

the CLASSIC

Townsend Harris High School at Queens College

FON 2013 performs for larger crowd in new location

by Stephanie Geier

Blurs of vibrant colors flash across the stage and bells jingle noisily. The air is filled with upbeat Caribbean music one minute and tranquil melodies from China the next. Dancers leap across the stage, swirling silk red ribbons in the air and accompanied by lively enthusiasm radiating from the audience.

These were the sights and sounds of the annual Festival of Nations (FON) on February 7, a night when Harrisites performed dances to music from around the world on the stage of the Colden Auditorium at Queens College.

A wide range of performances took center stage: there was a love song performed by Japanese classes, Filipino FON's Tinikling dance, a Chinese fan dance, and a fusion of Salsa and Bachata from Tambores Latinos. CPop dramatized their performance with white masks, and Virsa kicked off theirs by spinning a chakkar (a large, colorful ring symbolizing India's military strength). The show concluded with members gathering on stage to sing along to Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror," reminding the audience of FON's aspirations towards unity and common purpose.

For the first time, Caribbean Carnival brought the vibrancy of the West Indies to the table, wearing bright tank tops and skirts with bells while dancing to exotic beats.

"We didn't want to just be generalized as the 'African Americans,'" said

sophomore and Caribbean FON choreographer Kaycia Wilson. "We wanted to represent the Caribbean. It was a great turnout. I never felt more proud."

FON Coordinator and Spanish teacher Beatriz Ezquerro sees them as "very promising," and the group plans on performing again next year, with male members.



photo by Jamie Abbariao

Students perform in Colden Auditorium for this year's FON

Notably, this year's FON was not held in the Townsend Harris auditorium. Last year, FON had about 400 participants, which is the capacity of the Townsend Harris auditorium itself. Thus, many students complained that tickets were sold out, and they couldn't invite others. To fix this, the FON committee decided to rent Colden Auditorium instead, which seats 2,127 people.

"Teachers took a risk and worked really hard to do this," said Lisa Mars, Assistant Principal of Language, Music, and Art.

The decision came with pros and cons.

"We were more organized when we did it at Townsend, but I think Colden Auditorium was more

professional and brought out the show better,"

said junior Eleni Stellatos.

Because Colden Auditorium is constantly used for other events, students were not able to practice there until a few hours before the performance. Some were confused by the larger stage and unfamiliar orientation during their performance, and some found the transition from the auditorium to backstage difficult.

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New policy for first marking period report cards

by Isaac Pulatov

It's official. Townsend Harris students will no longer receive letter grades for the first marking period. Students will instead receive numerical grades for all three marking periods starting with the 2013 spring term.

Ellen Fee, Assistant Principal of Organization and Physical Education, explained the rationale for the new policy.

"The reason for letter grades is that 10 to 20 years ago, it occasionally took about a month to equalize class size. To equalize means to make sure each class has a proper amount of students. In other schools you could still have program changes in October. So, letter grades were given because a teacher might have seen a student for just 2 weeks. At Townsend Harris, for the last five years, after the first five days, we have

had no program changes."

The administration believes that this stability in class rosters early on makes it possible for teachers to provide more specific numerical grades for every student by the end of the marking period.

"In other schools I've worked at, students received program changes three weeks in so teachers only had two weeks to give grades. Now that most schedules are annualized, there's no longer such a long organization period. We try to minimize changing teachers," said Principal Anthony Barbetta.

The administration believes this decision will motivate students to evaluate their performance with more accuracy and make plans for improvement earlier on in the term.

Ms. Fee said, "Letter grades are so general. It

prevents students from knowing how they're doing. Numbers give you a better snapshot. Sometimes you feel like you're doing great, but feelings can be deceiving, and a numerical grade is the best way to know your performance. As a math teacher, I gave frequent assessments, and they're always numerical, so it's easy to give a snapshot to the students. It might be difficult for the teachers, but it's best for students."

Math teacher Timothy Connor doesn't think the change will make much of a difference. "It is what it is. It gives a sort of real letter as opposed to a vague letter."

Social Studies teacher Adam Stonehill said, "I think the number grade can be deceiving because instead of giving the students a range, it gives a number

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Assemblywoman Rozic returns to THHS for swearing in

by Isaac Pulatov

Townsend Harris High School hosted the inauguration for alumna Nily Rozic to the New York State Assembly. The event took place on January 27 in the auditorium.

In her acceptance speech, Rozic said “Thank you all for honoring me today. I’m deeply grateful to all of you who have helped me. Thank you to all of my great friends who have supported me.”

She also thanked members of the Townsend Harris community for their support: “I want to thank Principal Barbetta, and Mr. Scardino, who taught me to not only identify problems but roll up my sleeves and solve them. He is actually so dedicated to his job that he’s not here today, but this is as much his accomplishment as mine.”

In particular, she described the influence the Ephebic Oath had on her. “This oath set me on the path to public service, to leave my city greater than I found it.”

In addition to members of the school community being in attendance, the auditorium was packed with attendees ranging from Assemblymen and Councilmen to Senators and Borough Presidents, many of whom shared their thoughts.

City Councilman Mark Weprin acted as the Master of Ceremonies. In his opening speech, he praised Rozic for her many accomplishments.

“What Nily has done is incredible,” he said. “It was a great time for me to serve in the Assembly, and I’m happy for Nily that she will experience that same excitement.”

United States Senior Senator Chuck Schumer also offered words of encouragement for Rozic.

“When I look at Nily’s career, it bears a striking resemblance to my career,” said Schumer. “No one thought I would win, and no one thought Nily would win. She is hardworking, dedicated, smart, and committed to her community. She got in the old fashioned way, and she deserves it.”

Congresswoman Grace Meng said, “Townsend Harris does a great job in promoting government awareness and teaching how to be a good American. Nily has been a role model for people throughout Queens. I expect many great things out of Nily. I was really impressed when voters told me she knocked on their door

four times. Our assembly district is fortunate to have her.”

The final speaker was Justice Bernice Siegal of the Queens County Supreme Court. She linked Rozic’s success to her time at THHS: “It is only right and proper that she be here, back in Queens and Townsend Harris, because it is one of the best high schools in New York, which has produced many great alumni.”

Students and staff members shared their thoughts about the event.

Sophomore Nina Leeds said, “Nily is just such an inspiration. It’s so great to see a young woman getting involved in politics, especially her, who is so hardworking and passionate about what she does.”

Social Studies teacher Franco Scardino described Rozic’s student career at Townsend Harris and beyond. “She was a student of mine in both government and social science research, so I got to know her really well,” he said.

He added, “What struck me is she showed a real interest in improving her community’s quality of life. She embraced the Ephebic Oath. She started interning with elected officials when she was here. At NYU she continued interning. She



Photo courtesy of Nily Rozic for Assembly

Assemblywoman Nily Rozic is speaks at Townsend Harris during her inauguration

knew from a young age she wanted to work

in politics. I supported her because I have a lot of love and loyalty for her. I think she’ll be a very strong voice for progressive issues, like education and the environment. I couldn’t think of a better candidate than a Townsend Harris alumna running for an assembly seat that represents the school.”

Former Dean Wanda Nix said, “The school has always been about public and community service, and Nily’s accomplishments represent the culmination of our dreams and aspirations.”

Principal Anthony Barbetta praised Rozic’s speech.

“What I like about her speech was her optimism. She has a strong desire to help people and the community. And, she has an ambitious agenda,” he said.

The principal commented on those in attendance, saying: “I really liked how the auditorium was packed. It says a lot about Nily. I saw a lot of diversity in ethnicity, age and religion. Students who didn’t attend missed a wonderful event, a part of Townsend Harris history.”

Mr. Barbetta also greatly appreciated Senator Schumer for his participation in the event. “It was an honor to have a United States Senator speak here,” he said. “Senator Schumer made a great presentation.”

He added, “As I was sitting there on stage, I just thought, ‘Today: State Assemblywoman, tomorrow: Mayor!’”

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Concert benefits Sandy victims

By Asiya Jaffer

The effects of Hurricane Sandy on New York were severe and heartbreaking. The subway system, road tunnels, and suburban communities flooded; for a while the “city that never sleeps” seemed deserted.

In the wake of this destruction, members of the student body organized and held a Benefit Concert for the victims of the hurricane. The event raised over \$2,100 by the time curtains opened on February 22.

Ella Leviyeva, senior class president, organized the Benefit Concert and described why she felt it necessary to raise money for the victims of the massive storm:

“After Hurricane Sandy devastated our communities, I knew I wanted to do something to help. Ms. Verga was leading a very successful food and clothing drive, and I was so happy that our school was helping in some way. After seeing the immense impact of the storm, I realized that we, as a school, should do something with long-term impacts. The SU Board decided to host a Benefit Concert for the cause. Jason [Mills], Mohd [Sakib], Nabil [Khatiri], and I immediately began planning the show, hoping to make it stand out from other shows such as SING and FON in content yet still be successful,” she stated.

Jason Mills, Student Union president, said, “At first, it was difficult to get talents involved and organized, but we started working harder and teachers and students were signing up to do the show in no time. That was one of our biggest successes: the amount of people who wanted to help out

and all those who attended.”

Students spent time in every lunch band advertising and selling tickets for the concert. Many people who couldn’t attend still donated to the cause and soon many students joined in by advertising for the concert through Facebook and Instagram.

On the night of the concert, the



Performers at the concert.

photo by Joanna Woo

line to enter snaked throughout the lobby.

“The administration was immediately on board with our hopes to raise money for the cause,” said Ella.

The concert began with “Washed-Away,” a documentary by Ameer Kazmi and Godfred Sedano, seniors. The video featured interviews with individual students whose lives and homes were affected by the storm.

“It was a moving documentary,” said Christopher Jordan, senior. “I felt very moved by [a friend’s] experience in the documentary as I didn’t know how bad he’d been affected by Hurricane Sandy.”

After the 20-minute documentary, singing and dancing performances were featured from students of all grades.

Jason said, “It was a great turnout and because of all those who attended and donated, we raised over \$2,100. The concert helped build camaraderie and an understanding of the reality of the aftermath, reminding people that the reconstruction is far from over.”

Tumblr ‘micro-blogging’ takes over THHS

By Anna St. Clair

You get home from school. It’s 3:00. You decide to log on to your Tumblr since you haven’t been on in 15 minutes. You are scrolling through your dashboard, watching videos, laughing at gifs, and freaking out about what happened in the latest episodes of all your favorite television shows. You decide it’s probably time to start your homework. It’s around 3:15, right? Wrong. You look at the clock. It’s 5:00. Did you really just spend two hours scrolling through pictures of Benedict Cumberbatch, the fetching star of BBC’s *Sherlock*?

For many Harrisites, this is life on Tumblr.

Tumblr, a combination of a social network and blog platform, was created by David Karp in 2007. Since then it has grown to 77 million users. Tumblr is considered a micro-blogging platform, meaning the blog posts are shorter than more traditional blogs (think Wordpress).

When you log on to Tumblr you first come across the Dashboard, a conglomeration of all posts from every blog you follow. These posts can include videos, photos, audio files, text posts, and gifs (animations). Blogs can be found on all subjects: political blogs, nail art blogs, do-it-yourself blogs, science blogs, TV blogs and art blogs, are just some of the featured genres.

Many Townsend Harris students use Tumblr to show off their original creative work.

Yash Sharma, sophomore, said, “I use my Tumblr mainly as a portfolio for my designs...Whenever people ask to see my designs, I just give them that link. It’s easier than sending individual photographs.” Yash creates graphic designs featuring Townsend Harris athletes and previously worked with Nike advertisers in a summer internship program.

Tumblr is intended as a blog platform in which users post their own original content in a structured, consistent manner, but in the past three years Tumblr has blown up amongst teenagers just trying to have some online fun.

Fandom is a good example of fan-culture internet slang that Tumblr has popularized. Generally, a fandom is a community of fans that gets really excited about certain shows, books, or movies like *Doctor Who*, *Harry Potter*, or *The Avengers*. Many fans choose to publish their fan art, fan fiction and fan videos on Tumblr. The site also serves as a message board where fans discuss their theories and opinions on their fandoms. It is not uncommon to see heated debates voiced by two very passionate fans on the theme of brotherhood in *The Avengers*. If the internet is Townsend Harris then Tumblr is the humanities seminar and television is

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Science Olympiad team accelerates to the top

By Magdalena Grabos and Anna St. Clair

After long hours spent perfecting their robotic arm, late nights spent memorizing types of trees, and endless amounts of effort put into understanding diseases, the Science Olympiad team has achieved what many other teams could not: a trophy at Regionals.

On February 2, Townsend Harris took first place at the New York City Regional Science Olympiad Competition at Grover Cleveland High School, after coming in third last year. Three teams represented the school, each composed of fifteen members. One team placed first, another seventh, and the third came in eleventh. They received a total of 32 medals.

Nimrod Gozum, junior, said, “We were able to leave with our heads held high knowing that we are the best in the city.”

Senior and Science Olympiad club president Malavika Attur said that because it was her last year on the team she had “an even greater reason to want to do really well and get first place.”

At the daylong competition, students worked in groups of two or three. Some events required them to take an exam, design an experiment or test their previously built designs. Events tested all branches of science including forensics, chemistry, engineering, earth science and environmental science.

The preparation for the competition was filled with many all night study sessions, and study groups at Barnes and Nobles mere weeks before the competition. Olympians competing in the forestry event could be spotted flipping through field-guides, memorizing different species of trees; those competing in the rocks and minerals event closely studied charts and diagrams, knowing that small structural details could make a huge difference between an igneous and a sedimentary rock.

“It was definitely a lot of work. I had to study a lot but in the end it was all worth it,” said Musfera Khan, sophomore.

Regardless of the amount of hours spent studying, students realized that every part of the material could not be covered.

“When you are there you are anxious,” said junior Demeara Torres, “I saw kids who were in my events and I was like ‘Oh my God I don’t know what they’re talking about!’”

The nerves during the competition and the awards presentation morphed into excitement after the team’s win was announced.

This was the first time since 2009 that a THHS Science Olympiad team won first place at the city championship, having won only twice in the past.

“The competition is always stiff at the top,” said advisor Thomas Sangiorgi. “The team was more prepared and worked as a cohesive team to dominate.”

With this victory in their pocket, fifteen members will be chosen from the three teams to represent THHS at the state competition from April 12-13 in Syracuse, New York. With the stress of regionals behind them, Maria Mo, junior, said that before she can think about next year’s competition, she will just “focus on states.”

The state competition will be a challenge as the fifty-five best teams from 11 New York State regions will come to compete. Last time the THHS team finished in 16th place, an all time high, but this year they are looking to beat that record.

The team does feel optimistic towards the state competition. “I think we have a pretty good chance at states. We proved to be the best nerds in the city,” said Demeara.

Freshman Jasmine Vrite enjoyed her first year of Science Olympiad citing the family-like community and the feeling of accomplishment. As a freshman she will not be placed on the state team, but she has the utmost confidence in her teammates: “We can kick some butt at states! We have some very dedicated people in the club.”

Mr. Sangiorgi feels nothing short of inspired by the passion evident in his team: “I am very motivated by everyone, and their enthusiasm for science and this competition has motivated me to coach them. This team really touched my heart and I am proud of them all.”

Common App forbids freedom of expression

by Suswana Chowdhury

The 2013-2014 academic year seems to be a year of changes. The fee for Advanced Placement exams has increased, a new culture section has been added to the AP Spanish Exam, and the global history regents might become optional for students to receive their high school diploma. And now, yet another change was just announced - the Common Application is removing the "topic of your choice" essay option.

For years, the Common App has represented a pillar of consistency in its essay topics. The suggested prompts never varied, and there was always the option of "topic of your choice," which allowed applicants free reign for a maximum of 500 words. Starting this fall, the new Common App will be web-only with a strict 650 word limit (minimum is 250 words) and an entirely different set of essay questions.

The personal statement allows students to differentiate themselves from all the other applicants and allow the admissions officer to see beyond the numbers. A successful essay is one that most effectively captures the student's voice and works the best when the applicant is given the freedom to speak passionately about what is important to him or her. The

most obvious option would then be "topic of your choice." The elimination of this prompt suppresses creativity as it forces students to develop essays within a limited framework, making student essays more common. Admissions offices will now have to read even more of the same half-dozen topics ad nauseum. Students going through the application process want to portray their individuality. The Common App is continuing to conform to the increasingly omnipresent idea of standardization in all things school related.

The Common App recently released five new essay prompts for the 2013-2014 admissions season. The first prompt, which asks for a story that is so central to the applicant's identity that their application would be incomplete without it, seems to be the Common App's compromise with students for the "topic of your choice." So yes, one of the new questions does provide some flexibility, and yes, it is quite possible that students may be able to show their individuality within a limited framework. The question still remains however: what was the harm in allowing students to check off a box that indicated their essay did not fit the established choices?

DOE medical policies in need of a new prescription

by Catherine Moskos

A school simply isn't a school without a nurse. We've all found ourselves at the nurse's office at one time or another needing a cot to rest on or words in which to find comfort.

It seems that school nurses do more than just send us home when our foreheads seem a little too warm. They provide services to students with documented, diagnosed needs and give referrals to parents/guardians when they feel that further assessment of an illness is needed. Nurses look after students with acute and chronic health problems and implement their prescribed services. The school nurse is expected to routinely assess the physical environment of the school and suggest actions to improve health and safety.

School nurses can do all these things but one thing they can't do is give you an Advil or Tylenol when you ask for it. Nurses can administer medication only when an appropriately licensed health care provider or parent/guardian prescribes it. So don't seek relief from headaches, cramps, and the like in the nurse's office.

But let's look at the student body of Townsend Harris, or rather, any high school at all. Ages in a high school typically range from fourteen to eighteen and a typical high school student by his/her senior year is likely to be allowed to drive a car, work, apply to college, even vote. Is the Department of Education's Office of School Health telling me that I can drive and vote but not be allowed to ask for some Ibuprofen to relieve a headache long enough to get through a Latin exam?

I can't help thinking that maybe if a nurse was able to administer some Tylenol or Advil at a student's request, we could get rid of the possibility of a student accidentally overdosing on his or her own, which could cause internal bleeding or liver damage.

Drugs like Tylenol and Advil aren't allowed in schools but can we really prevent students from bringing them from home? I hope that this school's administration and the Department of Education understands that students bring these drugs into school every day and administer these drugs to each other.

I can't tell you how many times I've walked into the girl's bathroom and have heard, "Anybody have some Advil? I've got killer cramps," only to see soon after students taking these pain relievers from each other.

I'd hope that students only would take a Tylenol pill from someone they trust but wouldn't it be safer to have the luxury of taking medication from a trained adult who would carefully administer the process? Sounds like it would be to me.

I think the Department of Education's Office of School Health should be more lenient with high school students when it comes to medication.

It's time to lengthen the leash and hand over the pills.

Doesn't *anyone* at THHS want to be a circus trainer?

by Yelena Dzhanova

Townsend Harris seems unique to strangers, or perhaps we only like to think that we're unique.

We have themed music blaring in the hallways instead of loud, obnoxious bells dismissing the classrooms. Teachers assign sporadic collaterals as opposed to regular projects. Freshmen are required to take a writing class for the first semester, and it becomes a prerequisite for sophomores and juniors to take Latin or Greek as a full year course.

Nonetheless, while students may be different in their intrigues and styles, the final results never change. Each student's goal coincides with that of every other kid at Townsend: education stands as a top priority for the majority of the 1,100 students attending.

Most of the students I speak with seem to want a career in either the medical field as a doctor specializing in a specific area or in the field of law, serving as an attorney to protect and represent the Bill of Rights. These professions, deemed as the "highest paying" or the "most intelligent," lure students into thinking that they are the sole career options available.

But things are different in Townsend Harris; these kids know what they're getting into when they arrive, so what could ignite these predictable, but complacent ambitions?

The answer lies in the parents of each child. Parents shove their kids in these directions, pushing

Children don't want to disappoint their parents by rebelling against their desires. Call me an optimist,



Are these the only vocational options for serious students here?

them to get the best possible education so they may be able to become a renowned (and well-paid) doctor or a renowned (and well-paid) lawyer.

Granted, they seem to always have the best thoughts in mind for their child, but what becomes of the world when all creativity is lost and each mind is no different from the next?

It's often said that "Great minds think alike."

No. I don't think so. Great minds are supposed to be distinguished and individualized, but we can't have that if everyone goes after the same thing.

but I think a large percentage of the school is respectful and courteous, having been brought up that way. Knowingly, parents believe that they possess the ability to control the future of their child. Having a doctor or a lawyer in the family can instantly give parents bragging rights, a guarantee that their child is well-off and educated, and the belief that they've turned out to be successful as parental figures.

There's nothing wrong with becoming a doctor or a lawyer if that's what you really want to do in life. But when people sketches out your entire existence according to their own desires, something definitely must have gone awry.

How can the child possibly be happy if he doesn't get the chance to discover what he wants and how he wants to accomplish it? What about all the other professions that don't even get considered because of their hypothetical low-statures?

Will the creativity, courage and spontaneity disappear from this generation completely? What about all the other vocations, from marine biologists to circus trainers to make-up artists? There's so much more out there.

If we cannot truly "think outside of the box" when it comes to our futures then can we really claim to be the unique, creative, and artistic school we are known to be?

From the Editors

Lack of time limits grade accuracy

Townsend Harris students are used to being able to relax the day they get their first marking period report cards. No anxious sweat or nerves accompanied your walk to receive your report card because the truth of the matter is, unless you truly did poorly in the first term, you will be receiving an S. It's almost standard procedure for Townsend teachers that students who are somewhere within the 80 - 94 range of grades will get an S on their report cards. Most teachers don't like to give out E's, fearing that the student will either have an inflated view of their grades or that they won't have anything to aspire to in the coming terms. It's a difficult line to walk, and the recent decision to shift from letter grades to number grades comes with flaws and advantages.

The inherent idea to retire the letter grades in favor of numbers, as we have in every marking period, is a good one. It removes the almost casual nature of the first marking period, one that students may view as a time when they don't have to try as hard. There shouldn't be any reason that one marking period would mean less to a student. Teachers will most likely (or *should* most likely) already have numbers that they've calculated for that student that they are trying to convert to a neat, square letter.

The problem with this is the time factor. Technically, the first marking period is about five weeks long. But when you factor in any program changes, days off from school, or anything that disturbs a teaching schedule, it amounts to

about three and a half weeks.

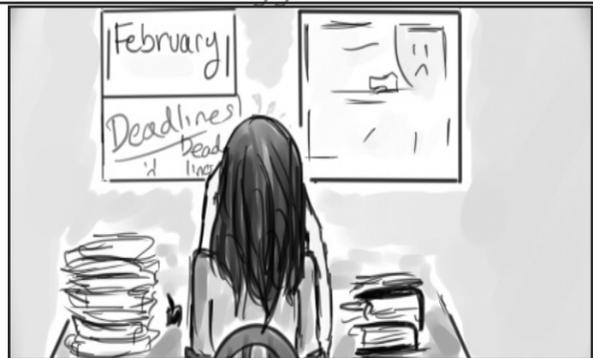
For some subjects, this is plenty of time to assign several assessments, tests, and graded homeworks to amount to a grade that is indicative of a student's progress.

But there are courses that would have greater difficulty squeezing in enough assignments to accurately assess a student. Teachers and students alike now feel stressed to be producing enough graded material in time for them to hand their grades in. And this marking period is markedly shorter than the two that follow it (about ten days shorter), creating another trial for us all to go through.

While Townsend Harris should be making the steps for uniform grading all year round, the timing of our grading could use another look.

A quarter system, with two quarters per semester could ease the woes of cramming work into a short time frame, and allow for more frequent progress reports, which is essentially, what a report card is without all the fear attached.

We have plenty of options for assigning grades, and we don't have to stop here.



Artwork by Nadia Ali

For and Against

FOR controlling guns in America AGAINST gun control

by Stephanie Geier

The semiautomatic Bushmaster rifle Adam Lanza used during the Sandy Hook shooting was a version of the same guns American troops used during the Vietnam War. The gun can kill up to six people per second.

Think about it: an everyday teenager had easy access to a high-kill military weapon.

It's because of this outrageously easy access to such guns that their ownership must be limited. In response to this, President Obama recently proposed legislation that would reinstate a ban on assault weapons. However, gun advocates won't stand for this, adamantly justifying their selfish 'need' for guns with unsubstantial reasons.

Most gun advocates justify assault weapon ownership with their automatic mantra of "exercising their Second Amendment rights." However, doing something simply because you can is not a reason, and just goes to show you don't need high capacity guns in the first place.

More sensibly, gun activists claim they use guns for defense, and I admit, I can see how they'd be useful. Protective handguns may be one thing, but assault rifles are completely unnecessary.

These monstrous weapons have one purpose: to slaughter masses of people at a time, and are thus reserved for the military. Who do we, everyday citizens, expect to be attacked by?

Gun activists believe that one day, we may have to protect ourselves from the government, because when countries like Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia were disarmed, the people were unable to retaliate against government abuse. However, at the time, Germany and Russia were under oppressive dictatorships. America, conversely, is a democracy, with three branches of government limiting everything the president does. If assault weapons were banned in the U.S., Americans would not meet the same fate.

And as for recreational purposes, there are far less lethal weapons one can use.

Perhaps an improved mental health system would decrease the number of mass shootings. But look at it this way: although she had a men-

tally ill son, if Nancy Lanza wasn't allowed to own that Bushmaster in the first place, Adam Lanza would not have obtained it.

Simply making it harder to obtain a gun through background checks won't entirely help because you'll never be able to sort out those who'll go on shooting sprees from those who won't.

James Holmes was a normal college student with no more than a speeding ticket on his criminal record, and psychologists are still baffled as to why he did what he did. While it may have looked suspicious that he was stocking up on guns, there are plenty of people, such as Nancy Lanza herself, who own multiple guns for defense and recreation. Thus, background checks won't always be accurate. If Holmes and Lanza were limited to handguns, however, the shootings would have been less fatal.

Some gun activists even hope to increase gun ownership by arming teachers. This is absurd, and only makes guns more accessible to mass murderers. Besides, how would you feel walking into math class knowing your teacher had a gun in their back pocket? As seen on the news, teachers can be just as disturbed as students. Why wouldn't they channel this through a gun as well?

In addition to banning assault weapons, the government should make it harder for people to obtain any other kind of gun, specifically those of high caliber. A more thorough background check should be instituted for gun buyers and there should be a limit on the number of guns a person can own: what was Nancy Lanza doing with over four guns?

The fact of the matter is that, just like any other law, gun legislation will never be 100% effective. Such legislation will, however, make it harder for these guns to be obtained and thus limit the number of shootings that occur.

The lack of gun restrictions in the U.S. must be taken care of immediately.

It's time to rid ourselves of the fantasy that it's the person, not the gun, that kills. While unpredictable human emotions and mental tendencies aren't always in our control, gun ownership is.

by Igor Portnoi

In the wake of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, the status of the Second Amendment has come into question. Liberals argue that people should not have an absolute right to bear arms because of the dangers such a right poses to others. The conservative view is to uphold the Second Amendment fully. I believe this is the correct viewpoint.

Requiring a background check on all gun sales does not prevent a black market from starting. From 1920-1933, a ban was placed on purchasing alcohol. Little was done to enforce the 18th amendment and although levels of alcohol decreased, eventually the dealings of groups like the Mafia and corrupt government officials made it impossible for the law to be effective.

Consider the success of drug laws in this country as well. After years of this prohibition, suddenly medical marijuana has been legalized in 18 states and two states have eased their marijuana laws even further. Many Democrats who favor prohibiting guns from being bought by much of the population also believe that the War on Drugs has been a dismal failure and should be ended to allow people the freedom to make their own decisions about drug choices.

If we as a country could not control alcohol or drugs, how can we expect to control guns adequately?

From 2011-2012, the Social Security Administration reportedly purchased 174,000 hollow point rounds. According to the administration, these purchases were made just in case the banks run dry and civil unrest occurs, but isn't that what we have the police and S.W.A.T. for? The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration purchased 46,000 rounds and 326,000 rounds went to the Department of Agriculture. Why do we need so much protection for fish, tomatoes and retirement plans while law abiding citizens can't even buy a round to protect themselves?

Although I disagree with most of the gun control proposals, some sound more reasonable than others. Limiting assault weapons, for example, is legitimate; there really is no reason for a person to have access to such large firepower for purely recreational purposes. Providing funding to law enforcement to control gun violence is also a good idea, which will only provide positive effects and may actually reduce gun violence. But we must remember, no matter what, gun control can never be totally successful due to the complex nature of our society.

All in all, if a decision cannot be reached, I propose to keep the laws as they are. Shootings will happen every day no matter what. If the problem cannot be solved due to the potentials of a black market coming into existence and increasing in influence, the case should be closed.

Report card reactions

continued from Page 1

that will most likely greatly fluctuate.”

Fellow Social Studies teacher, Aliza Sherman, said, “I always have numbers for my students, but AP World is a course that gets harder as the semester progresses. A student might get a 97 for the first marking period, and then get a 92 for the second one. That’s just because the course is getting harder. I don’t want students to think that they are doing worse, nor do I want the parents to get a similarly wrong impression.”

Veronica York, Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services, said “Numbers are definitive. So, at that point your grade is accurate. If you get a grade on a test, at that moment, that is your grade. March 1st is the end of first marking period. Report card grades go out the 12th. You’ll have a numerical grade to know how well you’re doing. You’ve been in school in a month. If we wait any longer, we will have to wait until May! Wouldn’t a student want to know more than an S or an E before May? It’s easier to fix yourself 5 weeks in than 3 months in.”

In response to questions about whether or not numerical grades will stress students out, Ms. York replied, “A number is scarier, but if you got an S and you actually got an 80, you’re living in denial. If you got an 80, and you want better, you now have a concrete grade and a point to improve from.”

Principal Anthony Barbetta said, “Most, if not all schools, give number grades. Students have the right to know exactly how they’re doing. An S can be a 80 or 89. Parents need to know too.”

Ms. Fee added, “If a student gets all Ss, where do you send your parents [for Parent/Teacher conferences]? If your parent only gets to see 4 teachers, how do you pick out of 8? The S might be a 92 in history or an 80 in Latin. If there was a number, parents would wait for certain teachers and know which ones are priorities to see.”

Principal Barbetta said, “4 to 5 weeks should be enough information to give a number grade. I think this decision will help parents, students, and teachers. The only reason for opposition is that the teachers might not think they have enough data. I think 4-5 weeks, with one test every two weeks and enough homework, class work, and quizzes will allow the teacher to give a valid numerical assessment.”

English teacher Joseph Canzoneri thinks the marking period is too brief for him to assign a number grade to it. “As a parent I understand the need for precision in grading but at the same time the grade is based on such a brief sample of grades and lessons that its only an accurate comment on how well the student has done for a brief period of time, and therefore isn’t very reliable.”

John Tsai, Physics teacher, said, “I wish the marking period was a little longer, by about week.”

Various students shared strong opinions on this change.

“I hate this idea so much. I want to cry and go in a hole in Alaska,” said sophomore Daja Nasib. “I’m used to the first term being easier. Now, they’re just cramming in tests.”

“It’s horrible,” said Senior Sara Clemente. “When you see a letter grade you have hope, but when you see a number grade you feel like you can never get it up.”

Many students believe that the marking period is too short and teachers are rushing to give in tests.

Sophomore Igor Portnoi commented, “I don’t think it will help us because it forces teachers to cram tests on certain days. [One Friday] students had three or four tests. It forces more pressure on us to do our best.”

Junior Christian Castro agrees. “It’s too much stress on students and teachers to give all their tests on a day like a Friday, the day students just want to go home. Plus, the first report card doesn’t count and not a lot of students care about it.”

Junior Brian Van says, “In our mission statement, it states, ‘The mission of Townsend Harris High School is to foster a love of learning’ but instituting said system would contradict said statement. This system would create more pressure on the students. I feel that it would more likely foster a hatred of learning, rather than a love.”

Some students, such as sophomore Zachariah Ooi, agree with the decision.

“I think it’s great that we start off with number grades, because it forces students to become much more serious about their first marking period grades. I don’t think people should be able to simply shrug off their academic performance just because the grades they are getting aren’t numbers. Not to mention it would be easier for us as students to find out how well we’re doing by looking at specific numbers, instead of letters that represent a wide range of grades.”

Another side to this decision is the impact it has on college applicants.

“This helps early decision students. The Es and Ss mean nothing to the colleges. If they see you getting good grades, they’re more likely to accept you. All our students are competing with all the other high schools in New York City. Other students are submitting 95s and 98s, and we’re submitting Es and Ss. Numerical grades give colleges more information,” said Ms. York.

Changes in junior college trip

By Ella Leviyeva

Students often say that they knew they wanted to attend a specific college when they stepped onto the campus, got a certain feeling, and told themselves, “This is where I want to spend four years of my life.” An important way to see if a school is the right place is to visit many campuses. For the past few years, college trips have been hosted for juniors to explore the campuses of regions beyond New York City. As opposed to previous years, in which the college trip was a weekend long trip with overnight stays, the college trip this year will be broken up into three separate day trips.

Social studies teacher Franco Scardino started the program with former college advisor Ms. Teague. Mr. Scardino said, “The goal was to expose kids to different colleges and college settings, to give them an idea of what the environment is like. These tours provide students with opportunities to have informational sessions.”

“We ran three trips,” continued Mr. Scardino, “One contained the schools between New Haven and Boston, another in Upstate New York, visiting the private schools and SUNYs, and the last one was from Philadelphia to Washington DC.”

After Ms. Teague left and the college office closed, Mr. Scardino continued hosting the trips until last year when the guidance department and college counselors took over the responsibility.

Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services Veronica York said, “Visiting schools is important, it gives students ways to view schools with their friends and with professionals probing them in the right direction.”

When asked about the change from a weekend trip to day trips, Ms. York explained, “These trips are pretty expensive and we’re trying to bring it under \$100 as opposed to the over \$300 students would pay for a weekend long trip. The goal is to schedule three very different areas and explore the colleges in that region and hopefully appeal to more students.”

SU President and former Junior Class President Jason Mills assisted Mr. Scardino in planning the college weekend.

“I think that there is an up and downside to this new idea,” said Jason. “It allows for more people to go on the trip at more affordable costs, which is amazing. However, it also diminishes a key aspect of the college trip: seeing many different types of campuses. Everyone is not going to get into Harvard, Boston College, or Wesleyan, but these colleges offer very different experiences and it is nice for students to experience a myriad of college environments before they actually choose.”

Parent Coordinator Dafne Manhart, who often chaperones these college trips,



photo by Catherine Moskos

Yale University on a past college tour trip.

said, “These trips are very important. My two sons did not have this opportunity when they attended high school, which is why I go on them now. I used to tell my sons, ‘A building is a building,’ but my son would argue and say, ‘No mom, you get a feeling, and that feeling really matters, it really impacts your decision.’”

Junior Daniel Yacar said, “The point of this trip is to walk through the college experience and to help unite the junior grade. I am not planning on attending this trip because part of the fun is sleeping away from home for a weekend and experiencing a real taste of college.”

Arvinder Singh, senior, said, “One of the schools we visited last year was Boston University and ever since visiting the campus I realized that it was one of my top options. This trip was fundamental towards my decision making process.”

Marco Gallagher, senior, prefers the weekend trip: “Personally, after attending said trip, I feel like splitting it up wouldn’t be as effective or fun. You’d be seeing less colleges per trip and wouldn’t be able to compare them as easily.”

Senior Gabriella Niyazov says, “Grouping all the colleges and seeing all the possibilities opens your mind up to more than what you initially had your mind set on.”

Not everyone felt like a weekend away with classmates was essential to making a decision. “I didn’t attend the college trip as a junior,” said Senior Laura O’Shea, “but it still didn’t impact my college process as I was still able to choose the schools that were best for me. Although it would have been a good experience, I’m still very happy with my decision.”

The bands between bands: how the bell music is selected

By Mehr Kaur, Roxanne Lewis, Vickie Savvides, and Beata Warchol

Upbeat, slow, and sometimes groovy songs blast through the overhead speakers at Townsend Harris High School as students rush to get to their classes on time. It is a tradition at Townsend Harris to hear music instead of bells. It is also tradition for students and teachers to stare at each other on any given day and ask, "Who chose this?"

Perhaps it should come as no shock that Ms. Fee, Assistant Principal of Organization, is at the bottom of that question. Although she is not necessarily the person who chooses the actual songs, the final responsibility falls to her office, where a nearby CD player provides the school's signature sounds for passing.

Ms. Fee explained, "Sometimes staff members get ideas and bring cds, sometimes students get ideas and they request that it be for the occasion. Students have also requested music to be played that commemorates the death of a musician in the past. The request usually goes to the principal first, then to me."

Traditionally, classical music plays to signal the change of bands, but jazz and instrumental versions of popular songs also appear.

The music has been a tradition since 1984. Dr. Largmann, the founding principal, was instrumental in starting it.

"The warning bell gives the teacher a chance to give closure to a lesson, an important part of the learning process. The music allows for a seamless ending and beginning of periods, without the jolt of a bell," says Ms. Fee.

Principal Barbetta believes the hallway music is innovative and works for Townsend Harris: "Not only does this policy work here, but it's also a great way to expose students to classical music."

Many Harrisites enjoy the music that plays on the speakers.

Sophomore Labiba Choudhury commented, "It's interesting. It makes the running from one class to another much easier."

Sarah Manrakhan, senior, particularly enjoys the music used to commemorate the holidays and special events, such as the romantic songs played on Valentine's Day.

"It made the students feel more involved in the holiday since there aren't any special dances or events in our school revolving around some occasions."

Some Harrisites questioned the final musical decisions.

Sophomore Lina Sultana said that in Freshman Gym, she was never able to hear the music clearly.

She emphasized: "I miss my bell."

Harrisites offered their opinions on what types of music they would rather hear if given the option. Many students requested more popular and upbeat songs.

Although Mr. Wood knows the music serves as a warning for when students should be in class, he would prefer more jazz songs to be played:

"We need more Charlie Parker," he said.

Junior Karun Bhardwaj enjoys the music played during the week of FON, which represents different cultures, "Townsend should be exposed to the rest of the student body, culturally. And I think playing songs from a different culture every other week would be a great idea to do so."

In most high schools today, a standard bell rings in order to separate one period from the next.

Mr. Lobianco, the principal of Lehman High School in the Bronx, shared his thoughts on the bell system: "Personally, a simple bell is important. It wakes the students up as soon as the class ends. It's a firm way of telling them, 'Class is over.'"

For students transitioning from schools with bells, the Townsend Harris method can be jarring at first.

Brianna Carreras, freshman, was stunned on her first day at Townsend, "I was confused" she said, "I didn't know what it meant and what to do. I just followed the others."

Eriselda Cuni, another freshman, was also shocked,

"I didn't understand this music. In my old school, we always used bells. I felt like I was in High School Musical."

Beyond the academic reasons and the debates about bells versus music, Mr. Barbetta offered, perhaps, a simple explanation: "Students at Townsend Harris work hard all day, so they deserve a little music in between."

Indeed, for many the musical tradition has become more than a simple fact of everyday life at THHS.

Senior Sheldon Isaac explained, "The music is what makes Townsend, Townsend. Without the music, we would be like any other school with bells. It lets us be different and lets others know that we go to Harris. The music represents us."



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MIT (2)	Brown University (8)	Georgetown U. (7)
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Club Spotlight: the GSA brings students together

By Rachel Chabin

Townsend Harris may be home to a dizzying array of clubs, sports teams, and extracurricular activities, but the THHS Gay-Straight Alliance is unique in its message, drive, and purpose.

While many clubs in the school appeal to students with similar hobbies, passions, or religious values, the GSA (also known as SAGES) serves to create an open, friendly, and safe environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students as well as their allies throughout the building.

Facilitated by Franco Scardino, Social Studies teacher, the GSA has sponsored a number of outreach initiatives, such as selling "THHS GSA ~ BE THE CHANGE" awareness bracelets in order to bring greater attention to the mission of the organization.

Mr. Scardino said, "The club is a safe and welcoming space for students who are exploring their identity and for those students who advocate for respect for all. I think the club is a necessary component of our school's mission and what we stand for."

During the 2011-2012 school year, the club hosted three documentary viewings in the auditorium, showing three movies that portrayed the controversial relationships between religious LGBT men and women with various members of their devout communities.

The close-knit atmosphere of the weekly meetings draw students of all orientations to room 411 after school, where members and guests alike discuss different activist opportunities, news stories, LGBT-related legislature, and personal opinions regarding the influence of government and religion on the minority community. While it is a place designed for organizing educational outreach events and fundraisers, the club is also a safe haven for students to vent their feelings without judgment or uncomfortable questions.

Despite the common misconception that only LGBT students participate in this club's weekly meetings, the GSA gets steady attendance from both LGBT and ally students.

"I think THHS does indeed benefit from having a GSA because I feel that it enables students to be more open with each other," claims junior Amanda Ruggeri, a member since the beginning of this year's fall semester. "[The GSA] also helps people feel more comfortable with themselves."

Sophomore and new member Jeanne Jin agrees, stressing the helpfulness of the club's presence in THHS. "I definitely think the school benefits because in high school, a lot of changes in social identity come, and I think GSA helps students to not feel alone."

Minni's Shabu Shabu: The art of Taiwanese hotpot

by Andrew Mitchel

Shabu Shabu sounds very foreign and esoteric, right?

Actually, it is just the Japanese name for hotpot, a dish where meat, vegetables, and a variety of other ingredients are combined in broth to create a flavorful soup. The phrase is actually slang, an onomatopoeia for the sound which the contents of the soup make as they swirl through the stock: the equivalent of “swish swish.” While the dish originated in Japan and was traditionally served in a communal way with one big pot of soup created for the table, the restaurant I went to was Taiwanese.

Minni's was a fascinating experience for me. Upon entry, I noticed the incredibly beautiful décor. It was obvious that the entire interior had been redone recently.

This was only the second time I ever had hotpot, and I taught myself the correct way to prepare my food on the fly. You first order the meat and/or vegetables you want to go inside of your hotpot. The menu also contains “side orders,” like noodles, to add to the mayhem within your bowl of boiling broth. Pre-cooked Taiwanese fare was also available, and I shared an order of gyoza dumplings with friends, which were fantastic. The service could've been better, but there was a large group of us, and it was a busy Friday evening.

My soup was a diverse cauldron of different fixings.

I ordered beef and shrimp as the meat for my hotpot, and when the broth got boiling at a high enough temperature, they were cooked within seconds. In addition to rice noodles, I put in the vegetables the restaurant provides each patron with when they walk in, such as cabbage, bean sprouts, and other Asian vegetables. I shared an order of udon noodles with a friend as well, which I threw right in; it cooked very well in my broth. I went a bit overboard with the provided sauces, such as Sichuan sauce, but still had a very enjoyable meal.

I highly recommend Minni's to anyone who loves soup, Asian food, or just new experiences.

Address:
136-17 38 Avenue
Flushing, New York 11354

Food: A

Décor: A+

Service: B+

Overall: A



cartoon by Jamie Fung



Logo by Jenner Chen

For many students at THHS, watching shows and movies online is a favored pastime. We are the Netflix generation, and for those of us who come into school and talk at length about the great shows we've spent our online time watching, we are very much a part of a growing 'Net Clique' of instant video watchers. Sometimes, however, it's not easy to dig through the endless programs available online to find something really worth your time. "Net Cliques" is a column devoted to guiding you to the shows and movies that you might not find on your recommended list.

Embrace your inner child in the world of animated movies

by Amy Hao & Joanna Wong

When asked why he always aimed to make his films “family oriented” rather than “child oriented,” an amused Walt Disney replied, “You're dead if you aim only for kids. Adults are only kids grown up, anyway.”

So NetCliques readers, that is your cue. This month is the perfect time for you to embrace your inner youngster, relive your childhood, and reenter the fantastical world of animated movies. But wait! Before you even think about reaching for that pile of Pixar/Disney DVDs, we're going to have to ask you to move far far away and consider journeying with us to a land of underrated and often forgotten cinema favorites, with stories that might not be your average fairy tale but have just the right amount of magic to put a smile on your face.

Because we just so happened to mention the granddaddy of animated filmmakers, why not start off today's suggested queue with some movies from his company's vault of Animated Classic movies? And no, they are not going to be princess flicks or motion pictures featuring talking animals, whether they be talking lions, tigers, or bears.

This feature takes place in a completely different universe from those so-stereotypical-they-work movies (and we don't just mean that figuratively; it really takes place in another universe!). *Treasure Planet* (available on

Amazon, iTunes and by other means) was first pitched alongside *The Little Mermaid* as “Treasure Island... but in space!” Naturally, everyone at the time preferred to see a red headed mermaid over an adolescent in space, so the story was initially scrapped. However, the sci-fi screenplay eventually resurfaced, and the modernized adaptation of the Robert Louis Stevenson novel finally got the Disney stamp of approval. One of the many things that makes this movie so engaging is the wonderful voice acting of David Hyde Pierce, Emma Thompson, and the then little-known star Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Another is the use of hand-drawn 2D pictures layered atop 3D computer graphics, with the ending result consisting of breathtaking scenery and otherworldly elements - such as aliens, cyborgs, and actual space ships - that make the masterpiece that much more captivating and engaging.

With a plot that feels familiar yet new and exciting, *Treasure Planet* shines as one of the forgotten favorites of the Magic Kingdom.

Another lost treasure is a flick that does in fact star a royalty figure and talking animal of sorts, but most definitely does not take place in a happy forest or typical castle. *The Emperor's New Groove* (available on Amazon, iTunes, etc.), which got its title but not its story from “The Emperor's New Clothes,” takes place in the Inca Em-

pire, a place that doesn't seem entirely fit for Mickey Mouse, but turns out to be the perfect foundation for a different kind of tale. When a plot to kill him accidentally ends up turning him into a llama, the immature emperor Kuzco must fight for his throne and recognize that the world doesn't revolve around him.

Packed with intelligent references to Incan culture, the hilarious hit has the feel and comedic presence of a cartoon show, but the morals and delicate graphics of a true Disney movie.

Now that we've dusted off some of our personal Magic Kingdom favorites for you, it's time we expand our horizons and stretch to other branches of animated goodies.

For example, if you're ever in need of a good laugh, the United Kingdom has created a gem of a show, *Wallace and Gromit* (available on Amazon, iTunes, and Netflix). The adventure follows Wallace, a forgetful inventor and cheese enthusiast, and his companion Gromit, a dog who only communicates through sign. However, the really notable aspect is the fantastic stop-motion clay animation technique where all the characters are plasticine models that are shifted and shot frame by frame and then compressed into the film. Boasting both groundbreaking cinematography and fun storylines, *Wallace and Gromit* is definitely a show to enjoy.

E.B. White's classic tale *Charlotte's Web* (available on Amazon, iTunes, etc), depicting an adorable friendship between a piglet and a spider, first appeared as an animation in 1973. Scored by Robert and Richard Sherman (of *Mary Poppins* and *Jungle Book* fame), the story follows a runt named Wilbur who, having been saved from certain death by a young girl named Fern, needs to prove to the humans that he's a prize pig worth keeping alive. A spider named Charlotte befriends him, and they work together with the rest of the farm animals to make Wilbur “some pig.” Heartwarming and inspirational, this cartoon is sure to please audiences of all ages.

It's unrealistic to wish upon a star that we can be made young again, but it's always fine to reset your mind for an afternoon or two to relish the favorites of your own day.

So, for this month, go out there and embrace those films you long ago abandoned, guided perhaps by our personal selections; after all, you are only as young as you feel. And, if we forgot any of your go-to kiddie movies, please comment on the online edition of this column at thhsclassic.com.

Happy streaming!

Warm Bodies melts cold hearts in theaters everywhere

by Jennifer Walsh and Parina Kaewkrajang

As vampires became synonymous with sparkles and werewolves became equated with shape shifting Native Americans, it was only a matter of time before another traditional monster got a pop culture upgrade.

Directed by Jonathan Levine and based on Issac Marion's novel, the 2013 film *Warm Bodies* provides our generation with another classic Halloween monster to fawn over. With wit and humor, the movie offers a refreshing revival for zombie apocalypses and chick-flicks alike.

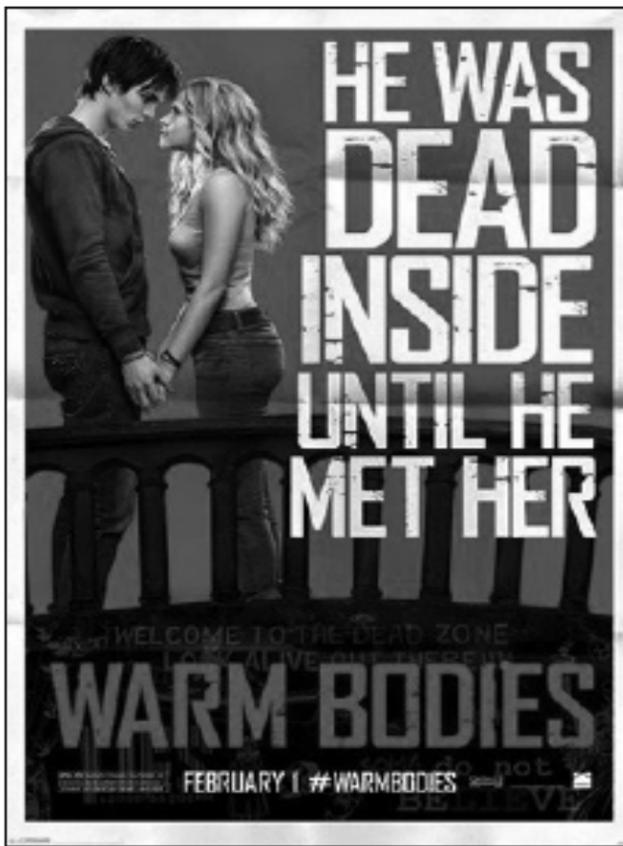
Nicholas Hoult plays R, a sentimental and reflective zombie protagonist who falls in love with a human girl. His acting was effective; he perfected the zombie walk and delivered flawless voice overs representing his thoughts, which, amid the short zombie groans, constituted most of the dialogue.

Simultaneously, Teresa Palmer fulfills her role as the terror-stricken but strong-willed human girl, Julie. Her performance was generic, and harsher critics may say that she did not immerse herself in Julie as much as Hoult did with R.

Warm Bodies lacks the gore found in most zombie movies, and those who come in expecting intense action will be disappointed.

The movie isn't full of fight sequences or zombie attacks, and the few included look low-budget and cheap. The "Bonies," zombies who have essentially turned into warped skeletons, are the worst offenders. However, the painstakingly detailed scenery, actors, and extras blend right in with the situation, helping to create the somber yet playful tone of the story.

The zombies aren't the frightening, bloody creatures found on shows like *The*



Poster promotes *Warm Bodies*.

Walking Dead, but are somehow more reserved, making the movie's premise more believable. The concept of zombies turning back into humans is different and interesting, and it helps R be a relatable protagonist.

R's scenes with Julie have the same awkwardness usually present in teen crushes, and will surely delight young audiences. Of course, Julie's father, played by John Malkovich, disapproves of her relationship with R. The film's *Romeo and Juliet* plot line is certainly cliched, but the deadpan humor definitely separates it from other romantic comedies.

The romance is innocent and lighthearted, creating a fun escape for viewers.

The film did not fulfill its potential to present something more than "zombie falls in love with girl" story but still worked as a romance. Some of the scenes between zombies can be hard to watch, as the dialogue consists almost entirely of grunted-out phrases. Action-wise, some parts of the film lagged, although there was a clear attempt at a buildup towards a dramatic conclusion. There was no clever, innovative surprise ending. The movie is simple and sincere, but also easily forgettable.

Nevertheless, *Warm Bodies* proves itself to be everything that it promises.

Zombies stalk abandoned streets in search for prey while humans box themselves behind cement walls. And amid the chaos for survival, love changes everything - again. The film will entertain, amuse, and start the hearts of audiences, if only briefly.

photo courtesy of imdb.com

Find the best technology for your individual needs

by Chris Artun

iPads, Nooks, Galaxy Tabs...what to choose? What will fit my needs the best? Well, here's a breakdown of the top tablets currently available on the market, their respective ups and downs, and whether or not they give you a real bang for your buck.

iPad 4th generation (Apple) Price: \$529-\$929

It's safe to say that nearly everyone who was born in the 21st century or has kept up with technology has heard of an iPad or the Apple industry. But how many people actually know what makes the iPad perform all its strange techno magic? Apple designers boast the iPad's 1.3 GHz processor (computer engine) to help run things smoothly. It has a rear camera of 5-megapixels, around the standard range for its division. It comes with a special resolution known as "Retina," Apple's enhanced form of high definition. Also, an added perk to this device is the ability to get an iPad with cellular service built-in, exactly like any phone would. For now, only Verizon, Sprint, and AT&T carry iPads. As far as getting your money out of it, this device is extremely recommended for those new to the tablet generations because of its user-friendly interface and functionality. For those who are more advanced in technological wizardry, there are a few other options.



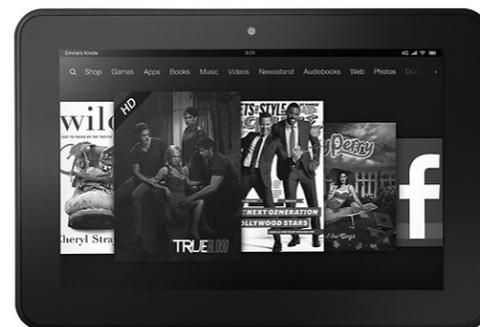
Galaxy Note 10.1 (Samsung) Price: \$399-\$549

Samsung has devised its own version of the tablet, the Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1. Its long line of cellular brethren, such as the Galaxy S3 and Nexus, simply don't match up to its outstanding performance. Simply put, you want power, go get a Note 10.1. The best part is, it comes at a slightly cheaper price! Running the latest software called Android 4.0, the Galaxy Note's enhanced interface allows users to do much more on it than they would on an iPad. Frankly, the resolution appears to be the same, because once we get up to 1280 x 800, I don't think it makes all that much of a difference to the naked eye. Widgets are also available, including traffic, weather, and breaking news. The rear camera also has 5-megapixels, while its front-facing camera has 1.9. The Note is only available in Wi-Fi models, with a full range of miscellaneous ports for connection to other devices.



Kindle Fire HD 8.9 (Amazon) Price: \$299-\$599

This tablet serves to those who don't need all the aforementioned fancy features, but want to take advantage of some next generation technology. For such users, there is the "reading tablet," a tablet that is pretty much used to read books on a screen, which is beginning to become more common than print books. These tablets don't serve much more of a purpose than to read books and other publications. However, they do make the reading experience quite pleasurable. With the ability to brighten the screen, increase the text size, and bookmark pages, the user is able to perform the basic functions on the electronic version that they would on a regular version. However, it is important that users beware that these files, known as .epubs, require great amounts of space each. I recommend investing in a separate storage capacity in the event that your desires exceed what you can have.



No matter what you choose, make sure that the tablet meets your specific needs. The iPad isn't the only choice out there.

Community celebrates diversity at Festival of Nations

continued from page 1

In addition, if students forgot something in their locker, it was hard for them to go back and get it. The committee was also concerned that since Colden was larger the auditorium would look empty during the show.

"It was a nice thought," said senior Shaleen Singha, "but it just made it harder for us."

Sophomore Gene Choi said the hectic nature of FON performances left him "in consideration of where it should be held next year."

On the bright side, both the audience and performers had more space.

When FON was held at Townsend Harris, performers would crowd in the cafeteria and watch FON on TV between their performances. At Colden, however, each FON group sat in its own section at the back of the theater between performances and watched the show live. The lighting and sound equipment were also more sophisticated at Colden.

"I felt like it was a nicer event," said junior and FON participant Diana Londono. "It looked a little bit more professional."

"I thought FON turned out wonderful this year," said junior FON coordinator Amanda Ramsaroop. "I really didn't know what to expect... after seeing the performance at Colden and hearing the reaction from both dancers and audience members, Colden was a great choice."

The FON committee hopes to rent Colden Auditorium again next year.

Looking to the future, Ms. Mars hopes to alleviate participants' confusion by taking them on a walkthrough of Colden beforehand, which only FON group leaders did prior to the show. Many students also hope to practice at Colden before show day.

In addition, Ms. Ezquerro, who has coordinated FON for three years, hopes students will incorporate more cultures in future shows, such as other Hispanic

dances and more European representations.

However, the biggest problem experienced during the show was not anticipated: the communication radios stopped working before it started, so coordinators resorted to cell phones.

"I did my opening speech while texting sound cues," said Ms. Mars. "It was amazing we actually pulled it off without radios."

Despite these issues, the change in venue had no effect on its traditional spirit and message, being able to "move past mere tolerance to appreciation and acceptance...in the hope of a more peaceful world," as Ms. Mars said in her opening speech.

"I thought it was very artistic," said junior Abbey Li. "I like how people were in a group that wasn't their own ethnicity. This shows acceptance of other cultures."

However, Ms. Mars reminds us that it is the process behind creating

the show that matters the most because it "brings us together as a community."

For freshman Yasmin Ally, it was one of the best experiences of her life because it allowed for new friendships and for the experience of various cultures.

Freshman Crystal Crosby likes how FON allowed her to showcase her nationality while doing something she was passionate about: dance.

Still others enjoyed the show for the moments they had in the spotlight.

"When I was up on that stage, I literally felt like I was in a dream, and all of it went by within seconds," Gene recalls. "There was an adrenaline rush that overcame me while I was up there, and I truly loved it."

With performers often practicing every day until as late as 6:30 for over three months, performers and coordinators say that creating FON is often difficult.

"Sometimes FON is noisy in the hallways," said Ms. Ezquerro.

She added, "We admit preparing this is confusing and noisy, but the result is rewarding."



One of the many sights to be viewed during the FON performance.

Tumblr platform inspires self-expression, procrastination

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classical literature.

Other students treat their blogs like a public online scrapbook, filling them with found photographs, artwork, and quotations.

Angelina Liu, freshman, said, "I have a bunch of Tumblrs: a black and white photography blog, a fashion/preppy blog, a personal blog, a theatre blog, and a summer blog. Most of the time I blog for fun and to gain inspiration, like from seeing a lot of things posted in the fashion blogs I follow."

If fandom blogs are for the geeks, then these scrapbook blogs (often called "hipster blogs"- though this term can be controversial) are for the self-expressive.

"I blog to express, not impress," said Angelina.

Even amongst these scrapbook blogs there is a sense of community and friendship. "It helps me mentally in the sense that I can find personal posts that I relate to completely, and it's a relief knowing that I'm not the only one who deals with certain issues."

Fangirling (or Fanboying)--the act of obsessing over a fandom--can be fun, but what is the addictive ingredient in the Tumblr recipe?

The website's design traps users into an infinite continuum of procrastination. The dashboard allows

users to scroll through all posts made by everyone they follow at any time. There is no need to click to the next page, and with a few simple keystrokes you can like and reblog posts without leaving the dashboard.

"I got attached to the infinite number of pictures on my dashboard, and I lose track of time when looking at them," said Akhtra Khan, junior.

The amount of time students spend on Tumblr is potentially problematic. "I'm on Tumblr six hours a day," said Nijah Phills, sophomore.

When Deborah Chai, junior, was discussing her Tumblr habits she said, "Please don't ask how often I am on. It's so sad, and no one needs to know."

Tumblr also allows users to ask questions to bloggers. You can ask questions without revealing your identity via the anonymous button. Not surprisingly the anonymous button has become a medium for cyber bullying.

"People who speak their opinion which is controversial get a lot of backlash. If someone doesn't like *Sherlock* or Benedict Cumberbatch they'll be called names, and I've seen people who've gotten so many negative messages that they've had to leave," said Deborah.

But when asked about whether the abuse of the

anonymous button leads to a hostile environment, most students described feeling a sense of community on the site.

Some Harrisites, such as Maya Grodzka, junior, have created close friendships.

"I personally met a friend on Tumblr. She lives in Brazil and is learning English. We speak English and Portuguese together. She is a year younger than me, and we are now facebook friends. So I believe that Tumblr can initiate friendships worldwide."

Tumblr users, like all internet users, say things online that they would not say in real life.

Although this can mean nasty anonymous threats and comments, it can also allow shyer people to bond with others.

"I think it's because it's the internet that I can share things more with people than I could in real life. T.V. is a pretty big part of my life, and I've gotten really close to people who just enjoy the same things I do," said Deborah.

So the next time you're wondering what happened to those two hours you had scheduled for homework, they were probably spent on Tumblr.

Spring full of potential for Townsend Harris athletes

by Dimitri Theofanis

The snow is melting and the birds are chirping, which can only mean one thing for Townsend Harris: another successful sports season is on its way.

Despite the loss of some key seniors from last year, the Boys Varsity Baseball team is full of hope.

Senior captain TJ Ritter said, "I'm excited for this upcoming season because we have a lot of young talent and I think they can contribute to the team to help us win. With hard work we can make the playoffs."

Fellow senior captain Elijah Dominguez said, "I believe we as a squad shall prevail due to great leadership qualities in many of our captains. We hope to get more wins this season, developing skills and team chemistry along the way."

Senior captain Ameer Kazmi said, "It was hard to lose the seniors because we've been with them for so long, but we have a great team this season and hopes are high for being successful. We're practicing differently and we're changing things up to improve the way we're playing and everyone seems more dedicated this season."

Girls Varsity Softball is also getting ready to step on the field. "I'm hoping for a successful season with a winning record. We lost vital members of the team last year so hopefully the freshmen can help, and we're excited to see what they have to offer us this year," said senior captain Damaris Sierra.

The Boys Varsity Volleyball team is also gearing up for the upcoming season. Senior captain Alex Boychuk said, "I'm excited to start this season. Even though we lost the core of our team last year, we can still make some noise."

Senior Terell Drayton said, "Personally I want to be in the top ten blocks and kills list of the league. I have high hopes for this team because the returning players have a sense of confidence that they didn't last year."

The Boys Varsity Tennis team is coming off the loss of a few key players, who helped the team achieve their best record in the past few years. However, senior captain Andrew Eichenholz thinks they can achieve that goal once more. "Even after losing our captains and key members of our team, new and returning players will be able to help us to another strong season."

Girls Varsity Tennis is hoping for the best in their upcoming season. Senior captain Alison Mann said, "I'm really excited to be captain this year. Our returning girls are really great players and very committed to the team. We also have

a few promising underclassmen that are trying out, so I'm excited to see what they bring to the team this year. The past 3 years have been tough because we faced really talented players from schools like Cardozo and Francis Lewis, but there are a couple of new schools in the division so we're excited to see how they play."

Fellow senior captain Bashe Miller said, "I feel that the tennis team this year is faced with a challenge. We lost our senior captain, who played an integral part both on and off the court. Of course we must find someone who can fill her position as second singles but I'm hopeful that the incoming underclassman will be capable of doing so. Otherwise I feel that the team will be successful with much practice during the beginnings of the cold brisk spring season."

Senior captain Isaac Pulatov is expecting another successful track season, coming off the record-breaking fall and winter seasons. "We have a strong pool of talent and if we commit ourselves to this season, I have no doubt we will medal in Queens."



The captains of the baseball team hard at practice.

photo by Dimitri Theofanis

Boys basketball finishes season with a playoff run

by Dimitri Theofanis

The Varsity Boys Basketball team has had their best season since the 2009-2010 season, finishing with a record of 8-6 while having advanced to the second round of playoffs.

The team won its first playoff game on February 26 against Clara Barton high school, where senior captain Sharief Enany scored 28 points in the 63-50 victory. Sharief said, "the game was at 5, but I started warming up at 2:45. I've been in a shooting slump lately and I warmed up extra early to make sure that I was on point. As seniors, it feels good to have a playoff win under our belt for the first time since freshman year."

Senior captain Alex Boychuk scored 15 points and racked up 8 assists during the game.

He said, "We grew a lot since freshmen year and we were able to demonstrate that growth in the first playoff game. With the playoff game being at home, we wanted to make it a notable performance, knowing that it could potentially be our last game ever."

"It felt nice to finally win a playoff game after three years," said senior Antonino Scaturro.

Sharief was the team's highest scorer this season, averaging twenty points a game, and Alex had the most assists of the season, averaging around four assists a game.

Sophomore Jozef Nikaj secured a position in the starting lineup this season, averaging around ten points and twelve rebounds a game.

"We had a great season, and next year we will be a more competitive team. We were really excited that we won our first playoff game and hopefully next year we will advance further in the playoffs," said Jozef.

Of the six losses, three were lost by only six points or less. The team lost its first game in double overtime to Robert F. Kennedy, which was the closest loss of the season.

The team also came in first place at the Cathedral Prep Christmas Tournament. Alex said, "The championship game was the most exhilarating



photo courtesy of Sharief Enany

Players from the team after winning at the Cathedral Prep Tournament.

game of our lives. We were down by 17 points with four minutes to go in the game and we came back to win in overtime."

"It's been a great season; we've had our ups and downs but overall we grew as a team and we had a great time playing together," said senior TJ Ritter.

The team lost to Fannie Lou Hamer High School on Thursday, February 28, ending their playoff run in the second round.

Senior Khalid Abdin said, "Although I wasn't allowed to play due to certain circumstances, it felt great to witness the boys pull out a good season. The way this team was built, I'm sure they'll do well next year."

Junior Nicholas Stamoulis said, "Game after game we fought through struggles and hardships of an entire season. In the end we won our first playoff game in three years and that is something we should all be proud of. I am proud to call my team my brothers."

"After four years on the team, it made me realize how much of a family we've become," said Alex. Sharief shared his bittersweet departure from the team, saying, "for the past four years, I've poured my heart out onto the court for this team, and seeing it come to an end is something that I'll cherish forever."

Girls varsity basketball team finishes undefeated

by Dimitri Theofanis

For the second consecutive year, the Girls Varsity Basketball team has had an undefeated record, finishing in first place with 16 wins and no losses.

The team won 11 of its games by 20 points or more, and 15 games by six points or more. The team showed its dominance in the league throughout the season, scoring as much as 60 points or more five times.

Junior Sierra Berkel led the team in scoring with an average of 16 points a game, also averaging 5 rebounds a game.

“I think that one word to describe this season would be incredible. It definitely feels good having the title of reigning division champs for a second year in a row. Even though it’s something we acknowledge I feel like we don’t let it define us. We just try to take every game one game at a time and see what happens next,” said Sierra.

Sophomore Debra Chan was also a key component to the team’s success this season, averaging 14 points a game.

The team won its first playoff game in a thrilling 60-57 victory, where sophomore Natalie Gomez scored a three-pointer off a pass from Senior Bashe Miller in the last second of the game to seal the victory.

“Honestly I thought that by the time the ball even got to me the shot clock would go off, but when it got to me I just shot it up. I didn’t believe it went in; I didn’t realize what had happened until I got home. It was crazy, we went into a

huddle and we were just screaming.”

Senior Angelica Sordillo said, “I think our season was a huge success. We had a majority of our players return for this season so we really were already familiar with each other and the team chemistry was already there. I believe that has played a huge part in our success.”

She added, “As for having a perfect record for a second year in a row, it’s a great feeling, especially considering the amount of work we put into it. But of course our main goal is to make it as far as we can in the playoffs. The perfect record was just a stepping stone to our ultimate goal.”

“It’s honestly so hard thinking about next year right now, since we are going to be losing many key senior players as they move on to college. I have confidence though that as long as we compete and leave it on the floor we will be fine. The

most important thing that we need to keep is the pride that this team has,” said Sierra.

On Wednesday March 6, the team won its second playoff game against Clara Barton High School at Townsend Harris. The final score was 41-30, where Sierra Berkel scored 17 points and Debra Chan 10 points.

The team will be playing McKee/Staten Island Tech in the next round of playoffs.



photo courtesy of Lauren Caiaccia

Katie Kang breaks national records, makes school history

by Andrew Eichenholz

Entering the Townsend Harris community, the one mile run is a freshman’s worst nightmare. Four laps, four hundred meters a piece, and the dreaded mile is complete. Four years ago, senior Katie Kang went through what everybody at Townsend Harris has gone through: running her first mile in a more than respectable time of eight minutes. Little did she know that four years later she would be a city, state, and possibly national champion race walker, with the seventh fastest 1500 meter racewalk time in American high school history.

Katie has been victorious at the PSAL City Championships in 2012 and 2013, and won the outdoor City Championships in 2012 and the New York State Indoor Championships in 2013.

The list of accomplishments in the 1500 meter racewalk goes on and on for Katie, but the biggest accomplishment of her high school career to this point was one of her most recent. At the 110th PSAL City Indoor Championships, Katie set a precedent for all future PSAL racewalkers, becoming the first to ever eclipse the seven minute barrier. Not only did she break seven minutes, but she walked her way to a time of 6:44, becoming the seventh fastest in American high school history.

“It’s surreal. I still can’t believe it...Coming down the final straightaway and seeing my time on the clock, it was just unbelievable” said Katie. Showing great pride in representing her school, she said, “I felt proud that I was able to keep racewalk as an event that Townsend Harris will always be proud of since the previous record was set by our alumnus.”

Only a year ago, Katie became a national star when she placed second in the nation. “I remember asking Mr. Connor, is there a chance of me being in the top 6? And he said ‘You can be in the top 3.’” From thinking top 6, to top 3, to coming in 2nd, to being the favorite to take home the big prize at this year’s national championships, Katie Kang has come a long way since that first mile run freshman year.

Fellow captain of the girls track team, senior Klaudia Garncarz had nothing but praise for her friend and teammate. Klaudia said, “On behalf of myself and the team we are all incredibly proud. There wasn’t a doubt in my mind she could accomplish all she has after witnessing the hard work she put in during practice and meets.” The same sentiment was echoed throughout the school, as fellow senior Anthony Kissoon said, “I think it’s so cool that she’s breaking records and I know she’ll do well at Nationals again.”

“Katie is one of the easiest athletes I’ve ever coached. She does everything she’s asked. She has the determination and will power to overcome the rigors necessary to get to her level. I saw on her face, at cities, when she broke the national record by seventeen seconds, there was nothing stopping her,” said math teacher and track coach Timothy Connor.

Additional reporting by Isaac Pulatov



Katie Kang stepping to first place at The Armory.

photo by Yash Sharma

GAMES TO WATCH

- 3/19 5:30PM Boys Varsity Volleyball vs. Flushing High School @ Townsend Harris
- 4/03 4:00PM Girls Varsity Basketball vs. Benjamin Cardozo High School @ Townsend Harris
- 4/08 4:00PM Boys Varsity Baseball vs. East New York Transit Tech @ Townsend Harris
- 4/10 4:30PM Girls Varsity Fencing vs. Queens High School of Teaching @ Townsend Harris