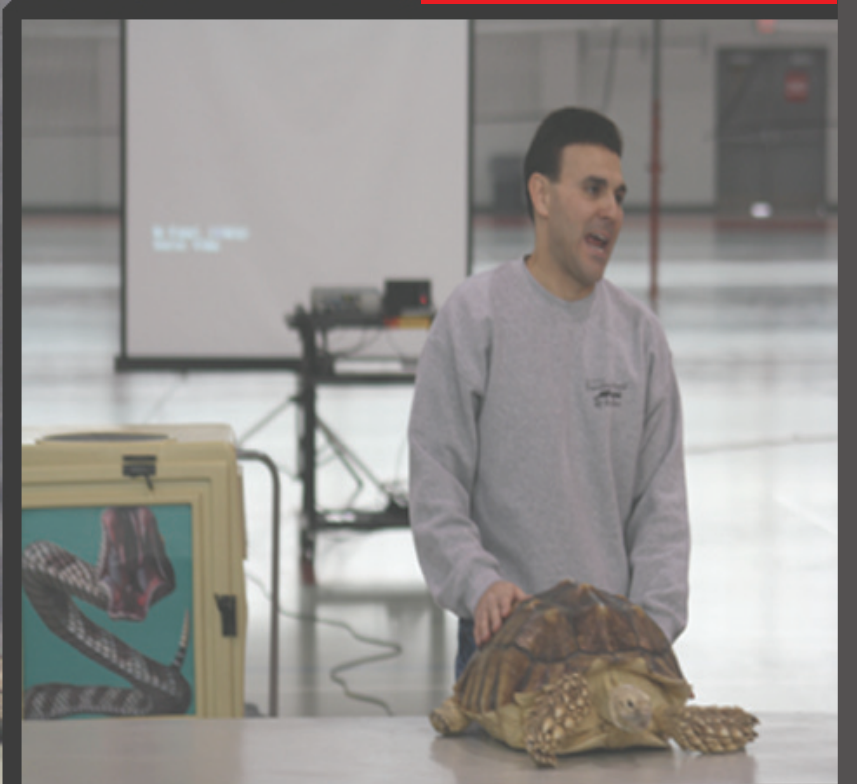


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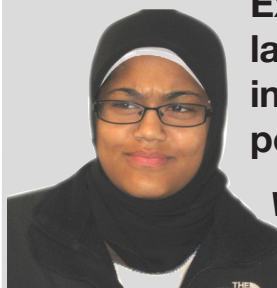
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# EDITORIALS



**Expanding foreign language department increases student potential**

**Uzma Ahmad**  
Editorials Editor

This year, Niles West made the decision to offer Mandarin to its students. According to the Cambridge University Press (CUP), Mandarin is the most-spoken language in the world. By introducing this global language to its students, West took an important step in the proper direction, as it broadened its spectrum for diversity. However, our school is still overlooking the other top languages of the world: Hindi (ranked fourth) and Arabic (ranked fifth). If West expanded its language options to include these two prominent languages as well, it would be adopting a role of global success for its students.

At a time when we are moving more and more towards globalization and a global economy, it only makes sense to increase the variety of languages with which the school familiarizes its students with. Since both Hindi and Arabic are two of the most influential languages in the world, it can only be beneficial to add these rich languages that are widely spoken across the globe, to the list of those that are offered at our school.

## If the school were to offer Hindi to its students, it would be properly serving the greater needs of the large Hindi-speaking community

German and French are both notable and eminent languages. However, according to CUP, they rank as the 10th and 13th most-spoken languages respectively. With no offense to these languages and the teachers who instruct them, it should be noted that these two languages are only rarely used outside of the classroom by District 219 students. Hindi and Arabic, on the other hand, are used commonly by many students, as they are the mother tongues of many of the families that are connected to West.

For a school that possesses so many Arabic speaking ethnicities, offering Arabic will help lessen the gap that is sometimes created by language barriers.

In the past few years, there has been a huge influx of students from Iraq and its surrounding regions. For these students, who are mainly refugees from the Iraq War, Arabic is usually the only language with which they are familiar. Although these students speak Arabic, many are unable to read and write it. These students deserve to learn the grammar and syntax of their mother tongue. Learning English as a second language without mastering the grammar of one's native language is almost impossible. Thus, Arabic classes will also help bridge the communication gap when teaching English to these refugee students.

With a large concentration of students from southeast Asia, Hindi is regularly spoken by many of our students in their households and within the halls of West as well. If the school were to offer Hindi to its students, it would be properly serving the greater needs of the large Hindi-speaking community.

The importance of establishing excellent language skills in

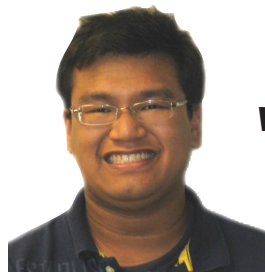
## Offering Arabic will help lessen the gap that is sometimes created by language barriers

our students is indisputable. Not only is it a resourceful tool in understanding English, but it helps to improve communication with speakers of other languages. It is also widely accepted that those who are fluent in diverse languages are more likely to be hired in the professional world. Recently, the Central Intelligence Agency has increased recruitment of Arabic speakers. Since Niles West is supposed to be preparing us for our future, offering Arabic and Hindi at this school will definitely increase student potential for success in the professional world.

It is understandable that limited school budgets may not allow easy funding for the offering new languages. However, polling the student body, as was done before offering Mandarin, will help gain a rough idea of how many students are actually willing to take this language. If the polls reveal high student interest in studying Arabic or Hindi, then surely the money that is allocated to programs for these two languages will not be spent in vain.

By introducing a language that is not conventionally taught in high schools, West will be opening the door to the exploration of cultures, allowing students to familiarize themselves with the world around them.

## Laptops offer enriched learning experiences



**Rexly**  
**Penaflorida II**  
Managing Editor

In an age in which people rely on computers for a significant amount of information, most districts still insist on literally "going old school" by relying on bound textbooks. Some are obsolete the day that they are published, and many so large, unwieldy and heavy that they threaten to spawn a generation of backpack-toting scoliotics.

District 219 is no exception. The time has come for the district to move forward in terms of technology. In the 21st Century, a laptop for each student is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity in order for students to be more productive and successful in their studies.

Virtually all textbooks are available online, and online versions include facets missing from conventional textbooks: audio clips, video footage and interactive programs. All enhance the learning experience in a way textbooks cannot.

Getting laptops for students would be the wisest idea that could come out of the school board's meetings. According to USA Today, a school in Yankton, SD, conducted an experiment pitting students using laptops in class and students without laptops. The end result was that students with the laptops attended school more

often and garnered a grade point average of 3.26 while students without the laptops missed school more frequently and earned a grade point average of 2.82. Students with laptops also raised their test averages by 5.7 percentage points—the difference between an A or a B in a class.

Another benefit for having laptops in school is that the method of teaching students would become more interactive. At West, honors physics students currently have weekly homework that can be found on the Internet, and then, the teacher looks at each student's correct answers on the homework and sees what (s)he could do to help students in class. Not only is it convenient for students to do their homework on the computer, but it can save time for teacher when (s)he grades students' homework. Some English teachers review rough drafts online, providing almost immediate feedback on students' writing.

Having laptops could also help students' health by reducing the amount of weight on their backs and shoulders. Many students resemble Himalayan sherpas scaling K-2 as they lug giant backpacks up and down stairs and down hallways. That can't be advantageous for a growing teenager's spine.

For the environmentalists in this school, laptops would be very beneficial because they save tons of paper. In an era in which "going green" has become a very serious issue, requiring textbooks with 400 or more pages is not a very eco-friendly concept.

Our era is not called the digital age for nothing. People depend on computers, cell phones and television to get their news. Even *West Word*—a print newspaper—has a website that features electronic versions of issues and online web exclusives.

All of these media point to the fact that the school board should consider providing laptops for all students. The time has come for District 219 to use its considerable resources to embrace the wave of the future.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sports Editor:

From 1978-1982, I read just about every issue of *West Word* as a student of this great high school. From 1991-present, I have read just about every issue of *West Word* as a faculty member and have enjoyed the comprehensive job of news reporting done by your staff.

In October, the Niles West golf team finished one of their most successful campaigns as a team in school history. Unfortunately, *West Word* failed to mention the accomplishments of this team.

So, I'd like to thank senior All-Conference golfers Dan Aler and Mark Ouska, senior captain John Nasshan, senior sectional qualifier Brendan Ryan, seniors Kevin Czajkowski, Nathan

Aprison, and Clive Salvacio, and juniors John Kim, Jeffrey Yoo and George Curran. Sophomore Claudia Mak also placed eighth at the girls conference meet.

These athletes should all be very proud of their accomplishments. To the *West Word* staff, I hope you realize that you reach a large audience of staff and students and that you missed the fairway and the green on this story. This omission was like a ball hit in the hazard—no good!

Sincerely,

Mitchell Stern  
Golf Team Head Coach

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*West Word* is a student-produced newspaper published monthly during the school year. Editorials represent the general view of the staff; otherwise, commentary pieces and columns reflect the views of the individual writer and not necessarily *West Word*. Replies to pieces from *West Word* are strongly encouraged as are letters to the editor reflecting the views of the school community. This correspondence can be delivered to *West Word*, located in room 3160. Letters may also be mailed to *West Word*, 5701 Oakton, Skokie, IL, 60077 or submitted to [westword219@yahoo.com](mailto:westword219@yahoo.com). Where noted, pictures courtesy of MCT Information Services are used with permission.



# WestWord

## west opinions

### Exchange programs enhance cultural receptivity



**Zoe Ljubic**  
Editor in Chief

Every summer, I travel overseas to Croatia. On these two-month trips, I am able to augment my language skills through immersion and to learn about my family's culture. I am able to taste the food and engage in activities that set Croatians apart from the rest of the world. Each summer, I learn something new while visiting, lessons that cannot be processed merely by studying the language here in the United States.

In addition to speaking Croatian and English, I have taken five years of Spanish and have become as fluent as anyone who has not spent considerable time in a Spanish-speaking country. I would love to have the same opportunity to improve my Spanish skills and to experience the rich culture of Spain in the same way that I have immersed myself in the language and culture of Croatia.

Unfortunately, unlike French and German students, Spanish students have no opportunity for cultural exchange. The Niles Township District 219 German teachers began sponsoring a two-week exchange program between students in Bruchsal, Germany and the District 219 German students two years ago. In addition, the French students will begin their exchange in late April this year. Currently, only German and French students are able to enroll in this foreign exchange program that lasts up to two weeks—a nice experience, perhaps, but hardly enough immersion truly to make an impact.

Many high schools in area, including New Trier, Glenbrook South, Maine South and Maine West, offer foreign exchange programs for their students. Likewise, they accept those who wish to spend up to a semester at their school. Why are students at District 219 not able to experience this opportunity? Foreign language students would benefit from a semester abroad, and West would be enhanced by the presence of students from other countries as well.

According to the German exchange program website, German teachers at District 219 praise the German exchange, saying that establishing an exchange with a German school does not only

benefit the students, but also enriches our community as well, fostering cultural understanding and connections and, in some cases, building life-long friendships between participants.

Clearly, this exchange enables students to take a language they have studied and apply it in the real world. They are able to experience a new style of living. German teacher Sara Shuster said that there is no doubt that the German exchange will leave an important impact on students, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of our ever more globalized world. She is absolutely right.

If students can gain this much from a mere two weeks, imagine how much would they would benefit from an entire semester. They will dip their feet in a lake of culture; however, they will not experience the life of a high school student during the school year. Doesn't an exchange program involve spending up to a semester in school in another country? Part of being a teenager involves going to school. Currently, no foreign language students in District 219

### Clearly, this exchange enables students to take a language they have studied and apply it in the real world

are afforded that opportunity. That is a shame.

Many foreign language teachers stress the importance of immersion. The American Council on the Teachers of Foreign Language stresses that "immersion programs for older students are very effective. Depending on the age of the students, they may or may not develop native-like pronunciation and intonation. However, the older student already possesses an internalized grammar of the native language which is useful in learning a new language. Regardless of age, immersion programs are effective because they use second language acquisition as the vehicle for learning the general education curriculum. This makes the content of the course inherently more interesting for the student and maximizes the instructional time by accomplishing two goals at once: language acquisition and content learning."

German teacher Joe Neumayer was a high school foreign exchange student and said that the experience opened his eyes to a new and exciting culture as well as sharpening his language skills.

His students and all foreign language learners in the district should have the same opportunity.

### Chaos in parking lots demands traffic control

#### Editorial

Nothing can be more overwhelming than the morning chaos caused by the congestion of cars and buses in our school parking lots during student drop-off and pick-up. In the 15 minutes that precede school hours, both the north and south parking lots are madhouses. Parents cut across teachers' parking spaces, narrowly avoiding accidents; lanes are completely clogged by two-way traffic; and the parking lot is a mess of students and cars rushing towards the school building.

A major issue with parents dropping off or picking up their students in the south parking lot is that the traffic flow can never be smooth and one-way. They enter from Gross Point Road, drive through the parking lot and exit again onto Gross Point Road. In the process however, they often cut off many teachers from their parking spaces and interfere with the buses by blocking their

### The school needs to standardize its regulation of the way students are deposited

way. Not only is such chaos highly dangerous, but it is simply unbearable for teachers and students who are walking in and around school.

Meanwhile, the north parking lot is filled with parents scrambling to get their children to school on time. This congestion causes student drivers to take twice as long to drive through the mess. Parents drop off their children in the front and make u-turns in the visitors' parking lot. Then, they try to return to Oakton via the north entrance while students who drive are attempting to enter the student parking lot. This causes gridlock that often makes students late for first period classes.

According to Assistant Principal of Operations Ryan McTague, the school has no specific regulations for drop-off. School administrators need to impose some—tomorrow. The school needs to standardize its regulation of the way students are deposited. Although security personnel are deployed to direct traffic in

the north parking lot, congestion is still prevalent everywhere. Student drivers are still scrambling to make it across the lot to park, and teachers are dodging parents' cars to get into parking spaces. McTague said that the school advises parents to stagger their arrival times in order to combat overcrowding. Clearly, this is not happening.

In order to lessen the overbearing traffic jams in our school parking lots, *West Word* has devised a few strategies and rules that will help direct traffic in a more controlled manner:

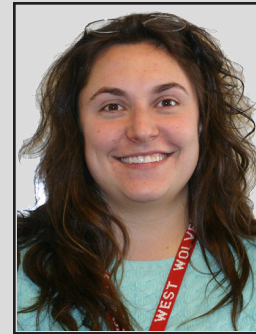
- only school buses and faculty vehicles would be allowed to enter the south parking lot from Gross Point road;
- parents who normally enter the south lot from Gross Point would be rerouted by security guards to enter from Oakton into the north entrance. After dropping off their children, parents would not be allowed to turn around in the guest parking lot outside the Oakton Lobby, but would be required to follow the road along the east side the school, exiting by taking a right turn onto Gross Point Road. Parents might complain that this takes them out of their way and is time consuming, but it is the teachers and students who need to be on time for school, not they.
- more security personnel should be employed to direct traffic from the north entrance to the exit at Gross Point Road.

The new plan solves three issues. First of all, the south parking lot will be virtually parent-free. Since they block the way for faculty parking and buses, this will reduce the majority of the congestion in this area. Second, this plan allows one-way traffic throughout the school. Most of the congestion in the north area of the school is the result of parents' trying to return to Oakton after dropping off or picking up their children. If the parents enter from Oakton, continue next to the school and exit onto Gross Point, congestion will be significantly reduced. Traffic will be organized and composed, unlike the chaotic mess that we have as of right now. Last, the plan will decrease congestion and help students and faculty to arrive promptly.

Until the administration starts employing rules and procedures for traffic flow, our school parking lots will continue to be tumultuous and uncontrolled. It is imperative that the school notice the problem and immediately take action.

### Should Niles West offer foreign exchange programs?

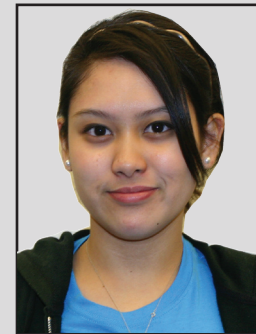
#### Faculty



Jessica Fliman

**Yes, because not only is it a great way to learn about a culture, but it also strengthens the language you are learning.**

#### Senior



Jonemie Rodica

**Yes, because it exposes us to different cultures. Diversity is important.**

#### Junior



John Morzy

**It is good for students who don't live in this country to experience the schooling system and curriculum in the U.S.**

#### Sophomore



Tony Christiansen

**Yes, because it is a diverse community, and people should be allowed to have the same experience as West's students do.**

#### Freshman



Diane Brikha

**It would be a great experience for the students since each will learn in depth about the other's culture.**