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On the cover:



The cover of this issue of Griffin Rites was the visualization of the concept “grit,” a mindset with the potential to revolutionize the education system.

The photo features English teacher Be-Asia McKerracher adding to the “grit word wall,” which was created by students’ ideas of what grit meant to them. The photo was taken by Elizabeth Payton, with help from the Griffin Rites staff.

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We welcome letters to the editor, and reserve the right to edit them for length and clarity, but not to change ideas. Letters may opinionated and argumentative but not hostile. They must be signed and submitted to F6 or mailed to Shannon Le Grand at 5815 NE 48th St, Kansas City, MO.

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Junior Eric Duong holds up a piece of cardboard while robot "Simon" targets and moves towards the reflective tape upon it. During a demonstration event at Topping Elementary School on Sept. 27, children were able to drive the robot and get a glimpse of what robotics is all about. "Simon" was used last year's FIRST Robotics Competition. Photo by Elizabeth Payton.



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The push for AP

Should underclassmen be encouraged to take AP courses?

By Elizabeth Payton

The Advanced Placement (AP) system is, without a doubt, an opportune way for students to potentially earn free college credit before they even graduate high school, and with North Kansas City Schools paying the exam fee for all students who wish to participate, it seems like there isn't anything to lose.

Acknowledging that AP classes are college courses, many ambiguous stipulations arise as to when a student should enroll in these classes. Thus, the College Board, the company that oversees the AP system, recommends specific



courses to ease the transition from a normal high school curriculum to a college credit-bearing workload, some of which are offered at Winnetonka: AP College Computer Science Principles (PLTW), AP Human Geography, AP Psychology and AP United States History.

However, with new policies in place to accommodate the growing amount of AP students over the past few years, Winnetonka has allowed freshmen, under specific circumstances, to enroll in more difficult AP courses. Understandably, these new policies positively enhance the high school experience for students who are ready for college-level courses, but for the students who aren't ready, these policies may do more harm than good.

According to the College Board, in a 2016 letter addressing their personal policies on underclassmen in AP, freshmen should rarely be enrolled in an AP class outside of the "few exceptions" like those mentioned earlier.

"AP courses are rarely offered in ninth grade, and exam results show that, for the most part, ninth-grade students are not sufficiently prepared to participate in a college-level course," the letter stated. "Therefore, the College Board believes these students would be better served by course work focusing on the academic building blocks necessary for later, successful enrollment in college-level courses. Many college admission officers support this position, feeling that students should not be rushed into AP course work, but should instead develop the necessary skills and conceptual understandings in foundational courses prior to enrolling in AP."

It should be noted, though, that the general convention is for underclassmen who wish to enroll in AP take history-based courses. These courses serve as an engaging way to introduce students to higher-level reading and abstract analysis, skills that, in other AP classes, a student is expected to already possess.

At Winnetonka this year, freshmen who scored above a certain threshold on the first cumulative district Biology exam were offered the choice of switching into AP Biology, a course with a prerequisite of both biology and chemistry according to the Career and Education Planning Guide (2019-20). Additionally, AP Biology emphasizes a statistical approach to data during some units, so understanding higher-level mathematics would also be recommended for this course— a skill few underclassmen can realistically achieve.

Freshman Cheyenne Brown, who was transferred from Honors Biology to AP Biology in early September, said while having the experience of taking an AP exam as a freshman might be useful in the future, she feels under prepared regarding the content she is expected to already know.

"I would not put freshmen in this AP class, just because it's a lot more than just learning the stuff [content]," Brown said. "You should have a background, and at least have taken a simple Biology class to be able to move on to the full AP course. It can get stressful. Sometimes I do feel like maybe I wasn't actually qualified to take this class just because I lack a lot of the background knowledge."

For freshmen, I feel like it's even easier to get stressed out because you're used to

Student Opinions

middle school work, but now, you've got to get familiar with all this stuff [content from regular/Honors Biology] now plus the AP course."

Also, like many other freshmen, Brown is enrolled in AP Human Geography. Regarding that class, she said the curriculum is less-demanding and the concepts easier to grasp. And, according to previous AP Coordinator Carrie Marcantonio, freshmen are encouraged to take that course because of its purpose as "an introductory to AP."

"There are classes specifically designed for freshman and sophomores, and that includes AP Human Geography," Marcantonio said. "AP Human Geography is meant to be a semester class, but because we stretch it out over the year, we're able to move a little bit slower so that younger kids who've never had to read that kind of dense material before can keep up with it."

We were very intentional about AP Human Geo., because it is more engaging and interesting, and all that, as opposed to starting off with AP US History, which is a little more straight-forward reading kind of history."

For some students, encouragement to pursue college-level classes, especially AP, a financially reasonable option, is absolutely vital to achieving their full high school potential. Likewise, "introductory" AP courses seem like an excellent way to prepare underclassmen to succeed in future college-level courses. But to expect freshmen to succeed in AP Biology, a college class designed for upperclassmen, especially considering they have no fundamental background in the subject, as per a preliminary test score, is entirely unrealistic.

The College Board concluded, in

their letter mentioned earlier, it is inevitable that some underclassmen, and even those who have yet to reach high school, will be academically capable of pursuing advanced classes, but the educators must make case-by-case decisions regarding each desired AP class.

"In deciding when to offer college-level course work to any student, educators should carefully review the curricular and resource requirements for each AP course, and consider whether a student has received the appropriate academic preparation," the letter stated. "AP courses require students to apply advanced critical thinking and analytical skills that are typical of comparable college-level courses. This guiding AP enrollment policy holds true for all AP courses and exams, regardless of the grade level in which a school or district decides to offer AP course work."

Whether this push to move freshmen into AP Biology was an anomaly or a preliminary indication of a much larger problem, this system used to encourage a student to take a course they, statistically and logistically, aren't ready for may just be blatantly setting them up for failure.

However, with the outcome of this decision has yet to be seen, there is no final say on whether these students will benefit from the situation or not, and the long-term impact may not be known for years.

"I took AP Human Geography [freshman year]. The majority of my class was a mix of grades and I felt those who were there, freshman or not, could manage the class if they had the resolve to truly study and not have late assignments. Those who signed up out of whim and didn't catch on quick did not fare too well in the class."

Junior Dante Nyugen

"I took AP US History [sophomore year]. During the class I felt I was keeping pace, and I kept up on the work, and did well in the tests, as did most of the class. However, when we took the AP test most of us got 1s. So while the class itself wasn't difficult to keep up with, it did not prepare us for the AP test."

Senior Delainee Divine

"I think underclassmen going for honors diplomas SHOULD take AP classes (in order to lessen the workload for their last two years). However, it's not a good idea to take more than two AP classes Freshman/Sophomore year, it's just too much to deal with in the first couple years."

Junior Blake Brinsa

From Newton's laws to nuclei

Science-credit graduation requirements, visualized

Class of 2023
3 credits required



9th grade:
Biology



10th grade:
Chemistry



11th grade:
Choice



12th grade:
Choice

Class of 2022
3 credits required



9th grade:
Physics



10th grade:
Chemistry



11th grade:
Biology



12th grade:
Choice

Class of 2021
3 credits required



9th grade:
Physics



10th grade:
Chemistry



11th grade:
Biology



12th grade:
Choice

Choice-credit options



AP Physics 1
AP Physics 2



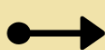
College Chemistry
AP Chemistry



College Biology
AP Biology
Human Anatomy

Project Lead The Way

College Principles of
Biomedical Science



College Human Body
Systems



College Biomedical
Innovations



College Medical
Interventions

By Kaylee Renno

After a decade of teaching ninth grade physics, science and mathematics teacher Marcia Holwick now spends her time lesson planning for her new Algebra II classes. Regular and Honors Physics classes, which were previously required to be taken by incoming freshmen, are no longer a graduation requirement as of the 2019-20 school year.

Students are now required to take biology as freshmen, followed by chemistry as sophomores, then a choice of any two other science classes during their junior and senior years.

Holwick explained that physics was taught to freshmen as a result of a grant provided by the University of Missouri. However, she said it was “pretty evident that it was not really a good thing for most students.”

“I would always express that ninth grade physics was not good for kids,” Holwick said. “If a student had [already] completed Algebra I, then they were in a better position to do well in... physics. But to take Algebra I at the same time that [they’re] taking math-based science, that doesn’t make any sense at all.”

Physics and Honors Physics rely on a curriculum based around

Algebra I concepts, which is often times, the math class taken by freshmen. With Physics moved to an elective choice during junior or senior year, students will be able to take this science course with Algebra I and Geometry already taught to them. Junior Stefani Maricic, reflecting on her Physics class as a freshman, said she agrees.

“I remember having a very hard time with projectiles,” Maricic said. “The reason why I struggled with projectiles, and first semester as a whole, was because of all the math I had to do. I am not good at math and never really was, so physics was really hard for me because of how heavy-handed it was with math.”

Biology focuses on using vocabulary to further teach concepts that students were introduced to in middle school, making it a good choice for freshmen, Maricic said.

“The change is good because physics is really difficult for students who aren’t the best at math,” Maricic said. “Starting freshmen off with an easy class like Biology would also be less stress-inducing.”

However, this year’s juniors will still need to take Biology to satisfy their class graduation requirements. As a result, freshmen and juniors are mixed within the extra Biology classes.



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Senior Isaac Hernandez hypes up junior Alex Kisler during the drum line performance of Jig 2 at the first Friday Night Lights game on the Winnetonka football field on Aug. 30.

Photo by Kelsey Cowden.

Instrumental spells

By Cheyenne Brown

The Winnetonka Pride Band's music selection has caught the attention of many J.K. Rowling fans, with enchanting instrumentals straight from the wizarding world of Harry Potter.

In previous years, the Band has followed a variety of themes such as, Pirates of the Caribbean, Queen and Jazz. This year's theme is likely to be popular with many of the students at Winnetonka, according to Drum Major Gavin Jones, a junior.

The musical pieces themselves were challenging, requiring time and practice. While learning the music allowed the Band to gain experience, it also put their dedication to the test.

"It definitely takes a lot of grit to actually learn and be bold enough to put it out there," Assistant Drum Major Hanna Hale said.

The theme behind the music itself was decided with a voting system set up by Band Director Jennifer Rubin. After the votes were cast, it was revealed that the vast majority voted for Harry Potter. The Band is performing nine songs from the Harry Potter soundtracks, including "Hedwig's Theme" from "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," which Jones believes will be the most recognized.

There were many adversities for band students to overcome this past year, such as the summer heat and the difficulty of the music scores. The young musicians were challenged during the last two weeks of July at band camp, practicing several hours each day. Learning from and facing these obstacles allowed the band to work on being flexible and establish a foundation for teamwork.

The band's choice of music for this year is special to many of its members, including

Hale.

"A lot of us are Harry Potter fans, and it's my senior year," Hale said. "Harry Potter is something that I am obsessed with, so it really symbolizes a good end for me at least."

The Harry Potter theme has influenced other aspects of the band outside of their music. The new band shirts have the Hogwarts crest on them, and the bands salute is a display of wand wielding.

Overall, Jones hopes the student body shares their same passion for the music.

"I really hope that whatever music we choose each year, not only do we connect with it, but the rest of the student body does," Jones said. "If we have something on the field that no one connects with, there's no point in making that music. Music is like another language and if no one else speaks that language, there's no point in using it."

The curtain rises, twice



By Ruth Estrada

This year, both the theater department and fine arts department will each be hosting a musical, meaning there will be an additional musical along with the typical spring play.

During first semester, “Shrek the Musical” will be performed, featuring the talent of both band and orchestra for the soundtrack along with oral performances from theater actors. Then, Godspell will be performed second semester to highlight the talent of those involved in theatre this year.

Theatre Director Dr. Sheri Coffman explained that the decision was influenced by a desire to have the musical arts more involved with the theater department. Coffman worked with Choir Director Jason Elam and Band Director Jennifer Rubin to determine which musicals would be optimal for this purpose.

“I wanted to do Godspell... for our

big musical, but it didn’t allow us to have a full pit orchestra [and] it had a limited ensemble,” Coffman explained. “Miss Rubin really wanted to be able to have as many pit students as possible involved, so we opted to go with Shrek the Musical to cover both our musicians and all of our actors.”

So far, the decision to perform Shrek the Musical has been met with optimism from students and staff alike; at auditions in early September, that was clear, Coffman said.

“We’ve had more people audition for Shrek than we’ve had for the last 8 years,” Coffman said. “Auditions were supposed to go from 2:45 to 5:30, but at 7:00, Mr. Elam and I were still auditioning people. It’s a huge cast.”

Shrek the Musical is set to be performed on Nov. 21-23 at 7 p.m. in the main auditorium. Tickets can be bought online.

“Donkey” played by junior Jordon Prince rehearses a song titled “Make a Move”, about Shrek (senior James Long) being too nervous to tell Fiona (senior Miyon Roston) how he really feels. “Donkey is such a sarcastic and fun character to play,” Prince said. “Not only that, his songs are not like any other character’s. I think the audience will really enjoy this show.”

Photo by Derek Walsh

Green room revival

By Daniel Smith

In May 2019, the school was devastated to discover a small group of students had vandalized the green room, a sacred-like place for theatre students to relax in between performances. Among the damages, the walls were broken in, couches slashed, costumes ruined and expensive equipment damaged.

In the aftermath of the event, Dr. Sheri Coffman and a few members of the theatre department assessed the damage and began the long process of replacing what was lost. However, contributions from several students, staff and community members helped make a quicker and more meaningful recovery.

“The theater students all pulled together, and actually, during the physical cleanup of the room, some of the music students and Mr. Elam came over and joined us and worked by our side as we

put the room back in order,” Coffman said.

Students within the theatre department immediately began fundraising with a bake sale led by now-senior Aarika Wilson. Funds from the bake sale were intended to replace all the damaged equipment.

“I single handedly made all the cookies for the big sale,” Wilson said. “The first day we made \$200, and then...we got it approved to go for another day, [which was] another \$200 for the department. We made \$400 all together.”

According to Coffman, the community also played a large part in replacing lost and damaged items by donating invaluable time, money and even furniture. The damage in the room itself was repaired by custodial staff over the summer.

“I had some parents who donated money to help us recover the funds,”

Coffman said. “And I had so many offers from everyone- from teachers, administration [and] the community, offering to help us replace our couches that were destroyed and the other furniture pieces. Then administration took care of getting all of the costumes that we could save; they got them to the cleaners for us and took care of the bill for dry cleaning them.”

This school year, the green room continues to serve its purpose as a sacred area for theatre students, but the impact the event had on the department was far more than physical. Support from so many areas within the community and the theatre department itself resulted in a new-found sense of security.

“I think after the bake sale Coffman kind of realized that a lot of people did care,” Wilson said. “I feel like we’re a tighter circle. And I also feel like the school supports us a lot.”

Grit:

**A solution to the
average student's
greatest problem**

English teacher
Be-Asia McKerracher
assists sophomore
Kaster Hughes in
Honors ELA II.
Photo by Daniel
Smith.

By Daniel Smith

Many students, at Winnetonka and in high schools all across the country, are dealing with a serious lack of determination, an important skill needed to get them successfully through the school year. However, as part of an inclination to help her students, English teacher Be-Asia McKerracher presents a solution: grit.

McKerracher said her desire to spread the message of grit came from Professor of Psychology (University of Pennsylvania) Angela Duckworth's TED Talk, crediting Duckworth as "the author of the big grit movement." McKerracher stumbled upon the TED Talk while searching for a way to motivate her College English class a few years ago.

Duckworth defines grit as "passion and sustained persistence applied toward long-term achievement, with no particular concern for rewards or recognition along the way." Likewise, McKerracher said she sees grit as the ability to persevere in any situation.

"The general definition of grit is perseverance over a long period of time," McKerracher said. "Grit is running a marathon and not running a sprint (quoting Duckworth)." It's being able to work hard for long term goals. I describe it as working hard, even if you don't understand the first time. [It's] like pushing through."

The "grit movement" began as Duckworth was teaching 7th grade mathematics in New York. She became interested in the psychology behind her student's motivation, performance and perseverance, which led her to continue graduate school and begin research on what she called "grit."

According to McKerracher, the best time to apply the grit mindset is "probably like around now." However, she also expressed it is equally important to persevere in the spring, when students and teachers alike are beginning to focus on the summer.

"It's easy to have grit at the beginning of the year because things are easier in all of your classes," McKerracher said. "But around September and October is when classes start getting harder because you

start going to that next level of assignments. Teachers aren't really [reviewing stuff anymore and sometimes it's hard to keep up with them. Talking to [students] about grit in April and March is really good too, especially for seniors because their brain, by March, is looking to their new life. They're done with high school."

As a teacher, McKerracher said she sees some students "hit a wall" as the school year goes on, leaving them unable to complete the work and move forward. She attributes this behavior to the build up of pressure students are subjected to, especially the anticipation of life after high school.

Duckworth points out, on her website, that grit can be more applicable to some situations than others. For example, graduating a program despite unfortunate circumstances is an indicator of grit, whereas the ability to study for an exam when other activities look more appealing may more-so be an indicator of self-control.

One former Winnetonka student, who wished to remain anonymous, said that their lack of grit ultimately prevented them from graduating high school.

"I didn't have the grit to do it anymore," the former student said. "Once there was too much of it [work] on my plate, I didn't have the motivation. The problem is that when it comes down to stuff like sitting down and doing busy work..., that is where grit is needed because in the end, it's a fact of life, it's going to happen. You're going to get busy work, just do it."

Similar to the "wall" metaphor McKerracher described, the former student analogizes high school to floating along in a stream of water, wherein some students reach dams, or obstacles, and are unable to proceed.

"So when we reach one of these impasses, these dams, some people hit it and just stop," they said. "Now, they're just in this pond, this build up of water, and don't know where to go. And I'd say to those people in that pond, sometimes it feels like you can't do anything about it, so have someone else do it with you, get help."

This issue of the "dams" is a very real one for all kinds of high school students. While the former student suggested that

students should get help, McKerracher provides a few more possible solutions for relieving the buildup of pressure she mentioned.

"I feel like teachers in schools could put less emphasis on college or less emphasis on choice," McKerracher said. "[We ask] 'what you're going to do when you grow up?' as opposed to asking 'are you learning?' or 'are you happy in the classes you're taking?' or 'are you interested in something else?' It's just to release some of that pressure, because I think even my sophomores feel the pressure of college and they're years away from even having to apply."

"...this is going to be hard. And you're gonna suck at it for a while. But you will get better."

Additionally, McKerracher also noted the presence of a culture of practically rushing students into college and assuming that young scholars have already decided on all their plans following high school.

"We assume that kids, by the time they're freshman, are supposed to know what they want to do with the rest of their life," McKerracher said. "[For example,] 'You said you were going to be a doctor, so you better take all these hard biology classes and chemistry classes and math classes, or you can't be a doctor.' But at 15, you don't really know what you want to do with the rest of your life. You might have an idea, but it's probably going to

change before you get to the rest of your life.”

McKerracher also suggested that taking some time to relax and enjoy some of the more childish aspects of life could alleviate the stress of high school. She said that doing this can refresh your mind and make it easier to apply grit successfully.

“I was in class saying, ‘here’s some things you can do when you go home,’ like ‘you can go out in the grass,’ or ‘you can go play with the cricket.’ And they’re like, ‘nobody has time for that’ and ‘we have to go to work’ and that nobody wants to go outside. It’s been a long time since we’ve done anything silly and goofy because we’re kind of taught that you need to be an adult, but even adults need to do things like color. I think our environment can help relieve some of that pressure too.”

Grit is a quality that, it seems, some people can harness more easily than others. Many people will struggle with their ability to use grit, but according to Duckworth’s book, “Grit: The Power of Passion

and Perseverance,” there are two ways to “grow” grit.

“On your own, you can grow your grit ‘from the inside-out’: You can cultivate your interests,” she states in her book. “You can develop a habit of daily challenge exceeding-skill practice. You can connect your work to a purpose beyond yourself. And you can learn to hope when all seems lost. You can also grow your grit ‘from the outside-in.’ Parents, coaches, teachers, bosses, mentors, friends— developing your personal grit depends critically on other people.”

A fundamental aspect of grit is accepting failure. The key to success when it comes to grit is the ability to fail and get back up to continue, no matter how many times an individual may fail.

“You’re going to want to think about it as a race in that no matter how close you were to first, at the end of the race if you didn’t make it to first, you’re a failure,” the former student said. “Most people want to see it as that, but it’s not like that at all. I tried really, really hard, then

crashed and I thought that all that ‘really hard’ didn’t matter if I crashed, but it did. I tried, and I will try again, just as hard or harder. They shouldn’t see it as a race, they need to see it as the steps involved.”

McKerracher also touches on the aspect of failure by reinforcing the idea that grit is needed for practically every part of a person’s life, and in her case, that includes her personal life.

“I’m a teacher during the day, but I’m also a person who plays a lot of video games,” McKerracher said. “You need a lot of grit for some of those because you die a lot, and you suck a lot before you get better. You have to have a lot of grit to work hard at something and fail most of the time, until you start getting better. It reminds me that things that I want to do aren’t necessarily easy, but I can do it if I just work at it. I don’t think kids hear that enough. I don’t think young people hear, ‘this is going to be hard. And you’re gonna suck at it for a while. But you will get better.’”

Grit | *Noun*

Courage, bravery, pluck, mettle, backbone, spirit, strength of character, strength of will, moral fiber, steel, nerve, fortitude, toughness, hardiness, resolve, resolution, determination, tenacity, perseverance, endurance; informal: guts, spunk.

Math Multiplied

Sophomores
enjoy double the
opportunities for
math classes



Sophomore Paige Hutson takes notes as she listens to math teacher Melanie Fender in Honors Geometry.

By Macy Goetz

For the first time, sophomore students taking honors math classes were given the opportunity to take two math classes in one school year rather than taking only one class. These students took Honors Geometry every day for the first semester of school, and Honors Algebra II second semester.

"This class was created because there were so many students, 28 to be exact, last year that we felt could have probably taken a higher math class in their freshman or 8th grade year," math teacher Melanie Fender said. "We just felt like we could get them a little bit ahead."

Rather than it being a block class (every other day), it's a house

class, meaning they have the same class every single day, to make room for their Algebra II class second semester. But with the class being every day, students feel a pressure to balance their school work.

"It's definitely a faster moving class" sophomore Tucker Shay said. "You have to stay on top of your work and keep up with the fast pace."

Taking both math classes this school year allows students to take more advanced classes at a much faster pace in years to come than they would if they only took one class. This way students can get ahead and take college level classes during high school, which is much cheaper than doing it at an actual college or university.

"Taking the class makes my school life better because it is every day so I don't skip a beat and the material is always fresh in my mind" sophomore Rae Miller said.

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Innovative, proactive and reactive systems aim to minimize risk within high school sports

By Elizabeth Payton

Over the last few decades, the increasing awareness of sports-related injuries has shaped high school sports, and with recent breakthroughs in understanding concussions and its long-term effects, emphasis is being put on the need for innovative and proactive solutions.

This season, select players from the Winnetonka football team will be donning their helmets, now equipped with a technology that has the potential to make practices and games all the more safer, according to head football coach Benny Palmer.

The InSite helmet system places sensors inside existing, compatible helmets, allowing coaches to remotely monitor the frequency and severity of head impacts during a game. Thus, when an abnormal or potentially dangerous head collision occurs, sideline staff are notified and can take action immediately.

While identifying and treating potential concussions is an important aspect of the helmet system's purpose, Palmer highlights its role in the adjustment of player technique during practice.

"This system will allow us to look at real data regarding the rate of contact that we are taking, allowing me to design a practice schedule that is conscious of [that] contact..." Palmer said. "We are constantly working to find ways to limit the rate of contact... in practice. The season is long, and we want to stay healthy all season long."

Winnetonka was chosen as one of four high schools to participate in the program starting this season, with over 50 high schools in the Greater Kansas City area already using

Stressing safety

Varsity player, senior Dylan Rizer prepares for a home game.
Photo by Laurissa Saenz

the technology. A total of five InSite Systems were donated on Sept. 25 to be installed into five players' helmets.

Innovative technology, such as this helmet system, along with the evolution of the sport itself has allowed football to become a highly-popular high school sport, in which potential injuries pose much less of a risk now than in the past.

"Students and parents should not think that playing football is going to lead to an immense amount of side effects," Palmer said. "Instead, because of the improvements towards player safety, the [gained] attributes of hard work, team work, pride, effort, enthusiasm, and family... should outweigh the risks of playing."

The way that sports are approached by coaches, trainers and schools has a significant impact on the players' safety as well, Palmer said. With any sport, proactive and reactive responses are needed to decrease the risk of injury.

Proactive responses focus on preventing players from being put into situations where a head injury could occur, whereas reactive responses are often a series of events that happen after a player receives a head injury.

Likewise, to prevent head injuries and potential concussions, soccer coach David Flynn stresses the need for players to be aware of everything that is happening on the field.

"Situational awareness is the number one thing," Flynn said. "For example, in practices and things like that, we really em-

phasize [to] keep the ball on the ground. If we're doing stuff that's in the air, everybody knows that we're doing it in the air, and everybody's aware of it."

However, with the inevitability of concussions occurring, it's important to have procedures in place to ensure players can safely recover. Currently, players who are confirmed to have a concussion have to undergo a five-day protocol, where they need to demonstrate they are physically and cognitively able to continue in the sport.

"We've had some students who've gotten... severe concussions," Flynn said, "and it's taken them weeks, or even months to be able to get to the point where they can maybe come back, and we've had others that have had a concussion, and then within a day or two, they're able to go through the protocol and they only miss a week."

As frequently as every year, coaches must undergo rule reviews as well as training on how to identify concussions and the resulting protocols.

"The number of concussions that we see, in terms of the reported concussions, has actually gone up," Flynn said. "But that's not necessarily because there's more concussions. It's because we're much more aware of what's happening now than we were 10, 15 years ago [when] there were likely players who had concussions, but you just got up, dusted yourself off and went back in it. Now we don't do that."

One thousand characters, nine hundred episodes, twenty years: *One Piece*

By Daniel Smith

“My fortune is yours for the taking, but you’ll have to find it first—I left everything I own in ONE PIECE!”

These were the epic, final words of the legendary Gold Roger, the man known as the “King of the Pirates”. These words were shouted out to a crowd as Roger sat awaiting his execution. Two guards on either side of him sank their spears into his chest, only a second too late to interrupt the phrase that would change the course of history for decades to come.

Roger’s large, toothy grin flashed for a final time, which was met with thunderous shouts of joy and excitement. Some men ran directly to the docks, jumped into their sloops, raised the sails, and took the helm. Thousands set out for the Grand Line, in pursuit of dreams greater than they’d ever dared to imagine. Gold Roger had inspired the Great Pirate Era.

More than 20 years have passed (both in real life and in the story),

and *One Piece*’s journey is still not over. The creator, Eiichiro Oda, continues on with his swashbuckling tales of mystery and wonder. The great treasure still has yet to be found, but our main protagonist, Monkey D. Luffy, is as determined as ever to become the next King of the Pirates.

Since its inception franchise has hit monumental numbers, with the manga series having approximately over 960 chapters, and with the anime having recently hit the 900 episode mark.

In Japan, the anime is massively popular, with entire stores dedicated to *One Piece* merchandise. Practically everything you can buy has been given the *One Piece* brand treatment, from toys to video games to watches to cars to fried chicken. In Universal Studios Japan, there are huge monuments to iconic scenes in *One Piece* that true fans flock from all across the world to appreciate.

When I saw these things for the first time, I couldn’t help but wonder, “What could possibly make a series that popular? How could a story go on for so long, be written by the same author, and still be considered good?”

It didn’t take long for me to realize that I had to find the answers to these questions by reading the manga and watching the anime. And thus, my journey into one of the biggest, most complex and most enjoyable fictional worlds I’ve ever witnessed began.

As the main protagonist, Monkey D. Luffy is naturally the one whose antics are focused on the most. However, many of the people Luffy meets along his journey through the Grand Line eventually get more focus later on, showing what they have been up to since their encounter with the future Pirate King.

With the fact that there are literally hundreds of characters that Luffy meets during various points in the *One Piece* story, Oda’s effort to show what past characters are up to really makes the show’s world feel functional; The characters are really going about their business entirely without needing to interact with the protagonist, whether that business be joining the Marines, pillaging towns as a pirate, trying to take down the government, or ruling a country.



#BeKind by Andrea Caspari

I thank the Universe for two things: my husband...and Griffin Grounds. We are so spoiled, Tonka. What other school not only has a coffee shop—but they deliver to your classroom? Don’t talk to me until I’ve had my second cup. (This even applies to my first block—sorry about that, kids.) No matter how much sleep I get the night before, I walk into the building bleary-eyed and in a crazy mood. And every morning, a student holds the

door for everyone coming in. I don’t know his name, but I am so impressed by his smile and kindness. It’s a small gesture, but it means so much. I thank him every day, and I always wish I had a Tonka Ticket to give him. He inspires me to do this for others. I always say I will ask his name...that I will give him a ticket...that I will hold the door for others. (Well, someday when I have more time.)

But the time to act is now. I think we need to spread kindness like confetti; wouldn’t it be amazing if we truly made

an effort to spread random acts of kindness throughout Tonka—and the greater community? We need to hold the doors for others. Pick up an extra chip bag or soda can to throw away. Tell someone they mean something to you while you’re thinking of it. We only have today, and we only have each other. Let’s do it, Tonka. Your smile and action could be the difference in someone else’s day—you never know what someone is going through. This impact will have a ripple effect. Pay it forward. Make a difference. #BeKind