

# BEHIND THE WALL



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## Special points of interest:

- Behind the Wall welcomes you to our first issue of the season
- Mr. Meyer absorbs the Superintendent position and Mr. Fiegl and Mrs. Brugger are appointed Deans of students.
- Seniors are handed a lounge
- Students want change and Student Council is here to support them.
- Learn about the scheduling challenges Mrs. Cross-Baker faced this summer
- Read about who's new at Westport
- Class elections; Who's been elected to what

## BTW's WELCOME ADDRESS

The 2018-19 school year is well underway and *Behind The Wall* is excited to be up and running once again. Our goal as a school newspaper is to produce a monthly issue which provides relevant, well-written, and interesting articles to the Westport Central School community. As we begin what could be the final year with a high school in Westport, it is crucial that we do our best to make it the best year yet and to document it appropriately. One important



topic, which will be frequently discussed and written about, is the proposed merger between our school district and Elizabethtown-Lewis Central School. We'll aim to provide un-bias, truthful information, which both explains and informs readers on merger happenings. A theme for this particular issue of *Behind the*

*Wall* is the many changes which Westport seems to be completely and totally absorbed in. Whether it's new budget cuts, new teachers, new students, new ideas, new advisors and clubs, or new schedules, we've got it covered. A combination of fresh new staff, and dedicated, experienced staff, should make for a great school year.

*BTW* encourages and welcomes letters from our readers, controversial or not, as well as constructive criticism and/or new ideas. We'd like to thank our readers for the great support last year, and we hope to both meet and exceed the expectations we've set for ourselves this year.

## MONTHLY MERGER UPDATE

BY: LAWRENCE LOBDELL

The controversial Elizabethtown Lewis/ Westport Central School merger vote has been passed by each school board in a unanimous vote. This means that come October 9th, the two school districts will vote. If the vote results in a no, the merger will be turned down and the two school districts will remain separate. If yes, there will be a second vote held December

4th which will be the final decision of whether or not our two schools merge. Should it be voted down in either October or December, the board has to wait one year before they can start the whole process again.



## MEYER TAKES ON SUPERINTENDENT POSISTION; BRUGGER AND FIEGL APPOINTED DEANS OF STUDENTS

BY: HUDSON STEPHENS

*"This new role will allow him to focus on more district level responsibilities and less day- to-day happenings, such as routine discipline."*

Thanks to a steadily depleting budget, the 2018-19 school year will see Mr. Meyer as both the K-12 Principal and the acting Interim Superintendent at WCS. In an attempt to keep the school from going under, three teaching positions were cut (a P.E, Social Studies, and Elementary Math AIS) as well as the Superintendent position which is now combined with Mr. Meyer's principal position. This new role will allow him to focus on more district level responsibilities and less day- to-day happenings, such as routine discipline. This particular responsibility has been handed over to the newly appointed Deans of Students, Mrs. Brugger and Mr. Fiegl. Unfortunately, these new responsibilities for Mr. Meyer will lead to a less prom-

inent physical presence, as he'll be out of the building much more, attending various meetings. He has confirmed, however, that all of these changes have led to a stable budget for this school year. This newfound stability will unfortunately be temporary, should the merger vote in October or December come up negative. More cuts will need to be made for next year as Mr. Meyer and the board struggle to keep the school afloat.

On a more positive note, Mr. Fiegl explained what his role as Dean of Students means and how he intends to navigate the school year. He was very clear about his main intention, which is to ultimately look after the sole wellbeing of the students. "I'll be real

with students and I'll keep them accountable," he said, when asked about his new title. He and Mrs. Brugger will handle more of the day-to-day discipline and will only bring in administration for higher offenses or things they can't manage. Neither of them have served as a Dean of Students before, and Westport hasn't had one since either of them started working here, or possibly ever, so this year will be a learning experience for everyone involved.

With these new changes, the 2018-2019 school year at Westport is off to a smooth start.

## SENIORS GIVEN LOUNGE

BY: EDWARD NESBITT

This year the senior class was given the privilege of having a lounge. Superintendent/Principal Mr. Meyer explained his reasoning for the seniors having a lounge this year. Mr. Meyer explained that since our school didn't have any senior privileges that it was a good thing to do, and we have the space this year.

Owen Pierce: "It's Awesome and I'm so Pleased to have this chance."

Alexa, was full of pride when I asked her opinion on the lounge. She responded with, "If it was going to be anyone, It was going to be us..."

Melissa Place was completely surprised by this privilege and shocked, "it just came out of nowhere and it's really nice to



have this and to grow as a school, especially over time like we have..."

I interviewed Matt Pribble

about this because in this school everyone should have a voice and have it heard. Matt, being a junior and not having this privilege, was glad the seniors have it. He said, "It shows the trust and work our school did to make this happen."

It's been a very long time since the seniors had any real, set-in-stone privileges like this, and it's really nice to see how our school has improved connections with the student body to make things like this work for us all.....because eventually all of us hope to be given a lounge or some sort of senior privilege.

*"If it was going to be anyone, It was going to be us..." - Alexa Doherty*

## CHANGES WE'D LIKE TO SEE; A MESSAGE FROM YOUR STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT

BY: JEREMY ROSSI

It's a new year at Westport Central! The 2018 school year officially kicked off September 5th, bringing smiles to some faces and frowns to others. Smiles are great, but what can we do about some of those frowns? Here is what a few students, and teachers, think could be done to improve the Westport experience:

**Study Halls.** When I asked students something they would like to see changed or improved, study hall was a common theme. Some of the student suggestions were being able to talk more freely, instead of being restricted to schoolwork talk only. Bonus study hall privileges were also a hot topic, things like going to the gym, outside, or using it as a free period to relax.

**Hygiene** was also a strong concern for many. Students, especially the females, had some simple suggestions that

they said would greatly increase satisfaction in the school. They said that they would like more mirrors and sinks in the bathroom, or even just fixing what we do already have. Also, in the locker rooms especially, getting air fresheners, so it is a little nicer when you walk in. However, the most brought up idea with female students was the lack of hygiene products in the bathroom. They would like to see a change making it easier to get the products they need.

There were other great answers from students about things our school can adapt to improve our time here. Ideas like a snack vending machine and more student body sports involvement were mentioned. Mrs. Loher even spouted out an idea! She would like new chairs in her room, after discovering how uncomfortable they can be.

The biggest complaint heard is about the late-to-school detention policy. The top change students would like to see is the late policy. Many students have fallen victim of the 8:00 bell, and faced the punishment of a lunch detention, making it a rather unpopular rule.

What can we do? So, now that we have all these ideas, how can we actually make a change? Well, the answer is speak up. Student council is trying to stay at the top of the game this year, and is the perfect place for you to bring these ideas. With new Advisor, Mrs. Brankman, and a new president and vice president, their goal is to do as much as possible to make our students happy. Just talk to your class representatives, Mrs. Brankman, or meet us Thursdays during high school lunch when we have meetings!

*"The biggest complaint heard is about the late-to-school detention policy."*

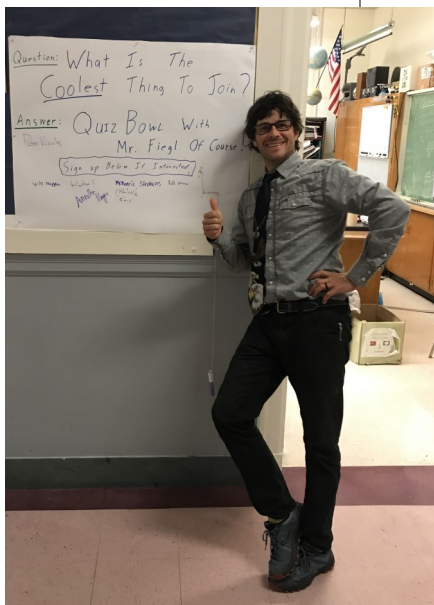
## 2018-19 CLUBS AND ADVISORS

BY: HUDSON STEPHENS

With the monumental loss of both our student council and quiz bowl advisor, Mrs. Phillips, there are many changes in the world of clubs at WCS. Mrs. Brankman relinquished her brief grasp on FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) and took on Student Council where she hopes to make an impact with new president Jeremy Rossi. She will also continue to work with the Juniors and now the Seniors as well, who lost three-year advisor Mrs. Matthews. Mrs. Bisselle will also assist Mrs. Brankman with the Juniors and Mrs. Lackey will absorb the FBLA position and remain the Slideshow advisor. Mr. Fiegl will replace Mrs.

Phillips as Quizbowl advisor and Mrs. Brugger and Mrs. Bisselle will advise Yearbook for the third year in a row. Mrs. Napper remains the second senior class advisor and Mr. Smith remains with the Sophomores. Mrs. Brugger has taken on the freshman class.

It's not too late to join any club at school and I'm sure any of these advisors would be more than happy to welcome anyone who cared enough to participate. It's a great way to stay involved, especially with our high school possibly being in its final year. For such a small school, just having these clubs is a feat in itself.







*"I think overall it's a solid schedule, but there are still a couple of pieces that need a few tweaks and that's true every fall." - Mrs. Cross-Baker*

*"I think that the scheduling issues of this year will present a positive learning experience for years to come."*

## SCHEDULING THE 2018-19 SCHOOL YEAR; AN INSIDE LOOK WITH MRS. CROSS-BAKER

BY: LAWRENCE LOBDELL

This year's schedule has been the talking point for many conversations of Westport Central Students, but why? For starters, students did not receive their schedules until the very first day of school. In years past, students would receive schedules in the mail towards the end of August. One student, when asked what they thought about the schedule's lateness, said, "You come to school on Wednesday and teachers need you to have stuff by the next day and you're not able to go out to get the supplies with sports and stuff."

When asked why the schedule was released later compared to other years, Mrs. Cross-Baker had this to say: "This is only my second year here so from what I saw last year schedules were either given out at 7th grade orientation or the back-to-school night. If they went out before that, I honestly didn't know about that."

Students have also brought up the lack of a "Back-to-School Night." In years past students would have one night to go into school, meet their new teachers, set up lockers, and get a list of materials needed. With no back-to-school night, students had a general feeling of unpreparedness going into this new school year. When Mrs. Cross-Baker was asked why there was no back-to-school night, she said, "Last year we had two staff preparation days. This year we only had one, and with only one day the decision was made to spend that day wisely and not to have a back-to-school night; but, there is no doubt that I have heard some concerns around that, and I think that that's a great issue to look at as we plan for next year.

Now, how does the schedule get made and in particular, this year's schedule? Mrs. Cross-Baker says, "We start with looking at classes students need for graduation. We also look at core blocks in the elementary school. English and Math are two periods for grades k through 6 so we piece those together. Then we look at where students need some support in some classes and try to piece those together and then fill in everything after that. Once we have a staff picture done, then I map each student out period-by-period and when things don't work, we make some adjustments and go from there, and I think overall it's a solid schedule, but there are still a couple of pieces that need a few tweaks and that's true every fall. Not unusual." Students this year were also puzzled by the electives they were placed into. Students who hadn't expressed any interest in certain electives were now in them without having been asked. Mrs. Cross-Baker says that this was to put students in classes they weren't familiar with to get them to try new things. This isn't that big of an issue. A simple schedule change would solve the problem, but the problem really is how much time it has taken to switch classes. It took some kids almost two weeks to just change classes. When asked what to do to prevent this general feeling of frustration, Mrs. Cross-Baker had this to say, "What I know that is hard for people to see are some of the issues that show up in the beginning of the school year that take my time from the list (of students requesting elective changes.) Number one, I have to go through new students' files. What credits do

they have, do they fit with our curriculum, and then how do we make a schedule here? That's not a five minute process. Sometimes records are complete, sometimes there are mixed records in the file. Students have good years, off years. Sometimes students come in and they have Spanish and we only have French, so how do we find solutions to those? I think the second week, with fewer staff, we had to make some adjustments to how staff go through their day and that has occupied some real time as well. Adjusting when certain things are happening in the day, where certain duties are covered by staff, takes time. So there's a piece of this where at the same time students are wondering about classes and electives, staff has also had some sorting out. When we had two days before school opened some of that happened over the course of two days. I think that took a little longer into the first week because we only had one day and not everything fit in that one day, so as teachers started their classes, they were also working through some schedule tweaks and teachers got updates even as current as yesterday. (Which at time of interview would have been the eleventh of September. Schedule changes were still happening even after.) The third piece is I'm the only one who makes student schedule changes, so in between some of those other pieces, the schedule changes are working through as we go from there." I think that the scheduling issues of this year will present a positive learning experience for years to come.

# FRESH FACES AT WESTPORT

BY: ANNETTE STEPHENS

Kicking off the new school year, there were many new faces around our familiar halls. Many of these are included in the healthy sum of new students. Mr. Meyer informed us in his welcome address that this year there are more new students than any other year during his time within the walls of WCS. Two of these originally unfamiliar faces stuck out more than others, those being Mr. Fairchild and Miss Larkin, the new math teacher and art teacher respectively. Both Mr. Fairchild and Miss Larkin seem to have adjusted to our culture quickly and successfully, and have positive first impressions on "The Port." Mr. Fairchild is a seasoned educator and administrator, having been in the field for upwards of 30 years, and played a vital role in eight other school districts in the area. His most recent post: Superintendent of Chazy Central Rural School. While he has been out of the classroom for sometime, that is what he is most excited about

embarking on this new year—being back in the classroom. It is still uncertain as to whether or not he is an acting spy for our rivals up north, but it's clear that he is kind-hearted, disclosing that his favorite teaching moment is "seeing students I wasn't sure were going to make it, earn their diploma." If you are itching to talk to him, but don't know how to start, he has an enthralling story about a school field trip, a mountain, a middle schooler, and a cliff. That could be a good ice-breaker.

Miss Larkin is also a seasoned teacher, having been in the classroom for 18 years. She is also, as can be assumed, a talented artist, who is in the classroom rather than a studio because she loves interacting with other people through art and making it social rather than individual. Miss Larkin also has many interesting things on her resume that you likely cannot guess. She has taught in a one room schoolhouse on a local Native American re-

serve, been skydiving, partook in sailboat racing, is an expert skier (a talent she has passed down to her daughters), and has been to 7 other countries. She is certainly a worldly woman, and like Mr. Fairchild, if you have had a desire to talk to her but need some help, try striking up a conversation with key words referring to her craziest teaching moment: "Native American field trip", "ski slope", and "white girl".

Pictured below are some of our new fellow Eagles. Both Miss Larkin and Mr. Fairchild included in their interviews what a great group of welcoming people we are. Let us greet our new peers with open arms and welcome them into our tight-knit community.

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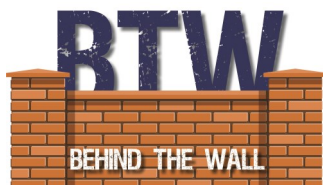
Left to right: Donavyn Smith, Alexis Bauman, Austin Milgrim, Parys Barcomb, Rafe Simmer, McKenzie Wescott, Cole Simmer



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## CLASS ELECTIONS; UPSETS AND MORE

BY: MAGGIE PLOUFE

As the new school year may bring forth new beginnings for Westport students, yearly traditions such as picking classes, joining clubs, and holding class elections have been amongst the quickly established organizational aspects of transitioning into a new grade level. These traditions are undoubtedly newer to the underclassmen rather than the upperclassmen who have had much more practice fundraising; however, this year's class elections all across the board were nothing short of amusing.

For the freshman class, advised by Mrs. Brugger, who is new to the election process, a tie between fellow classmates Jameson Fiegl and Thea Shaw in the running for vice president resulted in a revote, where Jameson finally claimed the position. The other class positions were awarded to Rachel Storey as president, Rafe Simmer as Treasurer, and Madelyn Liberi as secretary, while Student Council reps were to be Alexis Baumann and Elizabeth Poe.

As for the juniors advised by Mrs. Brankman and Mrs. Bisselle, Abe Staats was voted this year's president replacing Annette Stephens, while Arlo Halloran remained vice. Maggie Ploufe was switched from last year's treasurer to this Year's secretary, leaving McKenzie Stephens to pick up the position of treasurer. The vote for Student Council rep was a doozy however, as Trent Clark gave Lawrence Lobdell a run for his money to gain the last spot. Matthew Pribble was voted in first... but then it all came down to the wire between Lawrence and Trent. "I was shakin' in my boots," said Lobdell, "I was breakin a sweat... I give my all for Student Council and I thought I was a goner..." The tally resulted in Lawrence's favor, but he did show gratitude towards his competitor: "Trent would have made a good Student Council member." He wished him luck next year.

The seniors, advised by Mrs. Napper and Mrs. Brankman, kept their class representa-

tives closest to what they had last year, only swapping the roles of Peter Vaiciulis from secretary to vice president and Kaeli Braack from vice president to secretary. Hudson Stephens remains president, Will Napper is still treasurer, and Jeremy Rossi and Melissa Place continue to represent Student Council.

On the other hand, the sophomores and juniors have made multiple switches with class reps... the sophomore class advised by Mr. Smith held an election that switched things up tremendously. Last year's president (Tomasi Vaiciulis) was replaced by Cassidy Brack who was last year's vice president, allowing for Abigail Carlson to take up the position of vice presidency. Spencer Jensen replaced Solomon Fair for treasurer, and Magnus Kohler replaced Kaleb Petit for a spot on Student Council. Victoria Cole remains in the secretary position that she held last year.



*The newly elected freshman representatives*