

# Opinion

## One senior thinks twelfth grade should be eliminated

by Gilbert Jones  
SPECIAL TO THE TRUMPET

Senioritis: The marked decrease in motivation that is associated with being in the twelfth grade. It is acquired in various ways, but its eventual infection of almost the entire senior population is inevitable. For some, it will lead to dropping out, hopefully to become a productive member of society. For those remaining, one of two general statements apply: those who are waiting to join the workforce and those who are waiting to attend college. For both, senior year is essentially a vacation. As senior year remains as unproductive as ever and states face massive deficits, it is time to once again consider eliminating senior year.

To answer this question, it is important to consider the purpose of high school: to prepare students for their lives after graduation. Thus, when considering senior year, one has to keep in mind if it is preparing students for anything. One indication is that some adults will freely admit that they have not used much of what they learned in senior year (or in high school) for the rest of their lives. This stems from the fact that high school's best way of preparing students is through helping them to differentiate themselves by their academic abilities and personal interests, a process which by senior year has generally been accomplished.

The period then acts simply as one of little productivity, decelerating students before catapulting them into adult life.

For those attending college, senior year is little more than a period to fill out college applications, log hours in class and wait. For those who are not attending a university, the senior year

simply be eliminated to create savings.

There would other benefits besides monetary savings though. For one, the high school dropout rate would inevitably decline. Students focused on simply getting a job as quickly as possible would have an incentive to remain in school if it were 25% shorter. In addition, their education would be more focused as they would have to adhere more strictly to graduation requirements throughout their high school experience.

For the college bound, senior year would no longer act as an unnecessary buffer between them and further educational experiences, as the college environment is simply more effective at teaching those who are continuing their education. Because in colleges, teachers have more control over their curriculum. Students have

more control over their studies and thus greater enthusiasm for their courses. The result is a much more cohesive learning environment than that provided in high school.

Eliminating senior year would have a multitude of benefits, from more balanced state checkbooks to more productive 17 and 18-year-olds to lower dropout rates to students more quickly moving up to college. The net result is that eliminating senior year would simply prepare students more quickly and more effectively for the adult world, which in the end is the only real purpose of high school.

Long Reach High School									
6101 Old Dobbin Lane Columbia, MD 21045									
Office - (410) 313-7117 Guidance - (410) 313-7412									
Student Progress Report - School Year 2006-2007									
- 4th quarter									
Course	Teacher	1st	2nd	Exam	3rd	4th	Exam	Grade: 12	
								Final	Final
German II	Crs#1510	Cred:1.00	Exc/Unexc abs: 0/0	A	A	A	A	A	A
Ancient & Medieval Hist	Crs#1290K	Cred:1.00	Exc/Unexc abs: 0/0	B	A	A	B	B	A
Calculus 07	Crs#1490H	Cred:1.00	Exc/Unexc abs: 0/0	2/0	3/0	1/0	A	A	6/0
English 12 AP/OT	Crs#1122H	Cred:1.00	Exc/Unexc abs: 1/0	0/0	B	B	A	A	1/0
Stagecraft III	Crs#1213	Cred:1.00	Exc/Unexc abs: 0/0	A	A	0/0	A	A	0/0
Laboratory Asst - English	Crs#1799	Cred:1.00	Exc/Unexc abs: 0/0	0/0	A	A	A	A	0/0
Psychology	Crs#148M	Cred:1.00	Exc/Unexc abs: 0/0	2/0	A	A	1/0	1/0	4/0
Completed Service Requirement: YES		GPA's: 4.00 3.71		3.57 3.86		YTD Present: 178.5		Absent: 1.5	
Completed World of Work Requirements: YES		Tardy: 1.0		Retained: <input type="checkbox"/>		Student is promoted unless the Retained box is checked ---->			

Photo Courtesy of "Katarina"

is generally used to fulfill abstruse graduation requirements in order to validate the past three years of schooling. This wastes talent that could be better spent either in college or at work.

Accompanying this waste of talent is a comparable waste in millions of taxpayer dollars. In these hard economic times, in which state budgets are strained to the limit, education is inevitably targeted for cuts. Rather than reducing programs which enrich and inspire younger students who stand to benefit the most from public educational programs, senior year should

## The truth behind vegan, vegetarian diets

by Lauren Ranzino

Too many people seem to attach labels to the diets that they supposedly follow, concurrently annoying those who actually know – and follow – the dietary rules.

There are always those people who claim to be some subset of vegetarian or follow another diet, though few of them seem to ever fully commit or follow through with their decision. Three seniors who stick to their diets – Lauren Klingensmith, Brandi Tebo and Taylor Wejkszner – gave some great insight into what it really all means.

There are three main categories: vegetarianism, pescatarianism and veganism. Most vegetarians are lacto-ovo-vegetarians. Lacto-ovo-vegetarians do not consume any meat, fish or shellfish. However, they do eat eggs and dairy products (the prefixes lacto- and ovo- meaning dairy consuming and egg consuming, respectively.)

Next, there are the pescatarian. The same rules apply here as they do to the lacto-ovo-vegetarian, except fish is consumed.

The vegan diet is perhaps the most interesting. Vegans follow the vegetarian rules but also exclude all animal products, including dairy products, eggs and any processed food with animal-derived

ingredients. Veganism could be called more of a lifestyle or philosophy than a diet.

Many are skeptical about these diets because of the health concerns associated with them. While important food groups are cut out, it is still possible to receive a steady intake of protein, vitamins, etc. – as long as one knows the proper ways to procure them.

If the diets are "appropriately planned," states the American Dietetic Association, "vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate and provide health benefits."

"I do not take any other supplements besides vitamins," said Klingensmith. "I just make sure I keep track of the nutrients I am getting throughout the day. I even have an app on my iPhone for it!"

All three of these diets constitute lower blood pressure and cholesterol, lower body fat levels, lower rates of hypertension and fewer incidents of heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Additionally, people tend to receive an increase in levels of antioxidants, fiber, carbohydrates, magnesium and potassium.

Some hardships include getting enough vitamin B12 and vitamin D in the diet. It is very hard for people on these diets to get in a lot of calcium, too; they can,

however, get it through large amounts of dark, leafy green veggies, tofu and calcium fortified soy and rice beverages.

"To get protein, I eat "fake" meat, like soy substitutes, tofu, etc. and there are more and more varieties of soy products coming out," said Klingensmith.

Pescatarians must be careful about just how much fish they consume, as there are concerns about toxicity, such as Mercury and PCBs.

More importantly for everyone to realize is that becoming a vegetarian, pescatarian or vegan is not just about not eating meat, but to make a difference to support the ethical treatment of animals.

Factory farming has a large and detrimental effect on the animals, due to the lack of care, and the environment by producing greenhouse gas emission, using a huge amount of energy and using land that could be used for growing crops. By switching to any of the three diets, hundreds of animals (per person) could be saved each year.

Brandi Tebo makes a great point. She said, "If you care about the environment, if you care about other living creatures, if you care about your health, [and you are willing to make the commitment] then you should go vegan."

Meh

YouTube is not for everyone

by Cain Azar

So, let's just hypothetically say a girl named Sally received a brand new video camera for Christmas (or Hanukkah or Kwanzaa). Just because Sally has this shiny new video camera does not mean Sally should post videos of herself on YouTube—especially if Sally cannot sing, dance, or make intelligent sentences.

America's youth has suddenly decided to blog their lives, record every thought and throw stupid opinions onto the web for the entire world to view, replay, share and favorite. If Sally were to post an awful video, she may find herself receiving death threats similar to Rebecca Black. And, contrary to popular belief, death threats are not fun things to obtain. They are about as fun as reading *A Farewell to Arms*. Nevertheless, mindless children continue to upload all of their awful little videos to the web and then cry when they get an equally awful response.

The Internet can be a mean place. Sure, watching somebody hurt him or herself is all in good fun, but that poor, unattractive girl who cannot sing is overwhelmed by hatred. That poor, unattractive girl should pose as a lesson to everyone. Just because one has a video camera does not enable one to suddenly have talent at singing or playing the banjo.

With cyber bullying on the rise, teens and children should be doing whatever possible to make themselves less likely to be poked fun at by creepy people with YouTube accounts.

In addition, children and teens who actually decide to post videos should learn to use proper grammar and punctuation. I am by no means saying that abbreviations should not be used; I am simply stating that awful grammar is just annoying, especially if the video one is posting is a lyric video.

Also, if one plans on posting a video, it may be a wise idea for that person to know what they are talking about. It is inappropriate for third graders to be posting video responses about bin Laden's death; so therefore, these videos should not be clogging up YouTube.

People who are simply watching them should also do their part in not making humanity look hopeless. Saying that "the 4,397 people who dislike this video never had friends" is just stupid because obviously the poster does not have friends either or they would be spending their time with them instead of posting "witty" comments that nobody finds funny.

Meh!

# Alex Vratsanos wins Key Club's "Unsung Hero" award

by Alexander Hess

"Alex is always the first to ask 'How can I help?'" said Key Club co-advisor Mrs. Laura Walizer in her letter recommending senior Alex Vratsanos for the organization's Pennsylvania District Robert "Bob" E. Bagans Unsung Hero Award.

The award, which shares its name with the present district administrator and lifelong Key Club associate, recognizes the efforts of devoted Key Club members who are not yet officers in their divisions. According to the Pennsylvania District, it is given to those who "...work hard yet receive little thanks."

It is evident that Vratsanos had been hard at work for his 18-month term with Key Club, limiting himself not only to this one foundation. He has worked to branch out into other organizations and causes such as UNICEF, Geo Club, and Autism Awareness. The crown jewel of his accomplishments was the collection of \$250 for Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF, which comprised nearly a fourth of the total amount collected by Parkland's Key Club. Vratsanos views this as one of his greatest personal accomplishments.

"It started when I picked up a box for it in (Key Club co-advisor) Mr. Martin's room and filled it over the course of a couple days," said Vratsanos. "I returned it and picked up another, to find it was the last box he and Key Club had. So, I decided to use it over and over... and by the end of October, I had filled it a total of seven times."

In Walizer's eyes, Vratsanos' unyielding devotion more than merited him the award. The local division's lieutenant governor agreed, and Vratsanos was officially recognized for his charitable work with the Unsung Hero award on March 5th at a division meeting in Hershey.

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"[Ms. Walizer] seemed very confident that I would stand a good chance of winning it," said Vratsanos, "and when they

announced that I had won, she was one of the first people that I thought of."

Vratsanos, however, says that official recognition is not the sweetest victory.

"Official recognition for my work in Key Club is... nominal. To me, having my work now in the books does provide some satisfaction, that those who read those books will see my name and what I have done," said Vratsanos, who furthered that the truly satisfactory aspects of his work arise from the work itself.

"Knowing that I sacrificed some of my time...to achieve something greater which I will remember constitutes half of the 'real' satisfaction," he said. "The other half comes from the...people that I have done work for- their satisfaction, their happiness, their gratitude, all of which I share with them."



Photo Courtesy of Parkland Key Club

Vratsanos is an active member of the Key Club and has recently received the high honor of the "Unsung Hero" award.

# Senior Kela Cope volunteers at Ghanaian orphanage

by Sam Wolf

With the end of the school year approaching, many students see sleeping in late, trips to the beach and complete care-free days in their near future. However, one Parkland student has a slightly different way of spending some of her free time this summer. Senior Kela Cope will be travelling to Ghana this summer to volunteer at an orphanage for two weeks.

The orphanage she will be working at is located several miles north of the nation's capitol, Accra. Cope's mornings will consist of maintenance work such as cooking and cleaning along with her afternoons consisting of directly caring for the children. Her host family and their home, which is where she will be residing for the duration of the trip, is not far from the orphanage.

The trip is being run through and subsidized by the International Volunteer Headquarters, also known as IVHQ. The IVHQ offers several different locations in which one can work during their stay in their selected countries. "There

were a whole bunch of different places I could work, but the two that really caught my attention were a school and



photo by Sam Wolf

an orphanage," said Cope. "I decided on the orphanage because those children

have had such a difficult life already considering they've lost their parents."

But what exactly was Cope's attraction to working with children? She claims that it and her whole inspiration for going on the trip root from works such as *A Long Way Gone*, a book in the senior year English curriculum. It is about a boy from Africa who is captured and forced to serve in a government army at the age of 13. "I found it so shocking that this was the first time I was hearing about this. It just amazes me that we don't learn about it in school," said Cope.

In recent months, the Parkland senior has been learning about the difference in cultural and social life compared to the U.S.. Aside from

the extremely hot temperatures and nonexistence of running water, one element that will be a bit of a culture shock is the way in which everybody treats each other. "In America you just walk by people on the street don't even acknowledge them, but over there everybody greets each other whenever they see them. You call all of your elders grandmother or grandfather, and

there's just an overall more intimate relationship between everybody.

Should anybody choose to become involved with IVHQ there is very minimal costs to attend a trip. For example, the only expenses Cope has to pay for are her plane ticket and \$100 per week.

When asked about what kind of experience she expects to have, Cope responded by saying, "I think it will be a wake up call for how lucky I am. I am very interested to see how life is in a completely different part of the world."

"I am very interested to see how life is in a completely different part of the world,"  
- Senior Kela Cope

# Blake Shuttle launches toward Cape Canaveral, Florida

by Phil Riola

Parkland has always been known for taking learning far outside the classroom and engaging students in the material they love. Luckily, as budget cuts

drown Pennsylvania public schools, Parkland is still able to spread our extraordinary resources and extracurricular programs to students and professionals outside the district. Lately, this has meant sending one of our most popular teaching tools to Florida.

On April 29, 2011, Parkland's treasured Blake Shuttle was front and center for the final flight of NASA's

Space Shuttle Endeavor. Endeavor's final flight marked the end of an almost two-decade long space program.

Mr. Robert Boehmer, an elementary art teacher, conceived Parkland's Blake Shuttle, which is currently being housed at Schnecksville Elementary School, shortly after the Challenger disaster in 1986. Boehmer had participated in the same "Teacher In Space" program that Challenger crewmember Christopher McAuliffe participated in.

Blake took nine years and 40,000+ volunteer hours to build. It is a 4/10-scale replica of the Space Shuttle, and since its opening day, has served more than 64,000 children across the Lehigh Valley.

On launch day, Blake was front and center on the NASA Causeway Launch Viewing Area at the Kennedy Space Center and

was open for tours throughout the day. In addition, Blake was featured at the United States Astronaut Hall of Fame at the Kennedy Space Center's Visitor's Complex on April 30 and May 1.

Blake was transported to Florida with help from Mack Trucks, Lee Butz, AFC First Financial, Ironton Telephone Company, Service Electric Cable TV and Communications, and American Banks.

It is hard in these harsh economic times to find funding for such extraordinary programs; however the importance of such programs is crucial. Dr. Louise E. Donohue Superintendent of Schools said, "Our selection to participate in the festivities surrounding the Endeavor's final mission allows us the privilege of representing the Parkland School District, Pennsylvania, NASA and the Astronaut Corps during a national historic event. We are delighted to put this unique educational tool on display for so many others to see."



photo courtesy of Blake Shuttle Crew

Students prepare to board the Blake shuttle for take off!