

Staff Editorial

Safety must be an ongoing effort

We're talking about safety again. And not as a result of the theoretical threat usually felt in the wake of a school shooting in some other far away state. This time, the discussions are contextualized by recent safety scares that have rendered the possibility of a school shooting more tangible than ever.

Last month, authorities found a WJHS student in possession of firearms and other weapons and later that week at Glenbrook South High School, a note threatening a school shooting was found under a desk.

If this editorial is beginning to sound repetitive, it's probably because it follows in the path of various other pieces we've written in the past two years about school safety; this one is our second just this year.

But there are a number of reasons we feel it is necessary to keep talking about school safety.

It has become apparent that this year's succession of school shootings hasn't been enough to supersede congressional gridlock and instigate federal gun violence legislation. As a result, until that becomes a priority for our lawmaking bodies, school safety is in our own hands. And ultimately, our local school safety is most directly and efficiently addressed through changes stemming from local discussions.

It's no secret that the events of the past few months have brought to light the numerous flaws in the previous security system. And the administration is working to fix the cracks in our security system.

In addition to a new Kiosk system, this includes new double-buzzer vestibules at entries, an upgrade of the district's video surveillance, a smaller entrance, limited entrances during the day, and enhanced visitor management systems.

We recognize that this undertaking is a work in progress and appreciate the efforts of the administration and faculty who have acted to address safety concerns.

But because we're venturing into new territory, we need to continue to assess how these implementations are or aren't working and recalculate what needs to be done to make our school safer. As a result we think it's necessary to emphasize and elaborate upon a call to action we suggested in a previous editorial to hold open forums during advisory periods so students can voice their observations and opinions about the new safety implementations.

And in that same light, we think it's necessary to remind students that we have a role in our own safety. It is both in our interest and responsibility as part of a community to be conscious of these new changes and communicate how they address the cracks in our security that could be exploited by a school shooter. Our skepticism and complaints can be useful resources in making the system better as long as these are constructively conceived and deliberately communicated.

We need to stay politically involved



by Danielle Kurensky

In the past few weeks the entire nation has been immersed in the drama concerning Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation hearings and sexual assault accusations from Dr. Christine Blasey Ford.

Our student body seems intrigued like never before. Rivalled only by the 2016 presidential election, I have never heard this much political discussion at school.

While one might expect these conversations to come up just in political science classes, I have heard multiple people discussing the hearings with their friends during lunch and passing periods.

While the nation struggles with how to go about this polarizing issue, we as high school students are in a unique place. We are, or close to, the ages that Ford and Kavanaugh were when the alleged assault took place. I believe this to be part of the reason the issue has resonated so deeply with students.

Many are unable to wrap their heads around the idea that something one did at a high school party could affect them more than thirty years later. Some are painting Kavanaugh as a confused teen who didn't

know better, and have attempted to minimize his ability to comprehend the severity of his actions.

Others believe that high school students are more than capable of understanding the impact of their actions. Many are worried about what message this would send to the country, especially young girls, if he is allowed on the Supreme Court despite being accused by three women of sexual misconduct.

In the past week, I have heard students arguing both sides of the issue. Although there are many reasons students are currently engaged in the issue, I believe it is important that we all stay engaged.

Throughout middle school I was interested in politics and always tried my best to stay up to date on political events.

I'm sure part of the reason for my interest was always wanting to seem more mature and keep up with my older sisters, but deep down I knew these issues had importance.

Although not everyone wanted to show off to their older siblings, I thought everyone at least understood the importance of being informed.

One day in class when a classmate told me she didn't care who the president was because it didn't affect her. I remember standing there stunned and shocked at her genuine indifference as to who the president was and I was unable to formulate a response.

This memory has always stuck with me, but not until recently was I

able to fully understand it.

As students who live in a privileged area, many of the national issues don't affect our day to day lives. Sure, we might be upset or angry when we see a news story about a certain national crisis, but more often than not we are able to move on, because the issues rarely affect our own lives.

Regardless of how the rest of Kavanaugh's confirmation process plays out, as students, I believe it is important to maintain this political interest. It is necessary that we continue to care.

According to The Washington Post, 43 percent of eligible voters did not vote in the 2016 presidential election. As the next wave of voters, we have the ability to change that number, to make the role of president be a reflection of more than 57 percent of Americans.

This change only occurs though if we continue to stay informed.

I know it can sometimes be difficult to read the news, as we can be left feeling hopeless after reading about the monstrosities taking place in the world, but we still need to.

So however you feel about Kavanaugh and his eligibility or lack thereof to be a Supreme Court Justice, allow yourself to stand strongly in support of your beliefs, because regardless of where you stand on the issue, having an educated position is better than being indifferent.

Let's talk about sex(ual education)



by Ezra Wallach

Ever since the Kavanaugh hearing, I've heard some people saying that maybe he shouldn't be held completely accountable because he was "just a confused teen who didn't know any better". The problem is that he definitely should've known better.

How to respectfully treat women or men is something that we should learn not just from our parents and siblings, but from the high schools we attend that teach us about nearly everything else.

After a friend of mine cancelled an Uber because the driver was a guy, I realized that lots of boys have no idea what the experience of being a girl today is like. Without this experience along with watching certain TV shows or having a sister, I would have never known that girls constantly have to think about how to keep themselves safe from "creepy guys".

Every girl or guy that I've talked to has said that they or someone close to them has experienced some form sexual harassment. These occurrences might be a lot more common than

most of us are willing to admit.

At my elementary school (shoutout McKenzie), we always used to dedicate time to a program called Second Step, which was meant to make us more sympathetic in efforts to reduce bullying.

While Second Step was no longer a part of our schedules once we hit middle school, we still had assemblies that discussed bullying and how to prevent it, and in my opinion, they kind of worked; but sadly that's not the only issue we have to worry about.

In fifth grade, we all had a sex-ed unit where we talked about STDs and contraceptives. And then in eighth grade and sophomore year we did it gain. And then we were done.

Since the "#MeToo" movement started, I've been thinking: why can't there be a Second Step like program that teaches teenagers how to have consensual and respectful relationships with other genders? Why have we let this topic remain so taboo in high schools even though it affects so many people?

The conversations that we have about sexual harassment are completely different in girls and guys advisories, and these discussions can never be truly productive without having a structured dialogue between genders.

In the past week I have heard some guys saying that even if Kavanaugh did sexually assault Blasey-Ford, that it just isn't that big of a deal. That's when the Kavanaugh situation stops being

political—people aren't realizing the severity and prevalence of these occurrences and how much of an impact they can have on the victims.

Girls have been taught by their parents and friends about how to protect themselves from sexual assault from a young age, and have worked to put themselves in safe situations. Wouldn't it make sense to at least spend some time and energy in school to ensure that boys and girls know how to interact with each other respectfully?

"I didn't know any better" should never be an excuse for us, because when it comes to normal bullying, nobody ever gets away with saying that. Instead of having to punish men after they have harassed or assaulted someone, we need to teach them that those things are really bad before they start to do them. This will protect both possible victims and perpetrators from getting hurt in the future.

Second Step taught us to be nice and to have sympathy, and without this, who knows how many bullies there would be at this school. We continually overlook how much these activities have helped us in becoming better friends and people, and with the same kind of education for the pressing issues that relate to high school students, maybe stories of sexual misconduct will become more rare in the future.



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