

The



Signal

The Official Newspaper of Fenton High School

Friday, January 29, 2021

New Civil Discourse Statement Aims to Guide Class Discussion

By Michelle Agyemang

Walking into a classroom with desks facing each other and questions posted on the board can bring up feelings of exhilaration or even stress. During a time where current events constantly spark heated debates, teachers noticed that there weren't any formal guidelines on how to form discussion.

Kate Ward, division leader for social studies and English classes said, "A lot of teachers have noticed they want kids to feel more comfortable having discussions and we know, from student feedback, that kids love having discussions, right? It's one of the things students get the most engaged in and they learn

the most, but it's not something that you're really taught to facilitate at teacher school. It can be tricky."

So, a team made up of Fenton administrators, teachers, and students decided to create a civil discourse statement that would make sure class discussions continued to be a place where students could comfortably share their opinions.

After counselor Melissa To saw an article about a civil discourse statement made for social studies classes at McHenry High School, she thought Fenton needed one, and English teacher Mrs. Stephanie Jackson and the instructional coaching team asked all teachers about essential components of a civil

discourse statement and received over one hundred and fifty responses.

After seeing the suggestions, Jackson built a unique team of teachers, administrators, counselors, and students to look over these responses.

"When we looked at all the teacher data, we realized that half of the statements had to do with understanding and half of them had to do with behaviors. We want students to understand certain things with discussion, but we also want to make sure that they're behaving in a certain way during discussion," says Jackson.

Revealing the two main topics of the statement led the team to divide into two: a blue and an orange team. The blue team was tasked with creating five statements by looking through understanding responses such as agreeing and disagreeing, respect, and empathy. Similarly, the orange team looked at responses regarding behavior and created five statements out of them.

After this intensive process, the teams were able to create a total of ten comprehensive statements about

discussion. The ten statements were further broken down and made into the final six statements.

"The cool thing about this statement is that this is for teachers and other adults, too. We should all be following these principles as well, not just kids, so it kind of works for the whole building and not just for students, but it does happen to be like a really good classroom tool also."

This collaborative process was able to create six statements that have the potential to bring hope to so many people at Fenton, one of which being Senior Quinn Wilcoxon.

Wilcoxon joined the committee to write the statement along with Seniors Cecilia Flores, Kyle Jones, and Carolyn Stadnyk.

Concerning the work, Wilcoxon says, "I feel Fenton really needed this statement to further progress our discussions in the classroom/s. I hope that from now on this statement will help students learn good ways to have formal and informal discussion so that maybe they won't be so shy and timid when it comes to public speaking."

The goal of discussions at Fenton High School is to learn from others & understand different perspectives

In all discussions, we pledge to

- Seek out different perspectives & respect people by supporting and encouraging their expression
- Demonstrate mutual respect by addressing each other by name and restating what that individual just said to establish common understanding
- Support our opinions with evidence from reputable & unbiased sources
- Use questioning to hold each other accountable to the topic and reflect on ideas presented
- Aim to avoid generalized statements. Example: "One perspective I think this group has is..." rather than "You all think..."

Graphic courtesy of Lauren Lemm

Music Students Qualify for ILMEA All-State Band, Choir

By Erica Ayala

Anna Micor and Bart Sporna have qualified for the Illinois Music Education Association (ILMEA) All State Band and choir. Micor qualified for the flute and piccolo and Bart was selected with the Tenor 1 voice part. A few months ago, Bart and Anna were selected for the ILMEA District 1 Festival, and their auditions were then advanced to the state level where they were specifically chosen from a large pool of applicants from across Illinois.

Out of thousands of students, Anna and Bart were chosen for the highest musical honor in the state. "Anna is very mindful with the music she plays," Mr. George said. "She makes beautiful musical interpretations and tells a story through her flute playing. Anna doesn't just play the flute, but she creates works of art!" Although there isn't an exact date for the festival quite yet, they are elated for the wonderful opportunity. Micor said, "Advancing

to state in ILMEA is super exciting. The tentative date for the festival is sometime in May, and I cannot wait until then!" Not being able to play with her peers has been really difficult for her. "Just thinking about being able to play in person again makes me hopeful for the future," Anna exclaims.

The audition process for ILMEA was quite different this year due to COVID restrictions. For the choir, students were only given two pieces to prepare, their triads and scales, and weren't required to sight sing.

"Auditions looked a little different this year, obviously, but it was really awesome to see students go above and beyond to audition for this even in a pandemic." The music department hit the ground running at the beginning of the school year and began to prepare for the upcoming auditions. Students worked with Mrs. Seredy Williams before the school day started, at 8 in the morning. "I'm

really proud of him to go in a year that's been so many unknowns to do something extraordinary and go above and beyond," Mrs. Williams said. Senior Bart Sporna says, "It was a rough time for me to prepare for this challenging audition. Of course, Bart

and Anna couldn't have come this far without support from their mentors. "I am truly grateful for everyone who supported me throughout this journey. I am so excited to represent Fenton at this extraordinary opportunity," Sporna said.



Photo courtesy of Seredy Williams

Seniors Win Competitive Chick Evans, Questbridge Scholarships

By Olivia Baran

Two Fenton High School seniors received full college scholarships. One of the seniors, Audrey Benitez, matched with Northwestern through the Questbridge Scholarship. Audrey plans to study Computer Science in hopes of, "making technology more accessible in schools and communities throughout the world."

Audrey worked very hard to win this scholarship and even applied to a College Prep Scholars Program for Juniors, prior to applying for the scholarship. Audrey was not accepted into this program, however, this did not stop her from applying for the National College Match scholarship.

"Around late October, I became a finalist, along with my classmates Cecilia Flores, Daisy Cossio, Eric Moreno, and Lyli

Rodriguez. On December 1st, I received the news I got matched to Northwestern, and ever since then, I have been extremely grateful for this amazing opportunity I once thought



Photo courtesy of Audrey Benitez

was unreachable," Audrey stated.

Audrey received support from many staff members at Fenton. She expressed that the application process became much easier with the help of the Fenton staff.

Angelika Gasior, another senior who received a full scholarship, won the Chick Evans Scholarship.

Angelika states, "I worked as a caddie for three years and kept my grades up throughout high school. The application process was quite chaotic because during that time, I was also continuing to work hard in the classroom, at work and in extracurricular activities on top of applying to universities."

Similarly to Audrey, Angelika is thankful for her family and friends who made the application process that much easier. As a Chick Evans Scholar, Angelika worked as a caddie

for three years.

"Rushing from rounds of golf to cross country practices early in the hot summer mornings definitely paid off in the long run," Angelika stated. She will be majoring in Marketing,



Photo courtesy of Angelika Gasior

Kelly Mullins Recieves The Bears Classroom Champion Award

By Jenny Aguilar

On December 15, 2020, Social Studies teacher Kelly Mullins was selected as a Chicago Bears Classroom Champion for her outstanding work as a teacher and community member, receiving the nomination from Seniors Eric Moreno and Nickolas Benn.

Having found out about the award through Coach Mathew Lynch, Moreno explains how the decision came to nominated Mullins, saying, "Nick and I had decided on Ms. Mullins because she impacted us individually... She made it clear that she was going to be there for more than just the classroom. She's also clearly been one of the most understanding teachers, and for that, she deserved the award."

The Bears Classroom Champion award is a part of the many initiatives designed to highlight the amazing work individuals are doing all over the state of Illinois: "The Chicago Bears understand the work that good, quality teachers often do goes unnoticed. That's why we have

developed a program that seeks to honor educators when they go above and beyond their normal duties."

Current and former students, fellow colleagues, and parents are able to nominate a teacher who has positively impacted their community via the Chicago Bears website.

George McCaskey, the chairman of the Chicago Bears and son of Virginia Halas McCaskey, the primary owner of the Bears, personally delivered the news to Mullins during her U.S. History class.

McCaskey quotes the nomination letter sent in by Moreno and Benn, reading, "When students are dealing with personal issues, Ms. Mullins makes it clear she will always be there to help support them and provide any assistance needed. It is not uncommon for Ms. Mullins to extend assignment deadlines, lend an ear to listen, or open her heart to show her students she cares about them. She has an amazing way of teaching that gives the students the responsibility which challenges them through in-depth class discussions

and personal reflections. It is truly an honor to have a teacher who constantly wants to connect with her students. The student body at Fenton high school is fortunate to have Ms. Mullins in our lives."

Mullins was "absolutely shocked... I've been a Bears fan my whole life, [so] having a McCaskey in my class was really awesome. I was smiling for days."

This joyous event was only one of the many awards Fenton has received this school year through the football program: Mullins previously received the AFCA "Extra Yard Teachers" Award this past October, Moreno and Benn were both Bears Community High School All-Stars award recipients on October and November respectively, and Coach Lynch was chosen by the Bears as the NFL Coach of the Week for Monday Night Football on November 16.

Moreno comments on these achievements, saying, "Being able to have received [the Community High School All-Stars] award first, then have my best friend do it, then have

two inspirational figures in my life be recognized is amazing. I truly believe it was well deserved all around."

Mullins looks back on all the changes Fenton has implemented throughout the years to get this point: "Fenton has done some important work in recent years to recognize the value of social and emotional learning and building connections with students. This priority has really changed me as a teacher and softened my early drill sergeant approach. Students from my early classroom years would not recognize my classroom today. I'm proud of that."

Along with the recognition, Mullins also received a gift bag filled with hats, mugs, pens, and lanyards, an autographed football, a personalized jersey, and a \$1000 check for her classroom.

When asked what she planned on using the money for, Mullins said, "This is a great question and I don't know the answer yet. An ice cream machine? Nacho bar? Pocket Constitutions? Hand sanitizer?"

Sister Act Spring Muical Back On: Directors, Cast Look Ahead to Take Two

By Sarah Guerrero

After nearly a year of hiatus, the production of Fenton's spring musical, *Sister Act*, will be resuming, and everyone involved anticipates the awaited return. Due to COVID-19 health concerns, the show was postponed last March, and many cast and crew members felt unsure about when they would get back to work.

Junior Karissa Lara recalls the heartbreaking feeling from the original postponement, saying "I had such a strong hope. I remember just thinking, 'We have to come back. We have to do the musical.' I was in denial, and it wasn't until weeks later that I realized it wasn't going to happen."

Dr. George Mussman, a director of the show, reports that the drama department is very aware of the adversities that may come with producing a show in a troubled time like this, but assures us that they are prepared to work together and produce a safe and fun show.

"We're very conscious about the requirements we need to follow to make sure we are staying safe in terms of COVID. But whatever modifications we need to make to ensure that the cast and the crew is safe and healthy, we're certainly going to be doing. We will be having in person rehearsals, as well as

auditions. But, again, we're going to be very conscious of the procedures we are going to have to follow to keep everyone safe."

Mussman also expressed the importance of the musical, especially this year, with "how difficult it's been for people to be together and work together. We know this means we're going to have to make sacrifices in terms of what we're doing, but we think it's important that we all have the opportunity to work together. This is an important part of all of our lives that we've been missing this past year."

Senior Karissa Lara is very optimistic, enthusiastic, and ready to move forward with the show, sharing the eagerness of her peers to return to the stage. "It will bring back that sense of familiarity we've all been missing."

Lara also invites and encourages others to get involved. "Even if you're not involved in music, or if you feel like you're not the best dancer or actor, there's something for everyone. If you want to get involved, you should really look into auditioning!"

Director Serey Williams adds to the excitement, saying "The music is really fun and awesome. The show is hilarious, and I feel like everyone is going to enjoy all aspects of this."

Chess Team Bonds, Competes Through Virtual Meets

By Olivia Markowski

When it comes to continuing clubs in a time like this, there may be various challenges that students and teachers may face. Some clubs cannot meet and others may have various restrictions and protocols they have to follow. As for Fenton's chess team, they were lucky enough to have the opportunity to continue their meets through the internet.

At each meet, students get sent out into their pairing, they play a match, and once they are done with that match, their score is recorded on a big spreadsheet by Mrs. Bibel. They then wait for another pairing based on how they scored, and repeat this process over and over again.

Each member also has the opportunity to watch their other teammates play, as well as review their own game once they are done playing. The computer will analyze their game and let them know which moves were considered blunders, bad moves which could have lost their game, and they also take a look at minor mistakes that were also made.

As for playing a game with no mistakes, the game can sometimes be flagged and reviewed for possible cheating.

When it came to the change

in formatting and the difference of this year compared to last year, Mrs. Stephanie Downen, one of Fenton Chess team's coaches, shares, "Just this year versus last year in terms of regular chess, we've lost our top eight... chess is eight boards versus eight boards and we literally had 8 seniors on board last year. Emilio Sanchez, who's our board one this year, was like a sub last year, and is playing against every other school's best player. It's definitely been a rebuilding year and we're very young. Today, we have one Senior and one Junior playing and the rest

are Freshmen and Sophomores... The teams have been really awesome though, they always show up with their cameras on and are ready to go. We have a ton of fun with each other. I have talked to other chess coaches and it would be the same as it is in class where there's a black screen, a black screen a black screen, kids putting things into the chat, but our team all wants to be around each other and hang out."

Another challenge that the chess team had to face was the probable chance of individuals cheating.

Mrs. Michelle Bibel, another

coach of Fenton's chess team states, "One of the things that everyone has been worried about using online or virtual chess is cheating. When you are in a normal room, the coaches are all behind you, and you are not allowed to bring your cell phones in. So what can happen, if you're playing virtual is that you can set up the game, and then the computer can tell you what the next best move is. And so were always worried that the kids that we are playing against are using that as an unfair advantage... In terms of a state tournament that we are going to be doing virtually, they actually want us to be all together. So let's say we are all in a big room, everyone has their masks on, and everyone is separated, that's how they want us to do it for the state because they are worried about cheating."

While there are sides of remote that are very challenging, Sara Schaefer shares some of her favorite memories of the season by stating, "My favorite part is how close I've bonded with the team. I've surprisingly bonded with everyone pretty well despite the circumstances and everything. We will hang out and talk on our own for hours and play matches on our own very often and have so much fun."



Photo Courtesy of Stephanie Downen

Golz Reviews Witty, Charming Book *Brooding YA Hero* By Carrie DiRiso

By Jadyn Golz

Have you ever felt like a side character? Like you're just sitting on the sidelines watching the main cast go on exciting adventures? Well then this is the book for you! *Brooding YA Hero: Becoming a Main Character (Almost) as Awesome as Me*, written by Carrie DiRiso, stars none other than Broodie McHottiepants - the darkest, most mysterious guy around.

Broodie, being the gracious Young Adult hero that he is, shares his knowledge on how to become a main character in your own story. Who is Broodie? Well, you've met him before. Some of you may know him as the new guy at school who's hair always falls so perfectly against his ocean eyes, your stubborn but strikingly handsome companion in the zombie apocalypse, or even the handsome prince that swoons you in the masquerade ball just to disappear the next morning. In conclusion, he is the broodiest, hottest, and definitely most gracious YA hero and is 100% qualified to be your mentor.

Broodie, among many other side characters, lives in a world of stories. In between his busy life of starring as main male protagonists in stories, he begins to write his own novel on how to become the best YA hero one can be. Between his pages are beautiful illustrations by Linnea Gear and notes from Blondie DeMeani, Broodie's bad ex-girlfriend, with blonde hair that always falls in the most perfect of illustrious curls, red lipstick and nail polish that glitter as if they were the blood of her enemies (which it sometimes is), and she's always talking in sass.

I know, poor reader, absolutely terrifying isn't she? But she isn't the only antagonist one must look out for as a main character. There is also a beast such as The Boy Next Door who is much less handsome than Broodie and much more reliable.

That's the other thing, to be a "brooding YA hero" one must completely swoon and ignore their love interest. It's obviously not in the best interest of the interest (who I will refer to a "girl" from now on for simplicity's sake, although the love interest can use whichever pronouns the author wishes), but it's not like the poor girl has any sort of parental intervention or common sense that dating that dashing werelemur is a bad idea.

But who am I to tell you? I'm just a dumb protagonist girl wearing a very tinted pair of rose glasses. Hear it from Mr. McHottiepants himself, who goes over everything from plot, to character development, and even touches on what to do once you become a main character. Not so sure about Broodie yet (even though you're totally swooned, don't deny it)? Check out his Twitter at @broodingYAhero! Maybe you'll be the star in the next best-selling book.

Warner Bros Set to Release All 2021 Films In Theaters, On HBO Max Same Day

By Michelle Agyemang

The movie theater industry is slowly starting to come back after a tough time in 2020. However, the industry is still suffering from a lack of customers. On December 3, 2020, a large entertainment company, "WarnerBros," announced that they were releasing all-new 2021 movies onto the streaming service "HBO Max." The seventeen movies found on HBO Max can be reached by paying the \$15 subscription fee. However, films will only be available for one month after their release date, and right after, movies will return to their regular cycle of iTunes, DVDs, etc.

The choice was made when WarnerBros realized that movie theaters were still operating at reduced capacity and would be for most of 2021. The addition of HBO Max is a part of WarnerBros' long-term hope to increase the growth of streaming to offset the loss from theaters.

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Jason Kilar, WarnerMedia's chief executive, said, "Like a lot of businesses, theaters are in a tough spot right now. We are all in the middle of a pandemic, and we are all trying to figure our way through it. One of the things we can do to be helpful to them is to provide them with a steady stream of big-budget,

well-told stories."

HBO Max is relatively small, at 8.6 million subscribers. Competing against other streaming services is something that the small company will have to face. Disney has released their movies, *Mulan*, *Artemis Fowl*, and *Soul* exclusively on their streaming service "Disney+." Universal Studios has an agreement with large movie theaters "AMC" and "Cinemark" where they release to theaters 17 days before letting movies go online.

This information might bring out the question: what will happen to movie theaters? Many movie watchers, including myself, wonder when the pandemic is over if movie theaters will ever return. Many experts have said that the future of theaters is hopeful.

Rich Greenfield, partner at LightShed, spoke to CNBC, saying, "People are going to go to the movie theaters for many years, probably many decades. I truly believe that kids want to get away from their parents, parents want to get away from their kids, a night out; There is still going to be a movie business it's just going to be more of an event business... It's going to be more event ties I think just going to the movies just to see a movie will be a little bit less than it used to be."

Photo Op: What Did You Think of the Inauguration?

By Michelle Agyemang



Carolina Rosas '22

"I was unable to watch the entire ceremony but was blessed enough to listen to Amanda Gorman... She was able to capture the necessity of our divided country needing help."



Lauren Kissane '21

"I always think it's exciting and scary to see a transition in power but I am very hopeful for the next four years"



Morelia Aburto '22

"Watching the first African American woman get sworn in as Vice President shows many girls that nothing is impossible."

Blake Speaks Out on Shooting

By Jenny Aguilar

On August 23, 2020, Jacob Blake, an African American man, was shot seven times by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Five months later, on January 5, Kenosha prosecutors announced that no charges will be made against the police involved in the shooting.

Blake was visiting the mother of his kids, Laquisha Booker, for his eldest son's birthday. Domestic disputes prompted Blake to leave the home with the children. Booker then calls 911, stating, "Jacob Blake is here, and he has the keys to a rental that I purchased that I need to take back. And he's not trying to release it," according to the audio recording from the Kenosha County District Attorney's office.

The police first used two tasers on Blake, which he immediately pulled off his body. A video recorded by a neighbor shows Blake walking away from the police with his pocket knife in hand. Then, as Blake enters the driver's seat of the car, a policeman, Officer Rusten Sheskey, grabs Blake's shirt and shoots him seven times in his back. Blake was left paralyzed from the waist down.

Following the shooting, protests broke out all across the nation. These events echoed the protests that occurred last summer, following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. On August 25, two protesters were shot and killed by Kyle Rittenhouse, a counter protester. Rittenhouse pleaded not guilty and will proceed to go to court in March.

During a press conference on January 5, Michael Gravelly, the Kenosha County District Attorney, declared no charges will be made against any of the officers involved or Blake. In the review of the incident, Gravelly states, "With these facts established, I do not believe the State could prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Officer Sheskey was not acting lawfully in self-defense or defense of others which is the legal standard the State would have to meet to obtain a criminal conviction in this case."

The U.S. Department of Justice released a statement saying, "a federal civil rights investigation into the shooting of Jacob Blake is ongoing... Also ongoing are federal investigations into the arson, rioting, and other violent crimes that occurred in Kenosha in August 2020."

Blake spoke out for the first time since the incident in an interview with Michael Strahan. He describes the moment of the shooting, saying, "I was counting down my breaths, my blinks. I was like, God, I'm coming. I guess this is it for me... I didn't want to be the next George Floyd. I didn't want to die."

In regards to the pocket knife, Blake says, "I shouldn't have picked it up, only considering what was going on. At that time I wasn't thinking clearly." Blake explains his plan was to put the pocket knife in the car and then throw himself to the ground because if "they killed me there everybody would see it."

Insurrection On Capitol Hill, Calls For Unity During Inauguration

By Jenny Aguilar

Two weeks before Inauguration Day, on January 6, a joint session of Congress was scheduled to count the Electoral College votes to officially declare Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States. Many Republican members of Congress were expected to object to the results of many states under the pretense of "voter fraud." However, the day took a shocking turn when a large group of people attacked the Capitol building.

Prior to the attack, President Donald Trump had addressed his supporters, insisting that they take a stand against the election results. Photographs depict people breaking windows and gates to get access inside, fighting against Capitol police, and desecrating offices of Congress members and the house floor. Five people died, including Officer Brian Sicknick, who fought to protect the Capitol.

Citizens all over the nation worried about what could transpire on January 20 after this attack on democracy. In an interview with NPR, Stephanie Cutter, an executive producer of the inauguration, explains how, despite

the recent events at the Capitol, not much was changed in planning the inauguration in terms of security: "We were planning it in a world of a pandemic. So there were no events with large crowds. There was a scaled-down version of the swearing in on the west front of the Capitol."

As Inauguration Day finally arrived, Americans all across the nation watched the events unfold on their televisions. The looming theme throughout the day was a call for unity. Members of Congress arrived at the west front of the Capitol along with former Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. Lady Gaga performed the national anthem along with the United States Marine Band. Jennifer Lopez and Garth Brooks, a long-time Republican, also contributed performances.

One of the most notable moments of the event, was Amanda Gorman delivering her poem, "The Hill We Climb." At 22-years-old, Gorman is the youngest inaugural poet.

The poem, which describes the horrific events of January 6 and calls for unity for the nation, reads,

"We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it. Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy. And this effort very nearly succeeded. But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated."

Biden taking the oath of office and becoming the 46th President of the United States reaffirms that idea. In his inaugural address, Biden explicitly

asks Americans to come together in a time of great division: "Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation. I ask every American to join me in this cause. Uniting to fight the common foes we face... With unity we can do great things. Important things... We can make America, once again, the leading force for good in the world."



Stock photo from Unsplash.com