
Westfield PTSA
Minority Achievement Committee
Newsletter

THE MAC

2nd Edition October 2005

WELCOME!

By: Erin Peterson

Welcome Back Bulldogs, and a special welcome to our newest addition, the Class of 2009. I know Westfield can feel very overwhelming at first but, looking back at the past couple of years I can honestly say that I wouldn't have wanted to be at any other school. Westfield offers students a chance to be themselves, with all of the many different clubs and activities it's hard not to find a place where you belong. Not only does Westfield offer a great social scene it also offers one of the top educations in the county, not to mention our well-known athletic program. Hopefully the Class of 2009 will have an as enjoyable time here at Westfield as I have so far. Congrats to the Class of 2006, we're almost there!

The Chairman's Corner Mark Richardson, MAC CHAIR

Welcome to our new and returning parents to a new school year at Westfield. This year, the Minority Achievement Committee is off to an excellent start. We held our first monthly meeting in September. I am very excited about the accomplishments the school has made during the past year in closing the achievement gap and its plan for eliminating the achievement gap all together. Westfield has made strides in closing the achievement gap in Math and English as evidenced by the SOL test scores for this past year. While there remains much to

be done, the school is headed in the right direction.

The Minority Achievement Committee now has a link on the PTSA website. Important information is posted on this link as another means of communicating with parents and students. Minutes from our monthly meetings, upcoming committee meeting dates and links to other related websites are now available at a click of a button. Please take a look at the site as it was established for you. Your comments are welcome.

I hope each of you were able to attend the back to school night(s) and meet your child's teachers. Parental involvement is very important in ensuring academic success, and the back to school night is the initial step in getting involved early in the school year. I encourage ALL parents to communicate with your child's teachers on a regular basis. Do not wait until there is a problem or issue. Email or call teachers to check up on the status of your child, or to simply say hello.

**MAC Fall Parent
Coffee Tuesday
October 25, 2005 at
7:00 p.m. in the
Lecture Hall**

Culture
Abilities
Resilience
Effort

Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps

Culture, Language, and Economic Differences

Culture is the sum total of experiences, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and interests represented by the diversity of students and adults in our schools.

Why is it important for educators to know and understand diverse cultures?

Knowledge and understanding of the varied cultures represented in our public schools:

- Affirms our need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world;
- Recognizes the role schools play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society;
- Values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect; and
- Challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of social justice. (1)

What are you doing about closing the achievement gap?

Welcome Back

Mike Campbell, WHS Principal

We are anticipating an exciting, rewarding and challenging 2005-2006 school year. In five short years we have developed a well-known tradition of excellence in all endeavors: academics, athletics and the arts. This year's motto, Westfield High School "Tradition at its Best", serves to show how proud we are of our success and our goal to continue to excel. With that said, parent and student involvement are essential to our success. Parents are vital to the function of the school and the building of our community. I challenge you to get involved, assist in the clinic, join the PTSA, and volunteer to tutor in our BITS instructional program, and/or join a booster organization. Come out and support our performing arts department and see and athletic teams perform. Be a part of our success.

For the third year in a row our SAT scores increased. Westfield High School is the only school in Fairfax County that has had a consistent increase in both verbal and mathematics SAT scores during that time period. Our Advanced Placement (AP) and Standards of Learning (SOL) test scores also increased. 61% of our AP test scores were a 3 or better compared with 59% last year. Westfield High School also made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for the 2004-2005 school year and narrowed the achievement gap between our minority and majority students. Last year, *The Washington Post* ranked Westfield High School as one of the top ten public high schools in the metropolitan area. I am very proud of the Westfield High School staff and students and their outstanding accomplishments. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you at one of our upcoming meetings.

IT'S THE MAC ATTACK

- Did you attend Back to School night?
- Have you introduced yourself to your child's school counselor?
- Did you see and review your child's first quarter interim reports?
- Is your child struggling in any subject?

Be pro-active
THINK ABOUT IT!

Register For Keep in Touch



Register now for Keep in Touch, a service that allows employees, parents and others interested in emergency messages and other information about the school system to receive updates via e-mail. Participants set up individualized profiles and receive the most up-to-date information as soon as it is available. To sign up, visit the FCPS web site at www.fcps.edu and choose 'Keep in Touch' on the left hand side. Or, visit direct: <http://fcps.medianext.com/fcps/signup.html>

NAWLEDGE 101

By: Karla Butler

Is it time for your student to gain a little bit more knowledge/nawledge? Based on the suggestion from Westfield Senior-- Nate McKenzie "Nawledge 101" was born. Nawledge 101 is more than just a club; it is a tutoring program for Westfield students to help each other with a specific subject and a place to hang out with other

students. The club meets every Monday in Trailer 3 from 2:30-3:30. We all realize the importance of students effectively using their time on a late bus day and this is one way Westfield students can do just that. The main purposes of the club are to raise the grades of minority students at Westfield, to give assistance to students struggling in certain academic areas and to offer students a welcome place to work on homework after school. The student body will mainly run the club in an attempt to attract a wider audience of grade levels and student make up at Westfield. There will also be guest speakers invited in to talk with students about possible career options and life after high school. Some sessions will be even more enjoyable with food provided and a possible movie. Karla Butler-Sub School 4 Principal will serve as the faculty sponsor with alternate sessions being monitored by Christina Schmitt- Special Education Teacher and Carol Truesdell-Social Studies Teacher. It's time for some "Nawledge" in your student's life!!!

So, You Like Westfield?

By: Ziona Norris



"...So you like the school then?" she had asked me. I was sitting in class with my English teacher. We'd both agreed that I should write this article, and I couldn't wait to get started. But that question caught me up for a second. Did I like the school?

I'd come to Westfield after years of moving around. I'd started out

as a Military Brat, my mother serving in the Coast Guard, and I'd seen schools all over America. My mother raised my sister, brother, and me while pursuing her career. I'm sure any of the single parents can agree, it is never easy alone. We all made sacrifices; we all helped out, and every three years my family would pick up and move. A new school, a new town, new friends, it was all hard, but I had fun driving across the country. I've been to more places than I ever would have if my mother hadn't been a "Coasty." I only have the Man-up-there to thank that my mom was never called away from us to serve on the front lines.

By the time I was fourteen I thought we had settled down. My mom had just built her own house in North Carolina; I was accepted into the International Baccalaureate Program, and my siblings were in one of the best elementary schools in the county. But the school I was in didn't challenge me; the standards were outdated and tired. I never thought about what I wanted to be when I got out into the world, never even guessed. I wasn't even encouraged into a career I think, but I knew I didn't want to move again.

As we all know though, life takes turns; it's a winding road, and what else can you expect. And my family had just taken the road's sharpest turn. My mother retired from the Coast Guard after twenty-two years of service, and we were moving up to Virginia. It was hardest because no one in my family knew what was in Virginia. It wasn't an adventure like before when we moved. It was a duty.

For two years now I've been going to Westfield High School; for two years I've been able to spread my wings. I can't imagine having ever missed out on this school. Westfield pushes all its students into more achievement—always more. Here they have a chance to better the whole world.

I've never been to a school that actually cared what the student wanted to do. There is freedom of sorts in the halls of Westfield High. I feel like any one can do anything, as long as they reach for it. I think of Westfield as the ladder, chair, pedestal, whatever you need, that puts you closer to an out-of-reach dream.

I'm not always happy with what goes on; no one can ever be content with school just as it is. But your kids are getting the best in ways of education—the best that will help your kids decide what they want to do and become the best the world has to offer. My mom is always proud of what goes on, and that I'm learning something and getting straight in life.

This is my third year at Westfield; I'm a junior now. I take two Advanced Placement classes; I'm a member in many clubs, co-leader of The Creative Writing Club, and a diligent student. This year my sister walked into Westfield, and I couldn't be more proud to show her around, or to let her do what ever she wants to do. I feel like I accomplished something when she smiles at the way things are done around the school, or yells out at whatever she doesn't like. My mother is going to school now, and my brother is blowing all the State tests out of the water. I plan to join the class of 2011 at the French Culinary Institute after high school, and I plan to take my mother to Italy one of these days. She really deserves it!

Getting a Head Start:

By Carol Jasper

That is what the new school year brings. Don't wait till your grades start slipping. There are many resources in Fairfax County Schools that can help you. One of those resources is right here at WHS, "The BITS Program". We offer a free tutoring program on Saturdays 8:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

in the library, three Saturdays a month starting October 15, 2005 thru May 2006. For additional information, please see the PTSA, the Minority Achievement Committee website, with the link "BITS", or contact Carol Jasper, BITS Coordinator (703) 830-3865 (cvj78@aol.com) or contact your counselor. Remember; keep the lines of communication open in all avenues of the learning wheel. If you need help, don't be afraid to ask and keep on reaching to your goals.

MAC Fact

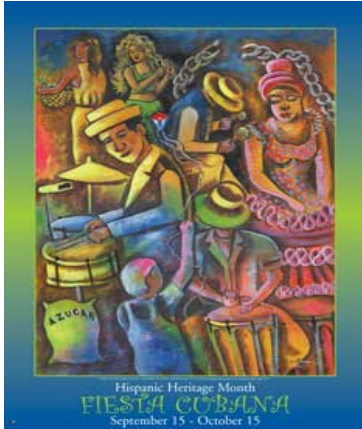
Definition: a historical insight about a person of color or an event concerning persons of color designed to help shape and uplift pride in the heritage of our minority youth

Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 – October 15

Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico declared its independence on September 16, and Chile on September 18.

The term Hispanic, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, refers to Spanish-speaking people in the United States of any race.



Ellen Ochoa, Astronaut

Astronaut Ellen Ochoa first left Earth in July 1991 and became the world's first Hispanic female astronaut. A mission specialist and flight engineer, she has since logged more than 900 hours in space on four flights, the last in 2002. Dr. Ochoa's many awards include NASA's Exceptional Service Medal (1997) and Outstanding Leadership Medal (1995). Besides being an astronaut, researcher, and engineer, Ochoa is a classical flutist.

MINORITY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT HANDBOOK

By: Karla Butler

Westfield High School is proud to announce that our Minority Student Achievement Handbook (MSA) is complete and will be ready for distribution to faculty, staff and parents in the month of October. Under the direction of our principal Mike Campbell and our parent leader, Mark Richardson, the Minority Student Achievement Committee has made some progress regarding its role in the school. With the help of dedicated parents, concerned faculty members and members of the administrative team, minority achievement issues are continually addressed. During the 2004-2005 school year, the MSA committee provided detailed test data illustrating issues that needed to be

specifically addressed in the classroom and with teachers at Westfield. This year we are proud to say that due to the hard work of the committee and specifically Christina Schmitt, a Westfield Special Education Teacher, the MSA handbook is complete. The handbook is full of helpful, useful and realistic strategies that our staff can use to address minority achievement in the classroom. The goal of the MSA committee is to address the achievement gap and closing the numbers between majority and minority students at Westfield High School. With this handbook and the active participation from faculty, staff and parents we can and will close the gap. Look for it soon on the website and at our first MSA Parent Coffee on October 25, 2005.

MAINTAINING YOUR COOL: CONFLICT RESOLUTION TIPS PART I

Did you know that the majority of students suspended from school for fighting are minorities? Some say its due to culture differences or lack of understanding of these differences. Whatever the reason we as parents, educators and neighbors bear a share of the responsibility when it comes to helping our children solve conflicts in a more peaceful manner. In part 1 of this 4 part series, the MAC would like to share some simple but effective tips for parents to help our children with conflict resolution.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Impress upon your child the importance of school and good grades.
- Spend quality time with your children.
- Listen to your children. Communicate with them about their concerns and fears.

- Help children deal appropriately with problems.
- Get involved in your child's school activities.
- Establish rules, set limits and be consistent, firm and fair in punishment.
- Encourage good study habits.
- Respect your child's feelings and attitudes and help them develop self-esteem.
- Watch closely for negative influences.
- Improve your own self-esteem so your children can model themselves after the most important "role model"... YOU.

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(1) C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps, chapter 2, 2nd Ed., National Education Association, copyright 2005

Do you have a question, or an issue you would like us to write about? Would you like to submit an article? We want to hear from you; contact;

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