

No complaints about no homework

Holidays provide a necessary relief from school work

by Molly George

As the school calendar shifted this year to include days off, students, teachers, and administrators are pleased with the no homework policy on holidays.

These holidays have included Labor Day, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Fall Break so far, and later in the year, Thanksgiving, MLK Day, Presidents' Day, Good Friday, and Memorial Day will provide a break for students and staff, labeled as holidays with no school or work.

"A once a quarter break is good for both teachers and students," said Paul Waechter, principal of the Northfield campus.

"New Trier is a place where students and staff strive for excellence," said Waechter. "That is a great part of our culture, but we also want to provide opportunities to slow down and enjoy other aspects of their lives."

Principal Denise Dubravec shared that the data from surveys which gathered information about common sources of student stress found that the two highest contributors are academic and post high school planning related.

"Student stress impacts their ability to be their very best," Dubravec said, mentioning sleeping behaviors and how students feel about themselves as specific factors of student performance, also mentioning

the role of the school, self-imposed student pressures, family to student relationships and support.

While there are limits on what the school can do to manage students' stress and workload, Dubravec said, "one piece we can control is giving kids a break."

The school has encouraged no work over major holidays for three to four years to truly provide students with a break. This year as the calendar brings back holidays that were excluded for the abbreviated schedule during construction, Dubravec said, "Our goal is to have this calendar every year and continue to be forward thinking so students can enjoy a day off."

Math teacher Kristen Torkelson said she already tends to avoid giving homework on school holidays, although the subject of math requires daily work.

"Having a break from the daily work is beneficial," said Torkelson. "I value it, and I think teachers need those breaks too."

Torkelson mentioned that everyone should use the days off as more of a break, but it fills a much needed purpose of catch up time.

Senior Sabrina Morris clarified that on days off, "you're doing stuff that's more long term but at least you have time to do it," and no homework days are better for reducing stress in theory than in action.

Comparing it to the test day policy, social studies teacher Jennifer Niemi pointed out that if other people don't follow the policy it won't work.

Niemi emphasized self-advocating and said, "It can feel scary, but in a really respectful and

kind way, students need to call out teachers because this is a well-intentioned policy, but it's going nowhere if no one's following it."

Sophomore Delaney Parris said that while she has appreciated the days without homework, long term or multiple day assignments are "a way of cheating the system" of no homework holidays.

Relaying her experience with her workload and the days off, Morris said, "senior year, it's either the same amount of work or more with college apps on top of it. It's a really stressful time, there's a lot going on mentally, and taking breaks from homework is much needed."

Niemi called herself a "cheerleader" for the no homework days as a teacher, adviser, and mom and said, "As a department, we are really trying to be mindful, holding each other accountable."

According to Dubravec, the decision to recognize holidays and discourage assignments over these days is new as an official policy and part of the Strategic Plan 2030 for student health and wellness. It's all about healthy behaviors and decisions and long term effects.

Waechter agreed that this policy "is part of a continual effort to reduce student stress and make it a priority that students enjoy their high school experience. Homework is an important part of high school and learning, but a once-a-quarter break also shows New Trier values the whole child."

Ultimately, Dubravec said, no homework days are about the "institution continuing to help kids think about how to take a step back."

NT film travels to the big screen at NYC festival

by Eleanor Kaplan



NT film at the 6th annual All American High School Film Festival | Kirsch

Four New Trier student films were featured on the big screen in New York City this month as part of the All American High School Film Festival, the world's largest high school film, photography, and media arts festival.

Eleven film students traveled to the festival in NYC, which took place Oct. 5-7.

Senior Olivia Luna had two films selected for the festival: a public service announcement titled "Oversharing" produced with seniors Marion Madanguit and Lilly Meehan-Egan, and a short film titled "No New Messages."

Junior Eleanor De Fer's short film, "Ribbon," and senior Ben Senior's short film, "Velveeta," were also selected.

The selected films were screened at the AMC theater in Times Square. Junior Jules Brown, sophomore Diego Consalvi, junior Isabel Dolan, sophomore George Dowd, sophomore Brendan Hollis, senior Eric Pirrie Villalobos, senior Michael Vongher, and sophomore Ryan Zabors also attended.

"Our long-term goal is to continue to submit, have multiple

films selected annually, and win awards as well," said media teacher James Syrek.

"There are specific awards presented at the Teen Indies Awards Ceremony that come with scholarship money, and my goal is for our students to be nominated in these categories, win and receive the support they deserve to pursue their filmmaking dreams," said Syrek.

Students also went on an NBC studio tour during the trip, after which they met with NT alum Arthur Meyer '02, Supervising Writer at "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon."

Meyer spoke to students about his path to film production from high school to Boston University, and then to a career in television.

In high school, Meyer was a theatre student and was involved with "No Questions Asked" improv troupe.

"Our group represented the best of New Trier throughout the weekend via their professionalism, support of fellow peers, enthusiasm towards attending panels and workshops, as well as networking with other filmmakers from schools around the country," said Syrek.

Companies fighting against digital retouching find success

Many brands take a stand against society's beauty standards

by Alyssa Pak

Whether the locale is Barnes & Noble, Walgreens, or Trader Joe's, the images of airbrushed female celebrities plastered on the cover of magazines are now ubiquitous.

Walking into Old Orchard, it's impossible to escape the stare of the glowing Victoria's Secret models covering the storefront windows with their thin, airbrushed legs.

Junior Ellie Steger explained that she finds unrealistic images of women across all parts of the media.

"Every billboard, advertisement and magazine seems to be covered in perfected women. Social media perpetuates this unrealistic standard because there seems to be not only countless Instagram models but also some of our peers who seem to have 'perfect' bodies and faces," noted Steger.

Photoshopping is now reaching younger generations too, as Kathryn Kalnes, teacher of The Fit Female course, explained that there was an option to have her kids' school pictures retouched.

"Even in 2nd grade, we've forgotten the reason pictures are taken in the first place. Instead of capturing what you looked like exactly at that time, people are just trying to be the most perfect," said Kalnes.

Occasionally, however, digital retouching does go wrong. On the movie poster for "Tomb Raider," people were quick to point out the extent to which Alicia Vikander's

neck was elongated, and in 2017, Kim Kardashian was called out for blackface after she posted a photo promoting her new contour kit.

Similarly, L'Oréal received backlash for whitening Beyoncé's skin in their 2008 ads, prompting accusations of whitewashing.

Perhaps most relevant to teenagers is Snapchat's release of their "Lenses," or filters, in 2015.

While these filters appear fairly innocuous, they also perpetuate certain societal expectations of women by contouring face shape, enlarging eyes, and smoothing skin.

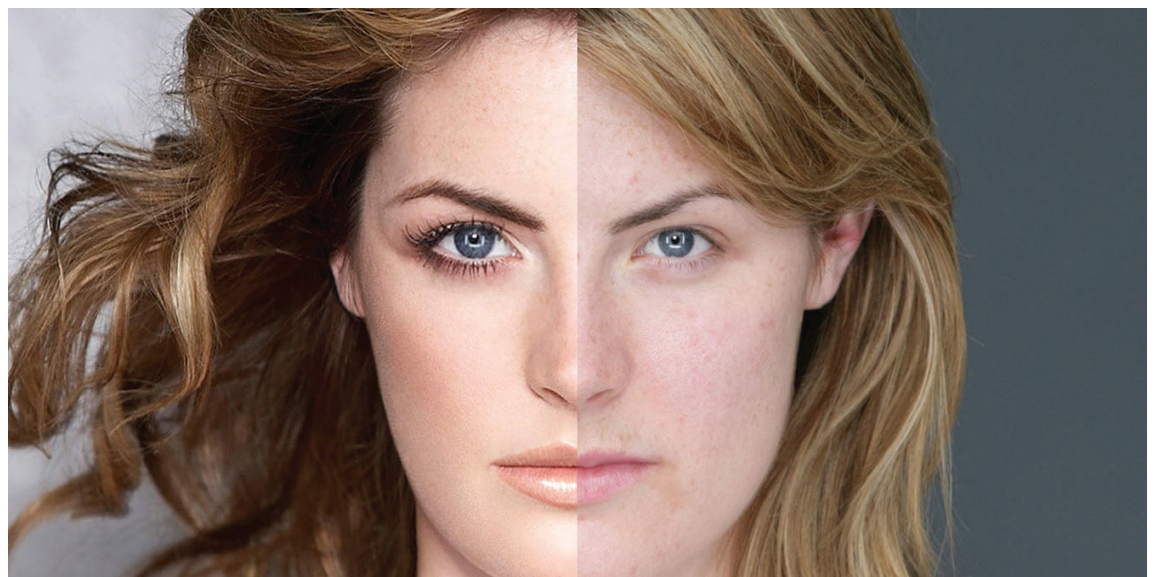
For all generations, this is a beauty standard that can be desensitizing; some people even go so far as to get plastic surgery in order to look like their favorite airbrushed snap filter.

When Snapchat promotes Kylie Jenner's story, consisting exclusively of snaps using filters that perfect her features, what message is it sending to its millions of users?

Many businesses have recently taken to combatting the unrealistic images of women that companies like Victoria's Secret project. Billie, a shave and body brand, started Project Body Hair which features women with body hair since almost all other body brands advertise women shaving their already smooth legs.

Aerie, a lingerie retailer, stopped the digital retouching of their models in 2014, and on Aug. 3, 2016, the company launched the Share Your Spark campaign.

The Share Your Spark video features 40 Aerie women, all with different body types. Each woman shares encouraging words or advice and then passes on her sparkler. This campaign was met with widespread support from women all over the



In 2006, Dove released its acclaimed "Evolution" video, showcasing the realities of the photoshopping process | Dove

country. Rather, she appreciates how companies such as Athleta are encouraging girls to have an active lifestyle as opposed to emphasizing outward appearances.

Yet other companies, such as Abercrombie and Fitch, refuse to join the fight against excessive photoshopping.

"Are we exclusionary? Absolutely. Those companies that are in trouble are trying to target everybody: young, old, fat, skinny. But then you become totally vanilla. You don't alienate anybody, but you don't excite anybody, either," said Mike Jeffries, former Abercrombie CEO, in an interview with Salon in 2006.

Although Jeffries stepped down from Abercrombie in 2014, and the company changed the name of their store employees from "models" to "brand representatives," it seems that the public is more interested in buying from brands that are known for promoting a message of equality

"If your teachers are constantly telling you something, you'll think that it's important," she said.

and inclusiveness.

"If I feel unrepresented in the models on a site, I'm probably less likely to buy from them again. I see no reason for a company to present their clothes on retouched bodies. If anything, it makes me feel uneasy because I can't see how the clothes actually fit people in real life," said Cox.

With some companies fighting against photoshopping to unrealistic beauty standards and some fighting to preserve it, it seems like people are becoming more and more interested in inclusive companies.

Regardless of gender, sexuality, face, or size, the widespread attention that brands such as Aerie have received lately for their efforts reflects this growing trend of inclusion.

"I think that these companies are doing a good thing by fighting against digital retouching because they're showing people that they look perfect just how they are," said sophomore Macy Zaban.