

The Magnet

CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL HUMANITIES MAGNET

MARCH 2009



CORE FOR THE 21st CENTURY:

the Integration of Technology



It seems almost every newspaper, television, radio advertisement has made some new technological advancement, but they are not alone; the Magnet is doing the same. It began with one computer cart, and from there, everything seemed to be racing forward into a new era of technology. The Magnet has spent much time and effort trying to provide new technology for its budding young students. In fact, many classes in the Magnet can now be accessed online through corebaby.org, classes such as Mr. Basinger's philosophy classes for tenth grade and Mr. Lemmon's twelfth grade film classes. In fact, many teachers in the Magnet are using websites such as turnitin.com for class essays, homework etc. Websites such as this one allow the student to submit his or her essay online into a plagiarism checker where the teacher can see just how original a student is and allow the teacher the ability to comment back on their work. Sandy Lee, who has been using the computers in class and accessing material on-line from home says, "It makes the class more interactive and interesting; it is also really helpful because it helps to hone my computer skills, which I'll probably need for a job later in my life".

Just recently, a volunteer group of 10th grade students were offered the opportunity to take their interdisciplinary essay exams on computers instead of the traditional handwritten method. This first-time-ever experiment was an overwhelming success. While many students may still be apprehensive about using computers for their interdisciplinary essays—worries about their typing skills, etc.—others are seeing the advantages. Interviews with some of the tenth grade students found positive feedback to the use of computers. Sara Grossman, one of the testers, said, "It was hard to get started, but once that happened everything was much easier to finish."

The Magnet hopes to continue the process of integration between online technology and the classroom to better prepare its students for life in college and life beyond school.

A Discussion about Core Grades

There are many different stories and rumors that float around our Magnet concerning grades that our students receive. The most common one is that the Core teachers grade too harshly and that it is impossible to get a satisfactory grade from them. This perception has even come up during tours of the program for prospective students and parents. Parents worry their child's GPA may lower if he or she attend our school. The other commonly held belief is that certain grade levels are harder than other grades. To investigate all of this, the Magnet has published a chart (included in this newsletter) that shows the first semester Core grades of our students.

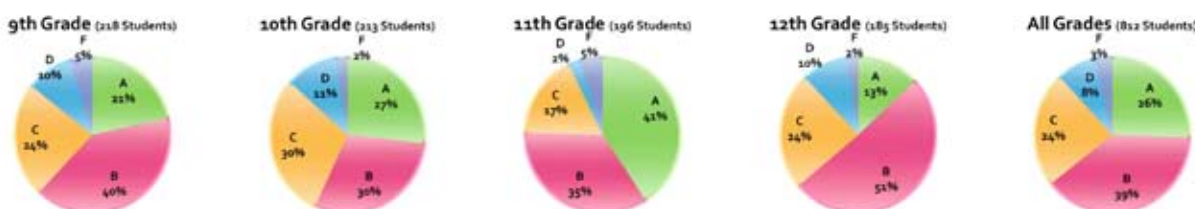
What do the numbers say? Are the rumors true or false?

That is for you to decide. We did ask several students, parents and teachers to give their interpretation of the data. They can be looked at as a "celebration of what the teaching team is doing well and also highlight the areas that the teachers need to improve on," said Mrs. Macon, the 11th grade Magnet coordinator. Many students have voiced their opinion about the transition between 11th and 12th grade not being very smooth due to a lack of connection in curriculum. Surprising to many are the similarities in grades between the 9th and 10th grades. If 10th grade were so hard, then why did more students receive A's (21% to 27%) and a smaller percentage receive D's and F's (15% to 13%)? Several parents suggested that while the curriculum in the 10th grade may be more intense, it is difficult for many students to adjust to the rigorous nature of high school from middle school. It takes some students a whole year to learn how to succeed in high school, so by the 10th grade year, they are ready for a heavier workload.

Many noticed a sharp difference in the percentage of A's given between the 11th and 12th grade. In explaining this, Raahil Kajani, a senior, said "Twelfth grade was the hardest and most challenging year and required you to think at a deeper level, whereas 11th grade was the easiest and had a lot of busy work." For others, the higher grades in the 11th grade demonstrates a "success on the part of the 11th grade teaching team to get kids who have not done well in traditional ways of learning to do well through other avenues of intelligence and creativity." Others believe the grades given by the 11th grade team more accurately reflect the level of our students. If that is the case, then the 12th grade teachers are too harsh in their grades, comparatively. In defense, Ms. Gifford, a 12th grade Core teacher, said, "The Core 12 team did not grade easy and still there were many A's and B's. Therefore, the grades showcased should be interpreted positively."

Gabriel Lemmon, Magnet coordinator, said "While many people may want to use this information to compare one grade level to another, I am more interested in the overall progress of our students. This data is a good starting point for a discussion about the success of our students, but the grades are only one measure of their progress. The data does demonstrate we are blessed to have such high achieving students, and our work with students in the classroom suggests they are being challenged to think and grow. That is the most important data."

Cleveland Humanities Magnet First Semester CORE Grades 2008-2009



Keep The CORE Program Healthy and Our Kids' Minds Healthy, Too!!

Budget cuts in LAUSD have made it more difficult to keep all aspects of CORE going strong. We need to raise **\$10,000** to help CORE buy paperback books, from which all grades benefit. Please visit humanitiesmagnet.org (the MPA web site) to make a voluntary donation online or send your contribution to Magnet Parents Association, c/o Cleveland High School, 8140 Vanalden Ave., Reseda, CA 91335. Checks should be made out to "Friends of Cleveland," but please designate "for the Magnet" on your check.

We thank you and so do the kids.

CORE Grade Updates

9th Grade Overview from Donna Hill

Ninth grade begins this semester with Africa and once again integrates the four disciplines of social institutions, art/religion, English and science. In social institutions, students start with the map of African countries and the origins of those boundaries with the impact of colonialism and the dominance of African lands, peoples and resources by European nations who carved up African into countries and decided which country they wanted to "own". Of course, being colonized forced the African peoples to ultimately fight back, leading to a struggle for independence and freedom from colonial rule. This resistance took many forms from violent to non-violent strategies. South Africa is a quintessential example of a resistance struggle to overthrow Apartheid. Art/religion teaches Africa in three sections: in North Africa, students learn about Islam and how it spread to Sub-Sahara Africa; in West Africa, they study the characteristics of African sculpture and masks and make prints of masks; finally, in South Africa, students learn about the role music played as a non-violent strategy in the resistance movement. In English, students first read the play, *Les Blancs*, written by Lorraine Hansberry, about a colonized African nation on the brink of bloody warfare, a violent resistance, to gain its independence. Both the white settler and the "native" populations are represented by varying points of view about the situation. Then, students read South African short stories and poems that reflect the courage it took to stand up against the Apartheid regime and fight for personal dignity and equality. The fourth discipline is science, which divides into three sections: the first proves that although race has social and political significance, it has no biological validity. In the second section, the students learn about immunology or the study of diseases like malaria and how the body resists them. The final section addresses the spread of AIDS in South Africa where it has become an epidemic and how the people there are struggling to contain and resist it.

10th Grade Overview from Ric Posito

Hello to all from the CORE 10 team! After a slight hiccup with regard to staffing, we are greatly looking forward to an exciting Spring semester. Thus far, we have been studying the progression from Polytheism to Monotheism in the developing Western Civilization. Previously, in Unit Two, we looked at the strengthening of the Christian Church throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. Now, with Unit Three, we are doing a comprehensive analysis of the violence and bloodshed done in the name of faith. We are looking at the introduction of the literary "Renaissance Man," a product of the Scientific Revolution, as presented in *The Canterbury Tales* as well as *Doctor Faustus*. Also, there is the return of the literature of William Shakespeare to CORE 10 with a reading of *King Henry the Fifth*. Social Institutions will be looking at *The Crusades* and the *Conquistadores* from Europe as they participated in acts of genocide against various indigenous civilizations. Mr. Demail will take the students through many of the Wars of Religion in 16th Century Europe. Mr. Basinger will present many different modes of technology, such as "wikis", "blogs" and something called "Google" to structure and organize presentations in both philosophy and art. Speaking of art, Miss Prato is assisting both Mr. Basinger and Mr. Demail as they

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Magnet Parent Association Meeting Dates:

Please join us

• March 18th • April 22 • May 20

Meetings start at 7:00 p.m. in the Parents Resource Room located behind the MPR and Cafeteria.

- Special Thanks To -

Patricia Burgueno for hosting our events.

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CORE Takes on the Public School System

Recently, a group of CORE students, led by teacher Jennifer Macon, completed an eight-month program as part of UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education and Access (IDEA). IDEA is a network of UCLA scholars and students, professionals in schools and public agencies, advocates, community activists, and urban youth whose mission is to make high quality public schooling and successful college participation a routine occurrence in underserved communities.

In part one of their work, the CORE students worked alongside students from Woodrow Wilson High School, Alain Leroy Locke High School, Manual Arts High School and Theodore Roosevelt High School in a hands-on research study conducted solely by the students that examined the barriers to youth voice within the Los Angeles Unified School District. As a follow-up to that work, the students explored what it takes to be a powerful civic agent and what steps must be put into place to advance the ability of all high school students in LAUSD to make their educational experience a better one.

In both cases, the students developed PowerPoint presentations, video PSAs, and policy papers with their recommendations and presented the outcomes to representatives from the school system, the City of Los Angeles, other students and parents. According to UCLA IDEA co-directors Professor John Rogers Ernest Morrell, the students' work will hopefully have a significant impact on educational policy.



(left to right) 11th Graders Catherine Gil and Rahael Asfaw; 11th Grade Coordinator Jennifer Macon; 11th Graders Haemin Jee and Jillian Goodman

Beat the Summertime Blues

The frost is running scared and the trees are sprouting buds if you look close enough, two clues that it's never too soon to start thinking about what your student is going to do this summer to keep his or her brain gears greased. If you are sticking around town this summer, why not take advantage of these opportunities:

ATTEND COLLEGE for FREE:

At L.A. Valley College (LAVC), students can take one or more college classes, tuition free, providing they meet college-level prerequisites and are currently enrolled as high school students. All they have to do is fill out an admissions Application and a Concurrent Enrollment Form, the latter of which needs to be approved by the high school principal. For more information, talk to your school counselor; or contact Annie Reed at LAVC, 818-947-2320. LAVC is located at 5800 Fulton Avenue, between Oxnard and Burbank Boulevard. For more info, visit www.lavc.edu. It's a great way to see how college compares to high school. CORE kids might just be surprised.

VOLUNTEER IN THE COMMUNITY:

- TreePeople, the non-profit urban-forestry group responsible for planting two million trees in Los Angeles, was actually founded by teenagers, which makes it an ultra-cool operation. During the months of June and July, volunteers can spend a Saturday or Sunday morning caring for some of those oxygen-spewing trees planted around the city. Scheduling for June takes place in May and believe it or not, volunteer slots fill up fast. Contact TreePeople's volunteer coordinator Lisa Sotelo at 818-623-4879. To learn more about this exceptional group, visit www.treepeople.org.

- L.A. WORKS offers such an extensive list of volunteer opportunities, there's sure to be something to please even the most finicky volunteer, including things like animal conservation or tutoring younger children. Check out www.laworks.com. or call 323-224-6510.

CORE Grade Updates continued from page 1

present the subject of art for the students. She would like the students, if at all possible, to attend an art presentation at The Getty Center entitled Captured Emotions: Baroque Painting in Bologna 1575-1725, as it has an extremely significant bearing on the curriculum of this unit. Currently, students in art history are discussing, looking at and analyzing architecture and art from the Medieval to the Baroque period. They have familiarized themselves with pictorial representations of biblical stories and scientific discoveries of sight and perspective. Visiting this exhibition would be a great opportunity for you and your child to see a collection of work from the time period they are studying and paintings not seen in class. There are several other exhibitions to see including "La Roldana's Saint Ginés: The Making of a Polychrome" and "Sculpture Drawing the Classical Figure."

11th Grade Overview from Jennifer Macon

Hello and welcome to the second semester of eleventh grade CORE! We hit the ground running in the first week of our Race Unit with what was a very intense and educational Power Pyramid, a recreation of the historical and contemporary power structure of the United States based on race. This introductory exercise proved to be a powerful conversation starter, and now, we begin our study of the history and evolution of race relations in this country. Our goal for this unit is to discover how we can counteract racial inequality by knowledge of self, honest and direct cross-cultural dialogue, and active anti-racism, especially in light of the recent election of Barack Obama, our first African American president. We will be developing our theme, "The Trouble We're In: Confronting Race and Racism in Our American Democracy," with a series of interdisciplinary workshops that survey history from the African American perspective by, among other things, reading Richard Wright's acclaimed autobiography, *Black Boy*, and by learning of and recreating the art of Romare Bearden and the Harlem Renaissance. From this foundation of black/white race relations, we will explore the multi-racial experiences of whites and people of color by discussing topics such as identity, privilege, the nature of difference, immigration, affirmative action, biraciality, the experiences of South Asians in a post-September 11th era, etc. In March, we will be welcoming scholar, author, and anti-racist advocate, Tim Wise, as our guest speaker. We anticipate many of our students going home eager to discuss these very important, relevant, often sensitive issues, and we would encourage you to engage them in a dialogue where you can share your experiences and, together, ask and explore questions about race.

12th Grade Overview from Ray Linn

This quarter we're taking the linguistic turn and focusing primarily on later 20th-century ideas about language and its relation to thought, emotion, and the self, and once again, I regret to inform you that we are battling negligent childrearing and extreme cultural deprivation. To be specific: virtually all 12th graders came to us believing that it makes sense to talk about pure thoughts and emotions that exist independent of language. Some even talk as though they can "see" their thoughts and emotions "in their minds." And almost all of the 12th graders believe they have some kind of mysterious "self" that exists independent of the language they think in—again, apparently they believe that they can see something beneath their language. And when they do mumble something about "language," they think that, whether a stop sign or the "To be or not to be speech," it's all alike, as though there were nothing special about the language of art. Not only that, but practically the whole class didn't even know that written language is the key to dominance, and that orals always lose out to literates when the fight starts. Some of these videots had no idea that their retardation is a consequence of hours spent in front of a television rather than a book. Of course, we've contacted the proper authorities, but we've been told that there's just no more room in California jails for negligent parents. So we're just trying to do the best we can, and perhaps a few seniors will graduate.

CORE TEACHER PROFILE:

The Road Not Taken....

He could have been a doctor, after being offered a full scholarship to medical school. He turned that down.

He was offered an appointment as a naval officer by the Naval Academy and turned that down, too. He could have had a career in opera, completing his undergraduate major in music at USC and turning away opportunities in management at the Seattle, San Francisco and New York Opera companies.

Instead, Neil Anstead has been teaching at Cleveland High School since 1959, the year the school first opened. That totals 50 happy and satisfying years in education, teaching high school students a variety of subjects that reflect his many interests. When Anstead was awarded his teaching credential, it was for a general secondary credential that has allowed him to teach diverse subjects, such as AP Economics, AP Art History, AP English Literature, Mythology and Algebra (among others).

Anstead has always liked teaching high school and feels it suits him well. Although he concurrently taught at Pierce College for ten years, he did not enjoy it as much as high school, where he has greater flexibility to experiment with new courses and material that reflect his broad interests.

In 1959, when Cleveland first opened for 10th grade students only (additional grades were added in subsequent years as construction was completed), the school was significantly different than today. Most noticeably, "it was a lily white school on the edges of civilization. There were no housing tracts nearby, only open fields," Anstead explained. Students were permitted to ride their horses to school, and others came barefoot. Needless to say, that way of life did not last long.

Anstead finds the high school experience to be much better now in many respects. He particularly enjoys the "wonderful ethnic mix" and finds students to be much broader minded. He also finds current Core students to be more concerned about one another and politer than in years past. "... especially politer to me," he notes. "It may be my age."

Anstead's biggest claim to fame – and his highest achievement – is founding coordinator of the Cleveland High School Humanities Magnet, a role he held for 25 years after its inception in 1981. He fondly recalls the Cleveland principal asking him to undertake this endeavor, and his subsequent visits throughout the city to publicize the program and recruit students for the inaugural year. Within three years, the humanities program was recognized throughout LAUSD for its excellence, and, within six years, the program attained national prominence, with Anstead traveling nationwide to create similar programs. He proudly notes, "Humanities is being taught in this city because of this school" and most LAUSD high schools now have Humanitas programs modeled on Core.

Mr. Anstead has the highest regard for his Core teaching colleagues and is ready with praise for the "superb passion and commitment" they bring to their work. He has great respect for their shared interest in lifelong learning and is quick to note their positive influence on his own studies.

Anstead currently enjoys several interests centering on Japanese culture. He finds sheer beauty in the discipline of the formal tea ceremony, which displays balance and order in each movement. He also enjoys Ikebana flower arranging.

Even after 50 years, Anstead has no plans to leave and finds the experience gained each year continues to increase his confidence as a teacher. Anstead relates to the Robert Frost poem *The Road Not Taken* and can say with certainty he definitely "took the right road" in dedicating his career to teaching high school students. He notes with satisfaction, "I'm where I should be." The Cleveland community definitely agrees.