W Z
X S C P Y S U C U G S Z J P I S R R R J

APRIL

MARCH

APRILFOOLSDAY

MAY

BUNNY

PASSOVER

BUTTERFLY

RAIN

EARTHDAY

SPRING

EASTER

SPRINGBREAK

FLOWERS

SUNSHINE

GRASS



Highlands Ta



**Jahred Jack,
Guitarist**



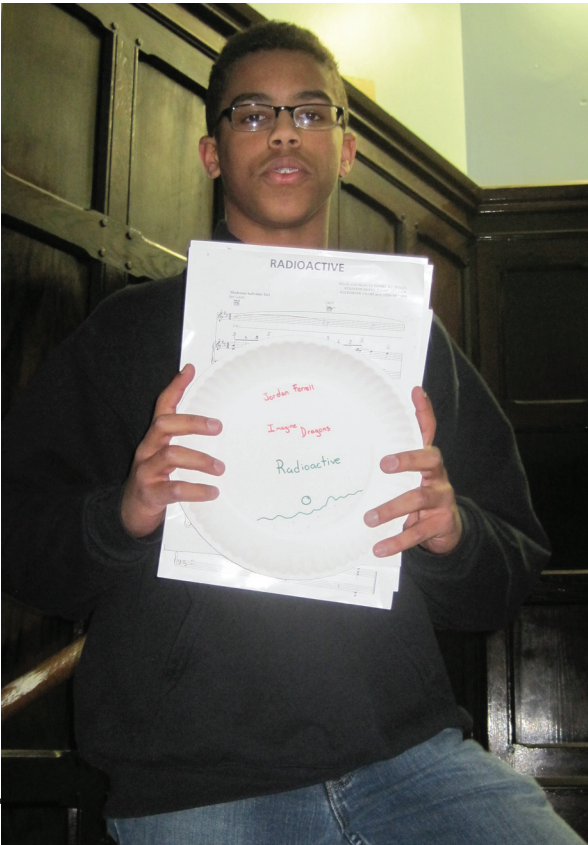
**Dayana
Picard, MC
and singer**



**Erica Andre,
Singer**



**Sebastian
Gomez,
Drummer**



**Jordan
Ferrell,
Pianist**



**Ben Kohl &
Aaron Weiner,
Singers**



**Maria Flores &
Jacob Fleuricot,
Singers**

**Con
all of**

alent Show 2014



**Ethan Donn,
Pianist**



**Faith Albert,
Singer**



**Jasmine Baez &
Cassandra Cortes,
Singer & guitarist**



**Adriane
Torres, Singer
&
Guitarist**



**Chellsie Colas &
Keren Robert,
Singers**



**Taylor
Cunningham
& Ayanna
Preudhomme,
Dancers**

**gratulations to
the performers!**

No Name-Calling Week Makes an Impact on Middle Schoolers

Sarah Salino

The week of January 21st, White Plains Middle School announced that it would be celebrating No Name-Calling Week, sponsored by the Student Organization. This was done to show that bullying can really cause harm to a person’s self-confidence and motivation. To address the problem, an assembly was held. During this assembly, we watched a film called Let’s Get Real. The film consisted of interviews with students on what was happening to them as a result of bullying, how they felt about bullying, and what you should do if a bully harasses you or physically harms you. The camera also caught some shocking, real footage of students being bullied. Although some students did not find the movie to be motivational, it did open eyes to see what is really happening when you insult or hurt someone.

Following the film, students of White Plains Middle School were given a few worksheets to fill out reflecting on the film and how it relates to our school community. I asked a few students how they felt about the school allowing us to watch this movie and discuss some of the rough topics included. One replied, “Even though the movie



was a bit much for me, the fact that I was able to discuss things that aren’t always so easy to talk about with classmates really brought up the comfort level I have with my teachers and friends.” Another student said, “I cannot imagine feeling the way that the kids I just watched being bullied feel. If it were me, I wouldn’t have known how to react or if I could handle it. Now that I know what bullying can do to people’s self-esteem, I really want to reach out to the problem and make a change.”

No Name-Calling Week really had an impact on the life of students in our community. If everyone considers that by bullying they are defeating the person being bullied, there may be a major change in how our school, students, and environment are viewed. Who knows, there could be students in our very hallways that are feeling the way that the victims in the film feel! With everyone’s cooperation, bullying can, and eventually will, end for good.

Freedom Industries’ Newest Product Is a Huge Headache

Danny DeGenaro

A 48,000 gallon storage tank belonging to Freedom Industries burst open on January 9 near Charleston, West Virginia. The contents of the tank, MCHM, or 4-methylcyclohexane-methanol poured into the Elk River. Southern and central West Virginia’s water became very toxic. People who drank, touched, or inhaled vapor from it experienced symptoms such as nausea, headaches, rashes, dizziness, and more. More than 300,000 people in West Virginia were affected in some way by the chemical.

A West Virginia Freedom Industries site is situated a mile down the Elk River from a huge water treatment plant. The chemical that was spilled, MCHM, which is a mouthful, gave West Virginians a mouthful of poison. According to democracynow.org, the water treatment plant, owned by American Water, regulates 16 percent of all water in the state. Environmental inspectors have not visited the Freedom Industries plant since 1991.

So, how is MCHM used? It is used by Freedom Industries to sell coal for a higher price. It accounts for 95 percent of a coal cleaning solution used in the froth flotation process, a method for cleaning coal. Cleaning the coal increases

its worth. It was also reported that, upon inspection, a layer of shielding surrounding the tank was porous, meaning it had small holes. This was the cause of the leak.

The CEO of Freedom Industries, Gary Southern, was videotaped at an interview, pausing several times to drink from a bottle of water. While he drank that water, over 300,000 people were unable to drink water or even take showers because of his company’s negligence. To avoid being interviewed, he claimed it had been a long day and he wanted to go home. He walked away from the reporters as they questioned him about when the management learned of the leak.

FEMA, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency, an organization which provides relief in the wake of natural disasters, at first decided not to help, because the spill was not considered “disaster status,” according to a letter by Elizabeth Zimmerman, deputy associate administrator of FEMA. FEMA did grant assistance to the nine counties affected by the spill from a request sent January 10. However, they didn’t provide additional help when it was asked for by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin on Jan. 27.



The S.O. of Highlands Middle School is sponsoring a Pennies for Patients campaign to help children who suffer with Leukemia and Lymphoma. Collection boxes have been set up in each team area, the Main Office and Media Center. .Our Goal is to raise \$2,000 by April 9th. Please support this worthy cause.

Spending More Time in School

Richard Daronco

Whether it’s a longer school day or a shorter summer vacation, elected officials across the country are pushing hard for students to spend more time in school. In 2009, President Obama led the way when he said American kids spend too little time in school which puts them at a disadvantage with students around the world. Governor Cuomo agrees and has included \$20 million in the budget to fully fund any school in New York that expands learning time by 25 percent.

“Our proposal is that we, the state, make it an option for every school district in the state, if they want to opt in and how they want to opt in – longer day, longer year, combination, it’s up to them. But if they do, the state would pay 100 percent of the additional cost to give them the incentive to actually do it,” Governor Cuomo said.

So how do students, teachers, parents and administrators feel about spending more time in middle school?

Students overwhelmingly said “no way” to spending more time in school. Matthew Velez, a seventh grader at Highlands said longer days would make it harder to concentrate in school and there would not be enough time for afterschool activities.

Andreas Alexandrou, an 8th grader at Highlands agreed. “I would not want to go to school till 6:00 pm because I would not be able to participate in sports after school. I also like to travel and go to summer camp so I would not want to go to school in July either,” said Alexandrou.

Teachers on the other hand were split 50/50. “Extending the school day has been proposed and executed successfully in other states,” said Teresa Cristiano, a reading specialist at Highlands. “Having this benefit for our students can only be beneficial in promoting achievement. The governor’s commitment to fully fund this endeavor is commendable,” Cristiano said. Some teachers preferred the idea of a shorter summer vacation because students tend to forget so much of what they learn over the summer.

Working parents seemed to favor longer school days but most of the parents interviewed would prefer a shorter summer vacation. The parents of 7th grader Nikolas O’Hanlon recently spent two years in Brazil where the schools had only six weeks of summer vacation and they say that worked well for them.

“We support a longer school year. We believe the summer vacation is far too long. Children become bored and forget what they learned over the summer, meaning that they spend much of the first part of the next year re-learning the information and skills they have forgotten over the summer,” said George O’Hanlon.

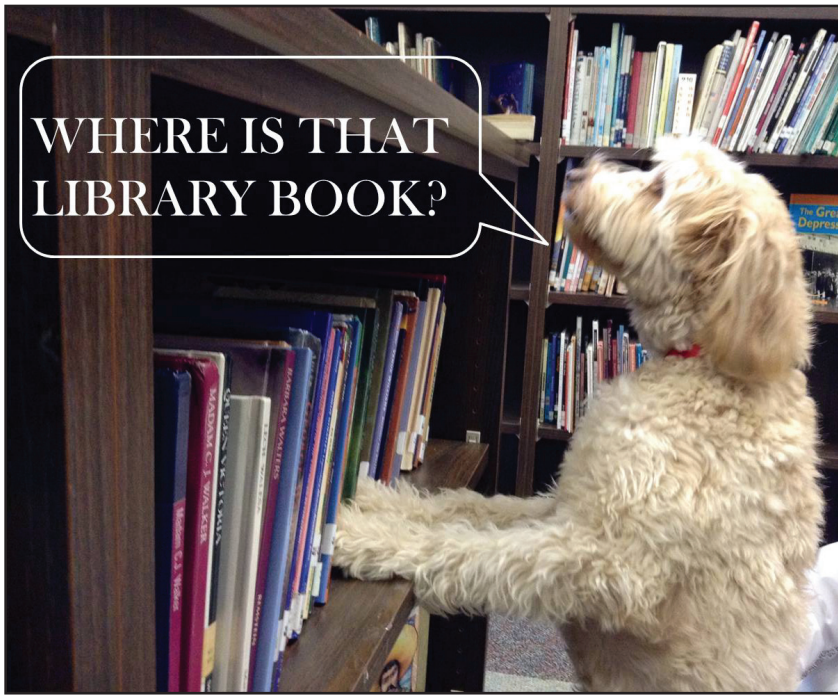
Both middle school principals were not quite ready to go along with a longer day or extending the year. Eastview Middle School principal Joseph Cloherty believes the focus should be on the curriculum and not more time in school. “Working with educators and parents to make sure we have higher expectations in all grade levels is the best way to make sure students do not fall behind the rest of the world,” Cloherty said.

Highlands Middle School principal, Ernest Spatafore is in favor of spending more time in a learning environment, but does not think that adding more time to the school day or year is the answer. “We need to focus more on core learning and provide more time for core learning within the structure of the regular school day,” Spatafore said.

It is unlikely that either Highlands or Eastview Middle School will extend the school year through July because neither school is equipped to do so. The temperature usually rise about 90 degrees in the cafeterias in the summertime so extending the school year is certainly not coming to a school near you anytime soon.

Library Corner Poppy Says...

WHERE IS THAT
LIBRARY BOOK?



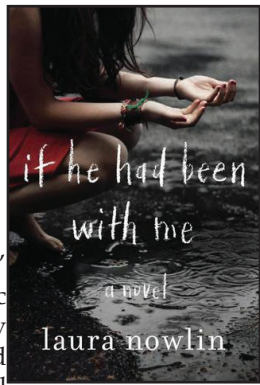
Reviews!

If He Had Been With Me Book Review

Melanie Varela

"If He had been With Me" by Laura Nowlin is a romantic realistic fiction book. This story is intended for young adults and a mature audience. In this novel the main character Autumn is stuck in a very conflicted love triangle. The theme of this book is that you don't realize what you have until you lose it. I recommend this book for any student from middle school to high school because it has so many conflicts teenagers go through in the real world such as love, new friendships, heartbreak, family problems, and betrayal.

This story takes place over the course of four years and is told from the view of Autumn. Autumn is in a conflicted love triangle throughout most of the book. She and Finn have grown up together since they were young. In middle school they began



to realize how their social rankings now determined who their friends were. In high school Autumn is first part of the popular crowd, but then her friends betray her and then she becomes one of the misfits. Finn, however, was always a preppy popular kid.

Throughout the story Autumn wants to become closer again to Finn but the only thing stopping her is the fact that she feels that she is betraying her boyfriend. Shockingly, what Autumn doesn't realize is that he has been betraying her this entire time! Autumn decides to write a novel about her experiences and is courageous enough to share it with Finn. He reads it and things are looking like they might work out. But that's when Finn has to go pick up his present girlfriend at the airport...and this is when the book comes to a tragic ending but no spoilers right?

Frozen: A Bone Chilling Experience

Nikolas O'Hanlon



Who can fire an icy blast and make an eternal winter? Elsa, that's who! The name of the movie is Frozen. It was inspired from the story of the Snow Queen. Elsa, the main character, is a princess who was cursed at birth and every thing she touches freezes. One of Elsa's biggest enemies is Prince Hans, who wants to kill Elsa and marry into the throne of Arendelle.

On November 27, 2013, the director released the movie Frozen and it was number one at the box office. The box office amount that

Frozen made was \$336,876,000. Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck directed the movie. The genres are Animation, Action/Adventure, and Family.

The story line is that Queen Elsa has accidentally frozen Arendelle and then went to the mountains to live alone. Anna sets off on a journey to find her sister with Kristoff so she could bring back summer. Only Anna, Kristoff, Olaf, and Sven, the reindeer, can unfreeze Arendelle and defeat the evil Prince Hans. Who do you think will win?

The ending was awesome! I thought it was caring when Elsa hugged the frozen Anna. It was also funny, like when the Duke of Weselton's hair fell off his head while he was bowing to Anna and Queen Elsa. So all in all it was caring, suspenseful, and funny. I recommend this movie to anyone.

Teacher Spotlight Mr. King

Stachys Aho

For how long have you been teaching?

Next year will be my tenth year as a teacher. I began my career as a wood work and design teacher in Dublin, Ireland. I taught in Brooklyn for 1 year before I came to White Plains.

Why did you become a teacher?

Because I love working with young people and I love to learn new things and as a teacher you get to do both.

Why did you decide to become a Technology teacher?

When I was in school my favorite subject were wood work, technical drawing, and architecture. It made sense for me to become a technology teacher.

Do you like your job at Highlands? Why?

Yes I love my job at Highlands. I really like the topic that Mr. Hauser and I are currently teaching, bridge building, and later this year we are going to build CO₂ race cars! It is really exciting and engaging curriculum for the students and myself. I love the diversity amongst the student population and it is a privilege to work with a wonderful school staff.

What do you do in your free time?

I like to spend my free time with my wife and my 5 month old baby. I also like to keep fit by jogging and I watch a lot of soccer.

What sport do you play?

Growing up I played Gaelic football, hurling and soccer. Hurling is the fastest field sport and it is like a combination of baseball, hockey and lacrosse, but better!

If you had another job besides teaching, what would it be?

In my dreams I would probably be a soccer coach in the English league (BPL) for Arsenal because it's my



favorite team. In real life I would be a structural engineer, it would be really exciting to have the opportunity to work on a bridge building project.

What do you feel is important for students to know to be successful?

successful?

I think it is important for students to become independent learners, and to develop the problem solving capabilities needed for college and beyond. Technology is an important subject because problem solving is at the heart of what we do every day.

How is teaching different in America versus Ireland?

In America, there is continuous day to day assessment. Whereas in Ireland, we tend to have highly pressurized end of cycle examinations that test your knowledge of material covered over the previous 3 years! I prefer the American system because it puts more importance on the work done day to day and helps students to be more consistently motivated. In other ways, the students in Ireland and in America are remarkably similar. I guess it makes sense that 13 year olds from different countries have a lot in common.

What is your favorite topic or unit to teach in technology and why?

I love bridge designing and building. The curriculum has a lot of depth and we are so lucky to have New York City in our backyard. It has such a rich history of bridge building. There are over 2000 bridges in the city and on 4 occasions it held the record for having the longest suspension bridge in the world. Amazingly, the Brooklyn Bridge was built over 125 years ago at a time when much smaller bridges were collapsing and it still stands today! It's wonderful that the students can actually cross these bridges during the time and that we are learning about them. It makes the learning in the classroom deeply connected to their real world experience.



DO YOU HAVE AN OPINION?
Would you like to share it? Write a review for
The Courier!
Contact Ms. Miller, Room 141

SportsDesk

World Cup 2014

Stachys Aho

The next World Cup (WC) will be hosted by the nation that won the magnificent cup 5 times, Brazil. Brazil has amazing stadiums across the country, with sensational crowds and fans. In 2013 a stadium fell down during construction and a worker died falling from 115ft in the air. Sepp Blatter, President of FIFA (Federation of International Football Association), the organization responsible for running the world cup, responded to this incident by saying that “Brazil is not ready for the World Cup.” This enraged many Brazilians, but Ronaldo, one of the best players in the world, ensured that the World Cup in Brazil would be great and that people shouldn’t worry. Brazil fulfilled its promise and the Stadiums are complete and ready to be played in. There are be 12 stadiums in twelve different cities in Brazil for the matches.

There are 8 groups of 4 teams. If a team gets a win they get 3 points, if they draw they get 1 point, and if they lose they get nothing. Each team plays three games and the two top teams with the most points in each group advance. The “group of death” as the Soccer fans like to call it is Group G, (Germany, Portugal, Ghana and the USA). This WC Group is the group of death because of the players, the history between the countries, and the loyal and supportive fans.

There are many factors that might affect the performance of these Group G countries. Germany is a country with players that are strong, agile, and gun blazing shooters. It has a history of cold blooded penalty kicking players, with ruthless and metronomic efficiency. Their first team has good chemistry because they all play in the same league. Germany would possibly be the #2 contender for the WC, apart from Brazil being the #1 contender. Portugal has excellent midfielders and forwards, such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Raul Mier-

eles. Portugal would definitely have a chance of advancing from the group stages. Ghana is the only African team in the last WC to qualify to the Quarter Finals and then lose to Uruguay. But the question is,



would Ghana do it again and then go to the finals as the first African team to do so? Would Asamoah miss a penalty again that would remove Ghana from the competition? USA the land of baseball, the free, and the rabid fan, is determined to advance unlike in the last WC. There was a very controversial decision by the referee. After their win against Germany, the Americans are looking forward to playing Ghana, the country that eliminated them two times in a row from the World Cup.

Brazil, the favorite to win the WC, is not fully ready for it, because many of their star players are not ready or aren’t first team quality i.e. Neymar, Lucas etc... The Brazilian manager Scolari has yet to decide between Hulk and Lucas. They are both skillful but Lucas is a creator, while Hulk is strong and plays a very direct game. Also, the middle field has a lot of potential but Scolari can’t fit all the middle fielders in the pitch. We will have to wait until the summer to see what each country has to bring to the World Cup.

Boys Ice Hockey

Miles Henry

This has been a good season for the modified ice hockey team. The team was led by Coaches Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Bond who have a lot of experience with hockey. The coaches were assisted by three captains, Chris Schiavone (head captain), Ian Chochrek (co - captain) and Evan

Taranow (co - captain). The modified ice hockey team is a great team, with 19 talented players. This year has shown growth for the teams expectations. The team has improved their record (1-5-4), even with a series of injuries and some students ineligible to play. Go Tigers!!!

Playing JV in Middle School

Richard Daronco

Some middle school athletes choose to play high school JV sports, but the process can be lengthy and a little difficult. Vanessa Chica is an 8th grader at Highlands who was asked to play on the White Plains High School Junior Varsity basketball team. One of the coaches suggested that she should try out for the basketball JV team and she thought it would be a great idea. “I liked the idea of playing JV because it was more challenging and more fun. The practices were longer and sometimes there were practices on a Saturday morning,” Chica said.

There is a lengthy physical that all middle school students must take before they can try out for a JV team. “An 8th grader must go through the medical process similar to joining a modified sport. The process is explained in the Athletic Handbook that you can get from the PE teachers at Highlands,” said Jen DeSena, Athletic Director at White Plains High School.

Mr. Fugarino, the JV baseball coach, says the varsity head coach would first have to recommend that a student be evaluated. “This means that the child would need to pass a fitness test that consists of several timed exercises. If the child meets the standard, then they are cleared to try out for a high school team,” said Fugarino.

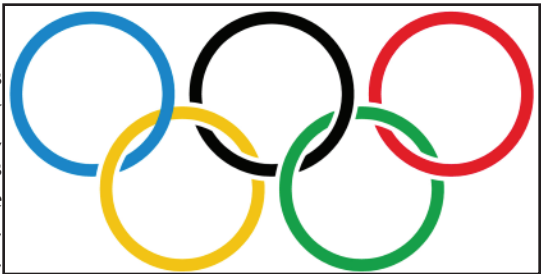
Vanessa said she received a packet from the nurse and then she had to do the mile run, sprints, a series of sit-ups, push-ups, and various fitness tests before she was cleared to try out by the coach. Both Vanessa and Jada Rencher were placed on the JV basketball team this winter and got a lot of playing time as starters. “I loved playing JV this year and I am glad I got the chance to do it,” Chica said.

There are some sports like tennis that only have high school teams so first check the Athletic handbook if you are considering playing high school sports. Good luck to our athletes, and Go Tigers!

Winter Olympics Wow the World

Emily Brooks

The winter Olympics took place from February 6th to February 23rd in Sochi, Russia. Some of the sports included familiar ones, like figure skating, ice hockey, snowboarding, and skiing,



and some other sports that most of us don’t know, like skeleton and luge. Skelton and luge are very similar sports. They both involve sledding down a bobsled track on a thin sled. The athletes sled down the track and do everything they can to stay aerodynamic. They steer with their calves for the most part by pushing down on the runners to apply pressure. The difference between the sports is that in skeleton, you have to sled face first, on your stomach. This puts your face millimeters away from the ice and makes it even more dangerous. In luge, you are sledding on your back, feet first, which is safer, but still dangerous.

Some of the athletes on America’s Olympic teams were Gracie Gold, Polina Edmunds, Ashley Wagner, Jeremy Abbott, and Jason Brown who made up the figure skating team. Some of the athletes on the American freestyle skiing team were David Wise, Aaron Blunck, Maddie Bowman, and Annalisa Drew. The American luge team included Tucker West, Aidan Kelly, Summer Britcher and Erin Hamlin. Matt Antoine, John Daly, Kyle Tress, Noelle Pikus-Pace and Katie Uhlaender were the athletes on the American skeleton team.

Competition among the teams of the countries represented was fierce. The Netherlands won an astonishing 23 medals for speed skating! Norway dominated the podium with 17 medals for cross-country skiing, while the United States took home 12 medals in extreme sports (freestyle skiing and snowboarding). Canada defeated the United States for the fourth time in Olympic history to take the gold in men’s ice hockey.

Russian teenagers dominated the ladies figure skating competition, earning gold in both the team and individual events. In total, Russia took home the most medals – 33. The United States came in second place in the final medal count, with 28 medals: 9 gold, 7 silver, and 12 bronze. Congratulations to all of the competitors!

ENJOY WATCHING OR WRITING ABOUT SPORTS? GO TO A SPRING SPORTING EVENT AND COVER IT FOR THE COURIER!