

WORDS BY WILDCATS

GWW NEWS BRINGS THE TRUTH TO YOU

STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN HALLOWEEN COSTUME CONTEST



By Joey Tangpongprush Photographs by Karin Barsegh

On Friday, October 29, students of the Dr. GW Williams Secondary School participated in a Halloween costume contest. The event took place on the field west of the school.

Many contestants in varying costumes of different themes were reviewed by a large panel of judges. Some danced or performed routines related to their outfits in an attempt to gain a higher score.

Elaborate, unique, and creative costumes scored highly and were popular with both the judges and the large crowd of students witnessing the event. Students were overwhelmingly supportive of their peers, clapping and cheering from the sidelines.

Many different costumed students were present. Anwyn was dressed up as Revivedbur, a character from DreamSMP. Their outfit was creative and homemade. Despite being a niche costume, many students recognized it. **Cont. Pg 3**

WHAT IS WORDS BY WILDCATS?

By Alexa Lupsor

Hello Wildcats! Welcome back to a new year at Williams. This year we have a new and exciting newspaper called Words by Wildcats, the official publication of Dr. G.W. Williams. Think of Words by Wildcats as the school's own New York Times.

Throughout this newspaper, you can learn a bunch of stuff, from sports articles, news articles to even some columns. There's something for everyone.

Words by Wildcats was created to encourage the strengthening of critical thinking skills, literacy skills and to help advance interests in writing and journalism. **Cont. Pg 3**

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WELCOME BACK TO WILLIAMS

By Ananya S Murlidharan



Welcome back Wildcats! The school year is off to a great start and everyone is excited to be in person for the 2021-2022 school year.

A special welcome to the Grade 9s who are joining us at Williams for the first time. In case you did not know, lunch can currently be eaten anywhere except for classrooms. You can sit in the cafeteria, outside, in the hallways, in the library, and even off school property, as long as you make it back in time for class.

The Guidance Office can be found by turning left at the main entrance. It is on the other side of the hall from the Attendance Office. If you have any questions regarding the school, course selection, or university, don't be afraid to reach out to your guidance counselor for help. People with last names starting with the letter A-H have Mr. Fuller as their guidance counselor, letters I-Q have Mr. Manson, and letters R-Z have Mr. Mondal; who is currently filling in for Ms. Durbacz.

Being at a new school can be difficult to navigate at times. Most science classes are downstairs. Whereas math, French, and most English classes are taken upstairs. If you ever need help finding your way around the school, you can always refer to the school map which is through this link.

Many events and clubs are also starting back up again! Joining clubs is a great way to make new friends and gain new experiences. For example, Words By Wildcats, our very own school newspaper with monthly issues about news/current events, opinions, investigations, interviews, columns, and satire. There are other clubs as well such as Med Life, Arts Council, Change by Coffee, and many more. For more information, check out the school's website.

You can also take a look at the many posters that are posted on the walls around the school. Get involved, get out of your comfort zone, and make some friends at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School!

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Column - By Spiro L. Saites

Reading is considered one of the most valuable and beneficial forms of learning and is such an enjoyable pastime. This series of articles will provide lots of information on impressively written, thought-provoking, and highly rated books with a wide variety of genres, writing styles, and authors. As an introduction to the book of the month edition at Dr. G.W. Williams, here are the first-ever novels to join the G.W. Novel Collection, October's Books of the Month!

1) The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires by Grady Hendrix

This novel meets all of the criteria for a spooky, chilling, and in-season read. Set in the 1990s, a supernatural thriller about a women's book club, and how they must protect their suburban town from a mysteriously charming man who turns out to be nothing but a blood-sucking fiend. If vampires, as well as suspenseful and ominous plots, intrigue you and your reading style, this novel is a must-read.

2) Ace of Spades by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

A contemporary YA and compelling thriller, this novel delves deep into institutionalized racism from an exceptional young adult voice. The story takes place in Niveus Private Academy, where wealth paves the school hallways and students are no less than perfect. However, hidden secrets are buried deep within the students of this school, and one day, these secrets come to light. If you enjoy an electrifying YA drama, with great mysteries and plot twists, this novel is perfect for you.



The Southern Book Club's
Guide to Slaying Vampires.
Credit Quirk Books



Ace of Spades. Credit
Feiwel & Friends



An inflatable T-Rex costume, one of the Internet’s most beloved, was present. Diana said, *dinosaur noises*.

One of the most creative costumes of the competition belonged to Alex, a grade 12 music student dressed up as “music conspiracy theory”. “The Earth is flat, and I think it is a B flat,” he stated. In an eerie warning, Alex warned that “the music is out to get us, run before it’s too late!”. He placed 3rd in the competition.

The judges decided to give 2nd place to Aiden’s costume.

In 1st place, Ashley as Rapunzel. Her costume was extremely elaborate and homemade. She stated that she spent many weeks making it. Reactions were overwhelmingly positive, especially from the judges, who gave her a record high score. Ashley will not be going out on Halloween night, as she will be helping to run a fundraiser selling crafts to raise money for the school’s music program.

Shahvir, a judge assisting the review process for the competition, stated that he loved the creativity and school spirit of the students. Shahvir said that all the costumes were very good, and “[judging was] a bit scary, I’m not a judgemental person,”.

The creativity and school spirit of students at GW Williams shone brightly on this spooky Halloween Friday.

Students Participate in Halloween Costume Contest - Cont. from Pg 1

Dream was present at the contest through the form of Inchan, a student participant. A lot of people liked Inchan’s homemade costume. Despite some uncertainty, they stated that the judges were very nice.

Judges also had a positive reaction to Claire, dressed as a bottle of ketchup. It was supposed to be a group costume, but the other pair was not present. Claire stated that “ketchup is one of the most popular condiments,”.

Netflix’s hit series, Squid Game, proved popular as a costume as well, with many students choosing to dress up as a contestant in the Korean survival drama series.

What is Words By Wildcats? - Continued from Pg 1

You may be wondering what it means to be a journalist? Being a journalist means that you get to report on different issues that interest you and the community. In the world of journalism, you’ve got to go above and beyond.

This is the philosophy of Words by Wildcats, we try to be inclusive of everyone and one of their ideas. But it’s not only writing news articles, there are opportunities to meet some fascinating people that you will learn to respect and admire. In conclusion, we hope this newspaper piques your interest. This year is going to be a great year at Williams!

THE EFFECTS OF THE TRANSITION FROM ONLINE TO IN-PERSON LEARNING ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Investigation - By Grace Chen

As schools transitioned from online to in-person learning, students had to adapt to in-person learning. Specifically, tests were no longer (secretly) open-book, students were not in the comfort of their homes, and there were only two classes per week with double the usual class time.

Therefore, it was worth investigating the effects of this transition on the mental health of students. To investigate the effects of this transition on students’ mental health, 75 students were asked to answer questions (multiple choice and free-response) in a Google Form. Unfortunately, the number of responses was statistically limited, and the lack of time was the major contributing factor. Nevertheless, several significant and interesting responses were still observed.

How stressful is it to actually transition from online to in-person learning?

The survey found that the majority of students did not find the transition from online learning to in-person learning to be extremely stressful. However, stress levels were higher than normal because the new schedule posed new challenges for students and teachers. This pattern was clearly noticed when three graphs from three of the questions were compared.

The following graphs represent the responses to questions where respondents were asked to rate their stress levels and fatigue on a scale of one to ten. One represents extremely stressed or tired and ten represents no stress or fatigue. **Continued on Next Page**

The Effects of the Transition from Online to In-Person Learning on Student Mental Health - Continued from Previous Page

When students were asked to rate their stress levels caused by the transition itself, the majority of students found their stress to be moderate or low as the majority of the responses were found between the five to ten range. However, when the respondents were asked to assess their stress levels and fatigue caused by the 2.5-hour classes, the graphs immediately shifted left towards one. Again, 1 is a significant amount of stress/fatigue and 10 is no stress/fatigue. Clearly, the majority of responses were found between the one to five range, indicating that the new schedule is a considerable source of fatigue and anxiety for students.

What strategies are being used to combat fatigue?

Overall, teachers are giving longer breaks, which the students find extremely helpful because it provides time for their brains to rest. Although, many students express their frustration with a new school policy that was implemented at the time of this survey. which took away designated break times.

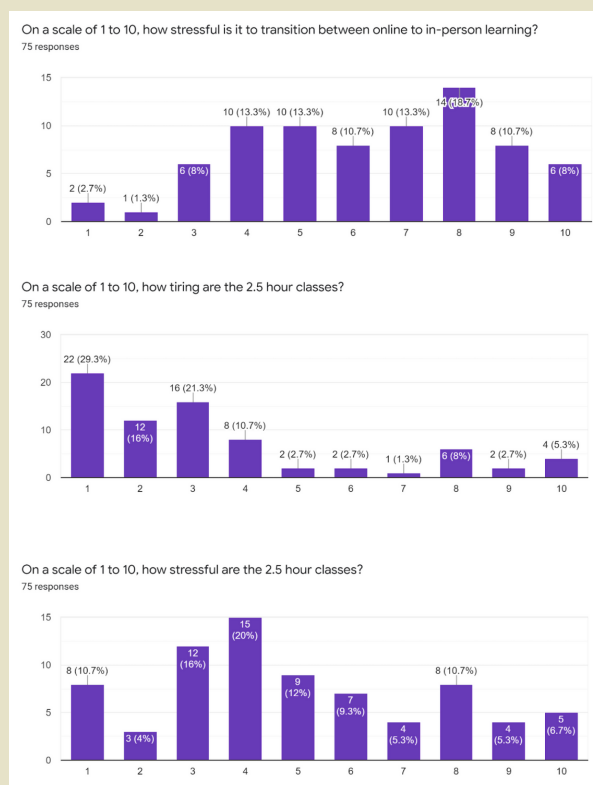
For instance, one respondent says, “before, walking a lap around the hallway was refreshing. But now ... it's just tiring even though we're walking inside confined spaces,”.

In fact, the inability to take a walk during a designated break is a constant theme throughout all the responses. Many students reiterate a similar longing for more movement and time to recharge their brains.

Furthermore, teachers are also organizing fun activities for their classes to play during their breaks. One respondent states that their class plays Kahoots in the middle of the period, and several others say that their teacher gives them walks outside.

Many also highlight how flexible teachers are. One student states that “[in] French class there is a tall table where you can stand up and work if you want to stretch your legs, overall teachers are just flexible with what you do.”

Therefore, students and teachers are certainly trying their best to relieve their fatigue with the given situation and regulations.

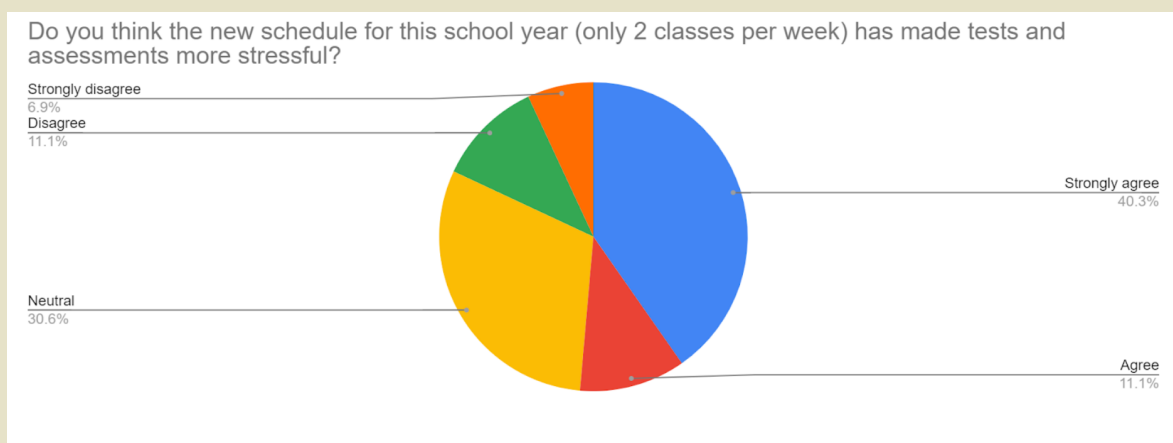


What does all this mean?

Over the course of the investigation, it is crystal clear that the major trigger of more anxiety is adapting to the new schedule. Many students and teachers are juggling the usual stressors that come with school while simultaneously trying to work around a new learning model.

Therefore, it is important to recognize that it is completely normal and understandable to feel overwhelmed. It is extremely difficult to adapt to something completely different from what everyone is accustomed to during online learning and learning pre-COVID.

In conclusion, we hope that our investigation sheds some light on the struggles that the student body was experiencing or continues to experience. Nevertheless, the team at Words by Wildcats hopes that the findings help people feel heard and feel that they are not alone in feeling more stress during these times.



AN INTERESTING FINAL YEAR: THE GRADE 12 PERSPECTIVE

By Olivia Jin

Although COVID-19 has impacted many students, it is arguably high school seniors who have been affected the most. It's no secret that the grade 12s have been through a lot during the pandemic; from alternating repeatedly from in-person to online learning, academic stress, and college applications, they've faced many challenges. "It sucks, but there's nothing we can do about it", to put it plainly, seemed to be the general consensus.

"This pandemic influenced a lot of social aspects of school," observes Sabrina. "We missed a lot of events. For example, the Christmas party and homecoming were things I was really looking forward to,".

"I'm a bit disappointed about how clubs are more limited this year," says another. "I really wanted to get into sports,". Clubs and events weren't the only grievances held by the seniors.

Lunch breaks, though often overlooked, were one of the most important ways to socialize with people. "I find lunch a bit strange now since I don't have as much time to connect with my friends."

As for academics, a variety of answers were received. "There's more pressure and more work. It was online last year so everything was easier, but I think that increased the competition because everyone got good grades," says Alishba.

"I'm worried about exams," Sabrina responds. "Our learning was impacted by the pandemic, and since we aren't doing exams this year I'm anxious for university, as the assessments there are harder,".

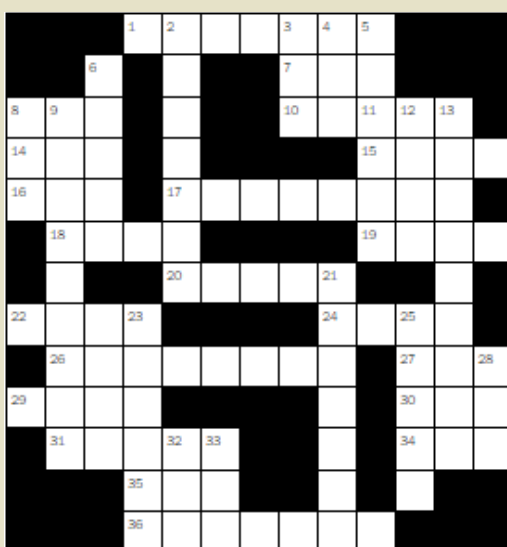
Academic stress also increased, according to Veronica. "I think I could do better if there were more classes in a week. The 2.5-hour ones are really stressful, especially if we are given homework during the week gap. It just increases the workload."

However, there seemed to be a silver lining for some. "Personally, I feel like I have more time for college applications, as well as just preparing for college in general," says Jenn. Others say that the year online has been beneficial to their mental health and that their learning improved during that period.

Although this year will be quite unorthodox, one thing remains clear: the grade 12s will face it head-on.

OCTOBER CROSSWORD PUZZLE - SQUID GAME THEMED

By Dora Gu



Answers can be found at:

<https://tinyurl.com/xpwnddr8>

Across

1. Korean honeycomb candy
7. A bar or rail
8. Guess ____?
10. Go when it turns ____
14. The acute version of a bacterial or viral middle ear infection
15. Dracula's real name
16. A zone of self-care and relaxation
17. In a state of unaware trance
18. Semiaquatic blubber animal
19. Third largest city in France
20. 001
22. The stone statues on Easter Island
24. A succulent that aids sunburns and wounds
26. A rope pulling kid's game
27. University of Tennessee
29. A dance style that includes acrobatics
30. Prefix meaning three
31. One who strongly dislikes something
34. _oygbiv
35. An abbreviation for a program at G.W.
36. Without a neck binding when dressed in formal wear

Down

2. Bundled grapes structure attached to the bronchioles
3. A top-level domain such as .com
4. Not this or that
5. What is Lucifer? (two words)
6. Plural of coma
8. The past "is"
9. A children's game of stacked numbered boxes
11. "Live" backwards
12. Another name for Saint Eligius
13. 10-9 in metres
18. A smoky whisky
21. Small spherical toys, often decorated with swirls of colour
23. When you're confident in doing something (three words)
25. An ending conclusion
28. Under 18
32. Shrimp nigiri
33. Fish eggs

A GREAT START TO THE SEASON

Sports - By Hailey Graham & Sally Kikkeri

In the first invitational cross country meet of the 2021 season, GW Williams's very own Payton Bates jumped to the occasion and came first in the Novice Male 4km run. Payton truly unleashed his inner “wildcat”!

Payton is a 14-year-old Grade 9 student, who has been on a long journey of running for 4 years. Despite not having formal cross-country training in the past, Bates clearly excels in this subject. Cross country running is something he is passionate about and he expresses that ideally, he would like to continue it in his future education.

Having had a sports-related injury at the time of the invitational cross country meet, Bates states he experienced pre-race jitters. “I currently have a heel injury, so I haven't been able to get much training in, because of that I was pretty nervous,” says Payton. Despite having a lack of confidence pre-race, Bates gave it his best and it paid off.

During our interview with Payton, he was asked why he believed he thrived in his 4km race; “I think it's just because of all the time I have been running, all the training I have done, and even with a few months off, I still haven't lost it all.” Bates states.

We would like to offer our congratulations to Payton Bates on a strong beginning to the cross country season. Go Wildcats!



Payton Bates, 14, winning the Novice Male 4km run.

Credit @drgwilliams

EXAMS ARE OFFICIALLY CANCELLED

By Ananya S Murlidharan

Exams are cancelled! All Ontario secondary school exams are cancelled for January 2021.

“I think it's a step in the right direction, I've been vocal about this issue, students have overwhelmingly indicated to me that they feel like exams are just an additional stress they don't need during this pandemic year and I am happy that board staff have taken that into consideration and are cancelling exams for OSSD courses,” Bruce Yu, a YRDSB student trustee and grade 11 student at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School says during an interview regarding the exam cancellation.

Bruce states that the 30% exam mark can be replaced with culminating tasks or projects with the assessments taking place on the scheduled days of the exam. Teachers can also choose to have only term work be the entirety of their student's grades.

This is an unexpected turn of events, due to the fact that students have started taking classes in person. Bruce tells us the reason for this is, “this decision was made after obviously taking into consideration student input as well as teacher input, so a survey was sent out to teachers about this, and from what I understand the overwhelming sentiment among teachers is also that exams aren't the best idea right now and they feel that this new format gives them flexibility, and it also helps support online learners who may not be able to participate in physical exams or physical normal exams,”.

Bruce Yu also said that the IB exams for those students in grades 11 and 12 are still to be determined by the IB organization that administers the exams. As of the publishing date for this issue, Words By Wildcats has confirmed that the IBO will be moving forward with exams.

STUDENTS WEIGH IN ON CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

By Joey Tangpongprush

The 2021 Canadian Federal Election campaign has come and gone as parties and leaders faced off to win the hearts and minds (and votes) of Canadians. At stake was the future of the country where policies, plans, and ideas have been brought into the spotlight.

After a tense election night on September 20, 2021, the results were made clear. At 160 seats in the House of Commons, Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party of Canada emerged with a minority government, one that was eerily similar to 2019's. Erin O'Toole of the Conservative Party won the same number of seats as his predecessor Andrew Scheer at 119. The NDP, under Jagmeet Singh, had a result of 25 seats while sharing the balance of power with the Bloc Quebecois, led by Yves-Francis Blanchet (32 seats). Despite not winning any seats, Maxime Bernier's populist movement, the People's Party, leapfrogged Annamie Paul's 2-seat Greens in the popular vote.

Despite the vast majority of GW William's student population being unable to vote due to age, many still have opinions about what issues should be addressed, and what policies should be at the forefront of the agendas of the country's leaders.

Climate change was at the top of the list for many students. Isaac, in grade 11, said, "if we don't do anything, things won't get better". The rapid consumption of Earth's resources was a concern to him, along with the high price of green solutions.

Ninth-grade student Dora was worried about climate change projections of doom. "What else can they say," she stated in reference to the politicians.

Affordability was a major talking point for the leaders during the election, and it was also a major concern for Olivia in ninth grade. The state of the economy, rapid inflation, and an expensive real estate market were stated issues.

Following the discovery of mass graves of Indigenous children at former residential schools in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, conversations about issues facing Indigenous Canadians have been reignited. Reconciliation was a major topic for Brianna, who said that she was "not witnessing changes in policy,".

The prominence of Islamophobia was an issue for Saamia, a ninth-grade student.



A voter slips a ballot into an Elections Canada ballot box - Global News Photo

Marc, a grade 12 student, was not particularly interested in Canadian politics but did have something to say about foreign policy. International interventions, such as "fixing conflicts" and the issue of the War in Afghanistan, were of note.

Mollie, a grade 11 student and self-declared libertarian, took issue with the COVID-19 pandemic response. She did not like social distancing guidelines, requirements, and pandemic restrictions, but clarified that she was supportive of COVID-19 inoculations.

A very common response from students was one of indifference or being unaware. Gregory, a grade 11 student, stated that "whatever happens, happens,". He was completely unaware that there was an ongoing federal election.

Seth, one of Gregory's peers, said he was "not following" the election campaign.

On October 26, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his new Federal cabinet that will be serving Canadians for the foreseeable future. Just like in 2015 and 2019, it was gender-balanced. However there were some new faces, most notably new Ministers of National Defence, Environment, and Health.

It will be seen if this government will live up to the expectations of future voters at the Dr. GW Williams Secondary School. The next federal election is scheduled on or before October 20, 2025.

SCHOOL EXAMS CANCELED: IS THIS THE BEST FOR STUDENTS?

Opinion - By Lauren Estabrooks

Study, take notes, five minute break, study, more notes, quick break, and repeat. The average high school student studies for 16-20 hours during exam season. Exams cause high stress levels and high studying rates for students. Before COVID-19 students had their regular exam season at the end of each semester. However, they were forced to switch to online school in March 2020, exams for semester 2 were canceled. During the 2020-2021 school year, students were introduced to a new model of learning that involved them switching between in person and online classes. This seemed like a good plan at first, but soon the model failed as students were forced to go fully online due to the high amount of covid cases. Once again the exams were cancelled. Now, students are back to school, in person this time. Most students are vaccinated, yet exams are canceled again.

This may not be as ideal for students as it seems. Looking back, Grade 12 students have not taken an exam since Grade 10 and the next time they do take a formal exam it will be in University. University exams are far more difficult and more demanding than high school exams. Similarly, Grade 11 students have not taken an exam since Grade 9. If the school board decides to arrange formal exams for the 2022-2023 school year, they will have to jump from taking a Grade 9 exam to a Grade 12 exam! That mark will count towards their final grade and in turn, University. Grade 9 and 10 students now have never taken an exam before. At least for Grade 9's they will get to find a sense of normalcy next year if they do run exams. Unfortunately, Grade 10 students will have to go from never taking an exam to taking one for the first time and having it count for university.

This year many teachers seemed keen on giving students exams if they were going to run them. Many teachers wanted to give students an exam, the reason being is so that students could get used to writing them again. The teachers that want exams teach the classes that almost always require written exams for students. This was seen in the results of the survey, many students agreed with only having to take formal exams for specific classes like Math, Science and English. This is fair as students do not need the stress of writing an exam for a class that does not require an exam in the first place, when they have not written one in almost two years. But how are students supposed to get used to writing exams again when the school board keeps trying to wait for the perfect moment to give them to students? There is ever going to be the perfect moment, and putting them off for students is not doing them any favours for their future education. Many students agree with this based on the results of the survey. Majority of students agree that having an exam will allow them to better prepare for their future education.

The covid case count recently has been significantly lower than last year this time as many students and faculty members are vaccinated. Meaning, there is a lower chance of an overwhelming amount of cases popping out of nowhere and forcing students to go online. Ontario is also currently in the process of producing a vaccine for kids 12 and under, which can only force the count down. Therefore if the cases currently aren't that high and the chances of going online are low, why couldn't the school board give students exams and cancel them if the case count is too high. If they get canceled, it's better than not trying to have exams in the first place.

Last year, Grade 11 students heard word that they were still going to have to take the OSSLT even though the model was switching between online and in-person. The government ultimately did not go forward with that plan. However grade 10s and 11s this year *will* be taking the OSSLT, but grade 12 students are *not* required to complete exams to graduate and apply to universities.

If the provincial government was seriously considering the OSSLT when cases were twice as bad last year, why can't they take formal exams this year when the case count is lower? The OSSLT is happening anyways for the grade 10s and 11s.

At the end of the day, no one enjoys taking an exam. Not one student wakes up the morning of their exam and thinks to themselves, "I'm so excited to take my math exam today!". Students and the school board have to realize that exams are not gone forever. It was nice to not have to worry about taking them when online and just trying to adjust to our harsh reality. But now, it's time to get back to it. Having exams will allow students to find a sense of normalcy again and get back to having school in person the way it used to be, which is what students really want.

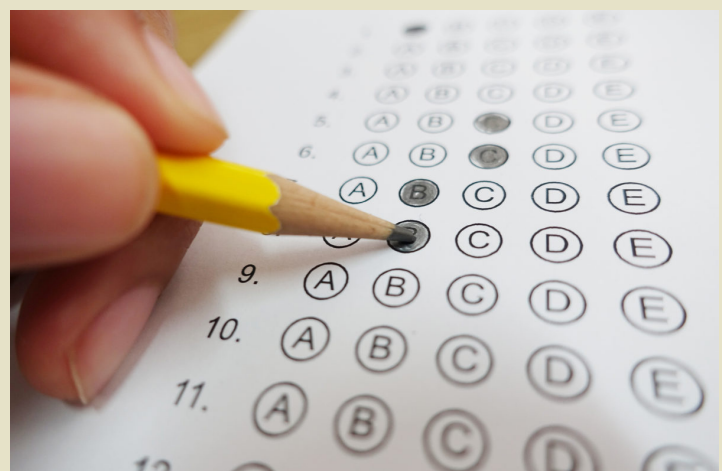


Image credit: Niche

THE ART ROOM IS A HANGOUT HEAVEN

Opinion - By Joey Tangpongprush

The warm lighting bounces off the hardwood floors, shining spotlights onto the art pieces scattered on the walls and tables. Music plays from a speaker by the teacher's desk, the tunes interrupted only by chit-chat, an occasional bout of laughter, and the running sink in the back. Art kids, art kid-wannabes, and students of all kinds mingle about, enjoying a respite from class. Some labor intensely on their projects. Others are just there to socialize.

This is the atmosphere of the art classroom. It's an opportunity to connect with friends in an environment not found anywhere else in the school's many popular lunch spots.

I absolutely love it. I've had some of my most memorable moments during an art room lunch. I developed my social skills and met many of my closest friends at a work table. Art room lunches are one of the things I have missed most during the pandemic. It will be one of the things I will miss most about the school when it is eventually my time to leave.

With this in mind, I'm frankly surprised it is not more popular. There are usually only two or three friend groups present at any one time, along with a few pairs of people and a smattering of singles. The crowd found in the art room is quite regular, too. I can name quite a few of my peers that can reliably be found sitting on an art stool.

Certainly, I am not advocating for the art room to be overrun by throngs of students looking to take advantage of the art room's many fine qualities, but they should certainly give it a try.

They'll find it a lot more appealing than the competition. At least I think they would. Understandably, the library used to forbid food pre-pandemic, a pitfall the art room does not succumb to. The cafeteria, despite its size, is so crowded and loud that it can be very fatiguing. Pre-pandemic, during the lunch period many classrooms hosted clubs, were devoid of life, or were closed altogether. The hallways do not provide seating or tables, and the outdoors is only suitable for a few select months of the year. Who would be brave enough (or stupid enough) to eat lunch at the outdoor tables during the height of winter?

Come to think about it, the only thing that comes close to the allure of the art room, at least for me, are the stairwells. Even then, you are technically a tripping hazard, obstructing the flow of people, and a fire hazard. Yikes...

There's no doubt in my mind that the art room is an "S" tier lunch hangout spot, unrivaled in comfort and a prime location for socialization. Whether you're there to let your creative juices flow or not, there's no place like the art room.

By the way, in case you're asking, I am not an art kid. I can't do art to save my own life.

HOW WE PERPETUATE THE OUTDATED EXISTENCE OF THE GENDER BINARY THROUGH OUR SPEECH

Opinion - By Emily Rudyk



Image credit: The Classic Journal

Before we begin, if you aren't yet aware of the difference between gender, gender identity, and sex, or the gender binary and the gender spectrum, please scroll down to the bottom and familiarize yourself with these vital terms.

Most people naively take to phrases such as "ladies and gentlemen" or "boys and girls". As harmless as they may seem, they are enforcing the out-of-date ideas of the gender binary. By only addressing the gender identities that fall within it, they set the expectation that everyone is either distinctly a man or distinctly a woman. Thus, creating the illusion that it is abnormal to identify outside of the gender binary and instead somewhere along the gender spectrum. The use of gender-specific expressions adds additional pressure for people to fit into the noninclusive gender binary. When these excluding forms of speech are used, as opposed to one of the many other all-encompassing gender-neutral ones, an unjust hierarchy is established. **Continued on Next Page**

How We Perpetuate the Outdated Existence of The Gender Binary Through Our Speech - Continued from Previous Page

As the message of unacceptance becomes blatantly clear, people begin to give in to society's pressure to conform. By assimilating into the gender binary and reluctantly confining into one of the strict binary options, individuals are giving up a defining and extraordinary piece of who they are.

Not only do gender-specific expressions pressure and disclude anyone who identifies outside the gender binary, but they also make baseless assumptions about people's gender identity.

Contrary to popular belief, one is unable to accurately assume someone's gender identity just by looking at them. It is not necessarily visible and paired with their sex or their gender expression. This means that it is not a matter we should jump to conclusions about. If we haven't had the opportunity to ask someone their gender and what pronouns they use, our default should always be to use gender-neutral terminology.

The beauty of the gender spectrum lies in its flexibility and inclusivity of all gender identities, including but not limited to: transgender, non-binary, woman, man, gender non-conforming, gender fluid, two-spirit, agender, and pangender.

To re-emphasize, there are not simply two genders; we must stop acting and speaking in ways that perpetuate these misconceptions. The world is a diverse place filled with unique and authentic individuals who deserve to live outside the straightjacket of the gender binary if they so choose.

Important terminology:

Gender is a social construct that encapsulates the roles, characteristics, behaviors, expressions, and identities that society has assigned to each. Great significance is placed on the way in which people collectively and individually interperite, interact with, and convey gender via the roles they assume, the expectations they take on, and the relationships they build. Note that gender is not determined by sex.

Gender identity reflects how an individual perceives themselves, in relation to society's concept of what it means to be a woman, a man, transgender, non-binary (gender non-conforming, gender fluid, two-spirit, pangender, agender, etc.) or a mix of multiple gender identities.

Sex refers to the biological attributes that make up who we are. These encompass both physical and physiological features that determine which sex we are; including but not limited to: male, female, and intersex. Be aware that sex does not determine gender.

The gender binary is an outdated take on the construct of gender. This belief revolves around the idea that there are only two genders that are opposite and inherently distinct. Being a binary, this approach limits all persons to only two options in regards to their gender identity: either man or woman.

The gender spectrum is a modern and updated view on gender, compared to the gender binary. It recognizes that not everyone solely and indefinitely falls in one of the two categories of being a man or a woman.

Gender-neutral alternatives for common gender-specific expressions:

For referring to/addressing people:

Hi guys → Hi there, everyone/everybody, people, peeps, friends, pals, folks, y'all, all, team

Girlfriend, boyfriend → Significant other/S.O., partner, date, companion, "my person"

Mother, father → Parent, guardian, caregiver, family, loved one

Son, daughter → Child, kid/kiddo, family, offspring, oldest/youngest, descendant

Womankind, mankind → Humankind, humanity

Honorifics:

Mrs., Mr., Ms. → M., Msr., Mx. (pronounced "mix"), Ind. (abbreviation of individual), Misc. (abbreviation of miscellaneous)

For referencing/discussing occupations:

Firewoman, fireman → Firefighter

Policeman, policewoman → Police officer

Waiter, waitress → Waiter, waitstaff, server

Garbageman, garbagewoman → Garbage collector

Camerawoman, cameraman → Camera operator

Foreman, forewoman → Supervisor, boss

Handywoman, handyman → Handyperson, maintenance person, fixer, repair person

Thank you for reading the inaugural issue of Words by Wildcats! If you have any questions, comments, concerns, or corrections, please reach out to the editorial staff @ WordsByWildcats on Instagram. Want to join the team? Stop by Room 107 on Wednesdays at 11:00.