On April 15, our school’s Peace Day ended on an exciting note: Each class competed to be the best on the Westie basketball court.

First, the basketball tournament featured freshmen vs. sophomores. Despite showing their best skills on the court, the sophomores lost this game. Then, the juniors and the seniors played, and the seniors won. The final round featured freshmen vs. seniors, and the SENIORS WON!

The freshmen vs. senior game volleyed between each team scoring the most points. This was one hard game to keep track of considering the many times the ball went out and the many foul shots that were made. Even keeping track of who made what shots was a little difficult.

At the start of the game, senior player Avelino Demoura and freshman player Carlos Roche jumped to get the ball, and the seniors pulled it. Right as the game began, Avelino started with a three-pointer. Let’s give it up to freshman player Luis Pena, who went hard multiple times throughout the game trying to make shots for his team to win. Overall, the freshmen showed persistence facing the seniors, who probably have more experience on the court. At one point in the game, senior player Bill Degazon courageously attempted a three-pointer but then missed, which created an opportunity for Alberto Gilbert to return a rebound and make a shot. Hiba Kafel, of the senior team, called for the ball and made the crowd go crazy with a three-pointer towards the end of the game.

We talked with the freshman coach Ms. Alford about what she thought of her team. “I thought they played very well...being an all freshmen team, new to the building, it could be scary and intimidating, but I think they worked together as a team and that’s why the score was pretty close. Overall, they did great with only losing by six points.”

Freshman student Marvens Isidore noted that “it was good for the freshmen to play [especially because we are] new students at the school.” He was also asked what he thinks could be better about the game, and he said, “I think we could’ve beaten the seniors if some of the students weren’t so stingy with the ball and liked ball hogging.” Senior player Hiba Kafel was asked what she thought about playing with a group of mostly boys, and she said, “I think overall I did all right being that I only assisted and made three points.”

Peace Day 2016 was a very peaceful day, and the day went smoothly. From small group talks, to special speakers, to the game, Peace Day was an awesome day.
Westie Green Team Sponsors Outdoor Cleanup

By Doudly Rene

Mr. McDonald’s 9th grade students along with Mr. James’ and Mr. Lewis’ 11th grade students helped the Westie Green Team clean up the outdoors behind our school.

The Green Team decided to take care of the litter outside in order to help the birds and clean the environment. The City of Boston supplied us with tools for the day so that we could rake leaves, tear out vines, and pick up trash.

Two students spoke about their experience. According to junior Vicky Nguyen, “At first it was disgusting, but a little while later we were working together and it was really nice because we were making the community look nicer!”

Her classmate, junior Rey Abedini, said, “Yeah, I had fun. It was a good experience.” I asked Rey how the cleanup can impact the city of Boston as a whole. He noted, “It helps us to take care of our city and helps us learn how to work together.”

Good job, Green Team! To join the Green Team, please see Ms. Grady, or email mgrady@boston-publicschools.org.

BPS Budget Cuts: Impact on WRA

By Christtotcha D. Morisset

Education is the foundation of every generation’s movement towards a successful future. It prepares us to take over from the preceding generation. We are the rising generation, and it is soon our turn to take the baton.

Boston Public Schools’ budget cuts deprive all Boston students of the nourishment of an education. Instead of funding a brighter future in us, the city wants to brighten the light within itself.

As the education budget deficit grows to about $50 million, the city and state spend $150 million to lure GE (General Electric Company) to Boston. This move will yield only about 850 jobs, versus 37,000 students in the Boston Public School system. All these students will go without resources next year.

Our shame-faced deficit cuts are at the point where the district is calling for reduction of teachers in Boston schools. Our school system has already been known for its past of budget cuts, slicing programs left and right, including extracurricular activities, the arts, and music programs.

Let’s think about how our city spends its money and demand that the money be spent on its future: its students.

Congratulations Gesar Naksi!

WRA congratulates senior Gesar Naksi for receiving acceptance to Northeastern University along with the prestigious Northeastern University Valedictorian Scholarship that covers the cost of tuition and room and board for eight semesters of study.

Gesar is one of ten students from Boston to receive this prestigious award.

To plan your pathway to receiving college scholarships, visit Ms. Debbie in the WRA library, or visit Boston College Planning Centers, located in the Boston Public Library in Copley Place, Codman Square Branch Library, Hyde Park Branch Library, Egleston Square Branch Library, and South Boston Branch Library.

Branch libraries are by appointment by calling 617-536-0200. The Boston College Planning Center at the Copley Square Branch is open on a walk-in basis: Monday – Thursday: 9:00 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. and Friday – Saturday: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at 700 Boylston Street (Copley T Stop).
Redemption from Weed

This essay was selected for Raider News after being assigned as a College English 11 Narrative Essay. Please note that this essay does not express the views of Boston Public Schools or WRA. Students should consult the Code of Conduct and reach out to their counselors, the school's administration, or CFC’s to talk about the important issues related to this article. BPS and WRA offer appropriate support services for helping students through difficult circumstances.

By Hanlet Guerrero

My redemption from weed is something deep for me to tell. I used to smoke weed, but I stopped not so long ago.

At first, it was hard because I struggled a lot trying to stay focused in class or even at work. Though it was hard to stop, I had help from someone special. My girlfriend helped throughout the whole process. She was there every time that I wanted to start smoking again to tell me that my life would be better if I didn’t smoke weed.

The first week I spent without smoking, I always wanted to go back to it again because I got headaches and I felt like I was going to faint in the middle of my classes or in the streets. I was most of the time in a bad mood and I wanted to be left alone.

But my girlfriend put up with all the attitude that I was giving her, and she told me that she only wanted the best for me and that she didn’t care if I was an addict or not. She was going to help me regardless.

The real reason I stopped smoking weed was because I realized that I wasn’t doing any good to the people around me, especially to my girlfriend. I felt like I never paid attention to her because I wanted to be high most of the time. That wasn’t what I really wanted. I wanted to be just a good person. Marijuana wasn’t letting me be that person that I actually wanted to be and I felt like I needed a change.

My biggest regret about smoking weed was the time I lost while I was high because I was always sleeping and eating. When I was high, people used to tell me I looked so happy because I was always laughing and smiling. But I was actually not because I used to smoke just to escape my feelings.

I’m going to be honest with myself right now. All I wanted was a father figure and someone to call dad, but the only person that could’ve made that happen was never there. If I am honest, I’m not perfect without my father and I started to smoke weed because of him.

But now that I’ve stopped and realized it’s not worth it, I’m better than before because at least I can manage to spend my time on things that are better for me. My story consists of telling teens that weed may not seem bad at the beginning, but it could really ruin your life.
My Life in Photography: Interview with Mr. Nozea
By William Matos and Emmanuel Ortega

We had the opportunity to interview Mr. Nozea, WRA Photography teacher, in order to discover how he got to where he is, his thoughts on photography, and his advice for students pursuing art as a possible field. Mr. Nozea teaches Photo 1, Photo 2, and any photo-related class.

Q: Where did you attend high school and college?

Nozea: “I went to Dorchester High my first year but there were some problems as far as gang activity around that time. I came out of school one day and saw a kid get shot. After this, my Mother said, “nope” and sent me to West Roxbury High for the remainder of my three years in high school. I enjoyed being part of the West Roxbury High community because it helped me form lasting friendships. As far as college, I went Mass College of Art and Design. I started as an illustration major; it’s very meditative. I then went into graphic design and wanted to combine the two art forms but settled for a major called SIM, the Studio for Interrelated Media (a multimedia major).

Q: When did you decide you wanted to become a photographer?

Nozea: When I was in college as a SIM major, I took many classes and disciplines, and one class I took was photography. I ended up taking four classes of photography starting with Photo 1, which caught my interest. From there, I took the rest [of the photo classes] until I was well rounded in photography.

Q: So who’s your favorite photographer?

Nozea: At the moment I don’t really have a favorite; most of the photographers that inspire me are contemporary photographers. There are lots of photographers out there doing great jobs. It’s hard to pinpoint a favorite since photography is changing right now and lots of photographers try to combine motion with still pictures.

Q: Why did you decide to teach photography?

Nozea: In my last years in college I was going around doing community service working with kids, vibing with kids. I felt good doing it, so I kind of pursued it. While in school, I started substituting for Boston Public Schools (BPS), and by the time I graduated, the opportunity had come up for me to be involved in BPS. I took advantage of it, and now I’m here today as your photo teacher.

Q: What would be your advice for students trying to get into the art field?

Nozea: My advice now is if it’s your inclination to do it, just explore and see where it gets you. Don’t let uncertainties keep you away from what you want to do because, really, art is about expression, especially nowadays. Certain expressions were kind of taboo 15-30 years ago, but now things are a lot more open, and people are more tolerant of how people express themselves. Try to be around people who also do art because that can motivate and drive you. Art is very competitive; believe it or not, artists might look passive, but they’re very competitive people. So surround yourself with people who do art and are competitive; this can motivate you.

Letter to Freshmen
By Crystal Ortolaza

Hello Freshmen,

My name is Crystal, and I’m here to give you some advice on how to survive high school.

High school is like a roller coaster. There are lots of ups and downs, and you’ll be going through a lot of obstacles.

The most important thing to remember is that if you are planning to go to college in three years, do not mess up your grades throughout the four years of high school. You need to keep your grades up, so that you’re able to get into your dream college.

It might seem like high school doesn’t teach you much about life, but you can’t blow off the work. High school is important because if you don’t graduate, your choices in life will be very limited. You need to put in the work in order to achieve your goals. That’s one lesson school does teach you. You’re going to do work that you do not want to do, but you have to push through it and get it done, and a reward will come to you one day.

Also, you have to get involved in school. Don’t be lazy and do nothing. Colleges love when students are involved in their community. Being involved also can give you a sense of purpose and belonging.

Another thing to remember is: Don’t allow your friends to define who you are. Break away from them if they don’t accept you for who you truly are. You have to be who you are, and not just who your friends want you to be because half of them won’t be there for you when you need them the most. When you get older, your real friends will come.

So, don’t rush, have fun, and get the best grades that you can. It can all happen, as long as you stay determined, and just do it!

Sincerely,
Crystal Ortolaza

Interesting College Courses
By Derek Bertucci

Thought college was all math and English? Think again! If you want to analyze movies and discuss food, or learn how aliens inhabit strange lands while learning to sing in a gospel choir, these courses are for you.

Northeastern University
Understanding the Bible
Principles of Organizational Communications

Boston University
Alien Worlds
Topics in Film and Literature

Boston College
Magazine Editing and Publishing

Bunker Hill Community College
Strangely enough, Bunker Hill offers midnight courses to those who work or have a family to take care of.

Emerson College
Latin American Fiction
Costume Construction

Mount Ida College
Mount Ida offers a summer program to give students the opportunity to catch up or get ahead.

Wheelock College
Racial and Cultural Identities

Harvard University
Romancing the Kitchen: Food Culture Across the Romance Languages

Tufts University
Gospel Choir
It’s Showtime: Westie’s Talent Show

By John White and Dyanna Vega

The West Roxbury Academy talent show took place on April 7, 2016 in the auditorium. The event showcased some of Westie’s finest of over 20 talented participants across all grades.

The crowd had an attendance of over 400 enthusiastic students and teachers, who all showed respect when students performed. The organizers of the show anticipated a high level of professionalism in the performances but were also curious about how the entire show would pan out.

Ashley Gomez (Freshman Class of 2019) shared, “[My friends] Told me to do it because they believed that I have a really nice voice, [but] I am nervous.”

Ashley performed one of the first acts in the show, singing Unconditionally by Katy Perry. Her performance was jaw dropping, and the crowd became electrified by her heavenly voice.

Some people already had their performance in their minds as far back as the first day of school, such as Alford (Dean of Discipline for the Freshmen).

“I’ve always partook in the talent show… I knew I was going to do the talent show since the first day of school,” she said. Her breathtaking dance routine with two other students ended the hour-long talent show.

While some people were thinking about their acts well before the talent show, others were trying to organize the show for the school.

Senior class Humanities teacher, Dr. Jones, has coordinated the talent show for the past three out of five years of the event’s history at Westie. She spent three to four months in collaboration with Ms. Saia, Mr. Somers, Ms. Quinones, and Mr. Weekes to organize the event. She was a little stressed trying to organize students from the different grades but recognized, “It all always comes together.”

Dr. Jones asserted her satisfaction and pride in the student performers. “A lot of the kids that performed had been [displaying] their talents outside of school… for many years, so I really think… they [should] get a chance to showcase what they work on,” she said.

The teachers were proud of the level of respect shown by the student audience. Ms. McCarthy, Grades 9 and 10 ELA teacher, expressed her opinion on the audience during the talent show.

“I think the entire faculty was really impressed with the student audience. Students were respectful, engaged, and had really positive energy,” she said.

School-wide events like the talent show are good for the school community for multiple reasons. One, they bring everyone together in a peaceful atmosphere. This event in particular shows what some people in the community can do without feeling embarrassed or scared. Lastly, events like this put people in a good mood and make us feel proud of our school.

My Journey Through High School

By Jazmin Brantley

Westie has had a big impact in my life. From wearing bell bottoms and basketball shorts to skinny jeans and skirts, I’ve progressed in both style and maturity. Westie has changed me completely; it changed me into someone I never thought I would be.

I used to be a smart, shy, and insecure girl that didn’t do anything. Then I went to high school, the place where everyone finds themselves. Teachers and students at Westie told me I was cute and that I had no reason to be insecure. I didn’t believe them at first, but as time went by, more and more people told me I was beautiful. That’s when I gained my backbone and became a stronger person.

I had more confidence, but that’s when my grades started to fall. I paid more attention to friends and reputation rather than my grades. That’s when I knew I was messing up, and I had to fix it.

In my tenth grade year I wanted to keep my head in the books, but I hated reading, and I was too involved with my friends and my reputation. I didn’t care about anything, and I believed that school was all about having fun with my friends and having “clout.”

Then by Term Two in tenth grade my teachers started telling me that these grades really matter if I wanted to be something in life. So, I started thinking about that every day, and I started to focus on my grades more. Thinking about the importance of my grades every day, I’ve realized that being dumb and fooling around isn’t cute.

In my eleventh grade year I knew I had to get myself together and worry about what would help me in my future. I started to believe that if I had failed in high school, I would have too many problems, and I would have no future... if I was to give up and let my distractions mess up my success. I also looked up to teachers who gave me hope like Ms. Quinones and Dr. Jones. They both said: “If you don’t care I don’t care! That’s on you, I graduated already!” They also told me not to give up because I am too smart and too close to graduating to graduate without my grades.

So, I thought about what they said every time I felt like giving up completely. They spoke nothing but the truth and they helped me focus on what I had to do in school. They always made sure everything was all right.

Then, by my twelfth grade year, I had to really keep my head in the books because I wanted my GPA to get higher. I tried to get honor roll for each term; I failed, but I never stopped trying.

Until third term of my senior year, I almost gave up. I wanted to just drop out and not go to college. There were too many things stressing me out and “Senioritis” was just making my life even worse. I was going to start skipping school every day, and I was going to look for another way to be successful, but my friends and teachers told me not to give up. Not now.

At the end, I thought I was going to give up; I didn’t care about what people were telling to do. I was only thinking, “All that work for college, and I still didn’t get accepted to a college?”

But now I’m glad I didn’t give up because in April I got my first acceptance to Johnson & Wales University! I thought I couldn’t do it, but I made it after all.

Now, I am just looking forward to seeing the bright future that is coming my way. I am pushing myself to be nothing but successful, and if I think about giving up, I will just think about high school and how I thought I couldn’t make it, but did make it in the end.
Westie Prom 2016

By Terence Oliver and Gloralfi Victorino

Westie prom is a memorable tradition for juniors and seniors. This year’s prom will feature the theme Hollywood at Night, which will make students feel like celebrity VIP’s on the red carpet.

Senior Jovan Perry is attending this year’s prom and stated, “I am looking forward to going to prom, and this is the first time I’m attending a prom. People should go because it will be a fun time, and I’m hoping prom will be as good as expected.”

Ms. Saia, senior class ELA teacher, is the Senior Class Advisor who works on making sure all the details of the prom come together. She noted how the seniors have completed a West Roxbury Academy community fundraiser by selling sweatsuits and Raider spirit gear. The fundraiser’s proceeds will support the senior class and specifically this year’s prom.

At the beginning of the year, the seniors hosted a Yankee Candle fundraiser, in addition to two bake sales this year and a 50/50 raffle directed to the faculty. To add to the seniors’ fundraising, they sell pastelitos every week.

Without fundraising, a ticket would be around $130, so fundraising makes prom affordable at a less expensive ticket rate.

There will be food, a photo booth, photographers, and good music for an estimated 240-280 students.

Ms. Saia’s hope for prom is that everyone has a safe and memorable evening. “I would like the students to remember all of their friends, and how much fun high school was, opening up a new chapter in their lives,” she said.

Senior Merven Morrison is looking forward to attending his senior prom, stating, “People should go to prom because it’s a once-in-a-lifetime thing, and I’m hoping to create memories.”

The WRA seniors are inviting our school community to become more aware of many social issues that impact American culture. At the end of this month they will present their final capstone projects to our school and community leaders. They need your attention, awareness, and your VOTE!! This is a small preview; please stay tuned!
Sports

City Champs in 2015: Can They Do it Again?

By Terence Oliver and Gloralfi Victorino

The Westie baseball team is a defending City champion with good attitude, chemistry, and talents. The team has incredible experience and returned a lot of players from last year who have better-than-average amount of talents.

Last year, the team had a long run, and although the team was defeated in the first game of the State Championship, they won the City Championship.

Westie baseball coach, Mr. Wilson, has been coaching for 30 years. He played baseball throughout college and shared how the current WRA team is not only hard working, but it is like a brotherhood.

For senior player, Jean Carlos, baseball at WRA is a place for friendship and a way to be motivated with a team pushing you to be your best.

Junior player José Merched shared his list of items that will make the WRA baseball team the best it can be. His list includes confidence, practice, and “always pushing each other no matter what.”

So far this season, the team’s record is 3-3. They have played Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, Brookline High School, Needham High School twice, Charlestown High School, and English High school.

Let’s show our support for our Westie baseball team and cheer the team on as they attempt the championship title again this year.

Softball: In The Beginning...

By Carlos De Los Santos, Alex Moore, and John White

Come March, when the snow melts, softball at Westie is one of the only spring season games in town besides baseball.

Softball is a classic tradition here at Westie and has been a positive sport for our school, but for some players on the team, like freshman Ashley Gomez, this year is her first time playing softball. She is a little intimidated playing with people that have more experience and age than she does.

“It’s really overwhelming and kind of intimidating because people are better than you,” she said.

She does think she can learn from the experienced players on her team, stating, “I think they could help me by helping me learn moves and statistics of softball.”

Ms. Diggs, who is the Assistant Headmaster and Head Coach of the softball team, shared that she had one year of experience with playing softball in a high school league with her assistant Ms. Harris. “We have a great group of players this year on the team; they are committed and bring a lot of positive energy to the game. This season is our rebuilding year. We are excited to build the team up to be the best we can be.”

Senior player Vanessa Green is loyal to her softball teammates and very familiar with the sport of softball. When she is up at bat, she told us that she hits “[About] four times.” Her stats are more than promising. She does a lot on the field, stating, “[I] play Shortstop, First base, and Second base.”

Vanessa shared the strength of her team and its season so far, reporting that they’ve lost only one game. They are doing great so far.

See how well they finish this season by showing your support for our Raider Softball team.

#PMPB

(Positive Mind, Positive Body)

Have you ever felt that you weren't enough?

Have you ever compared yourself to someone else?

LET’S CHANGE THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES!

We are challenging you to say something positive about a classmate, teacher, or family member for a full 24 hours. After you complete those 24 hours do it for 48 hours, and then 72 hours, then for the rest of your life!

Having braids or cultural hairstyles used to be considered too “urban”!

And now it’s trending???

#givecreditwhereitsdue
Quotable Quotes
What are your summer plans?

By Ronaldo Cameron

“My plans for the summer are to get plenty of rest, get a renovation on my house, and run a three-week basketball clinic. I will also make sure I take care of myself by getting my nails and hair done, hitting up the beach at least four times, and spending time with my family.”
- Ms. Alford, Administrator

“I’m going to be playing in a basketball league called Mike and Al’s 18 & Under.”
- D’Andre Sanders, Grade 10

“I’m doing track, and in August, I’m going to be in Texas doing Junior Olympics. I’m also training for World Youth Olympics.”
- Jahphiah Gilliard, Grade 10

“Enjoying my time and thinking about the upcoming school year.”
- Mr. Kemp, Dean of Discipline

“I’m going to be playing in a basketball league called Mike and Al’s 18 & Under.”
- D’Andre Sanders, Grade 10

“Work on my football skills and look more into my career. I’m also going to travel and workout.”
- Kavon Washington, Grade 11

By Erica Harris