

WESTWORLD

Economy impacts students' and teachers' car buying habits

by **Uzma Ahmad**
Editorials Editor

"My situation is at a point where the decline in the economy is not going to affect my car purchasing decision," math and science clerk Andrew Erickson said concerning the decline in automobile sales in the past few weeks.

For Erickson, the decline in the economy has not yet been a big enough factor to stop the purchasing of new cars. For others however, the recession has played a huge factor.

"Even though I do not feel such a hard hit from the economy, the prices of items have gone up a lot. So even though I need one, buying a new car is a tough decision," math teacher Tayyaba Ahmad said.

Students feel the crunch as well.

"Looking at the economy right now, I want to concentrate on selling my car—not buying a new one," junior Charlee Cotton said. "I want to wait for the economy to straighten out before I think about buying a new car," Cotton added.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, car sales have hit an all time low, dropping to the worst vehicle sale rates in almost a decade. Because of the recent recession in our economy, many of West's students and teachers are thinking twice about the cars they wish to purchase.

A major criterion for car purchasers has always been whether they will buy new or used cars. Due to the recent uncertainty in the economy, more and more consumers are leaning toward buying used vehicles.

"I would prefer a new car, but due to the [decline in the] economy, it is going to be a very hard decision," junior Michael Mani said.

Ahmad agrees on the notion of buying used cars as a defense against battling the decline in the economy. "Although there are benefits to buying a new car, if I were to buy a car right now, I would really consider buying a used one," Ahmad said.

For Erickson, buying used cars has been of the norm in the past. In the future, buying a used car still does not seem too big an issue for him. "It would be nice to buy a new car once in a while, but neither does it bother me as long as (the car) is in running condition," Erickson said.

For Ahmad, the negative aspect of buying a new car is its drop in price after its purchase. "Once you buy a brand new car, even if you buy a recent '07 car, just driving off the lot takes off thousands of dollars," Ahmad said.

Mani agrees, claiming that buying a used car is "a better economic choice."

Another major issue for consumers is car mileage. "Mileage is something that I will definitely look into," Mani said. For Erickson, "good gas mileage is always a good and important thing to have."

Junior Paul Domer concurs. "For me, it is most important to buy a car with good fuel efficiency," Domer said.

Many consumers differ on their opinions of hybrid cars. "I really like hybrid cars or cars that are energy efficient," Ahmad said.

Janet Vo echoes that sentiment.

"I've really been thinking about hybrids because in the long run, it saves up a lot of gas and is less pollutant," Vo said.

Mani agrees, claiming that "purchasing a hybrid is a good idea, because they are very efficient with gas."

For others though, hybrid cars do not seem as the best choice.

Erickson claims that although with hybrid cars, gas money seems to be saved on the spot, because of the car's high price "the amount of time it takes you to recoup the cost in gas actually takes between 10 to 15 years," he said. Thus, money is actually lost in the long run.

"[Since] the average American will not keep their car for

longer than about 10 years, hybrids do not seem like a very economically responsible decision," Erickson added.

For some, car brand is also a big issue when buying cars. "I would definitely want a Toyota. They give you more miles for every gallon, and they last a lot longer than cars like Chevy and Ford," Ahmad said. She added that because of our recent recession, "it is very important to buy an economically smart brand."

Although the recession has caused conflicts for many car consumers, the economy's instability has yet to outweigh the necessity of transportation. Erickson believes cars are vital in his daily life, especially when other options are hard to follow.

"Because of where I live and

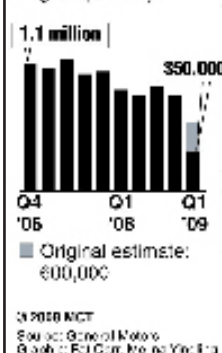
[how far it is from] where I have to get to, it is not conducive to pay for a taxi daily. In situations like mine, you have to buy what you need to survive," Erickson said. As for the option of public transportation, it does not always provide a proper solution, since, "[public transportation does not reach many of my [suburban] destinations." Erickson said.

Slashing production

GM announced that it will cut first-quarter 2009 North American production by 60 percent compared to the same quarter last year in response to weak demand.



Production cuts
Production targets quarterly



Plant closings

● Location of factories that will be closed temporarily during first quarter 2009



The recent economic downturn has resulted in future General Motors plant closings because of lagging car sales. Photo courtesy ASNEKRT Campus

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WestWord

Economic policy of President-elect sparks high expectations

W Naomi Prale
Around Town Editor

“Barack Obama’s economic plan is going to help the situation of the economy,” social studies teacher Joe Edwards said. “The idea behind [the plan] will create jobs, and that is what is needed for the country. Spending money will help the infrastructure of this country.”

It is up to President-elect Barack Obama to create a plan to help America out of the current recession. According to www.barackobama.com, Obama’s economic plan focuses on different economic strategies, including tax cuts for the middle class, tax relief for small businesses and startups and a fight for a fair trade policy that will open up markets to support American jobs.

“Most Americans are in the middle class or

lower,” freshman Nicole Ostro said. “[Tax cuts] would be good for [the middle class]. Wealthier people have more money, and they don’t seem to appreciate [their money]. [Obama’s tax cut



President-elect recently chose Bill Richardson Secretary of Commerce to help him turn the economy around. Photo courtesy ASNEKRT Campus

plan] is fair because people who work harder shouldn’t have to pay more.”

Senior Owais Ahmed agrees with Obama’s plan to cut taxes.

“Obama’s plan could help the middle class. He plans to give every family \$1000, but many of them might not spend that. [The plan] will only help everyone if each family spends that money. It is really up to the [American] people to help the economy,” Ahmed said.

Obama’s website suggests that the President-elect also plans to create a \$50 billion dollar stimulus package that will be given to struggling state governments and to extend unemployment insurance. Additionally, he will be more aggressive on preventing foreclosures on houses.

“Money makes the world go round,” junior Avi Schneider said. “The stock market is failing. How can we be spending money on [state governments and unemployment insurance]

if we don’t have any money at all? However, you just cannot let these people sit at home in financial trouble. You have to help them in some way.”

Ostro feels that Obama’s plan does not help out the nation enough financially.

“More needs to be done,” Ostro said. “We need to focus less on things like the auto bailouts and more on things like state taxes.”

Ahmed is skeptical about Obama’s plans.

“It all sounds too good to be true. Can he really get the economy in order with this one simple plan? He talks like any politician would. I actually want to see what he would do if he was president.”

Schneider is also a little unsure of Obama’s economic plan.

“Are all these things immediately going to fix the economy? No. Obama has good ideas, but America cannot think that this is going to immediately go away in a day,” Schneider said.

New federal mandate ties graduation rates to No Child Left Behind

W Uzma Ahmad
Editorials Editor

Under a mandate issued Oct. 28 by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, high schools and states must now track and lift their graduation rates. Pressure from the federal government to monitor rates was a result of the nation’s high school dropout rate of 25 percent.

As an extension of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the new dropout policy demands that all states track their dropouts, graduates and transfer students with the same, standardized reporting system to eliminate conflicts and discrepancies when comparing interstate rates.

The new policy also targets low graduation rates for black and Hispanic students, as well as students with disabilities. Schools are now responsible for tracking progress for these and all other minority groups, enabling them to improve. High schools are responsible for meeting annual targets for improvement in graduation rates. When these yearly targets, which are set by the state, are not met, high schools will face consequences such as the replacement of principals, removal of funds and the employment of tutoring for students paid for by the school.

Because Niles West already possesses a high graduation rate of 92.2 percent, the new

policy will not dramatically affect the school. The school is above the 90 percent graduation rate standard for Illinois which has been set by NCLB. West also surpasses the state’s average high school graduation rate of 86.5 percent and Chicago’s average of 68.7 percent. Thus, the new policy will not impact the dynamics of West or be of high concern for the administration.

In fact, many of the Cook County high schools will be unaffected from this new policy. Some local Cook County schools that are affected by the NCLB graduation rate policy are: Maine East (89.4 percent graduation rate), Proviso East (84.9 percent), Proviso West (77.5 percent), Hoffman Estates (88 percent), East Leyden (86.1 percent) and Tinley Park (85.1 percent).

Furthermore, the majority of the Chicago Public Schools do not meet the 90 percent standard. Some of these schools include: Roosevelt High School (54.6 percent), Taft High School (72.8 percent), Von Steuben (82.7 percent) and Payton College Preparatory (89.4 percent), which was recently rated as the 63rd best school in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*. Out of the nine charter high schools in Chicago, none pass the NCLB graduation rate standard.

In Lake County, Central Suburban League South rival Waukegan High School does not meet the 90 percent standard, sporting a 66.8

percent graduation rate.

Although Spellings’ new policies are intended to improve the nation’s dropout crisis, the NCLB extension laws have sparked criticism amongst many education groups such as the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA).

The NEA, a longtime critic of the NCLB laws, claims that the new policies, passed between the waning days of the Bush administration and the arrival of the Obama administration, were

instituted at the wrong time. Joel Packer, a lobbyist for the NEA told the Associated Press that “[the NEA] does not think it makes sense for the secretary to be putting out regulations less than three months before the Bush administration is going out of office.”

Despite heavy criticism, Spellings and other federal officials still stand by their efforts to improve the dropout crisis in the last few days of the Bush administration.

Facebook™ helps expand social life

W Helen Salamanca
Staff Writer

“Facebook™ helps teens with social skills, because it helps to socialize with the people in school that you have never met before,” senior Charnae Odom said of a recent study that suggests that online communities help teens develop social and technical skills

“I think that Facebook™, in general, is a great way to communicate with your friends and has pretty cool stuff,” junior April Eom said. “In a good way, it helps [teens] with social skills and is a way of getting to know each other.”

Sophomore Arek Solawa agrees with Eom. “Socially, it does help [social skills] a lot,” he said.

A three-year study done by the digital media research project conducted by the McArthur Foundation, stated that teens seem to be more motivated socially through Facebook™. They also seem to “understand the social value of online activity” as opposed to parents who think otherwise. Parents often assume that online activity is “an unproductive distraction.” However, the study suggests that teens are more stimulated to chat online through messaging and writing on each other’s “walls.”

“Online spaces provide unprecedented opportunities for kids to expand their social worlds and engage in public life, whether that is connecting with peers over MySpace™

and Facebook™, or publishing videos on YouTube™,” University of California, Irvine researcher Mizuko Ito told Yahoo! News.

English teacher and parent Tamara Jaffe-Notier expressed skepticism. “I am morally neutral about the website and believe that Facebook™ can be used in either a good way or a bad way,” Jaffe-Notier said.

Jaffe-Notier added that there are many other ways in which students can attain better technical skills such as creating a website.

The home page of Facebook™ boasts 140 million members and includes many applications such as checking friends’ updates, discussion groups and the advantage of controlling what people want to share with others.

“I think Facebook™ applications” such as wall-to-wall chatting/messaging, “should help [teenagers] talk, just as long as you know your friends and set your profile to private,” sophomore Fabian Aviles said.

Online social media may also helps teens build online social skills that they [teens] need in “contemporary society,” Ito said.

According to Ito, these sites, Facebook™, MySpace™, etc. not only serve as a socializing experience but also a source of recreation for teens.

Teens also learn technical skills by spending their time online, Ito added. Some of the skills that they can acquire are fixing computer hardware, editing videos and learning how to change software codes.

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WESTWORLD

As consoles win market share, all of your bases do not belong to PC

W Rexly Penaflores II
Managing Editor

As the gaming world progresses, there are gaming consoles that are left in the dust. For me, one of the first consoles to be considered obsolete was the Sega Dreamcast, next came the original GameBoy and after that the original Playstation (PS1) was the next console to go. In today's world, where it is a must that every game should be played on a 42-inch LCD television complete with an enormous sound system, it looks as if the next gaming console to take its leave is also considered to be one of the greatest inventions in our time—the personal computer (PC).

The birth of computer gaming started in 1962 when a group led by Steve Russell, a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology created *Spacewar!* From that moment until the birth of the personal computer in the 1980s, computer games started to grab the attention of gamers, and thanks to the creations of Will Wright and Sid Meier, the creators of *Sim City* and the *Civilization* series, respectively, PC games reigned over the video game world for a short time.

However, the introduction of gaming consoles such as the Nintendo 64 and PS1 in the late 1980s and early 1990s put the PC in last place as a gaming platform. Both the Nintendo 64 and the PS1 evolved into today's elite gaming platforms. Again last year, PC games were dead last in terms of gaming. According to www.shacknews.com, PC games made up 14 percent of the total sales of games in 2007. Nevertheless, popular PC-based games such as *Doom*, *The Sims*, *Civilization* and *World of Warcraft* have kept the PC in competition with popular game consoles such as the Xbox 360, Playstation 3 (PS3) and the Nintendo Wii.

PC's decline as a gaming platform is attributable to the constant upgrades that are needed to make each game run smoothly.

When a game is released for the PC, the thing that most gamers will probably look at first when purchasing a PC game is the amount of space needed to install the game on the computer's hard drive. With each passing year, the amount of space for games increases. For example, the turn-based strategy game *Civilization III* needed

only 400 megabytes (MB) of space in the hard drive. The game's sequel *Civilization IV* was released four years after *Civilization III* and the game required an astounding 1.7 gigabytes (GB) on the hard drive. Considering the current economic crisis, buying a new hard drive is out of the question—unless one has \$160 to spend on a 500GB hard drive from www.pcmag.com.

As if that weren't enough, not only do certain games have take up enormous chunks of memory on the hard drive, they also have to meet the standards of the latest graphics card which, at Best Buy, would cost another \$190. Gone are the days when there were little "sprites" or pixilated characters moving from one side of the screen to another. Today's computer games incorporate graphics that rival those of the PS3. The main thing that sets computer game producers apart from console game producers is the fact that console game makers create their game with the limits of the specific console in mind. Computer game makers create their games without knowing each computer's capability and hope that the game specifications meet the standards of the

latest graphics card.

While PC gaming is devolving into a dying art, don't tell that to the 10 million people playing Blizzard Entertainment's *World of Warcraft* (WOW). According to www.massively.com, a website dedicated to multiplayer role-playing games, 2 million of the 10 million people

playing WOW are from North America. For about \$15 a month, hardcore gamers level up their character and participate in quests that give their character massive amounts of points for improving their weapons. These gamers are the last of the PC gamers. As long as WOW continues to make the social life of gamers very miniscule, the PC gaming community will thrive.

Sometime in the future, the price for keeping a powerful gaming computer will be so expensive that gamers will just switch to console gaming instead of constantly buying graphics cards and hard drives. The amount of money that goes into upgrading computers is astounding. It seems as if buying a console such as the PS3 or Xbox 360 would be the sensible thing to do. In retrospect, PC games have reached the pinnacle of their popularity. It is only a matter of time before gamers stop playing on the computer. At that moment, the PC will become what it has always meant to be: equipment with the sole purpose of helping people finish their projects and publications.



Students and teachers consider neighboring high school's night program

W Hira Malik
Staff Writer

"I would like night school if the teaching methods were good. If the student who is in night school is the one supporting his/her family, (s)he could work as well as complete his/her education," senior Anita Thomas said.

According to www.pioneerlocal.com, Glenview's Glenbrook South's Evening High School will celebrate its 33rd anniversary this fall.

The school runs 6-9:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday and attracts a student body that runs the gamut from teenagers to students in their 50s, many of whom are returning students who dropped out but wish to receive a high school diploma.

The Glenbrook Evening High School is open only to those who live in District 225. District 219 does not have a similar program. Should it?

"I actually do not think night school would be a good idea. My grades would not go up because of night school; grades depend on the person and not the time school starts," junior Denys Quizhpi said.

Sophomore Tony Christiansen agrees.

"Students' grades would not go up because you get tired at night," Christiansen said.

Thomas disagrees, discounting fatigue as an excuse for not bringing her personal grades up. She sees the positive aspects of night school.

"I think maybe my grades would go up because I would get more time to work on it," Thomas said.

Night school is offered to help students continue their education regardless of their personal issues.

"[Night school] would further a student's education. [Night school] would keep students in school because they could stay in school rather than dropping out for various reasons," senior Alexander Williams said.

Junior Karla Espinoza sees the need for night school.

"Night school would raise my grades because I would be well rested. I would not be falling asleep over my homework like I do right now," Espinoza said.

Senior Irfana Lakada sees the need for night school; however, does not see the need for it in her life.

"For people who have jobs and are struggling, then night school is a good idea for them because it gives them time to prioritize.

[Night school] would keep students in school; if they needed to drop out, it would be a second option for them," Lakada said.

The core Glenbrook South and Glenbrook North requirements are the same at the night school. The night school is not a General Education development.

"I think [night school] is an interesting possibility if it were staffed by the current district teachers. The risky part would be that if the night school hired teachers from outside, because the other teachers would not be able to teach the core classes the same way the district teachers would," English teacher Kim Barker said.

Lakada agrees.

"Night school should still have the same core requirements because these kids are still in high school and need to get into college. The purpose of the day core requirements is to push students further rather than act as a barrier. Night school may be more difficult, but it should have the same requirements as day school," Lakada said.

The night school is flexible.

"Night school would be an advantage to those who have to work during the day," Quizhpi said.

Barker agrees.

"[Night school] would help students who want to finish their high school career but need to drop out for their own personal reasons," Barker said.

Every night, the school teaches a different topic such as math over the course of the four and a half hours.

"I would like extended lessons because they would be like a block schedule. That would be nice because there would be less interruption by bells with more necessary work to go along with it,"

Espinoza said.



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