

Headlight



Written by the students of Marblehead High School for our school and community

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Finding a Balance

Becky Twaalfhoven, Junior
Reporter in the Field

Since the first days of reports cards, and now with the introduction of the parent portal, grades have been a standard for achievement and success in school. With test scores, GPA, and averages now widely accepted as measures of performance and factors in acceptance, it's no wonder that students are increasingly preoccupied with them, me included. Yet teachers constantly emphasize the importance of learning and gaining skills over scoring well; and it's easy to understand the frustration of dealing with this obsession. We are all familiar with the stereotypical student "type" that only ever discusses numbers and judges their own self-worth on their midterm score. This stereotype encompasses a growing number of students, and not only in high school. I can remember comparing fifth grade report cards and counting the number of 4s, inevitably disappointed when certain categories had a 3+ or lower. Somehow, the teacher comments never seemed quite as important, and were difficult to compare with others' since they were not numerical. Looking back, I question the validity of judging my school experiences based on numbers. Shouldn't I be more satisfied with a comment like "creative" or "a pleasure to have a student" than a 4 in physical education? The problem lies in the enforcement of the idea that grades are a reflection of knowledge or worth, caused by the system and perpetuated by students. There is a fine line between caring enough and caring too much, which unfortunately becomes less clear by the day. As a student, I can personally say that I feel as if I can't afford to not obsess over scores, especially when my academic future seemingly depends on my results. The key to finding a balance is perspective and an open mind. For example, if you were to study for a history test with rote memorization and cramming without understanding, you might numerically score better than someone who read for curiosity and looked for connections without committing every fact to memory. Yet, in the long run, who's to say which student was more successful? The student who made connections has a long-term understanding, and the information gained will be significantly more relevant to other areas, though the immediate grade may not reflect that. To clarify, that is not to say that grades and tests are not important, or that one should completely disregard tests and scores. The simple truth is that grades are not a reflection of an entire person, and while some attention and investment in performance is beneficial, unhealthy obsession with numbers is not conducive to happiness or success. The definition of success is "the accomplishment of an aim or purpose"; so the question to ask is, what is your aim? If the aim of education is to teach students to score well, then perhaps I'm wrong, and grades really are the most important mark of accomplishment. Personally, I think school is about so much more than that.

A Review: TGIT

Morgan Hardwick, Senior
Reporter

TGIT, an acronym recently coined by ABC for its Thursday night TV series lineup, has me actually thanking God (or Shonda Rhimes) every time Thursday rolls around. Starting the night off with *Grey's Anatomy*, followed by *Scandal*, and ending with *How To Get Away With Murder*, ABC does not disappoint on the eve of every weekend. *Grey's Anatomy*, the classic eleven-season TV drama, follows the lives of surgical wing doctors battling disease, death and the occasional heartbreak (literally and metaphorically). Laced with humor, *Grey's* has been my addiction since I started following Meredith Grey and Dr. Shepherd's on and off relationship with my mom back in the pre-teen days, before re-watching it on Netflix to catch up right before the 10th season aired in September 2013.

The newest addition to my Thursday night DVR was another of Shonda Rhimes' masterfully created dramas, *Scandal*. I fell in love with the strong female lead Olivia Pope by the second episode, along with the scandalous relationship she is in with none other than the President of the United States. Olivia Pope and her team of Washington D.C. associates cover up (or uncover) a new scandal each episode, keeping my eyes locked to the screen every Thursday.

Ending the night is producer Shonda Rhimes' newest series, *How To Get Away With Murder*. Although I haven't been religiously watching the series, I can already tell Annalise Keating and her law firm filled with students from her criminal law class will be my newest addiction before the second season airs.

So I suggest putting down your work every Thursday night and spending three hours drifting off into Shondaland (AKA the name of Rhimes' production company - aptly fitting). By the end of the night you too will be shouting TGIT from the rooftops, or from your couch eating popcorn like Olivia Pope.

An Addiction Sweeping the Nation

Abby Schalck, Sophomore
Reporter

People today are suffering from a horrible addiction. This addiction takes them away from reality, destroys friendships, and turns them into emotionless puppets controlled by their addiction. These things, which they constantly covet, lay in their very pockets. These things are smartphones.

I don't have a smartphone, and I don't want one. This is because I have seen what they do to people. I have watched as friends and family have become mindless robots, spending hours continuously staring at a screen. I know that if I got a smartphone, I would not be able to resist the temptation. I don't want to turn into something that I am not, which is exactly what smartphones do to you.

Until two years ago, my best friend didn't have a smart phone. She was happy, and we had fun together. Once she got an iPhone, she changed into a whole different person. We barely spend time together anymore; and when we do, she spends half the time with someone else who is on the other end of a text, tweet, or snap-chat. It's hard to believe that a person I have been so close to for over ten years has turned into someone I don't even know any more.

I wish that people would understand that in the grand scheme of things, their Instagrams, Snapchat stories, and their tweets mean nothing. I want people to realize how inconsiderate it is to be sitting at a lunch table with every person staring at a screen in silence. Don't they realize that there are real people sitting beside them?

I too have been guilty of spending too much time online. I don't have access to it every minute of the day, but when am home, I spend time on a computer or an iPad. I've tried to make a change in my habits, and it's not easy. But it is possible. I want people to realize that their tweets, selfies, and posts can wait. The Internet will always be there, but the people you are pushing away won't be.

MHS Jazz Bands Take Berklee

Joanna Rosen, Senior
Editors' Assistant

On Saturday, the MHS Jazz Band and Jazz Combo went into Boston to compete at the Berklee High School Jazz Festival. This competition features student jazz ensembles that travel to Boston to vie for prizes in their respective divisions. Our two groups, which include Headlight members Drew Faria and Alex Kerai, as well as myself, performed in the morning. We then had the afternoon to walk around the Prudential Center and hang out with friends. Later, the jazz group Kneebody held a workshop in which they answered students' questions about making a living as professional musicians and gave a concert in the evening.

Music is something that has lost its importance in the lives of many Americans, so it was truly amazing to see so many high school students engrossed in their peers' performances. When you think of music, most people today would think of groups like Imagine Dragons and singers like Katy Perry or Meghan Trainor. Unfortunately, musicians such as Kneebody,

Snarky Puppy, or Frank Turner get little-to-no recognition from the general public. I am not attempting to belittle the work of popular singers and groups (I enjoy "I Bet My Life" and "All About that Bass" as much as the next person), but I am simply trying to draw attention to the fact that these performers are just that: performers. They appeal to most people because of their accessibility and appearance. Their songs are fun, catchy, and entertaining. Music has become something that is no longer respected or revered. It is something people listen to in order to pass the time, or to entertain them as they drive to work or school.

In reality, music is much more than entertainment. For many, it serves as a form of self-expression and for others it acts as a comfort during difficult times. Music has even been proven to boost test scores and grades, so it is also a tool for academic achievement. The importance of music—whether it be jazz, rock, indie, or folk—has been sorely neglected in the past decade or so, and it is no surprise that as a result, my generation has grown to view the music played on stations like 107.9 as legitimate art. Of course, some of it is. But most of it is over-produced and over-simplified. We are not stupid, but we have been so influenced by music companies that when we hear pieces

that feature heavily auto-tuned voices and more synthesizers than actual instruments, we think: "Wow, what a great song!" These pieces certainly may be fun to listen to, but more often than not they are just catchy tunes written with the intent of becoming hits.

There is something to be said of live music, with real instruments and real musicians. This is why the Berklee Jazz Festival was such a heartening event. There were at least forty groups competing on Saturday, and it was reassuring to see so many young people performing jazz standards as well as newer pieces. It restored some of my faith in my generation and its ability to distinguish between fun, catchy music and the less auto-tuned, more instrumental pieces. There is a difference between enjoying the music you hear on the radio and considering it to be art. There is a difference between the songs you hear on the radio every day and the works of lesser known composers and musicians who refrain from processing their work with synthesizers and software. And recognizing that today's popular music might not be the best example of music as an art form is very important. Art is something that moves people and evokes emotion and understanding. If a piece is truly a work of art, it can stand the test of time and can instill the same emotions in its viewers fifty years from its creation.



The MHS Jazz Band and Jazz Combo performed at the 46th Annual Berklee High School Jazz Festival at Berklee College of Music which Editors' Assistant Joanna Rosen reflects on in her article.

Headlight Staff 2014-15

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