



The High School View

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MCAS preparations underway despite controversy

BY CHLOE COMBRA AND JULIA SAYRE

Due to the cancellation of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) testing last spring, MCAS will be administered to both the sophomore and junior classes for the first time in school history. All of the 362 students sitting for the test between May 3 and 14 must pass both the English and Math portions to graduate.

Assistant Principal Dr. Barbara-jean Chauvin, who is in charge of coordinating MCAS at the high school, said that she sees MCAS as a reflection of students' learning and the school's ability to teach.

"If students are passing that test at good rates, that means we're preparing our students

to go into the world, and that's our job," said Dr. Chauvin. "So if a student can't pass MCAS, and it's such a low bar [to pass], are they really ready to go into the world?"

Dr. Chauvin and many teachers, however, think that because of the disruption to students' learning during the pandemic, more leniency should be granted to students.

Math teacher Melissa Brillard said she could see the importance of using MCAS as a data point to gauge learning loss among students this year, but said, "To have [students'] graduation rely on the inconsistency in their education, not due to their fault, just doesn't make sense and doesn't seem right."

Sophomore Teagan Myers said, "I just don't feel like MCAS is a good way of mea-

suring our ability to learn. I think [the state] should determine if the teacher is teaching well in a different way, and not make us students have to take a standardized test, which can cause anxiety in some people."

Junior Jessie Dlabaj feels that this year especially, standardized tests can create an unfair learning advantage for some. "It [can be] a lot harder to learn over the computer," she said. "[The scores] are going to show that some students were able to pick up information during this remote learning time and others weren't."

While Dr. Chauvin does see how students' performance on the test will most likely be impacted by the unpredictable school year and its challenges, she is still confident in

teachers' abilities to prepare students despite the extenuating circumstances.

"We are feeling sympathy for the students," Dr. Chauvin said. "They are a little bit removed from the subjects they are going to be testing in. But our faculty is so awesome. About a week ago, they shifted their teaching style a little to really focus on MCAS-related topics and skills, to freshen things up for students."

Regardless of a student learning remotely or in-person, all students taking MCAS must come into the building. Students will be in different testing environments based on their learning styles; the majority will be in the gym, sitting three to six feet apart.

Some uncertainty remains



BETHANY CARDOZA

Sophomore Teagan Meyers studies for MCAS in his English class.

as to whether or not Massachusetts schools will go through with the testing. Dr. Chauvin feels confident, however, that the testing will be administered. "The State Association of Superintendents, the Massachusetts Teachers'

Association, and grassroots efforts by parents are really pushing against it. My experience and my gut tells me we will be sitting for MCAS, it's going to happen. So I'm moving forward with my planning." **HSV**

COVID protocols come at a price

BY SARA CREATO AND MARIN GILLIS

Life at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) has changed drastically this past year. Disinfecting protocols and eating lunch in classrooms have been enacted to curb the spread of COVID-19. While disposable products, such as plastic gloves and wipes, and bagged lunches have proven to be a time-efficient method of mitigation, they have come at an environmental cost.

With growing concerns about climate change and pollution, plastic usage during the pandemic is causing long-term environmental effects.

Science teacher Debra Swanson said, "People are using single-use plastics as opposed to things that can be reused. It is a huge pollution problem. Single-use plastics are way up. Also

you think about all the PPE, or personal protective equipment, like masks — everyone is wearing disposable masks. They all have plastic, and how much of that ends up in the waste stream?"

Ms. Swanson sees cutting back as the solution. "Everybody knows the three Rs, to reduce, reuse, and recycle. It is the reducing that we really need to work on," she said. "We need to start using less and consuming less so we don't produce the waste, and when we do make it, then we reuse it, and finally as a last option, we recycle it."

A significant contributor to the school's waste is the adjustments made to its meal program. In October, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that it would be extending its free meal program to the end of the 2020-21 school year. With meals being eaten in classrooms and at

home, bagged lunch was the easiest option.

However, the bagged lunches require more packaging. Although the cafeteria uses some biodegradable and recyclable products, packaging is logistically challenging.

Meal coordinator Mercedes Ferreira said, "It's really expensive, for one, and it's really hard to get things that will hold hot foods that are biodegradable, because then they decompose. Basically, when you're biodegrading, that's what happens. It's getting hot and it's getting wet, and then it falls apart."

The cafeteria donates its extra meals to Island Community Services — typically 25 out of the approximately 200 meals made per day — and composts using a bin outside the cafeteria. Since students and staff are currently eating lunch in their classrooms, the majority lack access to composting facilities.

Senior Colleen Carroll and sophomore Julia Sayre decided to start a project making infographics and putting compost bins around the hallways to get the school composting again. "We were collecting, I think, 3,000 pounds a week before COVID, but now nobody's collecting. All of our food waste goes into the trash," said Colleen. "I'm hoping that Julia and I will spark an interest in more students to see the importance of composting, and be able to educate them more about the system."

As for more environmentally friendly alternatives to single-use products, Principal Sara Dingley says that although they have been considered, the primary focus of administration this year has been creating a smooth transition into the hybrid model. "There were some tradeoffs to opening school, and one of them was an abundance of sanitation, and that yields wipes, spray, and gloves," she said. **HSV**

Clubs fundraise for Haitian



JACKSON WOJNOWSKI

Senior Vitor Lage collects trash at the Edgartown School.

On Sunday, March 21, Interact Club members and Island Clean Up Project teamed up to do the second ever Island-wide cleanup day. Sponsors of Interact Club supported this cleanup by pledging to donate a certain amount of money for every pound of trash collected. The students, who collected a total of 480 pounds of trash from five locations around the Island, are using the proceeds to send a young woman in Haiti to law school. **HSV**

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