



A Year in Review: The Freshman Perspective

Miranda Connolly, Katherine Cronin, Alexis Earp, Olivia Gardner, and Kate Simcoe

Freshman year is an important time in any student's academic career. Students become acclimated to a new school and environment. This typically includes standard "high school things," such as a change in school policies, harder classes, and structured midterms and finals. Some changes, like a more lenient dress code and rules permitting students to carry their backpacks to each of their classes, are welcomed. After coming from a middle school environment in which if a student is caught in possession of their phone during class, they are sent to the office, nobody is complaining about these changes. However, many people still have grievances about some of the aspects of life at Marblehead High School.

The Vape Detectors: Are They Necessary?

Perspective #1: To be honest, I don't think they are necessary. Even if there are detectors, it won't deter people from vaping, they will just go to a different bathroom or spot around the school. In my opinion, they are a huge waste of money. I understand the reason behind them and how they are supposed to make bathrooms more of a safe space and stop people from doing something that might be detrimental to their health, but I think there are bigger issues out there and much better solutions to the problem.

Perspective #2: I think the vape detectors have had mixed results. Ever since they were installed, the number of people vaping in the A-wing bathrooms has definitely decreased. I used to walk in and see people leaning against sinks with their vape pens in plain sight, but now, I rarely see anyone vaping during school hours. It's definitely nice to walk into a bathroom that is not crowded with people vaping in the stalls, but the detectors have not been 100% effective. Since they are located only in the A-wing bathrooms, many kids go to other bathrooms to vape. This drives other students to avoid the bathrooms in places like the Health wing. Overall, the results have been mixed, but I think that the detectors are a step in the right direction.

Perspective #3: I think that it was a good choice for the school to buy vape detectors. However, I'm not positive that they are effective, because the D- and E-wing bathrooms smell like vape now that there are detectors in the A-wing bathrooms. Personally, I never want to use bathrooms in which people are vaping because they are harmful to breathe in, and I don't want to be accused of vaping myself if a teacher walks in.

Most freshmen also had their first experience with midterms. While some teachers at MVMS gave final exams, they were not structured like they are at the high school. Despite teachers and upperclassmen assuring us that midterms are not as bad as they are made out to be, it was still a tense time for freshmen. Now, we are preparing for our first set of formal final exams. Freshman Izzi Warner says that, "Finals are more stressful because we need to remember everything from the very beginning of the year. I liked how we had different days to take our midterms, and I feel like these midterms were the hardest but will become less anxiety-provoking in the next few years." Final exams take place in the last week of school, so freshmen are looking forward to finishing finals and then being able to relax during the summer break.

A Year in Review: The Junior Perspective

Jillian Lederman and Madison Morris

We made it. Junior year is officially over... almost. Here is what we've done so far this year: taken the PSAT, SAT/ACT, and AP tests, asked for teacher recommendations, made resumes, filled out our "brag sheets," become leaders of clubs and sports teams, joined honors societies, gone to prom, applied to jobs, pulled all-nighters to study for tests (looking at you, physics), procrastinated way too much (and regretted it later), drastically reduced the amount of sleep we need to function, bookmarked Naviance, cheered for the seniors at Powderpuff, failed to master walking up the stairs from the first to the third floor without getting out of breath (it never gets easier), enjoyed our new upperclassmen status, and more. Much more. Here is what we still have to do before our years of high school are over: do some sort of productive activity this summer, apply to college, actually participate in Powderpuff, make it through the first semester, get into college, go to prom again, continue to fail to walk up the stairs easily, walk across the stage to get our diplomas, and say goodbye, among other things. So yeah. There is a lot to anticipate in the year ahead. But there is a lot to look back on as well — some of it with pride, some of it with pure relief that it is over. And, after making it through all of that, we have a few words of wisdom for all of the junior classes that come after us. Thank us later.

Stay calm. The best word to describe junior year at MHS is busy. Classes are harder, expectations higher, and college applications closer and closer every day. You will not get five hours of homework every night. But some nights, you will have two projects due the next day, two tests and one quiz to study for, regular homework to do, the SAT that coming weekend, and after-school activities until 7:00 PM. On these nights, it is easy to panic. But from people who have had way too much experience panicking this year, it's not worth it. Sit down, get yourself some ice cream, and focus. If you need to, ask for extensions. Put everything in perspective. You will be surprised at how quickly you will forget about that one test you did horribly on, and how quickly you will learn the best way to manage all of your responsibilities in order to succeed.

Get to know your teachers. We all know what it is like to sit in a painfully quiet classroom, too scared to speak until we develop the confidence to actually raise our hands once in a while. Junior year isn't like that. We're not shy, not particularly well-behaved, and definitely not quiet. We actually talk to our teachers, ask them for advice, and have real conversations with them. Not only does this make classes far more relaxed and fun, but during junior year, it is more important to develop relationships with teachers than ever. It is one or two of your junior year teachers (usually) who will be the ones writing college recommendations for you, and you want them to have something to say. Make a good impression on your teachers, and you are one step closer to an enjoyable year and future success in your college application process.

Finally, and most importantly, it's not all bad. Junior year is hard. There is no getting around that, and many of us were taken aback at just how much we underestimated the expectations of this year. Yet, in between everything difficult, there are some really special moments to look forward to in junior year. Your friendships will only grow stronger. You have now been in classes with mostly the same people for at least three years of school. You know them better than you ever have before. You have them to laugh with, complain to, and panic with a block before that math test you forgot to study for. As a junior, you get to go to your own class's prom for the first time, enjoy having some sense of superiority over the underclassmen, and realize just how close you are to making it to the end of high school. So while we may want nothing more than for junior year to finally end, an incredible sense of pride accompanies the fact that we made it. We did it. Now, the class of 2020 takes on senior year.

A Year in Review: The Sophomore Perspective

Riley Bowen, Sophie Hauck, and Sophia Piper

Long story short, sophomore year is fun. If that's not enough for you, read on...

Every year in high school has its milestone. Freshman year is marked by the first day of school, senior year by the last, and every day of junior year seems to be important. Sophomore year just isn't like that. It's these 180 days (minus whatever you don't feel like showing up for) of emptiness during which we must make something happen. There is no school to familiarize ourselves with, no college that is closely monitoring us. Instead, we are left to our own devices to get more involved, to make better friends, and to finally shift closer to that back wall of the cafeteria. If nothing else, sophomore year is a time to keep on keeping on. Why do we so blindly continue? The underlying goal of sophomore year seems to be finding that purpose, especially considering there's a whole other half of high school to make it through. Based on our experiences this year, here are what we consider the answers to be.

Sophomore ego: Walking in on the first day of school at 11 AM, our grade certainly felt a boost of confidence. We had made it through freshman year, so of course we felt like we knew everything. This sense of superiority had not necessarily been "earned," or at least not to the extent that our behavior suggested, especially considering that we were not yet upperclassmen. Still, this feeling that we knew the school better, and that the school knew us better, was enough to make walking in each day a little less daunting and a little more exciting.

This familiarity affected more than just our egos, too. Although the difficulty of the year for each person varied, overall, academics were the same or even easier than freshman year. We were used to the climate of the school, knew what we were good at, and were mostly better at managing time. Plus, with AP classes becoming available, some of us received a GPA boost (which isn't the point of taking AP classes, but it was a nice bonus.). We also didn't have the stress of SATs looming over us as the juniors did. However, there were certainly some times during the year — where it was just hard to get motivated. Not to mention that things got real in Algebra 2. A lot of sophomores also had their first AP tests this year, and preparation was Stressful™. To be honest, though, the tests weren't terrible, aside from the AP Euro short responses (College Board, please refrain from invalidating my scores!).

Friends: Seeing as we're now almost halfway through high school, sophomore year was also the perfect time for friend group restructuring. While there are still a few circles that remain largely intact and will likely stay the same for the next two years, everyone made at least one new friend this year. School friendships finally moved past the walls of each classroom, and blurred faces passing in the hallway became some of our best friends. In fact, many of the tight bubbles that surround each friend group thinned out this year, if not popping completely. We're not yet at the point where everyone is friends with everyone, but there's certainly more friend group crossover than ever before, and it's fun to see the unexpected combinations of people that have come to be during this past year.

What does the future look like for the class of 2021? There's two more years to decide all the details, but if sophomore year has taught us anything, it's that when given the opportunity, our grade truly can make something happen. Sure, that accomplishment is undefined and perhaps a little self-indulgent, but it genuinely was a good year for our grade. We are undeniably more connected to this school than we were at the start of the year, and you can't lie and say that this connection hasn't had its perks. Despite the challenges that lie ahead, these connections make everything seem a little less scary and a little more exciting. Sophomore year is what you make of it, and together we've been able to make it a truly fun experience.

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