

Behind the Wall

January 2017
Issue 3

Westport Central's First Annual Spelling Bee

By: Annette Stephens

After the excitement of the two hour delay on Wednesday, January 11th,, the contestants of Westport's first ever spelling bee gathered on the stage of the auditorium, ready for the beginning of the bee. These contestants consisted of a select group of fourth through eighth graders who had previously competed in a small bee in their classrooms. While these contestants varied in physical size and maturity, they all had one common goal...to out spellthe other three or four participants from their grade and proceed to the regional bee in Beekmantown.

To get a general feel of the atmosphere of the bee from atop the stage, I took the liberty to speak to contestants Rachel Storey, Sydney Bisselle, Abbey Schwoebel and Thea Shaw. The general consensus from the four girls was that the event went smoothly and was fun. Schwoebel said that she enjoyed having competition in academics rather than just sports. At the older end of the spectrum, Bailey Lynch and Tori Cole took the event very seriously and were excited in the days leading up to it. Tori won the eighth grade competition and is excited to be moving onto the regional bee on March 3rd. Bailey expressed sadness after coming in second to Tori but is also happy to see her friend succeed. Other students competing in the regional bee include Sofie Fiegl, Gabrielle Mazzotte, Grace Reynolds, and Ruby Feinbloom. *Continued on page 4*

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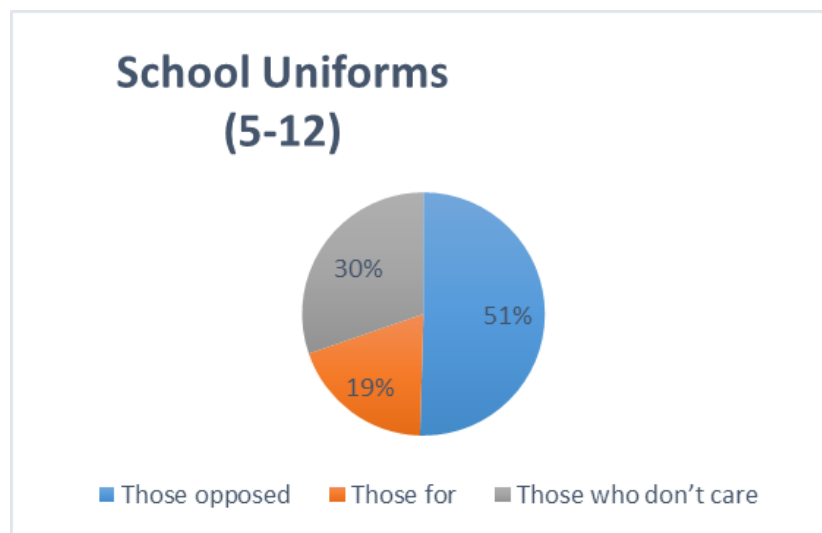
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SCHOOL UNIFORMS AT WESTPORT CENTRAL?

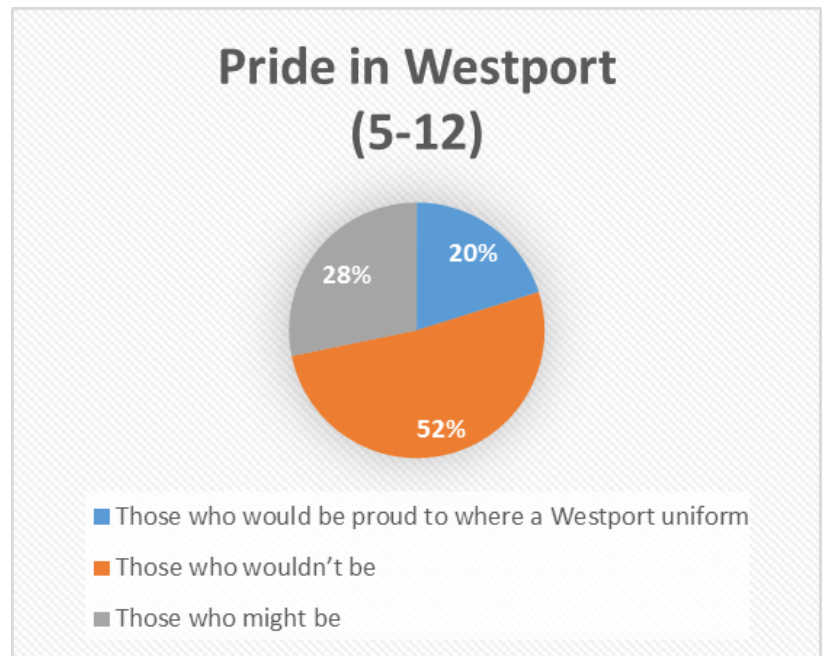
By: Hudson Stephens

A recent, elusive rumor has been circulating the halls of Westport Central, questioning the possibility of school uniforms for our students and possibly even our staff. In an interview with Mr. Meyer, we were informed that this prospect could not be ruled out, and that it was indeed a possibility. According to sources, Meyer was asked about the rumor by board members on January 12th, 2017, with no definitive answer reported. We can only initiate presumptive measures by preparing for whatever the outcome may be and proving resilient in the face of change.



In a survey with students in grades 5-12, we attained primarily negative responses towards school uniforms. The 5th and 6th grade proved the most positive with 39% expressing unopposed opinions. Meanwhile in the 8th grade, not a single student said they wouldn't mind a uniform. 75% were opposed while 25% didn't care. The sophomores, juniors and seniors also all expressed primarily opposed opinions, while the freshman results proved relatively even. The 7th grade was most ambivalent, as nearly 70% allegedly didn't care.

Another survey question was in regards to whether students would be proud to wear a Westport Central uniform daily. The response was overwhelmingly unconstructive, with only 20% conveying their school pride. The seniors voiced their opinions most strongly, with not a single student expressing pride for the school most of them have been a part of for 13 years. This depressing result should serve as a wakeup call to the rest of us here in Westport to embrace and embody our school pride in a more enlightening effort, so as to not end up as unhappy as our upperclassmen.



Ultimately, there is one important lesson to be learned from our research. The possibility of school uniforms at Westport is not unlikely. We are living in a generation of swelling innovation yet impending boundaries. We know that should uniforms be implemented at WCS, there would be much disdain and a probable chance of rash, rebellious acts from students. *Behind the Wall* will keep you updated on any news or confirmed rumors on this subject.

Westport Central's First Spelling Bee

By: Annette Stephens

Continued:

The Spelling Bee was organized by Mrs. Fiegl, Mrs. Lacroix, and Mrs. Bisselle, but the idea originated from Mr. Meyer. Mrs. Bisselle was very impressed by how well the event went and is planning to do it again next year. Going into the event, Bisselle did not realize how formal the bee was and believed that it was taken seriously but still had a light, fun mood. To authorize the bee, the organizing trio registered with the National Spelling Bee Association sponsored by Scripps National Spelling Bee program. Both Mrs. Bisselle and her daughter Sydney mentioned that the rules were still a bit unclear. If any Westport students qualify, they will move on to the national bee in Washington D.C... Bisselle believes that further success will come by practicing and understanding words and vocabulary. For the most part, students took the bee seriously and enjoyed the event even if they were nervous at first. Although Washington, DC seems far, for some students it just got closer.

The Inside Scoop On: Chromebooks

By: Peter Vaiciulis

A Chromebook is a laptop running the Linux-based Chrome OS as its operating system. The devices were originally designed to be used primarily while connected to the Internet, with most applications and data residing in "the cloud".

By the beginning of the 2017 – 2018 school year, Westport students in grades 5th to 12th will each have a Chromebook, courtesy of Westport Central School.

If you are not sure what a Chromebook is, picture a laptop, now picture that laptop a little bit smaller, now you have a Chromebook. Chromebooks function similarly to any other laptop, possessing a keyboard, a left-click function, and a screen for viewing any computerized subject.

Chromebooks are going to revolutionize our school in terms of technology access. There should be no need for the scheduling issues of the computer lab either, as students will be able to complete all computer work anywhere in the building and at home.

I can only applaud our administration for making the move to increase our students access to technology. Westport will certainly be taking big leaps in our near future.

School May Stink, But You Don't Have To!

By: Taylor Gough

As we ring in the new year, people like to forget what happened in the previous year and hope for positive changes in 2017. Although, one thing we should not forget to do this year is keep ourselves clean! Personal hygiene is extremely important, especially during athletic seasons.

Showering is good! Showering is a must for everyone, and is stressed more with athletes. I don't know how many people have noticed, but our school has a very pungent odor that varies from grade to grade. Washing yourself once or twice a week is definitely not enough! Also, I really hope that when you do shower, you are using soap, not just rinsing off.

Deodorant is your friend! Applying deodorant every day is extremely important. Before school or physical activity, or after physical activity, it doesn't hurt to rub on some deodorant. If deodorant is not an option, perfume can be allowed instead, but only once in awhile. Perfume is not a substitution for deodorant. The scent of perfume or cologne trying to cover a person's stench is almost as bad as the stench itself.

Wash your clothes after you wear them! Please, please, PLEASE do not wear clothes multiple times before washing them! No one wants to smell your week-old, dirty laundry. I highly advise you all to wash your clothes with detergent and properly dry them before wearing them again. This goes for gym clothes, as well. Letting your smelly and sweaty gym clothes sit in your gym locker for a month is highly gross. On behalf of the student body, please take home and wash your clothes!



Westport Alumni

By: Cameron Costello



On Wednesday, January 11th, and Friday January 13th, Westport Alumni returned to speak to the seniors about what they thought of college. Scarlett Moore is attending the University of Vermont (UVM); Sydney Mitchell is at St. Lawrence University; Ellie Schwoebel attends Wells College; Kristen Orr is now at Adirondack Community College; Thomas Mero is at University of Connecticut; Lucy Misarski is attending Johnson State College; Megan Sudduth is at Colby-Sawyer, and Ian Pierce is at Alfred State. We were able to ask the group some questions and the Alumni talked about a number of different things from wearing sweatpants and the same outfit every day to having a car on campus, and the importance of finding the tutoring center.

The Alumni attend many different size colleges and there are quite a few differences between their schools. At the smaller schools, some of the Alumni said that cars were useful because it is more convenient to get places. At the larger schools, cars were a little bit less useful because there are bus systems.

Thomas Mero sarcastically told us that you can wear sweatpants every day because nobody really cares what you wear in college, unlike high school. They also told us that even if you don't really like your roommate in college, you most likely will like someone else living in the same building as you.

They also informed us that we will need to put much more effort into studying in college than in high school. They said that it can be hard to prepare for college at Westport, but also at any other school. Many more hours are put into studying in College than in High School and the adjustments can be difficult, but the Alumni said to stick to college and persevere because it will pay off in the end.

Cell Phones

By: Blake Liberi

As school began in the New Year, and we were soaring through the second quarter, kids became more comfortable bringing out their cell phones in class to listen to music and connect to their favorite social media site. But one teacher in particular became aggravated with this problem. Her name is Mrs. Brankman. If you don't know her, she is one of our two middle and high school English teachers. Per her remarks, she is a "seasoned veteran" and "knows all the tricks in the book", so she is not playing around. "There is a time and place for cell phone use and my classroom is not the place without my permission."

Her outspoken commentary did cause the cell phone problem to calm down; however, she is still finding those few students who are on the wrong end of this predicament. Mrs. Brankman seems to lead this brigade of banning cell phone use in classrooms and some students seem to be simply denying her request to follow the school-wide policy for cell-phone use that can be found in the Student and Parent Handbook:

A. STUDENTS AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Westport Central School recognizes that there are personal equipment devices that have educational applications such as tablets, e-readers, calculators, voice recorders, digital camera and music listening devices. In some instances a "smart phone" may include applications that permit these functions.

These devices shall be allowed to be used in the classroom if they are being used for an academic purpose and the use of the device has been preapproved by a teacher and an administrator.

Preapproval is required for the use of these devices during a study hall.

As some people may know, Mr. Meyer addressed the cell phone use policy at the start of the year, but the rule has seemed to fade away these past months. Will Mrs. Brankman continue to enforce, or will the kids wear her down?

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

A Legend Lives On...

By: Maggie Ploufe

As you may all know, January 16, 2017 was a day off from school. But some might wonder “Why is this day so important and remembered each year?” Martin Luther King, MLK, was a leader who left a legacy, a man who brought hope and healing to our country. He was not only a preacher and dad; he was a strong leader during the Civil Rights Movement. It was his values of courage, truth, justice, compassion, dignity, humility and service that defined his character and empowered others. These values are similar to our values at Westport Central school: Respect, Responsibility, and Safety.

MLK fought for racial justice, equality, freedom, and dreamed of one day having a color blind society. He faced many challenges along the way, but in no means did he ever give up. He had often put his life on the line and dealt with threats, harassment, bombings, beatings, and even went to jail twenty-nine times! Even though it might've been easy for him to hate his enemies and the people who had wanted to persecute him, he still encouraged people to have faith, to protest peacefully and refrain from anger and violence. He told people to instead turn to forgiveness, tolerance, and reconciliation.

How are his teachings used today? On this holiday all across America, people perform services in hospitals, nursing homes, shelters, prisons, or wherever people need help along with many other projects to build communities. It is a day of service and a time to devote to caring for others as MLK did so much in his lifetime.

How can we implement these values in our school to make it a better environment? One way is to use or take into consideration his forms of conflict resolution. When we get into a “pickle”, whether it be with a fellow peer or teacher, instead of lashing out, we can take time and think to ourselves: “What is the most loving way I can resolve this conflict?” This can alleviate the tension of all different types of bullying and various disputes; overall creating a more functional and united school community.

Here is one fun project that also goes along with MLK day pertaining more towards racial justice and humanity in general. (Teachers can do this with students or you can even try this for yourself at home). Take two eggs, (from the store/non-cooked) that are two different colors: blue, white, brown, green, speckled, etc. Write down a list of things that are different about them based on the outside.



Then crack them both open and observe the differences on the inside. You will see that even though they didn't look similar on the outside, they are almost identical on the inside. MLK wanted people to realize that this goes for all humanity as well.

One way we can implement this in our school is to think about the ELWCS Griffins, and how we have come together to help each other in various ways like sports, transportation, and the sharing of a Superintendent. Even though we come from different schools we are still alike in age and are humans who are equal and the same on the inside no matter how different we look or act.

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a great positive impact on society. By using these values, hopefully we can too, create positive impacts for years to come.

Regents Week

By: Lizzie Stephens

The dreaded regents and finals week has come and gone by now, bringing a wave of relief over students and teachers. Many are cheering after finishing the stressful exams, on the other hand, many are still questioning why we don't get the winter regents week off from school as we do in June.

The two atmospheres between the June and January regents weeks differ immensely. In June, the school is practically empty. You do not have to worry about loud students in the hallways when the bell rings. In January, however, school is still in full swing. You are still going to class everyday and learning for a full three hours before or after you take the regents. You are still worrying about sports, and homework, and midterms. The "peace" you have during the June regents week is just not present during the January regents period.

Each year, students are hopeful that they will get the week off. Let's hope that next year is the year.