

THE STUDENT VIEW

The weekly column written by local high school students

WHS Student: Good-Bye Abercrombie, Hello Me

By ALEXA ZEPKA
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Take a moment to envision a world where everyone looks exactly the same. Imagine walking to school every morning behind a thousand clones of yourself, blending in literally perfectly with all of your classmates and never having the stress of choosing clothes that are "acceptable" to wear.

There would be no such thing as diversity, popularity would not exist and the term "labels" would be foreign to all. Some people might enjoy living in this kind of environment devoid of jealousy and social class, whereas others who dare to be different would oppose.

Unfortunately, for those who would not mind living in constant sameness, no one on this earth is similar in all ways. Since everybody is different, at some point in our lives, we are all judged.

The timeframe in which "labels" are dominant above everything is during the three years of middle school. If you were to visit Edison or Roosevelt Intermediate Schools, you would see about 90 percent of the students troling the hallways bedecked in Abercrombie and Fitch from head to toe.

Try asking any sixth- to eighth-grade student if he or she would prefer wearing a unique, stylish shirt from Old Navy, or just any old t-shirt that reads Abercrombie and Fitch in bold lettering across the chest. Chances are, the most popular response would be: Abercrombie and Fitch.

For some reason, middle schoolers deal with the stress of having to wear brand name clothing in order to look the part and fit in. Little do they know, when their intermediate school career comes to an end, all of that will change.

Westfield High School (WHS) consists of independent students who are no longer shy about expressing their individuality. Labels are officially insignificant, which allows every person, no matter who they are, to purchase the clothes they want to wear, not just the ones everybody else has.

It is relieving to see a flourishing diversity in people around the school.

Students, regardless of where they stand on the throne of popularity, are free to choose comfortable sweat pants over tight Abercrombie jeans that drain the oxygen out of you.

Freshmen, like myself, begin to realize that we are no longer as sheltered as we were in middle school, which forces us to stop hiding from who we truly are, and follow our own conscience, beliefs and taste. This makes clothes shopping in high school much less nerve-racking; unlike middle school, you will still be talked to even if you are not wearing a brand-name sweatshirt.

Labels no longer determine one's popularity status once they enter WHS. Being able to buy an outfit from the store of your choice that deeply defines you (and actually wear it) is one of the greatest feelings in the world. High school is a time to leave the materialistic pressures behind, and intermingle with everyone. Most importantly, high school is a time for people to befriend you based upon your personality...not where you bought your shoes.

Alexa Zepka is a freshman at WHS.

FW's Dyckman Named Commended Student

SCOTCH PLAINS -The principal, Sister Percylee Hart, RSM, of Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains, announced that senior Megan Dyckman of Fanwood has been named among the Commended Students in the 2007 National Merit Scholarship Program.

The principal will present a letter of commendation from the school and National Merit Scholarship Corporation, which conducts the program.

About 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation are recognized for their academic promise. Although they will not compete for the 2007 Merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed among the top 5 percent of more than 1.4 million students who entered the 2007 competition by taking the 2005 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).



THANKS TO OUR VETERANS...Cub Scouts Peter Hunziker and J.D. Marner, Pack 73, from Holy Trinity Interparochial School, make Thanksgiving cards for the veterans living at the Veterans Administration home in Lyons at the November pack meeting.

St. Bart's Announces First Marking Period Honor Roll

SCOTCH PLAINS - St. Bartholomew School in Scotch Plains congratulated the following students for their academic achievements during the first marking period.

Students earning the Principal's Award are eighth graders: Colleen Cassidy, Kara Gaynor, Diana Ngo, Laura Sammon and William Shore; seventh graders: Sabine Cardio, Mary Soorial, Anthony Krajcsik, Amanda Searls and Ananya Sen Gupta; sixth graders: Caitlin Carroll, Caitlin Conroy, Annabelle Ponderdolph, Nicole Viviano and Thomas Wang; and fifth graders: Douglas Cassidy, Jane Lestarchick, Aprilee Mimmott, Gabriella Guardascione and Michelle

Rinaldo.

Earning first honors are eighth graders: Joseph Carroll, Kaitlyn Magnus, Caroline Nucatola, Bridget Ryan and Ellen Tomljanovic; seventh graders: Antony Livingstone, Blair Bamrick, Daniel Quintin and Mary Leahy; sixth graders: Colleen Dow, Molly Gaynor, Gabrielle Gubernat, Rose Victoria Irace, Kate Long, Patricia Magnus, Sydney McCauley, Lyndsay Reed, Kathleen Ryan, Sophie Sabatell, Tara Sweeney and Earl Verlarde; and fifth graders: Nicole Conti, Alton Lutz, Danver Quintin, Yohance Huggins, Daniel Leahy and Bridget Pepe.

Earning second honors are eighth graders: Stephan Cardio, Oliver Howarth, John Luongo and Linsey Phelan; seventh graders: Matthew Donaway, Edward Lopez, Corrine Luongo, Chanise Roberson, Megan Trolo, Kurtis Walcott, Francis Degnan and Keith Monteiro; sixth graders: Danielle Galasso, Jessica Howard and Ryan Sawchuk; and fifth graders: John Ferry and Gregory Mayers.



Megan Dyckman

Education Matters

The Bumpy Road of Art on a Cart

By MARCIA KANTER
Elementary Art Teacher, Westfield Public Schools

Art on a cart forces the art teacher to eliminate or curtail valuable lessons and media. It's one thing to have a month-long, messy papier-mâché lesson in an art room- it's another thing to bring it into another teacher's space.

Clay, a valuable manipulative for young children, fell by the wayside during my last stint on a cart. Bags of clay weighing 25 to 50 pounds are fine in an area of an art room, but too heavy to manage on an art cart.

Storage of materials and projects in progress are limited and haphazard. Despite the cooperative attitude of my fellow classroom teachers, my needs and theirs often differ or clash. I am encroaching on their space when I move desks or make a mess. Classroom teachers sometimes feel they can't use their prep periods (with their classroom resources close at hand) to fullest advantage while an active and animated art lesson is going on around them.

And what about the children themselves? They need to move around during the day. Often, especially in inclement weather, they never leave their own classroom. An art or music room gives them a chance to experience a more relaxed and artistically creative environment.

When I had an art room, the students used to love to see displays of projects done by other classes and grade levels. I also had my own library of resource materials at hand.

I cannot carry all the books and prints we could refer to on a cart at any one time. We could work large and cooperatively in an art room. Now, kindergarten and first-grade desks and tables are so small that there is no room for large paper (on which young children should work) as well as the media with which to draw and paint.

If we had an art room, time would not be wasted setting up and breaking down the still life. It could be set up on a centrally located platform, visible to all the children, and remain in position for as long as the project was underway.

Only one set of props would be needed, instead of five separate sets, and the general materials such as glue, scissors, tissue, etc. would also remain out and available for each succeeding class without necessitating separate distribution and collection for each class.

I have to stop work five minutes early

in order to collect artwork (to be stored in a plastic bin) and bag and collect the still-life props to send down the hall to the next class.

Every day, I spend about two hours before school starts preparing my little rolling cart with jars of paint, boxes of concentrated tempera paint blocks, water cups, brushes, paper and other materials necessary to teach various elementary art classes throughout the day.

There is no central place to set up a demonstration or distribution table, so I work off the cart and out a student temporarily so I may demonstrate at his desk. It takes about 10 minutes to set up, another five to review and now we can, finally, start painting.

After only 20 or 25 minutes to work, just when we've hit our rhythm, it's time to stop and collect materials. To avoid spills and collisions, no one is allowed out of their seats except for the designated helpers.

My cart is too crowded to carry extra sets of brushes and cups so I, meanwhile, am washing brushes and water cups to be used in the next class and trying to supervise the cleanup.

Westfield prides itself on its appreciation and promotion of the arts. To quote a former colleague, Kathy Kelly, "A dedicated space for Art and Music should be a top priority - it speaks volumes to the community about art's rightful place in the school curriculum (and a child's life), not merely as a teacher's prep period, but as an important (and integral) part of the student body's education."

"It provides an outlet for creative energy and allows the art specialists to fully expand the art program incorporating variety and differentiation into the creative process. With everything at the fingertips of the art teacher and the budding young artist, the child's imagination can soar knowing that all art media will be available to use."

With all the district's emphasis on differentiation, art, the most differentiated and individualistic activity, deserves its own space* in which children can explore a vast array of media, techniques and resources in order to attain their greatest potential.

* (Note: One of the key proposals of the school bond referendum of January 23 is to free up space in the elementary schools and provide the opportunity for art/music rooms by centralizing kindergarten at Lincoln School.)

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