



The High School View

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World language learners seek seal of biliteracy

BY BROOKE CROCKER

On Friday, March 5, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) 37 students in upper-level language classes took the Language Proficiency Stamp Avant Test in pursuit of the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy.

The Stamp Avant Test consists of reading, writing, listening, and speaking portions. It was the second time MVRHS has offered the exam, and students tested in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and German. The seal is printed on the diplomas of students who pass the test.

Language department chair and biliteracy test administrator Justine DeOliveira, who also teaches Spanish at MVRHS, said, "[The test] is really looking at what it means to function in a language."



MAX POTTER

Finley Monahan studies the past perfect subjunctive to prepare for the biliteracy test.

The purpose of the seal, according to the World Language Department, is to "value language diversity and the skills needed to participate in a global society, prompt long-term study of languages learned in school, and produce a biliterate, multicultural workforce."

In order to qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy, students must score in the intermediate-high level in all sections of the Stamp test and demonstrate their English proficiency by passing the MCAS test.

Students believe the seal will be helpful in the future.

Senior AP Spanish student Rachel Salop said, "I took the test because I have been speaking Spanish for a long time, and earning the seal is a great accomplishment and can be useful in college." The seal may be used to test out of some language course requirements in college.

While many students started preparing for the specific sections on this test just a few weeks before the test date, they had all been building the foundation of their languages in their past few years in high school.

Senior AP Spanish student Hope Bettencourt said, "I think I really started preparing for [the test] freshman year with all the Spanish teachers that I've had. They've all prepared me well."

Scores on the test have already been released. Once the language department con-

firms that the students have passed MCAS, five students will receive the seal of biliteracy in Spanish, six students in Portuguese, and one student in French. Five additional seniors qualified for the Seal of Biliteracy in Portuguese, based on previous testing.

Students who did not qualify for the seal this time will be eligible to retake the test next year. "[The test is] all about what students are able to do and then also with using this specific type of testing, it provides individual feedback," said Ms. DeOliveira.

Now that the scores are released, language teachers are noting a discrepancy between students' listening and reading scores and their speaking and writing scores. Students have typically been performing better on the listening and

reading sections, and less well on the other sections.

"The reading and listening went surprisingly well for me. They were a bit easier than what I was used to with the AP activities we normally do in class," said Senior Bella Thorpe. "The writing and speaking were more difficult."

Teachers are trying to learn more about the differing scores between sections. "We are trying to dig a little deeper into the data and see why that is. Is it because of what we're doing in our program? Is it because of the test itself?" said Ms. DeOliveira. "Speaking is often the skill that takes the longest to develop and reach the highest level."

Regardless of whether they passed, Ms. DeOliveira was pleased with all the students who sat for the test. She said, "We want [students] to celebrate every step of the way, because it's a very long journey to learn a language and become proficient in it." **HSV**

Students get into 'Good Trouble'

BY HARDY EVILLE

While following U.S. Representative John Lewis through Texas as he stumped for various candidates during the 2018 midterm elections, Dawn Porter, director of the documentary "Good Trouble," was faced with a challenge: keeping up with him.

"He went to five churches on one Sunday morning. He would go in, speak, rile the crowd up, kiss them, and go on to the next. He had a police escort running through Texas," said Ms. Porter. "John Lewis's car speeds off down the highway, and our [local driver] goes, 'Hold on, I'm a rally car assistant,' and he floored it. The point is we could not keep up with the congressman, he was so energetic."

On March 5, the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School's (MVRHS) Race, Culture and Equity group presented a Q and A with Ms. Porter after sharing a link to "Good Trouble" for families to watch when they wanted.

The screening and follow-up discussion with Ms. Porter via Zoom on Friday evening was open to students and other MVRHS community members, and was part of the group's ongoing work of racial education at MVRHS.

Performing arts teacher Brooke Hardman-Ditchfield suggested screening the film because her husband, Brian Ditchfield, has worked closely with Ms. Porter for many years through his work as programming director of the Martha's Vineyard

Film Festival.

Dhakhir Warren, director of student affairs, also worked on organizing the screening, and was excited to finally watch the film.

"We thought it was a great opportunity to have an experience where families could sit down together, watch the film, have a conversation, and then open up a live Q and A with the director," he said.

The film explores Congressman Lewis' entire life, from early childhood, where he would preach to his family's chickens, to his time as a civil rights activist and leader during the Freedom Rides and the crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., as well as his work in Congress.

During the Q and A, Ms. Porter spoke about what it

was like to work with Congressman Lewis.

She said, "John Lewis was really an open book. I would say 'Mr. Lewis, can we come see you at work?' he'd say, 'Yes you can.' 'Can I come see you at home?' 'Yes you can.'"

School adjustment counselor Amy Lilavois and Ms. Hardman-Ditchfield reached out to sophomore Madeleine Bengtsson and junior Ella Clarke to moderate the Q and A. The student moderators met beforehand with Ms. Porter to discuss the film and brainstorm questions.

"She was really sweet and friendly," said Ella Clarke. "We expected to be intimidated, because her work and her résumé are so insane."

In addition to the moderators' questions, members of the MVRHS community were able to ask about the movie via the Zoom chat.

Ella was impressed by how

the documentary presented Congressman Lewis' life.

"I thought it was really powerful. I mean, honestly, I cried twice during it. I think you can feel the emotion through the screen," she said. "I was expecting to see his legacy, but we really got to know him as a person."

The Race, Culture and Equity group plans to continue organizing programming, and hopes to expand its audience.

"Sometimes it's easy to start an initiative and be going with some great momentum in the beginning, and then it can kind of trickle off as time goes on. I don't want that to happen," said Ms. Hardman-Ditchfield, a



COURTESY DAWN PORTER

Dawn Porter, director of "Good Trouble," spoke to the MVRHS community during a Q and A.

member of the group.

The group is planning to launch an Art for Social Justice Festival next fall. The festival will present films, plays, poetry, and art to explore the struggle for social justice in the U.S. **HSV**

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