

A New Kind of Schedule:

Combining courses from Greylock and local colleges allows students to create unique learning opportunities.

By KRISTA MANGIARDI

High School is often a large stereotype. For example, lockers, 7 periods, English, math, gym, and lunch are defining characteristics. Teenagers across the country have similar experiences to the point of often having the same reading list. However, here at Mt. Greylock, students have options. Quite a few exist that respect students as individuals who are capable of molding their own educations.

Due to Mt. Greylock's relatively small student body there is not a lot of flexibility for variety of classes in the course catalogue. This does not mean, however, that students cannot take classes that the school as a whole is unable to offer. A solution to this is creating an independent study. An independent study is based off personal, student-driven ideas. A student, typically an upperclassman, decides to pursue a subject not regularly offered and begins to brainstorm with his or her guidance counselor to make it a reality. A specific plan for a curriculum is drawn out, a mentor is found, and it is fit into schedules. Only a handful of students take advantage of this option. It can sometimes be hard to find a mentor. This is a staff member at the school who is educated in the subject that the student wishes to study. Furthermore, coordinating scheduling between the student's classes and the mentor's time can be difficult. One senior who is successfully partaking in this program is Celina Hoar. She is taking Marine Biology because it is something she wants to look into in college. She says, "Since we have lost so many teachers and classes in the past, it is good to give students the option. Especially since the school still has some supplies from the old courses." The most popular independent studies are languages as well as music-related classes. Studying a unique language, a specific science, or an art not only provides for an individualized schedule, but it looks reflects well on the student. Hoar continues, "Also, it helps students show they are responsible and independent." Colleges may see someone taking charge of what they want to learn and who is capable to do research and studies on their own. Guidance counselors see this as a special opportunity that hopefully more students will become aware of.

The most popular of alternative class option for students is taking AP Courses. Mt. Greylock offers eleven out of the possible thirty three from the College Board. AP classes are college level courses that can be taken by upperclassmen. In May, a test is taken to potentially receive college credit for the subject. This past year AP classes at Mt. Greylock have adopted an open enrollment policy. Tests are administered for English and History to let students know if they will likely be able to handle the course, but it is up to the student to decide if they personally are up to the challenge with the help of Guidance Counselors. These courses can give successful students a large advantage for college. In some cases intro courses can be completely skipped, but if not students have a more thorough background on the subject to help them along. One Junior, Patrick Madden, who is enrolled in AP courses this year, feels there are contrasting aspects of the program to consider: "The idea of an AP program as a set of intellectually rigorous courses is a great one...Yet when AP courses become more about getting a 5 or 4 on the exam than intellectual immersion and challenge, the numerous flaws of the AP program become starkly evident." Students can get a lot of an AP course, but they have to be ready for large workload. The curriculum for every class is perfectly scheduled out to meet the test with copious summer work included.

Another option an upperclassman could take advantage of is taking a college course. It is something that only a handful of students take part in, sometimes due to scheduling conflicts or transportation issues. Students have to line up a block in their Mt. Greylock schedule to a course and then get to the college from school. In some cases with a rotating schedule regular classes are missed and students must make up work on their own. It takes motivation, accountability, and a sense of drive to pursue enrolling, which involves a fairly extensive application process.

Alternative Schedules, Continued on Page 2

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR YOU?

By NAOMI LaCHANCE



Senior Matt Vaughan, a member of the Student Council, takes the podium.

Barack Obama's recent inauguration certainly evokes the topic of government in many peoples' minds. Government may seem to be a distant matter, especially because we live in the country with the third largest population in the world. Teens in America may wonder how they can have an impact on political decisions made that might impact their own lives, particularly when many are not yet old enough to vote. More often than not, it feels as if adults have the majority of control over our government and our lives. Nevertheless, we have an influential and active student government right here at Mt. Greylock that is particularly evident in one body: the student council.

The student council may seem to be a fairly inconspicuous organization. Twenty-four members, six from each grade, are elected in the spring by their classmates. During the following year, it might appear to some that they don't accomplish anything particularly significant. This, however, is far from true. The Council has the power to do "almost anything within reason and with the approval of administration," according to advisor Marjorie Keeley. So what, exactly, is the purpose of this group? According to their constitution, it is "to represent the students as a direct liaison between them and the administration; to inform the students in any matter concerning them; to provide an open forum for all students views; to protect students rights; to provide orderly direction of student council, and to aspire to be great leaders in Mount Greylock Regional High School."

In student council meetings, issues, which are brought up mainly by the student body, are considered. "We discuss what we think is the best way to solve (the issue)," said freshman representative Hallie Walker. Problems, ideas, and resolutions are then taken to the administration, including Mr. Payne, and together they strive to achieve the best solution. The student council organizes many events and reforms, from selling candy canes before winter break to assisting the decision of whether or not gym class should be graded. They ran an activity half day last October, where booths were set up that offered information on various extracurricular activities at Greylock, students performed, and members from each class competed with teachers and administrators in a game show called "Are You Smarter than Mr. Payne?" On voting day, the council organized and officiated the mock election that was held. Additionally, those buying lunch in the cafeteria have probably noticed that cranberry juice cocktail has returned to the selection of juice choices. That, too, was the student council's doing.

Presently, the new policy forbidding students from using the bathroom during class is cause for much agitation among students. Although the group has received complaints about the rule, they have decided to wait a little while to see if this change has any effect, either positive or negative, before taking action. The council is also working on the promotion of test synchronization, a reform that would force each school subject to only schedule tests on one pre-determined day of the week. This would lighten the load for students and make it nearly impossible for someone to have more than one test or quiz on any given day. Along with working on these more serious issues, the council is planning some events as well. They are currently planning, with Mr. Payne, a "fun-raiser" afternoon for students in grades nine through twelve. This will be an event of sledding and other outdoor activities. They will also visit local retirement community Sweet Brook on February 8th, to provide the elderly residents a night of bingo and entertainment.

Some events organized by the student council, such as the "fun-raiser" which will occur sometime in the near future, or selling candy canes, are mainly for the purpose of raising money.

Student Government, Continued on Page 2

With Purse Strings Tight, A Watchful Eye is Turned to the Economy

A full page this month is devoted to Paige Belanger's article on the state of the economy.

See Page 4

Girls Basketball

The Mountie girls team this year have started off with a 5 and 5 record and for the first time in years is posing a serious threat to other teams in the league. No longer are the Mountie girls being taken lightly by other teams and coaches.

See Page 2

The Book Worm

Isabel Kaufman reviews an older novel with a new set of eyes. "House of Leaves" is a unique labyrinth of tales spun expertly by Mark Z. Danielewski.

See Page 3

The Pledge of Allegiance: An Opinion

Chris Densmore shares his views on the Pledge of Allegiance in a history-lesson-turned-supreme-court-argument. How much of the constitution must we follow? What does the Separation of Church and State entail? Densmore questions tradition and regularized patriotism in his editorial titled "Fidelity."

See page 3

Alternative Schedules, Continued from Page 1

cess. Once this is taken care of, the student is able to have the experience of taking an actual college course early. Furthermore, for Mt. Greylock students, Williams, MCLA, and BCC all offer free classes. Senior Dylan Dethier got to take an Intro to Environmental Studies class, entitled "Humans and the Biosphere," at Williams. He says about the experience: "I enjoyed the class because it was a chance to share class with a group of students that are motivated and successful and because it was a chance to take a class I a subject more specific than AP Biology." Taking college classes again offers the opportunity to individualism a schedule and get an edge for attending a University.

There is also a way in which students may take the option of enrolling in college courses a step further. The self-driven student can dually enroll between Mt. Greylock and a college like MCLA or BCC to take virtually all of their courses at the college while receiving credit for their High School graduation as well. An interested student must have parental support and write a letter of intent to Mr. Payne. The student's application is then reviewed to be granted dual enrollment. Only one student has fallen under this category this year. In addition, students' graduation requirements must be in order, which is the main concern of guidance counselors, and make sure that they take English, as four years are required. This path can lead to several credits for college that are also less expensive than at most schools.

Yet another unique path for seniors is to become involved with work study. This may be for students who are behind in credits or who have a particular strength in an area they know they will want to further pursue. To become involved, a form in the Guidance office should be filled out and then later, documentation of work hours and experiences must be presented. The number of hours will decide how many credits are received. With extensive work, ten credits can be earned and the study can be shown on the student's transcript. A different version of using outside work for school would be the fourth quarter internship for seniors. Enrollment for this varies greatly every year. Students who decide to do this

Student Government, Continued from Page 1

Where, however, does that money go? According to Patrick Madden, a representative from the junior class, the money is saved in a Council account. "The Council taps into this account whenever necessary for projects that it deems worthy or necessary." This includes providing funding for art projects, helping the school's Youth Environmental Squad to purchase recycling bins, and, of course, enabling council-run events.

So, are Council members the only ones able to express their concerns and have an effect on Mt. Greylock? Absolutely not. Meetings are open to all Mt. Greylock students and occur every Monday after school. Although only Council members may vote on initiatives, other attendees may voice their opinions and ideas. "I think it's important to know that the student council is only a powerful and functional group if it hears the voices of the students it represents," urged Madden. "We can organize activities and fundraisers, but the only way that we can function as the vessel of communication between the students and the administration is if the students come to us with issues they'd like addressed." In addition to attending meetings, students are strongly encouraged to speak with their grade's representatives, or send the group an email at mgstudentcouncil@gmail.com. And, overall, is the council a productive and effective group? Keeley assures, "Yes, and getting more productive each year."

will intern for a career; for example, one interested in education fields may work in a classroom. Any senior whose credits are in line can do this, but those who are enrolled in AP courses must wait until after the test to intern, giving them about two weeks. The variety of Mt. Greylock options for out-of-school work can be quite surprising.

What about class options for younger students at Mt. Greylock? Well, there are a variety of tutoring options such as teaching assistants, peers, Williams students, or Mr. Steel. This can provide mentors and consistency in an education to further what the students may get out of the class alone. Also, the Guidance office is being flooded with brochures for summer classes and intensives and even study abroad opportunities. On top of this, there is a pathways program that is growing at Mt. Greylock. Through this, Students will be able to concentrate in an area or on objectives that they are interested in furthering. For example, an art pathway to support a student particularly interested in going on in the arts.

In comparison with other High Schools of the same relative student population, Mt. Greylock offers a good number of non-traditional options. Probably one of the only programs lacking is a vocational field. This is primarily due to the small amount of interest, population size, and schedules already filled with core classes. When course registration time comes around, there is an area on the form that all students receive where students can express their interests for different programs. Using this, it has been determined that there is not really need or room for vocations at Mt. Greylock.

While we could always use more, and the current economic situation squeezes many desired classes out, there are indeed numerous ways for Mt. Greylock students to break out of a stereotypical High School day. While some of these options are popular, others only have a few involved. All programs, however, can give students various advantages. To inquire about getting involved, schedule a chat with your counselor who will be more than willing to help you get involved with any of these exciting opportunities.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Youth Environmental Squad

The YES, with the help of Williams College, is exploring options to make MG greener! Its current initiatives are to get more can/bottle recycling going at the school as well as to start composting in the MG cafeteria. Progress is slow, but hopefully can/bottle recycling bins will appear soon in select locations around the school (and possibly smaller recycling bins in every classroom). Once we get the details of the compost pick-up hashed out, students can expect to see a moderator and two sets of bins – one set for trash and one set for food waste – at every lunch. In the meantime, the YES would like to urge everyone to turn out unused lights, carpool to school or take the bus, not stand with doors open letting cold air into the school, and recycle all paper materials in the brown paper recycling bags as much as possible. Anyone interested in joining the squad should talk to Patrick Madden or Petra Mijanovic, come to one of our Thursday lunch meetings, or e-mail us at greengreylock@gmail.com.

PTO Winter Gala

Unfortunately, the PTO has not received a sufficient number of advance registrations for its annual Winter Gala. As a result, this year's winter gala will be cancelled. Hopefully it will be back next year.

Winter Fun Raiser

Mr. Payne came to the student council earlier this school year with an idea of a fun day for the high school involving outdoor winter activities. The Student Council, with Mr. Payne, is planning a Winter Fun Raiser, to be held during the afternoon on Thursday, February 12. This event depends entirely on proper weather conditions and will be cancelled if there is not enough snow. The council is hashing out the details, but the afternoon will include primarily tubing races down the hill outside the gym (sign-ups will be at early and late lunches starting on Friday, January 30), snow sculpture competitions, and possibly some indoor activities for those without proper outdoor gear. See one of your student council representatives, Mr. Payne, or Mrs. Keeley with any questions or suggestions for the Fun Raiser. The object of the afternoon is to have a little fun and beat the winter blues right before February vacation.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

By JANELLE VAN LULING

In previous years, the Mt. Greylock girls basketball team has been notorious for finishing the year with a losing record. Never thought of to be a threat to any team in the county, the Mounties were simply another "W" for the opponent. In this 2008-2009 season however, the girls are looking strong and will not be taken lightly. Although the current 5-5 record does not show an overwhelming amount of success, the team has faced some of the toughest competition in Western Mass. in their first ten games of the season.

The Mounties started off their season with two postponed games due to the unpredictable weather of the Berkshires. Rather than beginning the year with a game against Mt. Everett, the girls were forced to face off against not only one of the toughest teams in Western Mass., but the entire state as well. The Lee Wildcats is one of the finest basketball teams year after year. Knowing that Lee consistently makes the Tournament in February, and often advances to the state tournament, the Mounties were ready to play. In a hard fight all the way to the end, Lee ended up defeating the girls, but their spirits were not broken and the Mounties immediately looked toward their next opponent: Mt. Anthony.

It's always uncertain what the girls from Vermont will bring to the basketball court. Mt. Anthony has won numerous VT state championships in recent years, and is known for their fast paced play. Going into the game, the Mounties prepared to slow the game down, and play at their own pace. Knowing that they didn't want to start off the season with a record of 0-2, the lady Mounties were determined to come out on top; and that's exactly what they did. Playing at the top of their game, the girls defeated the Lady Patriots. With a new boost of confidence, the Mounties were ready to continue down the road to qualify for

the Western Mass. Tournament. Lenox, St. Joe, and Mt. Everett (twice) account for the other four wins that place the girls with a 5-5 record. Beside Lee, PHS, Wahconah, Monument and Drury have handed the Mounties their five losses. Out of all five however, one stands alone.

On Friday, January 9, the girls traveled to Drury to play in one of the biggest games of the season. Knowing that the Southern division title would go to either team, the Mounties knew they had to come out hard. From the very start, Drury knew that it would not be an easy game. Sophomore Kim Houston led the Mounties in scoring with 17 points, and the team nailed an unfathomable thirteen for thirteen from the foul line. The defense was outstanding, the offense was crisp and fluent, but in the final minutes of regulation play the Blue Devils were able to climb their way back and as the final buzzer rang, the score remained tied. The four minute overtime was played hard, but Berkshire County all-star Taylor DeSanty was able to carry the devils into the last ten seconds with a four point lead. Mountie junior Erin Manners hit a three-pointer as the clock ticked away, but the valiant effort was not enough and the girls rode home with a loss.

Just a week later however, the Mounties bounced back and handily defeated the Lenox millionaires. Fresh off of two wins against St. Joe and Mt. Everett, the Mounties will look to continue their winning streak against Pittsfield High School on Monday. Despite their five tough losses, the girls are looking forward to the remainder of the season, and are hopeful that their success will carry them into the Western Mass. tournament. Unlike in years past, coaches and teams are recognizing the Mt. Greylock girls basketball program as a major threat, and no longer will the Mounties be taken lightly.

TUNNEL CITY COFFEE

NORTH ADAMS
115 STATE STREET

413-458-5010

WILLIAMSTOWN
100 SPRING STREET

FIDELITY

By CHRIS DENSMORE

As this is the last issue for me as editor of the Echo, I want to take an opportunity to consider an issue that has been on my mind for some time. I recognize that what I have written below addresses a tremendously controversial issue, but it is by no means intended to offend or hurt anyone. Additionally, this piece does not in any way represent the stance of the Echo or the school on the issue, but is simply my personal stance on the topic. I welcome any response at my personal e-mail address, densmo531@yahoo.com.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

That is the Pledge of Allegiance. It is recited at countless public events in America and Congress sessions open with a recitation of it. It was recited at President Obama's inauguration last week, and it is recited every Monday morning at Mount Greylock. What is a pledge? A pledge is a solemn promise or agreement to do or refrain from doing something. In turn, what is allegiance? Allegiance is loyalty. Thus the Pledge of Allegiance is a solemn promise of loyalty. As currently approved with the inclusion of the phrase "under God," in an abridgment of secularity and an improper endorsement of religion in politics. Constitutional law and aside—and there is a strong case that the constitution prohibits such an endorsement of faith—the phrase disables my personal patriotism. Considering a primary concern for basic human rights and freedoms, our nation allows politicians to proclaim their faith circumstantially with relative impunity. There is, however, a critical distinction between religious tolerance and religious encouragement. That boundary is violated with such injection of religion into patriotic life as the current Pledge.

As an atheist and an impassioned patriot, someone who loves his country and appreciates his freedom to the nth degree, and I find that the Pledge of Allegiance is awkward and disingenuous to recite. Furthermore, were I not an atheist, but a polytheist, the inclusion of a phrase such as "under God" in our nation's pledge, which, while improper as a religious reference alone, also endorses a specific religious orthodoxy of monotheism over other forms of faith, would challenge both my patriotism and my faith. Additionally, the endorsement of a monotheistic tradition, by expressing patriotism based on an affirmation of religious faith, suggests that "unbelievers" are outsiders. The inclusion of the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance is divisive, archaic diction, and whether legal or not, inappropriate in a nationalistic oath.

In defense of this juxtaposition of ecclesiastical and civil matters, proponents have claimed that the inclusion of the phrase is justifiable based upon the democratic principle of majority rule, considering that the majority of Americans support the inclusion of the phrase. Despite the criticism concerning the will of the majority, the minority possesses their equal rights and to violate those rights is folly. In 2002, atheist Michael Newdow, whose daughter was being taught the pledge in school, brought a case to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals concerning the constitutionality of the inclusion of the phrase. The Court ultimately ruled the phrase an unconstitutional endorsement of monotheistic religion when the Pledge is recited in public schools. As Newdow states in an interview with American Jurist, "In those situations [regarding fundamental constitutional rights,] it doesn't matter what the majority wants. If the ma-

majority wants to enslave blacks, too bad. If the majority wants to have the government implicating a religious belief, too bad. You can't do it. [Our Constitution] doesn't allow you to." Legally, faith cannot be translated into public policy because it violates the Constitution. Practically, faith cannot be translated into law because it burdens the minority with unmerited duress. To suggest that the rights of the minority with regard to such a delicate subject as religion should be waived in deference to majority preference is truly subversive towards the fundamental freedoms of the American people. The phrase must be removed for the sake of these freedoms.

Furthermore, proponents of the phrase's inclusion advocate that the base of American law is expressly religious and that the current order has established unpremeditated secular humanism. One argument for this suggestion is the indication of patriot invocations of religion in various other facets of American society such as currency ("In God We Trust") and the opening proclamation in the Supreme Court ("God save the United States and this honorable Court."). This rationalization is more accurately interpreted as a series of allegations deserving the same consideration the Pledge of Allegiance has received. Excusing the use of the phrase in the Pledge by indicating other references to God in political doctrine is akin to suggesting that a crime is excusable as long as it is committed multiple times. Although there is no denying that United States law was founded upon traditional Judeo-Christian morality, such a foundation does not necessitate acknowledgement to the God who allegedly created that moral doctrine. Although it lacks the gusto and solemnity of "under God," to change the phrase to "under the Christian moral doctrine" would perhaps be less offensive. I object not to the principle that the phrase suggests, but its direct acknowledgment of a deity I don't believe exists.

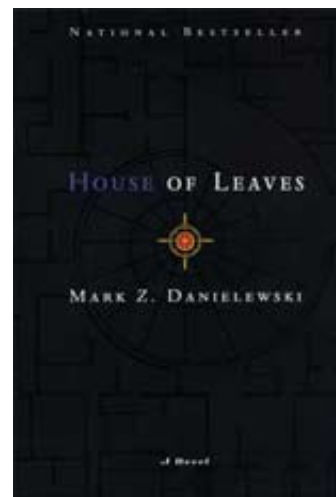
Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister and Christian socialist, originally composed the Pledge of Allegiance in 1892. Bellamy's original Pledge read, "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Is there something wrong with this original pledge? It doesn't seem so to me. Nevertheless, in the century since its creation, the Pledge of Allegiance has, regrettably, transformed from a singularly patriotic oath into a patriotic and religious oath (partially a function of fear of communism in the mid-20th century). This amalgamation of ecclesiastical and political matters and violates the sacred rights of the minority.

With the inclusion of the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, anyone present at a public recitation of the Pledge is forced to either accept government endorsement of religion or make a public protest in his silence. When I stand in a classroom every week and the pledge is recited my countless others around me, my intended silence during at "under God" occasionally creates unwanted and unwarranted attention from my peers. One might infer that I am not a full patriot as I do not recite the full pledge. To have my patriotism challenged on account of my faith is, quite frankly, insulting. Countless other students and patriotic citizens around the country endure this situation every day. What we, as a nation, must ask ourselves is: at what point did it become acceptable for patriotism to constitute religion in our democratic society? At what point did we become blind to the sacred nature of secularity in government? At what point did God become as supreme as our republic?

-Christopher Densmore

The Book Worm

By ISABEL KAUFMAN



Title:
House of Leaves

By:
Mark Z. Danielewski

Price: \$25.95

It's a new year and time for some new reading material. Time for a change; time to reinvent your literary life--within the confines of this logic, there is no possible reason why you should not be reading House of Leaves.

House of Leaves is not a "new" book, not in the literal, just-published sense: it's been around for 9 years, now. Yet there's still nothing quite like it on the market. There are epistolary novels, to be sure; there are novels made of scraps and errata that make up their own stories, and many of them are good, many are fascinating and new and worth reading. None of them resemble House of Leaves, however; I'm not strictly sure that anything can. It has been around long enough to become a cultural touchstone among some obscure sectors (I've seen parodies--it lends itself well to parody). It's its own entity: it's been compared to H.P. Lovecraft, if only for its brain-bending willingness to turn reality inside out, but it doesn't read like Lovecraft. It's sparse and, to some extent, naturalistic in its prose. The reading itself isn't hard: it's everything else.

So what's the story? Well. It's hard to say where to begin. Essentially, it's the story of a movie, of a labyrinth of unbelievable, changing size contained within the walls of one man's unassuming-looking house. The laws of physics cease to apply as the man, famed photojournalist Will Navidson, explores his house, documenting it on film all the while. The movie is documented in incredible detail by the manuscript's "author", a blind man improbably named Zampanò. After Zampanò's death, the manuscript is found and submitted to publication by a young L.A.-dwelling man going by the name of Johnny Truant. The book chronicles the house and the labyrinth through Zampanò's documentation; concurrently, it tells the story of Johnny Truant's slow descent into insanity, brought on by his dealings with Zampanò's manuscript. (The film, we are told, does not exist.)

Confused? It's understandable. It's not a book for the faint-hearted reader. It's a book that is written, at least in part, to see if it can drive the readers as insane as Johnny Truant. The text and formatting are as much a part of the book as the words. They become more and more intricate as reality becomes more and more twisted. They open and close as the labyrinth inside the Navidson house becomes alternately claustrophobic and terrifyingly large. It's a mind-bending experience to read. It's an immersion. It is in part a horror story, and could easily be terrifying: I can't imagine what it would be like read alone in a dark house. (If you like that sort of experience, go for it: it's a good book for that.) It will maybe give you a headache, for it'll certainly turn your brain inside out.

It will be like nothing you've ever read before. Happy new year. Have fun.

The Greylock Echo

The Mt. Greylock Echo is the student newspaper of Mt. Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown, Mass. Published monthly during the academic year, each issue is developed and edited by a team of student photographers, writers, and editors. Any Mt. Greylock student is welcome to submit articles, come to meetings, or join the Echo staff. Meetings are held in Echo Office at the back of the library, typically after school on Mondays after publication.

Next Issue:

Friday, November 21, 2008

Copy Deadline:

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Mt. Greylock Regional High School
1781 Cold Spring Road
Williamstown, Mass, 01267, USA
mountgreylockecho@gmail.com

Editor-in-Chief: Chris Densmore

Associate Editor: Matt Baker-White

Assistant Editors: Sam Tiff,
Patrick Madden, Petra Mijanovic,
and Taylor Foehl

Open a
Mango
ONE
teen account
& get \$25!

NotYourMothersDebitCard.com

ECONOMY

With a Slow Economy, MG Faces Fiscal Challenges

By PAIGE BELANGER

The current state of the economy is leaving its marks across American society. Unfortunately for those of us attending public schools such as Mt. Greylock, education is vastly affected by the economic slowdown. Lack of funding and an increase in prices of everyday school essentials factor into the educational financial crisis today. Measures are being taken in both national and local governments to prevent the demise of education in America.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, "Public K-12 schools throughout the nation need to spend about \$17 billion a year to maintain existing structures and grounds, far more than their current budgets allow." This means that schools are not able to upgrade their infrastructures, and are falling behind on much needed repairs. This accumulation of maintenance left unfinished, or, in some cases, never even started, can affect schools in extreme ways. Buildings are falling apart, and some schools nationwide have even completely closed their doors due to the deterioration of their buildings. Science labs are left outdated, some even missing imperative safety equipment. Schools across the country are weighed down by their low budgets, and, due to this, are not subjected to essential repairs and infrastructure improvements.

However, there is a solution to this widespread issue. The first, proposed by President Barack Obama initially in his campaign, but now in the form of a stimulus bill exceeding \$800 billion, would provide jobs across the community as well as aid schools that are simply out of date. Paid by a newly formed National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank, people would work towards building, or rebuilding, edifices such as roads, bridges, and schools (BarackObama.com). The second national level treatment to this seemingly incurable development was proposed by Democrats in the House of Representatives and Senate in response to President Obama's proposed stimulus bill. Proposed by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi on January 14, a revision to the stimulus bill is being formulated in Congress that would provide state and local governments with more aid. Under this new plan, about \$80 billion, or ten percent of the total proposed amount of the bill, would be put aside towards an "education stabilization fund, which would be used to help states avoid cutbacks in teachers and classroom programs (The Wall Street Journal). Lawmakers in Washington have recognized and developed ideas to solve the educational crisis across the country. However, they are not the only ones fighting for educational reform.



This slide, taken from Professor Kuttner's presentation, shows the "faceless woman" expressing frustration with the economy.

Despite the calls from Congress to provide aid for the states so that they might induce reform in the educational system, the states have been attempting to persuade the national government for more money to go towards important aspects of society, such as schools. Forty states in America are currently suffering from severe budget deficits, and this directly affects the amount of money placed within the educational field. Massachusetts, in a plan formulated by Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick along with the governors of New York, New Jersey, Ohio and Wisconsin, has asked for approximately \$250 billion in federal stimulus dollars to help public schools, along with many other programs (Massachusetts Teacher Association). This plan has yet to be approved. One reason for this is the amount of money that would go to each of these four states. The total package from the federal government would surpass one trillion dollars, and in the current economic crisis, there is only so much money to go around. Another reason for the hesitation is the total number of states that are currently afflicted by huge budget deficits: forty. States other than the four that proposed this trillion dollar plan are currently in need, and this enormous sum of money cannot just be handed out to one-tenth of the states in need. Another significant issue is the fact that education is not the only program in dire need of funds. Various other programs, such as healthcare, anti-poverty programs, infrastructure development and many more are struggling to get their hands on necessary funds. Since education is not the only priority of this country, it is difficult to balance budgets, even on a statewide level, that would include enough money to support the educational system.

The money that could be awarded to individual states from the federal government might be able to cure the grievances in the budget, and thus cure the budget deficit in multiple public schools. However, the money right now is only potential, and schools cannot incorporate it into the budget. Mt. Greylock superintendent Dr. Travis calls these new funds "something that we might be able to look forward to in the future." In the present time, however, public schools like Mt. Greylock have to partition their current resources. This could mean cuts, a raise in fees, or, in extreme cases, the loss of teachers.

Mt. Greylock has unavoidably suffered from the economic slowdown up to this point. Although students may have yet to perceive these effects to a great extent, Mt. Greylock's budget has undoubtedly undergone some changes for the worse. Thus far, the nationwide economic slowdown has taken its toll on Mt. Greylock in the form of oil prices. Every student that drives to school, or even remotely pays attention to either the national news or price listings at gas stations knows that gas prices, until recently, were exceedingly high. The cost of utility bills, such as electricity, also rose to a great extent. These developments affected the school budget in the same way that they influenced households. Mt. Greylock has had to pay more money in gas and electricity bills, taking more money directly out of the budget; money that potentially could have been spent on school and cleaning supplies. However, this problem might not exist for much longer. Now that oil prices have fallen to affordable levels, the Mt. Greylock administration hopes to make gas purchases in advance, which will lead to less cuts and more money for supplies, such as new textbooks.

The upcoming budget has far different issues than the previous financial plan's. Recently, Mt.

Greylock received letters from the town managers of both Lanesboro and Williamstown, which notified the school that their revenue has increased about 1.6 percent. This may seem beneficial to the school's financial condition, but in reality, it is not. Over the past five years, the towns have experienced a revenue increase of about three-five percent. This means that less money will go directly to Mt. Greylock, necessary funds will be excluded from the budget, and the school will have to employ more reductions. The only solution to this issue in the near future is the possible funds that schools will get from Massachusetts' plea for federal stimulus dollars. However, these are nowhere near guaranteed. If the Massachusetts budget is endowed with more money, then the state administrators, such as Governor Deval Patrick would have to choose which programs the money would go to. Education could quite feasibly be one of these programs, but at the same time, it could be left out, leaving public

schools, such as Mt. Greylock, to sustain themselves on the funds they have, which, put simply, are not enough.

The budget problem at Mt. Greylock is a concern, as it could lead to cuts that could inconvenience students. The decision to cut certain programs from the budget is "ultimately a school committee decision," says Dr. Travis. However, the budget cuts might be somewhat predictable. For example, the school committee could decide to rid Mt. Greylock of certain supplies and equipment, such as textbooks, dry-erase markers and other school materials. A late bus run could also be removed from the schedule, leaving students to make due with either a four or a five o'clock late bus, but not both. However, teachers are the last cut that the school committee would be forced to make. Dr. Travis states that the administration "will look at things before cutting staff," meaning that textbooks may have to be put on hold so that a teacher or janitor may be kept for the upcoming years. After-school and extra-curricular activities also hold a priority in the school committee. Instead of altogether removing certain sports, performances or clubs from the budget, the administration may decide to raise the participation fees in order to protect them from being cut.

Mt. Greylock is not the only public school in Massachusetts, or even nationwide, that is affected by the economic slowdown. The budget of public schools across the country is affected by the presumed recession. While both the federal and state governments are attempting to ease the financial burden of education, schools are still having difficulties with keeping up with repairs, providing school supplies, and retaining staff. Mt. Greylock is no different, and it does suffer to some extent from the financial crisis, but it is coping with the budget crisis much better than most.

Econ 101

By TAYLOR FOEHL and NED KLEINER

With the words, "economic meltdown", "recession", and "market crashes" flying around the media these days, everybody has picked up on the fact that we're in some tough times right now. Most students and even adults, however, don't quite know how we got here. Thanks to the Williams Center, students now have a basic understanding of what is going on. Ken Kuttner, a professor at Williams with tremendous experience in economics, came to Greylock to give a presentation on the current economic turmoil to the entire high school.

Kuttner gave a thirty minute Power Point presentation on the causes of the economic slump. He talked about mortgages; the different kinds and the important role they played bringing on the crisis. He also discussed everything from the big banks like Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch, to the federal bailout. After the presentation he opened up the floor to questions and answers. Students asked many insightful questions, each being handled to perfection by Professor Kuttner. Though perhaps a bit scared by the extreme circumstances, students left the auditorium with a much greater understanding of the situation.

MICHAEL'S
Restaurant
~AND~
Pizzeria
10% Off Pizza With
Coupon