

The High School View

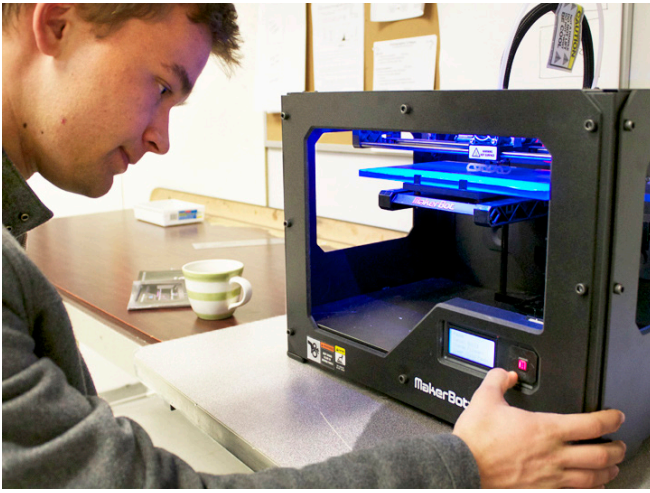
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New machine helps students dream

By Christopher Aring-Sharkovitz

What was science fiction a few years ago is now happening as science fact in technology and photography teacher Chris Baer's classroom. Using the school's new 3D printer, students are able to create anything from gears to model cars with working wheels to iPhone cases.

The models are made with Polylactic Acid (PLA) and have a maximum size of eight inches. The printer takes a design made by a student on a computer and



Senior James Ulyatt uses the new 3D printer at the high school.

PHOTO BY SARAH ORTLIP-SOMMERS

turns it into a model of the item. "I want students to invent, create, and design their own things," said Mr. Baer.

When Mr. Baer received the printer, he and his students started creating things using the sample models that came with it. Then they moved on to other designs.

This addition to the school's curriculum could benefit many students including those who are interested in architecture or engineering. The device allows students to work with a machine that they

may be using later on in life as a part of their job. "Somewhere in the near future, you could be downloading shoes off the Internet and printing them on your own 3D printer," said senior James Ulyatt, who has worked extensively with the new 3D printer.

Similar printers are used all over the world. Amy Chipperfield, a former regional high school student, now uses 3D printers to help design jewelry for a company in Boston.

"I am glad that I have

hands-on experience with one, as they will probably be widespread in the future," said James. Soon people will be making their own parts for something that may be broken.

The printer is located in the computer lab, room 402. The printer is used by students in the Invention and Technology course. According to Mr. Baer, students are so curious and excited about the new machine, they often visit his class even when they are not officially signed up for it.

History teacher pens new book

By Nathaniel Horwitz

Regional high school history teacher Andrew Vandall is on the verge of publishing his first book, *Our Experience in the Irish Brigade*. The book builds on a series of letters between two brothers serving in the Civil War and details their experiences in Pennsylvania's 116th Regiment, part of the Irish Brigade, which fought for the Union in every major battle between Richmond

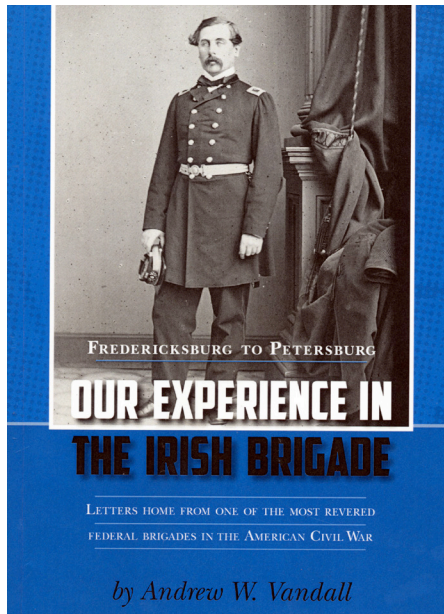
and Washington.

The letters, written between August 1862 and October 1864, in addition to Mr. Vandall's accompanying research, tell a compelling story that links together other accounts and offers a new perspective on the common tale of young men going to war.

Said Mr. Vandall, "I'm from that area of Pennsylvania, so I felt connected to the story. My

father was a historian, and ever since I was three or four we would go around battlefields in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and I loved the history and the exploration."

When he was older, Mr. Vandall spent time with Civil War re-enactors, and developed a close bond. "It's a strong network, a really close group. Some of them are lawyers, doctors, police officers, one's a chauffeur. What connects us is our love of history and American conflicts, and



the Civil War is a big part of that."

Mr. Vandall received the letters on which the book is based in 2007 from a historian friend who recommended he write about them. Originally, the plan was to present an introduction and explanation for each of the letters, but as he

worked on them the book grew to more than 300 pages.

Mr. Vandall said, "I enjoyed the process, going to the Library of Congress and researching in small historical societies, looking through primary documents, actually being a historian. Teachers, we talk about history all the time, but to actually do the history? That was a really cool experience for me."

Our Experience in the Irish Brigade will be available on Amazon starting May 1.

Tisbury School balances learning and testing

By Lily Bick

(This is the first article in a series planned by the High School View designed to explore the relationship between standardized tests and student learning in many of the Island's schools. The idea was suggested to the View staff by students. If you have stories and comments to share please e-mail them to the editors at newspaper@mvyps.org.)

School is about learning, but finding a balance between helping children learn and administering standardized tests is not always an easy task.

The standardized

test that all students in Massachusetts are required to take is the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

Many schools across Massachusetts are cutting electives to create room for MCAS preparation. Some Vineyard schools may not be exempt from this trend.

The Tisbury School has made a strong effort to give students as many possibilities to take specials classes regardless of pressure from the state.

According to the Tisbury School website, their overall mission and educational philosophy is not only, "promoting and supporting high achievement for

all students," such as on MCAS, but also to promote "the development of confident, competent children who are well-prepared for a lifetime of learning." The school accomplishes these goals by offering elective courses in vocal and instrumental music, physical education, shop, Spanish and computer science. Said Tisbury School principal John Custer, "I think it's good to have an assessment of skills. Also it's good to check that instruction and education practices are sound."

MCAS tests all students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL),

on English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science and tech/engineering, and history and social science. In addition, high school students must pass a Biology MCAS exam in order to be eligible to receive a high school diploma. Students in grades 3-8 are tested and reported with a level of advanced, proficient, needs improvement, or warning. In high school, there is no warning grade. Instead there is a grade of fail. Many schools feel a lot of pressure around the MCAS examinations because a school's overall performance can affect the amount of state funding the

school receives.

The results of MCAS exams are so important that some schools are cutting electives such as music, art, culinary, and shop and replacing them with MCAS prep. The only time that MCAS affects electives at the Tisbury School is when the actual testing is during times that are normally devoted to electives. "It is required by the state that students take the test first thing in the morning. If they have specials scheduled for that day, they will miss them for that day. We try to give them back that time. Whatever they lose during MCAS days, we give back to them at the end of the year when we have more flexibility with our schedule," said Mr. Custer.

"So they'll have a double-gym class or an extended recess."

Island schools have historically produced scores that are higher than the state averages. "Education is something that people here care about," said Mr. Custer. Generally smaller class sizes and something about the Island community helps in many ways. "The average class size at the Tisbury School is 18 students, while the national average is 20.3.

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