



WestWord

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Classroom extension, daycare center underway at West

W Rexly Penaflorida
Managing Editor

Niles West has seen a lot of changes this year, such as the new student commons and brand new study halls. In addition to these changes, there will soon be a new extension in the 1200 wing of the school, as well as a daycare center on the first floor of the 1400 hallway, also known as the science wing.

According to Assistant Principal Ryan McTague, the construction for the new extension will finish in March 2009. The end of the construction will initiate a new project in the science wing: the daycare center. The daycare center will take up rooms 1405, 1415 and 1425 in the current science wing.

As for the new building extension, it will house six new classrooms, replacing the classrooms that will be used for the daycare center.

"Our usual occupancy rate during the school day is 96-97 percent. Additionally, periods one, two and eight have the highest number of occupancy. During those three periods, we have about 98-99 percent occupancy rate, so we cannot move the [classes out of] the science wing until the extension is finished," McTague said.

Even though construction occurs during the school day, students and staff do not seem to be bothered by the constant noise.

"I hear it during class, but it does not affect my teaching at all," English teacher Paul Wack said.

Junior Jose Castillo concurred, saying, "It might bother me when I am doing classwork, but overall, it does not distract me."

According to McTague, the construction is on schedule. However, there was a two-week delay even before construction

began due to wiring difficulties, but McTague assures that the construction crew is on schedule and brick layers should start to work in the coming weeks.

Plans call for the daycare center to be used only for District 219 staff members, but community parents might be able to use the daycare center if there are still available spaces after the staff has secured spots. Asked about why the daycare center is being built at West rather than at North, McTague said that West has more space to build while North has limited space due to its proximity

would be a waste of money," Grossman said.

The school board finally accepted the plan for the daycare center last year during negotiations for an extension in the contract.

As for which private company will operate the daycare center, that is still in question.

"It works the same way that Aramark works in the cafeteria. It is the school's cafeteria, but another company controls the food and drinks. The same thing will be used in the daycare center. The school owns the daycare center, but there will be a separate company taking charge of assigning caretakers," McTague said.

The group that will interview prospective providers is the daycare committee. According to committee member Joe Edwards, past daycare committees laid the foundation for the center; the new committee will pick up where the former committee ended discussions.

"The previous committee had already picked a daycare provider, and [the new committee] will interview the provider and see if [it meets] our standards," Edwards said.

According to Edwards, the chosen provider will have to meet a very high standard created by the committee.

"Once the committee agrees to the rate that the provider is asking for, we also have to look at the content of their classrooms. Many parents are concerned about toys that are made with lead and also a hazardous type



The construction site will serve as a six-room extension to the 1200 wing.
Photo by Rexly Penaflorida

to the Edens Expressway. The only thing that is being blocked off at West due to the construction is the east staff parking lot.

The daycare center was proposed three years ago. According to the Niles Township Federation of Teachers president Steve Grossman, the idea for the daycare center was negotiated during collective bargaining in 2004 and is part of the teachers' contract.

"Originally the school board was a little concerned that if they approved to build the structure and no one would use it, then it

of plastic," Edwards said.

Despite the daunting task that lies ahead, Edwards expressed his optimism about the daycare center.

"This daycare [center] has been a long time coming," Edwards said.

McTague also expressed his excitement about the new construction. "It will help with the occupancy problem and at the same time, it will provide closeness for the staff and their children," he said.

Common final assessment to be developed for 2010 school year

W Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

Starting in the 2010 school year, all departments at Niles Township District 219 will review the curriculum guide and develop a common final assessment for each course.

"While every course has a curriculum guide, [the administration] decided to have a common final exam that tells [the teachers] whether or not students know what [the teachers] are teaching them," Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Anne Roloff said. "We thought that final exams were the best way to test what our students learned."

According to Steve Grossman, president of the Niles Township Federation of Teachers (NTFT), which was involved in discussions regarding the assessments, the language on common exams is going to lead to results that help teachers improve teaching.

"The common final assessments give teachers an accurate measure on what is taught in the classroom," Grossman said. "While students are held accountable for learning the material, teachers are held accountable to teach the class."

Roloff concurs. "The common exams will tell [the teachers] whether or not the students know what they are teaching them. We can go back, look at the results and change our instruction to become better teachers the next time around," she said.

The weight of the final exam will still be between 15-25 percent.

"The teachers [of the common courses] will have to sit down and decide the weight of the common final," Roloff said.

The common final assessment may count for the entire final exam grade or at least 10 percent of the final exam grade; however, it will be implemented for all similar courses. A teacher-generated final exam may be used in conjunction with the common final exam if the common final does not fulfill the weight requirements.

According to Grossman, the NTFT understands that because the new policy will change the way final exams are given, the exams raise a number of concerns.

"Test security and fairness are major concerns teachers have," Grossman said. "Students are at different levels, and this is a huge weight on [students'] grades."

According to Roloff, the administration is open to any ideas the teachers have on how to test students.

"Because the final exam counts for a large portion of students' grades, it is important to effectively test students," Roloff said. "In some departments, such as fine arts, a performance based final exam may be necessary."

The departments are currently in the process of collaborating to create a common final assessment for each course.

"Teachers are working on [revising the curriculum and creating a common final exam] during late starts," Roloff said. "Most of the work will happen next summer."

Each department faces its own challenges during the process. According to the director of science Lois Wisniewski, the criterion referenced tests (CRTs) have been given to students in the department for many years.

"Teachers in the [science department] have always collaborated to come up with objectives to write curriculum guides and develop a CRT," Wisniewski said. "[In some classes], the common final assessment may now replace the CRT."

According to Wisniewski, as long as the teachers are given the opportunity to add their own piece to the final exam, the policy should not raise many concerns.

"Primarily as teachers, we look at the objectives of the course and want to be sure all levels of understanding are there," Wisniewski said. "We hire excellent teachers with various levels of expertise that will help in constructing this test."

Wisniewski believes the open communication among teachers with help improve teaching.

"This is an excellent means to look at the curriculum and develop a common assessment that allows teachers to ask each

other what they are teaching," Wisniewski said. "It opens a dialogue with teachers to look at what is being learned and what is not."

Science teacher Neil Koreman expressed concern on the common final assessment.

"We have high quality, accomplished teachers that believe what should be taught in the course. They can agree on fundamental concepts, but the problem is testing these concepts in the same way," Koreman said. "The curriculum is already set, but questions of how the concepts will be tested are there and with a common weight of the exam."

Along with the science department, the math department has expressed hesitation to agree on the percentage of the common final.

According to director of math Lisa Stone, the policy of a common assessment is not new to the math department.

"We have been going at this for a while, with the CRTs, but the major change is the percentage the exam will be worth," Stone said.

According to Stone, the math department understands it has been required to implement this change.

"As a department, we understand this is a direction we were asked to move towards, and we will in a positive fashion," Stone said.

Teachers in the math department have expressed uneasiness on how this will affect each of their classes, according to Stone.

"It is natural for teachers to express trepidation with a new policy," Stone said. "We have a plan and we will make the best of what we have to work towards."

Math teacher Lynne Rauser agrees and supports the policy. "It is difficult to do something that does not give you flexibility," she said. "Although it takes away the creativity of being a teacher, it forms a united front between us."

According to the social studies director Scott Dahlberg,

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WESTWIRE



I thought we were going for shining armor, not tin foil...

w. Hillary Lindwall
News/Wire Editor

While trying to enter Niles West one morning with an armful of textbooks and a heavy instrument, it dawned on me that there has been a significant decline in people's manners. Although I could hardly walk up the steps to the building without dropping everything in my arms, not one person was kind enough to simply open the door for me.

After taking notice of this recurring phenomenon, I began to realize that opening doors is not the only nicety that has been thwarted. Upon further consideration, I came to the conclusion that the idea of chivalry in general has died out. While many elderly people still practice the art of chivalry, today's teens have placed all focus on the individual rather than on others and their surrounding community.

According to Michael Hall M.D., author of *The American*

I am especially dissatisfied with the majority of teenage boys, who have failed to carry on the traditions of their grandfathers

Gentleman: A Contemporary Guide to Chivalry, "many men and women have become preoccupied with their own needs and have forgotten about others, making them dismiss their personal...and social responsibilities."

I am especially dissatisfied with the majority of teenage boys, who have failed to carry on the traditions of their grandfathers. Today, most teenage boys do not think to open a car door for a girl or to walk her to her front door after a night out. In order to sustain the position of a gentleman, teenage boys of today need to seriously reexamine their ideals.

Rather than conform to the same type of chivalry that was observed in medieval times, it is obvious that our generation must create our own definition of valor. Because beliefs and processes change as time goes on, it would be impossible to recreate the gallantry of medieval knights. However, helping someone up when they trip in the hallway would be a nice start.

However, it is unfair to place all blame on the males of our generation. Females could also do their part to demonstrate greater benevolence and respect in society. By helping someone gather fallen books or committing other random acts of kindness,

By helping someone gather fallen books or committing other random acts of kindness, chivalry could easily be restored in today's society.

chivalry could easily be restored in today's society.

As stated by www.chivalrynow.net, there are only seven ideals that make up the ultimate gentleman. These parameters include truthfulness, loyalty, courteousness, companionship to women, support of justice, defense of the weak and avoiding scandal. This may seem like a lot, but when each courtesy is examined closely, it would be easy to learn and follow each characteristic. Although these attributes easily define a gentleman, they can also be observed and carried out by women, which would only add to the feeling of kindness that would soon ensue.

Teens should listen to his message and reinstate the kindness and respect towards others that once existed in society. By allowing such thoughts to be expressed and considered, manners and niceties could be restored. If we do not address this issue now, it will continue to worsen. Teens of today need to take charge and realize that the death of chivalry is an issue. If this decline continues, common courtesy will become extinct.

I think that most would agree that an increase in chivalry would be appreciated and would also help to make life (both in high school and out) a little easier.

Director of security DiJohn helps keep school safe *A Day in the Life...*

w. Naomi Prale
Around Town Editor

"Security officers are often thought of as the bad guys, and that isn't true," Niles Township District 219 director of security Jim DiJohn said of the role played by security personnel at Niles West and North. "The officers want to make the school safe. We are here to help make sure things don't fall through the cracks. Security is here 24/7." With that philosophy, DiJohn works to create a safe environment for the schools.

DiJohn rotates among the schools depending on need. On the day of *West Word's* visit, he began the day with a meeting with the West's security coordinator Brent Fowler and other security officers, touching base on the day's activities. After the meeting, he headed to the district security offices—formerly known as the pole barn—located behind West's south parking lot, where his main office is.

According to DiJohn, the pole barn office is the nerve center of district security. Here, DiJohn meets with security personnel, performs background checks for staff and families of transfer students, coordinates transportation for alternative schools such as North Cook Young Adult Academy, Ombudsman and Niles Central. He is also in charge of fingerprinting new district employees.

As the photographs in his office attest, in his spare time, DiJohn moonlights by working as an event manager at Soldier Field and concert venues, including those featuring Bruce Springsteen and the Eagles. Prior to taking the District 219



DiJohn helps organize security.
Photo by Naomi Prale

position, DiJohn worked as an event manager at Wrigley Field for several summers. "I know how to organize the security at major events," DiJohn said. Recently, he engaged in what he called one of his most exciting security details, working at the President-elect Obama's rally on election night.

The day continued with a monthly meeting at 9 a.m. with the Niles Township Youth Coalition, school personnel and Village of Skokie staff. Community events were discussed. School security directors and deans talked about all of the problems with the students for the month. Following the meeting we returned to the security office and met at 11 a.m. with security guards to discuss weather-related transportation problems.

At 12:30 p.m., DiJohn went out to a business lunch and met with people from American Heritage, the company that provides the security services for the district, an unusual occurrence for DiJohn. "I don't usually spend my lunches at restaurants," DiJohn said. "I usually grab something to go and eat it in my office."

After lunch, we went to North, where DiJohn pointed out the security cameras all over the school that videotape hallways, the cafeterias and other areas of the school.

DiJohn pointed out another of his ideas, magnet locks on most of the doors, limiting who comes in the school and who leaves. (The teachers have electronic keys to the school that allow them to come in and out of school.) Similar devices have been installed at West as well.

As our day came to an end, DiJohn summarized his philosophy on school security: "I believe we should be proactive, not reactive," DiJohn said.

West student represents U.S. in Greek conference

w. Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

At Niles Township District 219, students are taught to value diversity. In addition to the clubs provided by West that enable students to embrace their cultures, many students attend outside cultural events and activities. A prime example, senior Christy Koulouris, attends Greek school at her church every Saturday.

According to Koulouris, each year during the month of March, the Greek Youth Parliament organizes an essay competition for Greek students around the world. Thousands of participants compete to formulate a well-organized essay written in Greek. The board of Senators evaluates and grades these essays and chooses the 300 best written across the globe. Then, the 300 students with the best essays are invited to attend a four-day conference in Athens, Greece. In Athens, the students participated in a series of events and conferences, in addition to meeting the Greek Parliament. Out of thousands of participants in the United States, Koulouris was chosen to represent America at the conference.

"Our Greek school knew that one day in March [would be dedicated] to writing the essay, but we were not sure what day that would be," Koulouris said. "When the day came, we sat down in a classroom for three hours and wrote about anything we wanted."

Koulouris' essay focused on the polluted environment. "Although we can write about anything we want, the judges are looking for an essay with some topic that can relate back to Greece," Koulouris said. "My essay focused on the environment



Koulouris

and how it is polluted. I referenced back to the Greek forest fires last year."

Koulouris also mentioned that each year a different number of participants are chosen to represent America.

"When my sister was chosen a few years ago, she had two other students come with her," Koulouris said. "This year, I was the only one that represented the U.S."

The four-day event featured historical sightseeing and entertainment for the students.

"We had the opportunity to meet the President of the [Greek] Parliament and [the] Prime Minister. Also, we were able to visit historical landmarks around Athens to see exactly [what] the Greeks are known for, including the Acropolis," Koulouris said. "We went to an IMAX movie about astronomy and saw a theater production. It was a lot of fun."

As part of the four-day conference, an important meeting was held for the students to discuss controversial topics. According to Koulouris, the students were sorted into various groups of 60 that dealt with similar essay topics. In these groups, students debated contentious issues in Greece as if they were the Parliament.

Koulouris' group dealt with the environment and economic issues in Greece. "Each of us had to get up in front of the group and present our thoughts on the current issue. Basically, we presented our essay in three minutes to the students and President [of the Parliament]," Koulouris said. "Each student's response was video taped and the segments were presented on Greek television."

The entire experience was a revelation for Koulouris. "It was a great experience where I learned many things I did not already know about the Greek culture, met a lot of new people and had fun the entire time," Koulouris said. "We actual got a sense of how it feels like to be in the Greek Parliament."

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Muslim students request recognition

w Hira Malik
Staff Writer

All but three free days on the annual school calendar provide notation as to why students are off on those days. Those three days carry cryptic notations that merely say, "No School." However, a quick check of any calendar not provided by the school reveals that those three days off coincide with the Jewish holidays Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the Christian holiday Good Friday.

What about other religious holidays? For the past few months, Muslim students have asked the same question and have mounted an effort to add two days off, coinciding with Eid-ul-fitr (signaling the end of the holy month of Ramadan) and Eid-ul-adha (commemorating a sacrifice to Allah by the Prophet Ibrahim). A proposal was made in October to the student government's executive coordinating council, and it was considered at the Nov.

19 breakfast with the board.

Senior Nimra Elahi summarized the group's position.

"I feel that year by year, more and more Muslim students are coming into Niles West. With that in mind, more and more Muslim students are taking Eid off from school. I understand the difficulty, for Islam runs on the lunar calendar; however, Eid should be recognized by Niles West. I mean, we do only have two religious holidays," Elahi said.

Senior Zunara Ahmad agrees.

"Eid is a major Islamic holiday, and [students] should have it off. I know that there is a significant amount of Muslim students, and not just two or three students need this day off, but quite a few," Ahmad said.

According to student activities director Peter Geddeis, the problem with Eid is that, by law, schools must provide 180 days of instruction. So, all holidays must be decided in advance.

Depending on the level of orthodoxy, Muslims may or may not know when Eid will fall because the holidays are dependent upon the phases of the moon.

"Obviously I would like a day off for Eid, but I know the

difficulty involved with getting a day off," sophomore Abtaha Ahmed said.

Senior Yousef Jalili concurs.

"I know it is impossible to have Eid off because every Muslim culture celebrates Eid on different dates. Also, you can only be sure that Eid is on a certain day the night before when the moon is sighted. With that in mind, I know that getting Eid off is not going to happen," Jalili said.

District administrators are not opposed to days off for Eid, but recognize the inherent challenges.

"It is hard to put Eid on the calendar because you do not know when [Eid] is going to be," Principal Kaine Osburn said.

Geddeis sees room for compromise.

"[Eid is] difficult one because we do have days off that coincide with other religious holidays, and from that standpoint, it would be good to have Eid off," Geddeis said. "On the other hand, it makes it difficult for teachers to have continuous instruction if we had Eid off, as well as other days off. I think that if it were up to me, I would figure out a way to give the entire school a day off that would coincide with Eid," Geddeis added.

One-act plays give students chance to direct

w Daniel Blazek
Staff Writer

The theatre department will hold its biannual one-act play festival in the Black Box Theater, Friday, Dec. 12, and Saturday, Dec. 13, at 4 and 7 p.m.

The performance will differ from other productions that theater director Andrew Sinclair will not actually direct, but leave that task to student directors. Titled *Director's Studio: A Festival of 10-Minute Plays*, the four presentations will feature four different sets of productions (four or five per showing) directed by the students in the directing class. It will serve as, what Sinclair called, "their final exam" for the semester.

"This will really test how well they know how to use their directing skills," Sinclair said. "They have all been working really hard for this, and any one of them will tell you just how difficult the class really is."

The plays encompass all different styles of theater, ranging from comedy to drama, on a variety of topics, according to Sinclair. He noted that the sets of the plays are extremely basic because changing complex sets four or five times a performance would be too difficult

and time consuming.

The directors and plays in each group include: group one (Friday, 4 p.m.): junior Olivia Cross (*August Afternoon*), junior Jin Park (*The Divine Fallacy*), junior David Fisch (*Guys*) and junior Sean Buckley (*Breaking the Chain*); group two (Friday, 7 p.m.): senior Becky Lang (*Compatible*), junior Roxie Zeller (*After*), junior Fiona Stephens (*Apres Opera*), junior Alicia Peake (*The Individuality of Streetlamps*) and

senior Owais Ahmed (*Pillow Talk*); group three (Saturday, 4 p.m.): senior Liliy Bereznyakova (*What She Found There*), junior Scott Sheffield (*Executive Dance*), senior Parfait Kanam (*Go Look*), senior Jason Suran (*Jerry Springer is God*) and junior Philip Wolf (*He Gave Her the Eye*); group 4 (Saturday, 7 p.m.): senior Benjamin Cormalleth (*The Goblin's Plot to Murder God*), senior Olivia Wallace (*Seeing the Light*), junior Dan Machalinski (*Cover*) and

junior Alyssa Jutovsky (*What Are You Afraid Of?*).

Of the student directors, Sinclair said, "I expect them to do well. They are all good at what they do, and it will show when the performances come around."

Tickets for each session are \$5 (described by Sinclair as a "suggested donation" rather than a ticket) and half of all the proceeds will be donated to Dance Marathon.

Choir to take audience on musical excursion

w Adriana Zalloni
Staff Writer

The choir will hold its annual holiday concert Thursday, Dec. 18, at 7:30 p.m. in the Robert L. Johnson Auditorium.

Choraliers (both men and women), chamber singers, master singers, the a capella group Echo Effect and Guys and Dolls will perform

"It is a holiday themed concert. The pieces we are performing are holiday and love songs meshed together," choir director Amy Branahl

said. "We are also [performing] a lot of foreign language pieces this year."

Concert participants express enthusiasm for singing foreign language pieces.

"I am excited to sing songs in different languages (including *Caresse sur l'océan*," by Christophe Barratier)," junior master singer and Guys and Dolls member Jane Chung said. "Niles West is such a diverse school, and it is going to be cool to take advantage of that."

Junior choir president Sajni Ganger expressed excitement about the upcoming event.

"The holiday concert last year was so fun," Ganger said. "This year is going to be even better. I cannot wait to [perform]."

Holiday themed songs include such standards

as "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," by Edmund Sears; "Silent Night," by Larry Clark and Greg Gilpin; "Let There Be Peace On Earth," by Sy Miller and Jill Jackson; "The Twelve Days of Christmas" (traditional) and others.

Senior Jorian Micor is anticipating a successful concert.

"We have practiced hard and I know we will put on a great show," Micor said. "The winter season is my favorite time of year, I cannot wait to perform the songs I love."

Senior Chris Olivares concurs.

"I am anxious to see how we perform," Olivares said. "This year's group has strong lungs with so much soul. We are going to do great."



1. Who was Barack Obama's running mate?

- A. John Biden
- B. Joe Biden
- C. Joe Biden
- D. Joe Biden
- E. Joe Biden

2. What superhero appears in an image or reference in every episode of "Seinfeld?"

- A. I don't know
- B. Superman
- C. Batman
- D. Superman
- E. Superman

3. What was the first sport televised in the U.S.?

- A. Baseball
- B. Baseball
- C. Football
- D. Baseball
- E. Baseball

4. How many ounces are in one pound?

- A. 16
- B. 16
- C. 20
- D. 16
- E. 16

5. What is the unit of currency in Russia?

- A. The Ruble
- B. The Euro
- C. Euros
- D. Marks
- E. The Ruble

6. What river runs through Baghdad?

- A. I don't know
- B. Nile River
- C. Tigris River
- D. Tigris River
- E. Tigris River



A. Freshman - Maria Dekhtyar



B. Sophomore- Tony Christiansen



C. Junior - Adam Odisho



D. Senior- James Schlesinger



E. Faculty- Lia Gerambia

WESTWIRE

Fine arts groups to perform at annual winter concert

Helen Salamanca
Staff Writer

The Niles West orchestra and band will hold their annual winter concerts on Tuesday, Dec. 9 and 16, at 7:30 p.m. in the Robert L. Johnson Auditorium.

According to orchestra director Steven Katz, the musicians have been practicing for the concert all month and look forward to the performance.

"Everyone is welcome to attend the second concert of the year," Katz said. "We want people to come and celebrate the holiday season [with us]."

The orchestras that will perform include the concert, beginning strings, philharmonic and symphonic orchestra.

The concert orchestra will perform a Japanese lullaby called the "*Mori no Fukuro*" by Keiko Yamada, which translates to "Forest Owl," and the "*Tangos dos Sonhos*," which translates from Portuguese to "The Tango of Dreams." Katz described the latter as piece with a Latin beat with catchy melodic lines.

Both the concert and philharmonic orchestras will perform "*Rondeau*," composed by Mouret Leidig.

The philharmonic orchestra will perform "The Dance of

Iscariot," by Kirt N. Mosier; "The Journey of the Magi," by Robert Longfield and "Concerto in G Major," by Vivaldi.

The symphonic orchestra will perform "Mozart's symphony no. 25"; "Traumerei," by Shumann; "Tchaikovsky's fourth symphony" and "The Nutcracker Sweet," by Tchaikovsky.

For the first time, the Orchesis Dance Company, will perform alongside the orchestra.

This is the first year in which the music and dance departments will collaborate for a winter orchestra concert.

Orchesis members who will perform are juniors Deanna Hano, Danielle Thompson and Sabriah Wiedeman.

"I hope the audience enjoys the classical ballet piece; it is going to be very exciting," Thompson said.

It is going to be "very extraordinary" for the orchestra and Orchesis to join together, Orchesis director Mindy Slutzky said.

"It is going to be a wonderful performance, especially with Orchesis, and we are very excited about that part," Katz said. "I love playing in our concerts. The music is a lot of fun, and it will be a wonderful opportunity to see what kind of an orchestra concert we've got. We should also be getting new uniforms for our concert which is very exciting."

According to band director William Koch, the combined concert band, symphonic band and symphonic wind ensemble

will open with the seasonal song "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," by George Wyle.

The concert band's musical performance will include "Joyance," by Bruce Pearson and "The Bells of Christmas," by Sharon Elery Rogers.

The symphonic band will perform the following pieces: "Overture for Winds," by Charles Carter; "Hark the Herald Tubas Sing," by Michael Sweeney and "Celebration of Life," by Ralph Hultgren, which Koch calls "an evocative piece of work that depicts the works of the Jewish culture. The piece uses melodies to aspects of the Jewish culture although the themes and sounds will be very familiar to the families in the audience. However, it will not necessarily be direct of a different melody but it will be more of a different setting," Koch said.

The selections that the symphonic wind ensemble will perform are: "Vesuvius," by Frank Tichelli; "Celtic Carol," by Robert Smith and "Rhapsody for Hanukkah," by Stephen Bulla, "a very mature sounding piece," Koch said. "Usually when we use Hanukkah pieces, they are very simplistic, but this piece is very complex."

The band will also perform "Vesuvius" for a competition in Washington D.C. in January. The song is very popular among band students Koch said.

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the social studies department already has CRTs that can easily replace the common final exams.

"Every course has a CRT [in which] teachers are required to give to students. In most classes, the CRT will meet the curriculum [requirements] allowing teachers to rename [the CRTs] to common assessments," Dahlberg said.

However, Dahlberg said, social studies faculty expressed difficulty in reviewing the curriculum as a team of teachers.

"With classes like U.S. history, and the broad topics, teachers may find it difficult to agree on a common assessment," Dahlberg said. "For example, some teachers may stress [war] battles more than others, causing confusion to how many questions on [war] battles will be present on the exam."

Dahlberg expressed sensitivity to concerns. "We use the CRTs to measure curriculum and student performance. It is up to the teacher to decide how much the CRT is worth," he said. "For those teachers who oppose the idea of counting the CRT as a final exam grade, this will be a huge change."

Dahlberg also expressed optimism with the common assessment. "I hope we end up with tests that teachers believe are a benefit to the students to measure what the students learned," he said.

The English department is currently in the process of developing common final exams for freshmen and sophomores.

"We are in the middle of developing common assessments for freshmen and sophomores that we started at the end of last year," director of English Sanlida Cheng said. "The department is now getting a team together to begin working on the junior and senior assessments. Overall, the [new policy's] only difference is the percentage the exam will be worth."

Cheng echoed Dahlberg's optimism. "Our department has put in a lot of work in developing curriculum guides. This is our way to test the curriculum guides and know how our students are doing."

Previously mentioned, the common final assessment may be based on whatever the teachers decide. "For future assessments, we are looking at incorporating student writing," Cheng said.

As for the fine arts, applied science and technology and foreign language departments, there are CRTs already in place.

These exams will just be a name change from CRT to common final assessment. However, Roloff said that some teachers are considering a performance-based exam.

As teachers collaborate to develop a common final assessment and measure the amount of information students have learned through a given course, students hope for success.

"Different teachers have different ways of teaching. If one teacher covers a particular concept for a longer time than another, students with that specific teacher may perform better on [a portion of] the exam," freshman Mahween Ahmed said.

Freshman Monica Komorowski concurs. "It is unfair to students who understand a certain concept better because their teacher explained the concept in a different way."

Although advanced placement (AP) students take the AP exam at the end of the year, they will also develop common final assessments for each course.

"It is essential for teachers to develop a curriculum before they begin working on the final exam," Grossman said. "Although, it will be difficult for teachers to agree, it is something that must be done."

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