



Student Engagement Post-COVID

By Lily Barrie and Ella Daugherty

During the pandemic, student engagement suffered, as focus was placed on the adjustment to virtual school.

Since returning to in-person school, there has been a shift in attitude regarding student activities, particularly among the seniors.

“People are coming more together and attending more events,” said senior Ronni-Nicole Whitehead.

The increase in attendance at school events has created an exciting energy for upcoming activities this year.

“Student engagement has improved significantly,” said senior Gregory Gomez. “Our bounce back from COVID has been really strong.”

Seniors are the only high schoolers who got to experience MLK prior to the pandemic. Many of them remember their freshman year and want to recreate some of the same experiences and strengthen MLK’s community during their last year together.

Seniors are not the only students who feel positively about student life at MLK. Overall, there is an optimistic environment about the upcoming year.

“It all kind of broke down because of COVID, but it's all kind of building back up,” said junior Tamana Wahidi.

Teachers are also hopeful, but believe that MLK is still a work in progress.

“Faculty desire for student engagement is



MLK students show school spirit at girls soccer senior night on September 16, 2022.

higher now than it was prior to the pandemic,” said English teacher Mrs. Cindy Montgomery.

Instead of viewing the pandemic as a setback in student engagement, it can be seen overall as a chance for new ideas at MLK.

“We... in a positive way, have the opportunity to maybe reset the culture of our school,” said Mrs. Montgomery.

However, both students and teachers agree that there is still room for improvement.

In the effort to balance academic rigor and

student activities, academics typically win, ignoring student life and negatively impacting students’ mental health. At an academic magnet like MLK, the pressure placed on students can often be overwhelming.

“There is an environment for that, there is a time for that, that I don’t think they [administration] recognize as much as they should,” said Gomez when discussing academic pressure.

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New Year Brings Changes to SGA

By Bennett Spencer and Lily Barrie

Candidates in this year’s SGA and class elections noticed a multitude of changes in the election process, including new requirements for running and new events surrounding the election.

“Last year, it was just fill out a form that they showed during advisory,” said senior Vincent Wang, who ran in both this and last year’s elections. “This time we had to go through a whole process with signatures and teacher recommendations.”

The entire election process, from application to voting, lasted from mid-August to mid-September, and occupied multiple advisory

periods.

Freshman Alend Ahmed, who ran for class president, also noticed the more challenging nature of such changes.

“There were more requirements established that made it seem that not [just] anyone could run for SGA,” said Ahmed.

Despite the revamped requirements, candidates across grade levels felt the election process was clearer and smoother this year.

“Overall, I believe this year’s procedure went smoothly. The expectations were established from the beginning, and it was very organized,” said Klara Pinkrose, a senior who

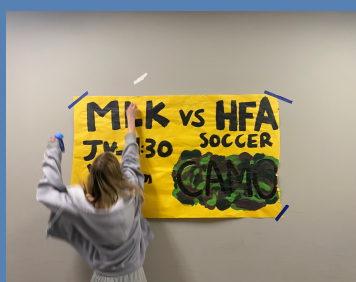
ran for class president.

Some of these changes can be attributed to the new SGA club sponsors and organizers, Dr. Lauren Williams and Mrs. Jasmine (Jordan) Chavez, and the paperwork they used to plan the election. They replaced the previous SGA sponsor Mr. Michael Bontrager who left MLK at the end of last school year.

However, they did not use the playbook left by Mr. Bontrager, but rather a completely different one.

“We went off of the paperwork we had from Mrs. [Olivia] Flakes,” said Dr. Williams. “And

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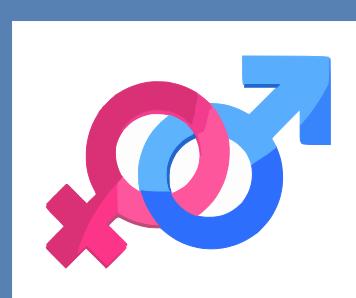
FEATURES PAGE 4 & 5

The Banner staff explores student engagement from multiple angles.



A & E PAGE 6

See this section for stories on two students, a musician and artist.



SPORTS PAGE 8

Are female athletes held to a different standard?

Student engagement

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Many students perceive that the administration does not think about the academic pressure placed on them, while the teachers recognize that the administration does care about the well-being of students.

“I know for a fact that admin cares more about how y’all are doing than academics most of the time,” said art teacher Mr. Stephen Graham.

Although students might not recognize it, care toward students can be shown in the support systems that have been put in place to help students since COVID. The pandemic revealed students’ need for support, creating momentum for constructive work. While these supports were likely needed for a long time, the pandemic provided an impetus for change.

“I unexpectedly found that not only did they [supports] work, but they worked across the board. My grades were better, my AP scores were better, and so I’ve kept them,” said Mrs. Montgomery.

Seniors feel like teachers have provided the necessary support in returning from the pandemic. They experienced the academic rigor of MLK prior to the pandemic, and therefore knew what to expect when returning to the building.

Juniors, on the other hand, entered high school online and feel differently about the assistance they have received. They had not previously experienced MLK’s rigor and had to build necessary accountability from scratch.

“Sometimes teachers don’t really put in enough resources for Schoology,” said Wahidi.

These supports regarding academics have also drawn attention to the mental health issues within MLK, as COVID and the lasting effects were hard for everyone emotionally.

“My room is a place that catches people...but since COVID, I go home feeling like a rung-out towel,” said Mr. Graham.

As an attempt to address these issues, mental health is frequently discussed in advisory and through the new SEL focus, sparking the conversation about student experiences and how the school can improve.

When considering the student life of MLK going forward, students and teachers must recognize the status of the environment that they share. MLK is an academic magnet, and students work hard every day to live up to those standards.

“What does it mean to have the privilege of going to a school like this, and what can we do for students to reward them for their work and commitment to being here?” said Ms. Montgomery.

A Talk with SGA Officers

By James Schremmer

Seniors and SGA officers Kevin Rome, Sheeva Azad, and Sarah Ahmed are ready to make this year one to remember for every student.

“I think we’re bringing diverse ideas and goals for the school, especially because our class is a very proactive class. I think we’re a part of a lot of other things, like the spirit committee,” said Ahmed, SGA vice-president.

These officers are also dedicated to fixing the problems past SGA administrations had and wish to bring a more transparent view of the SGA and its actions and processes for all students to see.

“In the past, and even now, some students feel like they are in the dark about what goes on in our school and like what change is happening, so I feel like just making that known that this is what we are working on and that we are willing to like, listen and then actively show you that we are working on your concerns,” said Rome, SGA secretary.

From even a young age, these officers have had a passion for helping others and campaigning for the best environment for their fellow students.



From left to right: Kevin Rome, Sheeva Azad and Sarah Ahmed. Not pictured: Vincent Wang, SGA treasurer.

“In fourth grade, our recess was open, and people could go out to the street and the people in the street could come out to us, and me and my friends made a poster and advocated for creating a fence...so I think I’ve had a passion for creating change for a while,” said Ahmed, SGA vice-president.

Finally, the officers would like to let each student know that they hold all students’ thoughts and opinions valuable.

“If you see us in the hallway, we are not intimidating. We’re friendly, and we want to talk to you,” said Rome.

Note: At the time of writing, Vincent Wang had not been named SGA treasurer.

Sheltered PLTS to Help Students

By Sarah Ahmed

Sheltered study halls have become a new tool to help students get back on their feet.

“On a bottom line we hope to see fewer failing grades,” said Mrs. Molly Ramos, MLK’s Literacy Teacher Development Specialist

Sheltered study halls are a way of reaching students directly by providing students help during the school day.

“Last year when we were working on the schedule for this year and it’s called the

SGA

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so all the requirements that were from this year came from that paperwork.”

Mrs. Flakes was a social studies teacher and sponsor of SGA before retiring six years ago.

The paperwork left by her included the requirement of teacher recommendations, signatures from classmates, and mandatory two years of involvement in student

master schedule, that’s where the original conversation came up about a sheltered PLT and working with students to make sure that they have the additional support that they needed,” said executive principal Dr. Angela McShepard-Ray

By monitoring a class that already allots time for students to complete their assignments, sheltered study halls have been able to hold students accountable for the work they get done.

“We are looking at multiple data points to make sure we are consistently making the

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government for any SGA position.

Furthermore, candidates expressed positive feedback on the new events surrounding the election.

“As for the debate aspect introduced this year, I think it really helped the student body understand their candidates and their plans, so I would do it again next year,” said Ahmed.

Locked Door Policy Designed to Increase School Safety

By Bethel Derege and Ainay Delahanty

A new district-wide policy stipulates that classroom doors must remain locked during the school day.

“I think the school feels safer since the new policy has been implemented,” said assistant principal Mrs. Hope Strickland.

Many teachers have embraced this new policy with open arms, with some even stating that they planned on locking their doors when the new school began even before the policy was announced.

“I think it’s [the policy] justified, 100%. It might be irritating, but I just know it will help in situations,” said 7th grade English teacher Ms. Stephanie Ellis.

Student responses to the new policy have been more mixed. Though the sentiment that this policy would protect them in an active shooter situation is widespread, not all students think that the policy is absolutely necessary.

“I’d say it’s somewhat justified. There have been a lot of shootings, so it can be kind of scary, but locking the doors inside the classroom is a bit much,” said junior William Wyckoff.

While noting the possible need, also Wyckoff notes that the policy is not without its drawbacks.

“People can’t get in and out of classrooms easily and teachers have to constantly walk over to open doors,” said Wyckoff.

Generally, most administrators, teachers, and students agree that the new policy contributes to feeling more secure.

However, the new policy has also brought with it an unforeseen consequence: some students cite increased feelings of paranoia in the classroom due to the necessity of locking the doors in the first place.

“When people care so much about safety, it can make some people paranoid,” said Wyckoff.

After teachers explain the lockdown rules to students, the students are often left even more worried and disoriented.

“It shocked me a little bit. If we’re like banging on doors, our teachers were talking about like they can’t let anyone in, even if you’re screaming. That’s just a little bit scary to me. I think it’s been affecting the kids a little bit, now they’re shocked, because anything could happen,” said 7th grader Reese Foster.

The policy has created some frank dialogue between students and teachers about building safety, a positive development since many students did not know why the policy was implemented and may have blamed their teachers for enforcing what could seem like an arbitrary rule when in fact the teachers were really trying to promote student safety.

“It’s good to have conversations with them



Senior Kquinn Donald knocks to gain entry to class.

[students] about why your teachers don’t want you to leave the classroom,” said Ms. Ellis.

Clearly MNPS district administration fully recognizes the safety crisis facing schools across America and are trying to strategize ways to address it.

“I think it’s clear now it’s not a problem that’s going away,” said physics teacher Mr. Chris Wright. “I think it’s just something we have to adapt to.”



“It makes me feel safe, knowing that the doors are locked and knowing that people can’t come and go without the teacher’s permission, and knowing who goes in and who goes out.” - Asiya Asfaw – 9th grade



“I don’t like it, because it feels a bit authoritarian.” -Taj Chaudhry - 11th grade



PLTs

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right decision on who needs that added support,” said Dr. McShepard Ray

The process of putting students in sheltered study halls is a meticulous one and the school makes sure to find the right people. It is a case of making sure help is given to the right people, and that they are not deprived of any resources that they need.

“One of the expectations was that those study hall teachers were meeting with their kids, if not on a weekly basis, as close to a weekly basis and checking in with them on

their grades,” said Mrs. Ramos.

Collaboration between the students, teachers, and administration in this endeavor functions to ensure academic success, as well as to help students acquire the life skills necessary for their futures, serving as a key component in how sheltered study halls are conducted.

“It’s really difficult to move students’ schedules around. You move one and it’s like a butterfly effect,” said Mrs. Ramos.

Rather than moving students, the administration has focused their aim on overall improvement, in addition to academic improvement, throughout the

year.

“What we want to see is that when students come into a structured PLT, we want to see that their grades are increasing, we want to see that they are developing the skills that they need to have,” said Dr. McShepard-Ray.

Because this is a pilot program, the administration has turned their heads towards creating an enhanced study hall experience for all of these students.

“We hope to see people actually learning how to manage their own time and set their own goals and take charge and ownership of their own learning,” said Mrs. Ramos.

What does student engagement

Spirit Committee

By Kevin Rome

Under the guidance of co-leaders seniors Hattie Gore and Sheeva Azad, MLK’s spirit committee has grown to fifty-three members dedicated to increasing school spirit at MLK.

Gore has a deep love for MLK and its community. “I’ve always been a loyal royal at heart,” said Gore. However, Gore hadn’t always felt engaged with school. Participating in the spirit committee gave her a sense of belonging at MLK.

“It really makes me feel at home,” said Gore.

Gore actively encourages connectivity and engagement amongst the MLK student community through the MLK spirit page.

“Reaching out to everyone through posters is hard and the Instagram gives needed outreach, we’re encouraging the student body to be feral in a good way,” said Gore.

The MLK Spirit page has evolved into the face of MLK’s school spirit, even receiving a follow from the official MNPS schools account. Additionally, students in the hallway light up at the mention of the MLK Spirit page.

“People have gone “IS THIS FOR MLK



Senior Hattie Gore hangs a spirit sign.

“SPIRIT!?!?!?” said Gore.

Gore graduates this spring and has pondered who will continue MLK Spirit. She wants more people to join the spirit committee and still plans on recruiting.

“I know there are people who care about this as much as I do,” said Gore.

Spirit Committee member and fellow senior Joshua Inso noticed the recent lack of school spirit around MLK. Like Gore, he wanted to get involved.

“My goal is to bring back the legacy of MLK’s spirit to the best of my abilities,” said Inso.

However, Inso realizes that building community through a shared love for MLK is not something he

can do alone.

“I seek out my friends to help me lead and encourage others to follow and participate in events and through the help of my friends, I’m able to create a bigger ripple across MLK,” said Inso.

Inso’s stands true to his mission of reviving spirit through leading cheers at games, actively participating and planning spirit weeks, as well as other fun school events that are yet to come.

“Most importantly, I spent my time here making life-long memories and friends,” said Inso.



By Naila Kailani

Senior Gwendolyn Johnson, SSMV student and dancer, missed out on her sophomore year at MLK, the year that generally bridges the gap between being an underclassman and upperclassman.

“During the tenth-grade school year that was pretty much all online, I don’t know, I lost a lot of motivation and didn’t have that much social interaction,” said Johnson.

Online schooling was difficult for many reasons, and lack of hands-on teaching manifested many difficulties for all students.

“I was really motivated before, like I’d come to school go home and do my work. But with COVID, I definitely had a lot more distractions. Like definitely watched all the seasons of *Brooklyn-99* at least three times,” said Johnson.

Mental health was also a salient issue of the past years in relation to school and COVID. Many students struggled with the combination of maturing and missing out on formative experiences.

“I feel like people’s 16th birthdays are really important, and mine was like my parents gave me some balloons and I just saw my friends for like fifteen minutes in the driveway,” says Johnson.

Over the past years there have been many turbulent events, and everyone has had the goal of reverting back to normal.

“I’m definitely really grateful to be back... I think in general I feel pretty back to how I felt in ninth grade to how I felt about school,” says Johnson.

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look like at MLK?

By Jamal McClain

Clubs are often the most anticipated part of the week, with students excited to lead clubs this year and enjoy time with their friends and learn new things.

“We really tried this year to focus on students being leaders,” said Ms. Sarah Laos, counselor, who worked with assistant principal Mrs. Hope Strickland on scheduling clubs. “It’s not something a teacher has to feel responsible for. They’re there as the adult, but they are not the ones creating the curriculum; they’re supervising.”

The emphasis on student leadership provides a chance for students to gain valuable skills. Students may learn how to organize themselves and others, how to take on leadership opportunities, and grow and learn.

It also allows teachers to gently guide students and student leaders, lending them the wisdom to hone their leadership skills, while not structuring the clubs themselves. The focus is tied to a larger theme for the year, SEL (social emotional learning).

“Our goal is really for students to have a time

during the week—the regular school day—where they can relax and do something they’re interested in,” said Mrs. Strickland.

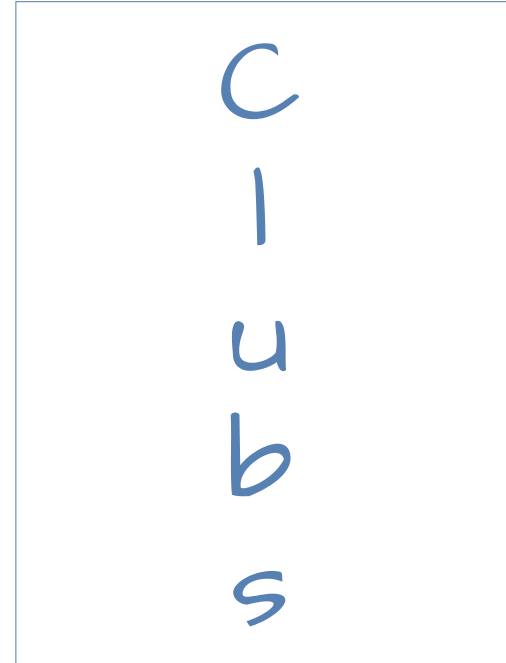
Clubs also provide students with opportunities they may not have had access to without the clubs.

The YMCA’s Latino Achievers provides summer training to club officers. The club creates an environment that allows Latino students to find community and enjoy their culture while planning for their future through activities like college trips.

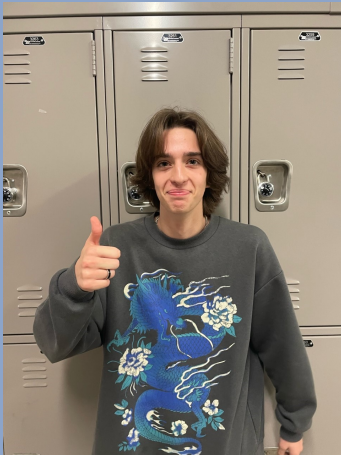
“The club is great because it also helps with students’ mental health. We do mental health check-ins and cater to Latinos,” said Spanish teacher and club sponsor Mrs. Anne Moctezuma-Baker.

The club also gives its officers a chance to gain valuable skills.

“I feel like the clubs are more student oriented because I have the ability and resources to communicate with administration and principals, for the club,” said Latino Achievers student president Katherin Gomez.



What club are you in and why do you like it?



Sergei Osin, 11th Grade Movies

“I guess it’s just nice to sit and relax.”



Jordan Fredricks, 11th Grade

“I’m in prom committee club and I like this club because it gives juniors and seniors an opportunity to promote new prom ideas and creative ideas.”



Owen Reynolds, 11th Grade

“I’m in AV club and it’s pretty tight cause Mr. Tidyman is running it. It’s one of my passions. I love talking about like audio stuff and old technology. It’s pretty fire.”



Jaisha Ricks, 10th Grade

“I’m in fashion club I really like the club because everyone has like different skills so we kind of use it as a time to like teach each other new stuff, like skills that we don’t have.”

By Helen Wyatt

Like many students, junior Destiny Granberry experienced a drop in her work ethic due to the isolation she faced her freshman year during virtual school in the midst of the pandemic.

“It [her work ethic] was definitely much stronger before. Prior to coming back, I didn’t really work hard cause everything was like on the internet like at the touch of my fingers, so I didn’t really have to do a lot,” said Granberry.

Not only was learning something that was greatly affected during quarantine, but mental health also had a negative impact. Granberry currently participates in multiple extra-curriculars such as dance and cheer but during freshman year when those social outlets weren’t available, her mental health paid the price.

“During COVID, it was really bad because I didn’t do anything...just did school and I stayed at home...all the time. Now it’s fine. I still don’t like school but it’s school,” said Granberry.



MLK Trombone Player an Accomplished Musician



By Nigel Pillow

Senior Orlandis Maise is an accomplished musician, attending the National Youth Orchestra program as one of the top three high school trombone players in the country.

"I feel satisfied with my current accomplishments given the time I have had. I know there is a long road ahead, and I believe that I have a lot of growth to look forward to," said Maise.

Maise's accomplishments are even more noteworthy given the relatively short time he has played his instrument.

Maise began playing the trombone in 7th grade. He made quick progress, placing in Midstate and making it into All-state every year since his freshman year.

In addition, he is a member of the Nashville Symphony's Accelerando program, a music education program that prepares talented young musicians for performance at the collegiate and professional levels.

For Maise, his inspiration has a family connection.

"My inspiration to choose the trombone came from my uncle, a former trombonist, showing me a video of Joseph Alessi playing an insanely hard piece. Alessi's great sound and his ability to not struggle with hard pieces made him my favorite classical artist. Alessi and my uncle's promise to give me lessons made me choose the trombone," said Maise.

He believes music is perceived by everyone differently.

"Music is not just notes or sounds on a

page. Music is how those sounds touch you. As long as your ears work, music cannot be bound by anything, not even language. One of the pieces of music I felt most touched by featured a woman singing in German," said Maise.

He hopes to translate his talent into a successful career in music.

"I hope to attend a music college like Julliard, Curtis or Coulburn. I am also interested in Vanderbilt," said Maise.

Maise also believes since music is such a special and intriguing phenomenon, the music program at MLK deserves more recognition and appreciation.

"I wish the band/orchestra department got a little more love and appreciation. Music is special to everyone. There should be an appreciation for the experience and camaraderie that being in a band/orchestra can create. Almost all my close friends started off in band with me in seventh grade. Now I am a senior. Even though some friends left the band, that did not change our friendship that originally started in band," said Maise.

Junior Artist Shares Her Perspective

By Shae Comardo and Grace Olson

Growing up as an artistic child, junior Celia Hunley learned to use art to cope with anything she undergoes.

"Art reflects the complexities of my emotions. Sometimes I feel as if I can let my emotions influence my rationalizing thoughts, so being able to express the complexities that come with that in a permanent thing is nice," said Hunley.

The featured watercolor piece, "Waves of Hope," was conjured from Hunley's imagination and created as a Christmas present to her mother last year.

"I wanted to do something abstract that I could give to my mom, and she loves it, so I accomplished my goal. This piece reflects the complexities of two labels, light and dark, but shows there's so many shades and different varieties within that," said Hunley.

Recently Hunley has started experimenting with new mediums, particularly watercolor, which she finds takes less time to complete. Beforehand she mainly focused on realism. She hopes to try her hand at oil painting.

Hunley finds that art has given her a tool to show her growth.

"Art helps me put a bookmark on a time in my life sort of, or like an emotion I've had.



"Waves of Hope" by Celia Hunley

It's really fun to look back at all these things I've made and see how much I've grown throughout the years," said Hunley.

Her work does not come without its hardships. Balancing being MLK student and artist while also managing her personal life is challenging.

"I am incredibly bad at balancing school

and art. I have ADHD and have found I only ever create the pieces of art I am most proud of in the evenings when the effects of my medications have worn off and when I am usually doing my homework. I only create art on my own time for myself about every two months," said Hunley.

Hunley has found a unique way of focusing on her artwork.

"I like to put my brain towards concentrating on something while I'm doing art. Podcasts like *Crime Junkie* and *Let's Not Meet* are some of my favorites. Crime podcasts are just so captivating and interesting, completely letting me absorb whatever I'm listening to while I also completely absorb what I'm painting," said Hunley.

Hunley, like most artists, is drawn toward creativity.

"The qualities of people who can express their world through a lens of art are the qualities I definitely gravitate towards. I think I tend to surround myself with creative people," said Hunley.

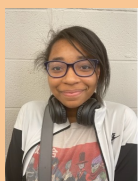
Hunley lets her emotions guide her through her art subconsciously.

"I'm not really analyzing what I am doing," said Hunley.

We asked several MLK students to interpret "Waves of Hope" by Celia Hunley. Here are their responses.



"The clash between the known parts of the world and what we don't know, such as the ocean." -Glancy Piper-Jones, 9th Grade



"It makes me think of happiness and sadness and someone may see you as happy when you can really be sad, or it can be vice versa." -Myrisha Prather, 10th Grade



"It's like strawberry shortcake fighting water." -Dillon Keegan, 11th Grade



"It's kind of like polar opposites, but there is a familiarity between the colors, it looks like waves or something over a period of time." -Rowan McCoy, 12th Grade

Shorten Royal Time to Make More Time for Clubs

By Katherin Vasquez Gomez

Royal Time should be shortened so students can have more time to spend in their clubs.

In Royal Time, students are grouped with other students in the same grade level. Students stay with the same group for the next four years, even six years for students who attended MLK for middle school.

In Royal Time advisors are given lessons that are supposed to be beneficial for students. Most of the lessons are based on SEL (Social Emotional Learning). Through these lessons, students learn about ways to manage stress, how to stay organized, and much more regarding the well-being and academic success of students.

These lessons are structured similarly to academic lessons and may not provide the proper space for students to express themselves or adequate time for a break.

The expectation for students in Royal

Time is to engage in the lessons and to implement the tools learned from the lessons into their daily lives. While the lessons are informative and the topics important to discuss with students, many students get disengaged or bored. Also, the lessons may also not benefit all students, as each student has his or her own unique way of self-expression, and some lessons may be more appropriate for high school students and not middle school students.

Club time at MLK gives students the opportunity to express their interests, connect with other students, be creative and overall, have a break from the pressure of academics.

Through my experience as club president for Latino Achievers, spending time in the club allows me to practice my leadership skills and be part of a positive atmosphere with individuals who share the same

similarities. I've made many new friendships and memories through my years in Latino Achievers, but I always wished it would be longer and not feel so rushed. The duration of clubs is forty minutes. This is not enough time for students, especially since we only have clubs only once a week.

Clubs are more beneficial than the SEL lessons taught in Royal Time because club time is not structured, and students have the space and free will to creatively do as they please.

For example, Senior Bennett Spencer looks forward to Best Buddies every Wednesday because he enjoys the relaxed atmosphere and being able to do something he enjoys.

With this sense of freedom students are less restrained from academic pressure and can do more for their communities, allowing them to learn more about themselves.

Get Rid of Structured PLTs Now

By Alisha Thompson

Structured PLTs have done nothing but make students' lives more stressful.

The rules include the following: no conversations with other students, no phones, no food, and students must write down upcoming assignments/tests on the board and in their planners that were given out earlier this year by advisory teachers during Royal Introductions.

These rules have contributed to students' overall stress levels because of extra responsibilities placed on them. Students must take time out of their study hall--time that possibly could be used on homework and studying for an upcoming tests--to hand

write every single assignment and assessment that will be due in the upcoming weeks on the classroom white board.

Over time this becomes a tiresome hassle due to the fact that not every student takes the same classes.

In a room of thirty students, only a fraction could have a certain class with the same teacher.

So, if each student writes down every assignment that is due within the next two weeks, including homework, projects and tests or other assessments, that means that there would be over two dozen assignments written on their whiteboard. This new

common practice would take, at the very least, ten minutes out of the already brief period every day.

A way to solve this issue is to get rid of the concept altogether.

While some parameters for how students spend their PLTs are needed, those parameters should be balanced against students' ability to choose how they spend what little unstructured time they have.

When students are given more freedom, they tend to be happier, which, as we all know, is beneficial for their mental health.



The mission of *The Royal Banner* is to be an accurate and timely source of information about the issues most pertinent to the students, parents, faculty, and staff of Martin Luther King, Jr. Academic Magnet School for Health Sciences and Engineering.

The vision of *The Royal Banner* is to promote awareness in readers by exploring issues that affect the school community and by serving as an outlet for the student voice, while maintaining the highest standards of integrity and honesty.

The publication of *The Royal Banner* is made possible through the generosity of the MLK PTSA. Thank you.

2022-2023 Staff Members

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Womens Sports Suffer Lack of Support, Different Standards

By Sierra Gray

In an environment that celebrates diversity, MLK's female athletes do not always receive the attention or accolades they deserve.

"The mens teams have support of their classmates, whereas the womens teams are more of an afterthought," said Melissa Farrow, the women's soccer coach.

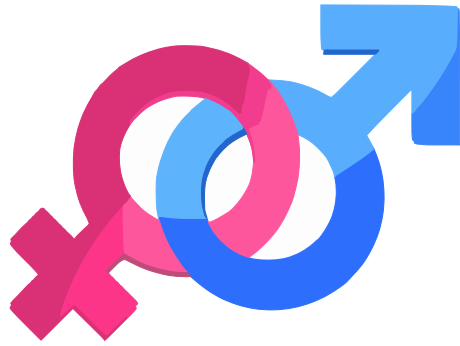
According to "No Question About It: Athletics Can Give Your Daughter a Fighting Chance" from *Women's Sport and Fitness*, The Women's Sports Foundation receives hundreds of calls each week that question whether sports are beneficial to young women's lives, and if it is even appropriate for them to take part in these teams.

Whether subconsciously or not, MLK's student body may have internalized some of these feelings.

"We played Hume-Fogg a few weeks ago and nothing was really said. But whenever there is a men's basketball game or a men's soccer game, I hear everyone talking about it in the halls," said junior Brooklyn Baldwin, a member of the volleyball team.

Unfortunately, when MLK students do address female athletes, it is rarely in language that is positive.

"I feel like our womens teams face a lot more criticism than mens teams. Guys at our



school are very harsh towards womens teams and women's teams tend to be the butt of all jokes," said senior Helen Wyatt, a captain of the women's soccer team.

Comments might not always have malicious intent, but they have a lasting effect on female Royal athletes. Dorothea Stillman, the author of "What's Wrong With 'Playing Like a Girl'" from *Newsweek* explains that the language used with young women shapes their future athletic paths.

"They're joking but they're not really joking, and it is so irritating because I know they wouldn't say those things about mens sports," said Baldwin.

The MLK spirit committee has boosted the morale of MLK's women's teams this year with their encouragement and acknowledgment of important games. Using social media, they have reached many members of the student body and have

gotten students engaged with MLK sports.

"Credit to the spirit committee, they were very supportive of the HFA match, although it would be great to have that level of commitment across all district home games to really pick the girls up and let them know that their efforts are being seen and rewarded," said Coach Farrow.

According to "Fighting to Win... and Playing to Win" from *Women's Health*, women's sports only receive two to four percent of media coverage, which typically leads to disengagement of the sport in high school.

"I think it is incumbent on the MLK student body, if they want their teams to be good, they should come out and support them and talk positively of them. Everyone is open to criticism, but that criticism must be constructive and not delivered in a way that involves denigrating their classmates on social media," said Coach Farrow.

Uplifting MLK's female athletes should be a priority if the school wants to be true to its mission.

"We are all playing the same sport, we are the Royals, the guys are the Royals, and there should be no difference between it," said Rowan McCoy, a captain of the women's soccer team.

Track Team Members Go to State

By Tripp Cook

Over the summer MLK had six athletes participate in the division AA state championship track meet on May 24. Avia Lane (10), Neveah Hyde (10), Amya Joy (10), Koriana Boyd (10), and LaNaya Roberts (10) all ran for the girls. Justin Villa (12) ran for the boys.

The six athletes all qualified for their spots after impressive performances at the Sub Sectional and Sectional meets, on May 5 and May 12, respectively.

The girls had multiple successful participants. Lane finished first in the 100 meters and 200 meters, with times of 12.16 seconds and 24.78 seconds. Hyde finished fourth in the 200 meters with a time of 26.28 seconds. Boyd finished third with a time of 1:00.27 minutes. Joy finished sixth in the 300 meters hurdles and fourth in the high jump, with a time of 51.66 seconds and a height of 5-00.00 feet. Roberts placed first in the discus with a throw of 109-05.00 feet.

Villa, who has since graduated, finished his last meet strong with a third-place finish in the 200 meters with a time of 21.96 seconds. Villa also finished second in the 400 meters with a time of 49.60 seconds.

Both teams had a great result in the relays. The girls team consisting of Boyd, Hyde, Joy, and Lane won both relay races, the 4x200 with a time of 1:43.54 and the 4x400 with a time of 4:06.62. The boys 4x200 team of Jaq Williams, Kingston Alford, CJ Owens, and Justin Villa placed first with a time of 1.29.85. The 4x400 team of Somto Okolocha, Kingston Alford, CJ Owens, and Justin Villa with a time of 4:06.62 also placed first.

Roberts, now a junior, said that finding success in discus season was due to her hard work.

"I really just put in the work, like I just worked a lot even on days when I didn't want to, even with a lot of homework and

even with having tests, midterms, finals, all of that I still just took the time to actually work and focus on my craft," said Roberts.

None of the girls who went to the state meet were seniors, which makes the future of the team seem very promising as the Royals look to recapture their success from the 2022 season.

"I'm looking forward to building on the success we had this past year. None of the girls were seniors that competed at the championship last year, so that's exciting. We get them for at least another year. We have a bunch of middle school girls that were city champions as middle schoolers, they were eighth graders last year and are going to be ninth graders this year. I am as excited for the boys to join the girls at the state meet in greater numbers," said Coach Michael Gabrys.