

# BEHIND THE WALL



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## Special points of interest:

- WCS Students attend BOE meeting in hopes of staying in Westport
- Teachers and students to begin reading initiative
- New BOE seeking volunteers for transition committees
- Jane Kimball wins regional spelling bee
- WCS Quizbowl team receives recognition at local competition
- Westport wins big at ISAB Awards and North Country Model UN
- A tough evening at Elizabethtown as the BOE votes to keep the original, suggested plan

## WCS STUDENTS FIGHT FOR HIGHSCHOOL

BY: ANNETTE STEPHENS

For a while, after the December fourth decision to merge the Westport and Elizabethtown-Lewis school districts, the halls of WCS had calmed down a bit, as students began to come to terms with the realities of next year. This, however, appears to be the calm before the storm, as the school is ablaze once more with students who are concerned and hopeful of what next year may be. At the first merged school district board meeting, the news of the high

school possibly being held in Westport next year surfaced and Westport high schoolers were hopeful and less upset about what next year might mean for us.

March 18th marked the day of the third merged school district board meeting which took place in the WCS auditorium and drew a large crowd of students, faculty members, and community members from all three towns. In attendance at this meeting was

a group of seventeen Westport high schoolers, there to vie for high school in Westport next year. This group, and many others who could not make it to the meeting, see high school in Westport as an illustrious choice for many factors in both the school itself and the community. Students including Hudson Stephens, Lawrence Lobdell, Ella King, and 2018 alumna Lizzie Stephens spoke up pointing out that Westport is a more convenient choice for



*WCS students at a March 18th ELW Board Meeting*

## WCS STUDENTS FIGHT

(CONTINUED)

BY: ANNETTE STEPHENS

*"The March 18th meeting exhibited that WCS students are passionate about their future and their town identity"*

athletics as we are in closer proximity to the Camp Dudley fields, our gym already has many of the improvements the Elizabethtown Athletic Director expressed interest in for their gym (plastic bleachers on one side of the court rather than two, new larger score boards, and new baskets with plexiglass backboards on the sides of courts that raise automatically). The Westport campus has a baseball field, and a softball field that is currently not being used, but was renovated in 2015. It was also pointed out that Westport's community and business district would benefit from having the high school here to support business, while that of Elizabethtown would only be slightly affected as they already have an abundance of people coming in during the day for work at the county or hospital.

WCS student interest could have perhaps been fueled by tensions rising during a three

day Model UN trip the week-end before the March 18th board meeting in which Westport and Elizabethtown-Lewis students traveled and participated together as one "Griffin" team. During this trip, differences between the two student bodies became evident as well as students' fear of the ELW name becoming reality once more. Behind the name for the new school, "Elizabethtown-Lewis-Westport", comes distress for many WCS students. The fear is that in a couple years, or even a couple of months, Westport will simply be dropped off the name as Lewis has been in the Elizabethtown-Lewis school district, and we will be known as "Etown." While some people have shoved off this anticipated identity crisis, Westport's fear is already becoming a reality that students want to stop before it's too late. During the awards ceremony on the Model UN trip, the West-

port students were called up to receive their awards, but were recognized as Elizabethtown students. This was also the case in 2015 when the boys soccer team went to the State Finals.

The March 18th meeting exhibited that WCS students are passionate about their future and their town identity; we will do our best to ensure that next year is the best it can be and that we are not victims of the merge, but that we benefit from it. These past weeks have perhaps foreshadowed the division that next year will see, and have certainly not scraped the bottom of the barrel of underlying issues, tough decisions to be made, or huge potential benefits in the coming school year.

*"Early exposure to reading and books has been found to have amazing effects"*

## READING INITIATIVE, BLAST OFF WITH BOOKS

BY: JEREMY ROSSI

This month Westport Central's Student Council began the first of many months of a new project that involves getting books to our pre-k students in the district so they can start a love for reading early! Hopefully, this will get our young students thinking and enjoying the world of books.

Early exposure to reading and books has been found to have amazing effects. It leads to a boosted vocabulary, stimulates the learning process, has been found to boost

grades in subjects, and often inspires young people's imagination. I remember when I was little, my dad and I would read the Hardy Boys, and that lead to many hours of playing detective!

Our Student Council hopes to spread the joy of reading to its younger future students, and are excited to continue this project, especially if we keep getting such big smiling faces, like the one we got from Bristol Welch!

## ELW BOARD LOOKING FOR TRANSITION COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

BY: JEREMY ROSSI

The merger is heating up. The ELW Board of Education has been selected and now it's time to work out the details. The community, faculty, staff, and students have had the opportunity to voice their opinions, and committees are now being formed for some of the different aspects that need to be considered in building the new district. In total there are eight committees: School Identity, Facilities and Transportation, Athletics, Technology, Curriculum and Programming, Extra-Curricular Activities, Special Education, and the Code of Conduct.

These committees will provide a place for people to give input. However, as clarification,

these committees will not make the actual decisions; feedback will be brought to the Board of Education as a recommendation. People are welcome to join any committee, some will have more decisions and sway than others. For example, transportation probably won't be as popular to join because it's more specific and mainly a job that will be decided by the driving staff and the school's gas budget. On the other hand, School Identity will probably be more popular, and geared towards things students and community have ideas for, like a new school name, school colors, or a school mascot.

How does one join a committee? Well, it's simple! Email either Mr. Meyer or Mr. Osborne at [mej@westportcs.org](mailto:mej@westportcs.org) or [sosborne@elcsd.org](mailto:sosborne@elcsd.org), and just let them know what one you'd like to participate in. Meetings will probably happen once or twice a month, but that will be established officially when the groups meet for the first time and make their schedule. So, if you're worried about the merge, get your voice heard! Go out and join a committee, make a difference, assert yourself!

*"People are welcome to join any committee; some will have more decisions and sway than others"*

## JANE KIMBALL WINS REGIONAL SPELLING BEE

BY: HUDSON STEPHENS

Westport was well represented at the Regional Spelling Bee championships held in February at Ausable Valley Middle High School. Jane Kimball finished 4th overall and came in 1st for 5th grade. Jane told *BTW* that she was extremely nervous going into it, but eventually relaxed after the first few rounds. She'd done a lot of practice over the past couple of years and is a frequent reader, so she was well prepared. After several successful rounds, Jane finally fell after forgetting the "IC" at the end of the word NARCISSISTIC. She hopes to return to regionals next year, but knows she'll have tough local competition

in spellers such as Sofie Fiegl, Oona Hall, Charlotte Faber, and many others. Having finished 4th out of 66 spellers in grades 4-8 as only a 5th grader, we would not be surprised to see Jane back at Regionals in the coming years, finishing even higher than she did this year.



## WCS QUIZBOWLERS MAKE HEADLINES IN *POST STAR* NEWS

BY: MAGGIE PLOUFE

The last generation of competitors in WCS history to represent Westport in Quizbowls' 32nd Annual league of academic competition has been recently recognized as nothing short of inspiring, by advisor Mr. Fiegl as well as other advisors of competing city school districts including the commissioner of the PSAB (Post-Star Academic Bowl) organization, Patty Nicolls, and even the widespread *Post Star News*. As competition increased in anticipation of winning a coveted trip to Quizbowl Nationals, fellow competitors and advisors greatly noticed what Westport is really about when it comes to comradery, character representation, and ultimately what it means to be role models even in difficult situations.

Going head to head with nineteen schools in six different counties while being the smallest fish in the pond, proved to be a significant obstacle for WCS yet made little to no difference as our WCS academic team battled it out to the end with seven time champion Saratoga Springs High school, who graduates roughly five hundred students as opposed to our fifteen. In an article published by the *Post Star News* covering the counties of Warren, Washington, and Saratoga, Quizbowl commissioner Patty Nicolls commented: "It was the tightest game I've ever seen," and "It was like watching David vs. Goliath." (No subject off limits at Post-Star Academic Bowl by Samuel Northrop). To summarize the intensity of the game, Westport and Saratoga had a tied final score after trading leads throughout the contest

*"It was like watching David vs. Goliath."*



which resulted in a round of bonus questions in which Saratoga High School defeated our Eagles by only ten points... which is the value of only one correct answer. Despite this "stinging loss" as described by advisor Mr. Fiegl, the outcome of this circumstance soon became his proudest moment as a WCS Quizbowl coach. Instead of leaving the scene, WCS stayed to participate in another friendly match against Hudson Falls. "Afterwards the team decided to stick around and play a game for fun," says Fiegl. He wasn't the only one to notice this positive energy

however. In an email sent to all of the participating schools, the commissioner thanked all participants but especially gave recognition and high regards to our representation at the event and our distinguished character. "This display of sportsmanship by these teams was amazing, and I bow to the two coaches who encouraged their kids to ultimately play for the fun of it, and for the learning experience.... Made my heart proud... Saratoga was a very classy winner... Westport a classy 'non-winner'." Contributing to the season were seniors Will Napper,



Hudson Stephens, Peter Vaiciulis, and Patrick Fair; juniors Annette Stephens, McKenzie Stephens, and Maggie Ploufe, along with freshman Rafe Simmer. Joining in the fun towards the end of the season were Lawrence Lobdell, Tomasi Vaiciulis, and Liz Poe. All of whom participated in sports and other various extra-curricular commitments during the season, as opposed to most of the kids they competed against. "I am so proud of everyone involved... everyone on the team covered for each other and filled in when people weren't able to come. Everyone on our team was apart of our success." said Fiegl. In the Post-Star News, Saratoga Springs coaches commented that their students "prepared year round for these competitions and several have traveled as far as Westchester, Pennsylvania for a weekend tournament in the past." Similarly to the coach of South Glens Falls High School who

expressed his enthusiasm that these Quizbowl competitions provided his students with "an alternative outlet to traditional school competitions like sports." Mr. Fiegl commented on our behalf and expressed to the press: "They play basketball, they're in drama club, they're apart of everything. I give credit to (WCS) for creating dynamic kids." (No subject off limits at Post-Star Academic Bowl by Samuel Northrop).

Overall, the WCS Quizbowl team successfully maintained a competitive record to place in the top eight teams in the area league with minimal losses. Veteran Will Napper, being a crucial player, racked up most of the teams points. Nearing the end of the season, despite having to work around basketball schedules and the fluctuating weather, WCS ranked seventh seed in the bracket and competed tenaciously to advance their position in the playoffs. This team of fierce intellectuals

still continues to play, even though there is an absence of game days, with the help of Mr. Fiegl who provides a classroom space, buzzers, and lists of questions on hand for fun, and for the sake of enjoying each other's presence in friendly academic competition. "I loved it more than I thought I would, and I learned lots." said Fiegl. "These kids are so diverse, and do so much... The bigger schools were expected to do well, and smaller schools not as well... but people definitely noticed us, that we're special."

Touching a soft spot in this being the very last season for our students and advisor(s) to represent WCS in Quizbowl along with other athletic and academic extra-curriculars, this team was able to succeed in making a long lasting impression on all of those who not only competed against us, but had fun with us too. And that is all that you can ask for approaching the end of a beloved legacy.

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*"It's important that we  
recognize the disappointment  
of the WCS student body."*

## WESTPORT WINS BIG AT ISAB AWARDS AND MODEL UN

BY: LAWRENCE LOBDELL

March 14th marked the 8th Annual ISAB awards where students all over the region were awarded a "Sabby" for their Public Service Announcements (PSA) about anti-bullying and other positive behaviors in school. Westport took home two of the biggest awards. Lawrence Lobdell and Blake Liberi won a Sabby for best PSA and Noah Lynch, Matthew Pribble and Arlo Halloran won for Best High School Video. The boys were treated to a night on the town in the Burgh where they attended a special red carpet event and then the award show.

"It was a pretty cool experience," said Lawrence Lobdell. "We all seemed to have a good time at the show and being able to take home some snazzy trophies was

pretty dope." Those said trophies are now being displayed in Mrs. Lackey's room.

Other schools that participated included Plattsburgh, Beekmantown, Peru, NAC, Seton Catholic, and Keene. WCS had never entered before in the eight years of the awards, and winning two of the biggest, why, that's pretty cash money. Another event: For the third year in a row Westport attended North Country Model UN (NCMUN), an event where bright students from all over the region come to participate in mock United Nations proceedings in hope of winning awards for Outstanding Delegate, Best Delegate, or at least an honorable mention. And win Westport did.

Magnus Kohler and Alessia Caputo each took home an

honorable nod for their work in Political Committee. Odin Kohler took home an Outstanding delegate award for his work in the Nuremberg Trials where he played Joseph Goebbels, minister of public enlightenment for the Nazi party and was found not guilty. Working in the press corps this year, I was able to observe everything that was going on in all the different committees. There was war and lots of it. In legal committee, Saudi Arabia said they would go to war with the United States if they forced protection of LGBTQ rights upon them; Arab League proceedings ended with all of the delegates declaring nuclear war on each other, and in Political Committee, the delegation of Syria declared nuclear war on their own citizens. So, NCMUN was pretty fun.

## HEARTBREAK IN ELIZABETHTOWN

BY: HUDSON STEPHENS

April 1st proved nothing short of devastating for the 10 + Westport students who gathered at ELCS for the monthly ELW board meeting. Despite the unwavering participation and dedication to student activism at Westport in the past month or so, students left the auditorium feeling disappointed and weary of their future. The Board unanimously voted to remain with the original suggested plan for building use, with one alteration in the placement of 6-8 at Westport, rather than 7-8. Sue Russell's heartfelt apology to the plethora of heartbroken WCS students was no consolation, as each of the high school attendees headed for the doors, arms draped around each other, tears streaming down several faces. The board seemed

altogether disappointed that this was the decision they had to make, following the recommendation made by Dr. Davey. Several members asked Superintendent Davey if he'd truly explored all options, and he repeatedly exclaimed that he had. Dina Garvey made it very clear that the Board had been asked by teachers and students alike to please combine 7-12 and K-6. She wanted to be sure that it was not possible to do this effectively. It was also made clear that this decision does not have to be permanent, but nonetheless it feels unlikely that a change of building use is in our near future.

The Westport High school is not happy. It's safe to say that almost no one would like to go to school in E-town next

year. It's also safe to say that several Westport students will not be attending school at ELW next year, feeling that there are now better places for them to receive an education. This is not to say that E-town students wouldn't have felt the same way if the decision had been reversed, but it's important that we recognize the disappointment of the WCS student body.

If nothing else, the Westport student participation and comradery over these past couple months has demonstrated the unity and sense of place which engulfs our school community. We should be proud, and we should be ready to take our culture and our values wherever we go next.