

The WASL and upperclassmen: a match made in heaven?

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The WASL: a yearly tradition of wearisome requirements for sleepy-eyed freshmen and sophomores, and the most cherished two weeks of the springtime school year for juniors and seniors.

One of the most popular options for this free time is always sleeping in, especially with the early arrival of Daylight Savings Time this year, taking an extra hour of sleep away from frustrated students a day before testing began in March. WASL days are spent differently by all upperclassmen, depending on individual priorities.

For Brandon Hollen, a junior

at Freeman High School, the decision of what to do with the time was already made for him.

"Last year I was sick during the first day of the Reading WASL, so I ended up having to take the reading part this year," Hollen said.

Due to unfortunate circumstances, Brandon was unable to complete his make-up test at an earlier date.

"I wish there could have been a way that I could have just taken it last year all in one day, I don't see why everything is so strict," Hollen said. "I was told about the tests in the summer and that I would get something in the mail for it. That never happened. I ended up hearing about it on the news or something. I was a little frustrated."

When asked about how he would spend his time if not taking the WASL, Brandon replied, "There are not enough hours in a day, so I totally would have caught up on some sleep. I guess I'll get to do that during the next section of testing."

For that same reason, Amanda Dusthimer, a senior at Rogers High School, used her WASL days as a well deserved break.

"I slept a lot. I really needed to catch up on my sleep," Dusthimer said.

Dusthimer has no regrets for how she spent her time and plans to do things the same way in April.

WASL time can be a real source for seniors to finish senior projects or study for upcoming AP tests, but this pres-

sure-packed combo can be too much at times.

"Honestly, I'm burnt-out from all of it," Dusthimer said. "You could say it's 'senioritis.' I'm just trying to get a break from school being so stressful."

For a large amount of upperclassmen like Dusthimer, WASL week does mean a relaxing break of two more hours of sleep a night, but with college entrance becoming more competitive, some students are studying up to get ahead of the pack.

Alex Steiner, a junior at Ferris High School, is putting in the extra effort to improve her skills and prepare for approaching assessments.

"This WASL time I attended SAT prep classes and was up at 6:30 every morning so that

I could study and prepare," Steiner said. "The next WASL days I plan on going to the AP review for whatever class offers it. This year I plan on taking three AP tests of Language, Chemistry and US History. I really want to do well on the SAT and every AP test I take."

Although Steiner is focused on her studies, she understands what a great break WASL week can be.

"I took the real WASL when I was in 9th grade, so I got to sleep in last year. I would rather be sleeping in, don't get me wrong, but I also really think that these AP study sessions during WASL will pinpoint me as an extra hard working student and hopefully give me that extra help I need to get into a great college," she said.

Steiner says she would rec-

ommend these early morning study sessions to anyone, and that they are a great chance to "get ahead and be prepared." In knowing that every student's priorities are different, she restates her thoughts on taking the time off.

"People do need that extra two hours of sleeping in; I know I could use it and need it. I mean, school is hard!" Steiner said. "If students see an opportunity to catch up on sleep, take a break from homework, and just relax, even if it's just for two hours, they will take it. That's how most of the juniors and seniors see it. They see it as, 'I went through this for two years waking up early and taking a test for two hours, now's my time to get rest and sleep in.'"



Briefing: What's happening in Kosovo; why teens should care

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The province of Kosovo proclaimed its freedom from Serbia last February, creating triumph in the hearts of many, and apprehension and anger in the eyes of others.

First, some background:

Kosovo's parliament voted unanimously to break away from Serbia; however, of the 120 members, 11 were not present, including some ethnic Serbs. Kosovo desired independence because the primary ethnicity of the state is actually Albanian (not Serbian), and most inhabitants feel that they could govern themselves better than Serbia.

Located in the Balkan region of Europe, Kosovo developed a mix of Christians and Muslims at the end of the 19th century when Albanians became the primary ethnic group in Kosovo.

There is some doubt as to whether Kosovo will be able to achieve democracy. Being an underprivileged nation, the unemployment rate is 60 percent and the average monthly wage is \$250. Kosovo will only be able to import and export goods with nations that have recognized it, and the national infrastructure will require updating and rebuilding.

Second, how does this affect teens?

In the U.S., the traditional mindset is that democracy is righteous, and any other form of governing is aberrant, yet controversy sparks as to whether that is the case in the situation with Kosovo.

The U.S. government supports Kosovo, and President Bush believes that gaining freedom will be essential to establishing stability in the Balkans. He maintains that "the Serbian people can know that they have a friend in America."

Yet will stability be possible in an area with such diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds?

Ana Motoc, a foreign exchange student at Freeman High School from Moldova, in Eastern Europe, can relate.

"In my country, there are a few thousand people that want their independence now after what happened in Kosovo, and I think that the Balkan area, especially Kosovo, is a powder keg for that region," Motoc said.

Serbian sympathizers argue that the declaration of independence is setting the precedent for rebellion and secession movements in surrounding territories, posing as a dangerous situation for countries like China or Russia that control many territories with the potential to rebel. Serbians also believe that Kosovo's form of gaining independence is illegal.

"I think what is very dangerous is that the United States and the key EU [European Union] countries have abandoned any attempt at following the dictates of international law ... and said, well, yes, we'll recognize [the law] for every other repub-

lic in Yugoslavia, except Serbia," said George Szamuely, commentator on the Balkans, during a broadcast from the radio/television program, "Democracy Now!" "Serbia will just have, you know, a vast chunk of its territory just taken away from them."

Third, a question surfaces: is it reasonable to whittle a new nation out of a religious or ethnic minority?

"If a small peace-loving and democratic country in Europe, a member state of the UN, can be deprived of its territory illegally and against its will, historic injustice will have occurred, because a legitimate democracy has never before been punished this way," Serbian President Boris Tadic told the Security Council.

Serbia has recalled its ambassadors from the 27 countries supporting Kosovo's independence, while countries supporting Serbia are cutting ties with Kosovo's allies.

The fact that nations from all corners of the globe are "picking sides" and severing relationships is concerning. While democracy is favored, outside circumstances often play a larger role than is expected.

Following the civil war between the Albanians and Serbs that resulted in the deaths of over 10,000 people, Kosovo has been patrolled by NATO troops and put under the authority of the U.N. since 1999.

"Historically, [Kosovo] has been a turbulent area and the problems go back further than WWI and the assassination of Franz Ferdinand ... probably to the time of the crusades," said Mike Thacker, a political studies teacher at Freeman High School.

Serbian protesters have targeted Kosovo's allies, including the Turkish, Croatian, British and U.S. embassies, resulting in minimal destruction to property and some injuries, mostly to policemen.

The fact that Kosovo desires to be recognized as an independent nation poses an interesting quandary for the U.S. down the road. The seeds are planted for revolution and many nations like Taiwan, are seeing that separation from their mother country is plausible. By supporting democracy in Kosovo, the U.S. may be asked to help "spread democracy" elsewhere.

And finally, how does this affect "me?"

Our generation will undoubtedly be faced with Kosovo and similar situations. By learning from history and past actions we have the knowledge to prevent the situation with Kosovo from escalating into that of Afghanistan. Kosovo's parliament agreed that democracy was the correct course to take; however until Serbia and the rest of the world agree to recognize their independence, Kosovo has more of a dilemma than a democracy.

Soccer, track provide basis of life for Kenna Middleton

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The student in this feature was randomly selected from a yearbook randomly pulled from a pile on the Vox floor. The idea for this feature is based off of David Johnson's "Everyone Has a Story," published weekly in the Lewiston Morning Tribune.

From the moment she gets out of school until she gets home at night, Kenna Middleton, a sophomore at Lakeside High School, just keeps going and going.

Starting with track right after school, Kenna is both a distance runner and a pole-vaulter, a combination that is not easy to accomplish. Then, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, she goes right from track to soccer practice, where she plays until as late as 7 p.m.

Kenna has done track since last year, when she decided to join as a freshman.

"My friend pretty much convinced me to do track," Kenna explained. "I had some raw talent at the mile and she convinced me to give it a try in track."

In order to train for the mile-run, Kenna first does a workout with the distance team. Sometimes, this is a hill or speed workout, other times it is a run approximately an hour and a half long. The practice and work in distance last year paid off and Kenna's best mile time was five minutes and forty-eight seconds. Her goal for this year is to get this time down to at least five minutes and forty seconds.

After she completes the distance workout, Kenna then joins the pole-vaulters. For their workout, pole-vaulters do what you might expect: practice their form and increase their strength for pole-vaulting.

"It's kind of repetition," Kenna said. "You just give it a try and the coach tells you what to change. Pretty soon, it just comes naturally."

Kenna's best pole-vaulting height last year was six feet high. However, Kenna hopes to do even better this year since she broke her hand in the middle of the season last year playing soccer, and could therefore no longer pole-vault.

"I got into a collision with a girl and it kind of bent my fingers back and broke some of the bones in my hand," she said.

Along with track, Kenna has been playing soccer ever since she was in first grade and has enjoyed it deeply.

"You get to meet people from different schools and you all love soccer, so it's easy to connect with all of them," Kenna said.

Playing both mid-field and the occasional defense, soccer is something that Kenna devotes time to almost all year around. Playing high school soccer for Lakeside in the fall, she continues with soccer in the winter by joining an indoor soccer team and then plays club soccer for a team called The Scotties during the spring.

"School soccer is a lot more intense and there's more pressure to do well, but in club, it's more relaxed. At least, that's how it is on my team," Kenna said.

As with any sport, soccer also has its risk of injury. Besides breaking her hand last year during the track season, Kenna has also had her shin bone bruised. Another girl on her team has torn her ACL (anterior cruciate ligament - located around the knee) and the goalie of her team has also broken her nose. Kenna's family and a lot of her friends are also involved with sports, making it easier to hang out with them. Her dad used to play soccer and her brother, who is in 7th grade, also competes in track and soccer. Kenna's brother and dad, as well as some of her friends, even referee soccer games as a way to help out and earn a little bit of money.

Kenna is also able to bond with members of her soccer teams during activities that her teams do together off of the soccer field. They sometimes meet and play games, as well as have team dinners.

"My favorite [team bonding event] was the soccer sleepover at the beginning of the year," Kenna said. "We all stayed over at one of the girls' house and had a lot of fun."

Kenna also said that both of her parents are extremely supportive of her and soccer. While she has seen examples of stereotypical soccer moms yelling at their kids, she says that her mom isn't like many others.

In the end, Kenna really enjoys both track and soccer, but for different reasons.

"Soccer is a lot about skill and endurance because you're in the game a long time but track is more individual so I really like them both," she said.



Cate Graman / Staff Photographer

Sophomore Kenna Middleton of Lakeside High School has a busy schedule with her long list of sports. Kenna runs distance and pole vaults in track along with playing soccer.