



The High School View

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Students retreat to move forward

By Julia Cooper

Buzzing with misinterpreted rumors, 52 students and faculty members from the regional high school played a game of telephone while participating in the 7th Annual Peer Outreach Retreat. The retreat took place last Thursday and Friday at Alex's Place at the YMCA. The Peer Outreach retreat as well as Alex's Place is funded by the Alexandra Gagnon Foundation. The two-day retreat began with a large platter of donuts and nervous chatter among attendees. Every year, 10 students from each grade level are elected by their peers to attend the retreat.

The purpose of the Peer Outreach program is to train these elected students how to effectively help those in the school who may be in need of help on an emotional level. Students at the retreat participated in both large and small group discussions regarding methods of identifying problems, articulat-

ing concerns, and creating solutions. To go along with these discussions, role playing and trust building activities were organized to give participants opportunities to practice what they were learning and support their fellow retreat attendees. Said senior Gage Rancich who was elected to go on the retreat, "All of the activities, even one's I had seen before, like telephone, really seemed to reflect what was being taught. They were put into a context that made them so much more relatable than they had before."

The retreat was organized by school adjustment counselor Amy Lilavois and Guidance Director Mike McCarthy along with senior Peer Outreach facilitators Maddie Webster, Taylor Poggi, Kevin Burchill, Kathryn Antonsson, Dana Jacobs, and Bella Bennett.

"I wouldn't have been able to make it happen without the seniors this year," said Amy. "They really did an unbeliev-



PHOTO BY AMY LILAVOIS

Peer outreach retreat members participate in trust-building activities during the retreat.

able job. I did the least amount of talking throughout the retreat, which is definitely an accomplishment."

Sophomore Katherine Reid reflected on her experience at the retreat. She said, "Even though I thought the retreat would be mostly trust games, I think it's really beneficial to learn how to talk to my peers

when before I haven't known what to say. Everyone here is so nice and will undoubtedly play a positive role in the school."

Said retreat attendee, Coach Donald Herman, "In my years of teaching, I have seen the Peer Outreach program change our school atmosphere and culture for the better."

Standardized tests debated

By Katherine Donegan

For some, it is the face of the enemy. For others, a friend. Regardless, this year it will be back, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), a standardized test that sophomore students will be taking this spring.

Standardized testing has been a part of American education since the mid-1800s, yet its prevalence has increased after the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) was passed in 2002, which mandated annual testing in all 50 states. Under this act, states were required to create standards that the individual districts must meet, or else they would risk losing millions of dollars in federal funding. For students at the regional high school, this test dictates whether or not a student is able to graduate with a regular diploma or certificate of completion.

Since its creation, the MCAS has been a source of controversy. Proponents of the test believe that it is an inclusive and non-discriminatory way of measuring student achievement in an objective way and that it creates a necessary standard.

Parents of students of the regional high school take note of this merit of the MCAS. Apryl Anastacio, who has had one child take the MCAS, said, "The

only commendable quality of the MCAS is that it's a tool to measure the effect of the level of academics being measured in the school."

Additionally, some believe that it keeps some students from being neglected and lost in the system. As History department chair Elaine Weintraub, said, "Before the MCAS, there were no expectations for students in the bottom-level classes. It was just a holding space. I knew that teachers would not spend the effort on kids who found school more difficult, unless they had to. MCAS made them accountable for every student." Dr. Weintraub also believes that the test has merit in that it "allows us to have shared knowledge." Of this she said, "I believe that it is important that we all have the same basic education and common cultural knowledge, no matter what we decide to do with our lives."

Senior Eamon MacKenzie also believes in the importance of this basic level of learning. He said, "While the MCAS has its flaws, I believe that it is a fair system and rather than narrowing the curriculum, it focuses on the important skills students need to master."

Not everyone sees the MCAS in the same way. Some parents believe that it does not allow for teachers to teach other impor-

tant aspects of a well-rounded education, such as innovation and critical thinking. As Mrs. Anastacio said, "Schools have learned that higher scores give them more funding. Therefore, curricula are tailored to the MCAS and the creativity of teaching and learning is taken away."

Abby Webster, who has had two children take the test, also believes that it puts too narrow of a constriction on what teachers can teach. As she said, "MCAS puts too much pressure on teachers to gear their teaching around the test and distracts from a richer curriculum. Teachers should be encouraged by the state to foster as much innovation and creativity as possible rather than the other way around. I wish we could be refunded the millions of dollars spent on developing and administering MCAS and spend it on higher teacher salaries and more support services for our students."

Some students and teachers too believe that the test encompasses only one facet of education. As senior Clare Boland said, "The MCAS only measures a portion of what makes education meaningful. There are many qualities that are equally important as those the state deems is an education, such as curiosity and creative thinking. In its multiple choice format, it

also promotes the simplistic idea that there are only right and wrong answers."

Junior Lily Lubin agrees that it may harm the success of our students. Lily said, "The MCAS is used as an incorrect way to measure the merit of a teacher's and school's abilities. Higher test scores do not necessarily reflect higher quality of teaching."

Dr. Weintraub, who has seen hundreds of students go through the MCAS, including her own two children, has no-

Young brothers prepare for holiday season

By Marc Natichioni

As Thanksgiving draws closer, a group of high school students are working together to help serve the community. This group is the Young Brothers to Men, a high school club made up of young males of all cultures. This month they will begin their local food drive.

Last year the Young Brothers to Men donated 29 full meals for Thanksgiving dinners for families in need. They created these dinners from the generous donations made by local community members. This year their goal is to supply 50 meals. President of the club, senior Doug Andrade, hopes to accomplish this goal by widening their pool from which they acquire donations.

Said Doug "The group plans to reach out to not only the

high school but the elementary schools of the Island too." They also plan on setting up a table outside of Cronig's so people who want to donate can either donate money or go inside and buy the items on the list of food needed to create the meals. The money raised from donations is used to buy turkeys from Cronig's and leftover donations are given as gift cards to cover other costs or special items that families might need for their Thanksgivings.

While each year the club's Thanksgiving meal drive is a success, the members of the club try to improve each year. As senior Austin Stevenson said, "As we grow as a group, we learn as we go. We try to improve each and every year by reflecting on previous years."

blame on the increase in standardized testing. He wrote, "If we neglect creative students in school because of the structure and the testing movement... then they become underachievers."

Students at the regional high school are tested in their sophomore year on Mathematics, English Language Arts, and Science. While the stress some students experience can make the MCAS a negative experience, the MCAS can help students by providing free tuition in Massachusetts state colleges and universities if they achieve certain scores.

The dead walk the halls



PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE HALL

Ghosts, ghouls, vampires and other fantastical creatures roamed the hallways on Halloween. Senior Stephanie Harris (left) and junior Maddie Scott work diligently in their global history class while adorned in their Halloween costumes.

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