

J2 should qualify as an English credit

"In J2, we learn how to write efficiently and correctly about real life situations. We become self-learners."



Co-Editor-in-Chief Christine Erickson (12)

"I've learned so much in J2 about how to write and communicate effectively, clearly and accurately."



Co-Editor-in-Chief Owen Johnson (12)

"In J2, you are responsible for meeting deadlines and managing your time. It's a sneak peek into college rigor."



Co-Editor-in-Chief Kira Greenfield (12)

PETER HERLYA
STAFF WRITER

Research, writing, analyzing, interviewing, editing and revising are all educational aspects that journalism students master. Journalism 2, or J2 for short, meets every day to write and produce the latest issue of the award-winning newspaper, *The Heights Herald*. Proof of the courses success are the years of Gold Medallion awards issued to Columbia Heights by the Minnesota High School Press Association for an overall high quality production.

In past years, the class substituted for English 12 when taken during a student's senior year. It is recently under debate whether or not it should still be allowed to take the place of regular English.

Journalism teaches and develops not only the same skills, but more than what is taught as part of the English 12 curriculum. J2 students not only use critical writing and analytical skills, but they must do it with enough proficiency to be print-worthy.

"Although there isn't a literature component, students critically read other newspapers for content and quality since good readers become better writers. They are constantly challenging themselves to explore different styles of writing and perfecting their grammar," former Editor-in-Chief Jenessa Mohn (2016) said.

The class also focuses on time management and meeting deadlines, two skills

needed in most careers. Run like a college class, students learn to become self-directed with teacher guidance. They also learn the importance of dedication and pride in one's work.

"I can tell a difference between my stories from the beginning of the year and now. I started out writing a lot of opinion stories but now, I write any type of articles that are needed," sports editor Sam Alexon (11) said.

English teacher Ms. Jill Jungers developed the journalism curriculum in 2000, shaping the course over the years into what J2 is today. Since then, skills acquired in the course have helped students in a variety of ways.

"J2 was a crucial part of developing my skills as a writer. It allowed me to be successful in my college English courses," Mohn said.

With the announcement of Jungers' retirement this June, the decision was made that her peer, Mr. Christopher Polley, will take over as adviser of the program.

"Everything I've read in *The Heights Herald* so far has been extremely high quality. These are clearly not writers or readers that need additional Language Arts coursework," Polley said.

Another change will be the shift to an online newspaper presence as well as print. Although the reins will change hands and format may change, the fate of the journalism program itself should not be in question.

"The Journalism program is really ben-

eficial, because you learn skills that aren't taught in a regular English class. J2 shapes students into future leaders and becoming better people in society," Alexon said.

Another reason an English 12 credit should be given to seniors who take J2, is that the program depends on it. J2 already takes up four class slots throughout the year. Adding another English class to that makes six English slots in a full school year. Students do not want to spend all their time in English courses. They want to develop other interests or get other credits they need to graduate.

"There are many elective courses that I would have liked to have taken in the past, but wasn't given the opportunity because of doubling courses. I was looking forward to having that chance in my senior year," Alexon said.

The list of accomplishments accumulated by the Heights journalism program is admirable and something the district should take pride in. The newspaper gives students a voice and connects the high school to the community. When seniors enroll in the course, they know they will be part of a hard-working program. Exempting them from English 12 is a small concession and recognizes the high expectations they must meet in J2.

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Religion affects performance in school testing

RAHMA ABDI
STAFF WRITER

Taking a test is already stressful and difficult. Try doing it on an empty stomach, and the challenge multiplies. This is the dilemma of Muslim students who fast for religious purposes during the school year.

Ramadan occurs during the ninth month of the lunar Islamic calendar and marks an important holiday for Muslims. During Ramadan, people fast, refraining from eating and drinking, from sunrise to sunset. It is a time to focus on one's faith. Muslims fast to identify with those who don't have basic necessities. They also perform acts of generosity, raise money and donate supplies to help others.

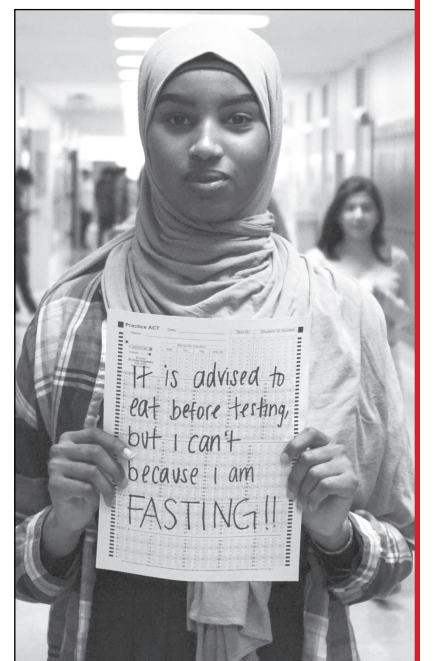
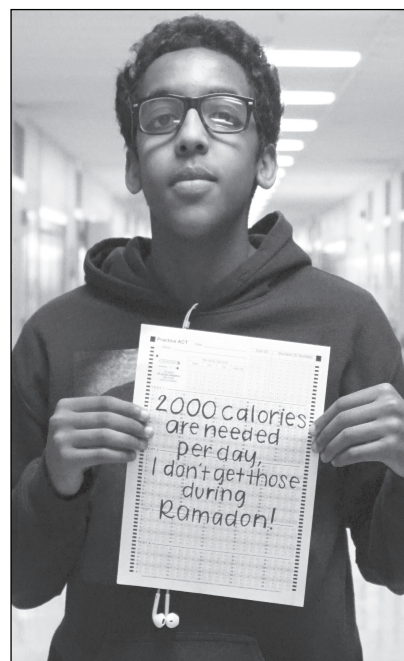
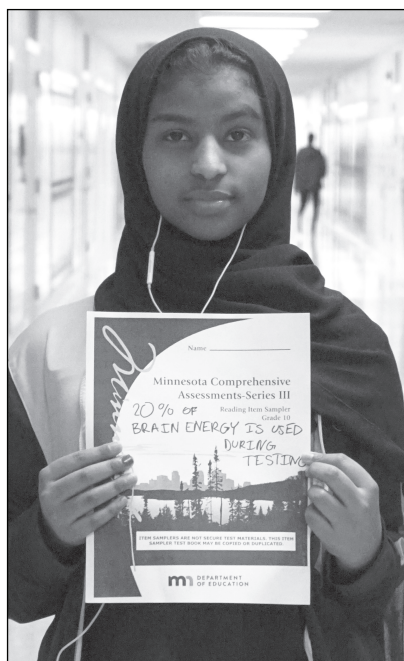
"Ramadan is a time for me to connect with my religion and to be more compassionate towards others," Busad Ismael (11) said.

The problem is, the body needs nourishment and fluids to function at its best. According to Science America, during tests, the brain consumes 20% of one's total energy. When a student is fasting, the brain does not have

enough blood sugar due to a lack of nourishment. Piedmont Atlanta Hospital conducted a study of people who skipped meals. The brain needs glucose to run efficiently. When it is lacking, the body does not function at 100 percent. Low blood sugar can also cause irritability, confusion and fatigue. At the same time, the body begins to increase production of cortisol, intensifying stress and hunger. From this study, Atlanta was able to conclude that the students who did not eat before tests performed lower than students who did.

"If I don't eat a good meal before a test, I find it harder to focus," Ahmed Abdi (9) said.

According to the US National Library of Medicine (UNLM), the lack of food consumed during Ramadan leads to alterations in feeding habits. It also disturbs sleep patterns and duration of rest. This all negatively affects cognition, impeding a student's ability to pay attention, learn, remember new skills and solve problems. Several studies done by UNLM revealed that psychomotor performance, subjective alertness and memory are



Photos by Kate Rockwell

Muslim students Hanni Hussein (10), Mahad Mohamed (10) and Nasteho Aden (10) give valid reasons why fasting students struggle with standardized testing during the Islamic holiday of Ramadan as they advocate for change.

severely affected during Ramadan.

This year, Ramadan starts around the time of MCA and AP testing. Muslim students will have an unfair disadvantage because of fasting for religious purposes.

The state and schools can help fasting students by moving the date earlier or later in the year. A conscious effort needs to be made in regards to the

calendar and scheduling events.

"Having the tests earlier and not during Ramadan would allow me to have the energy I need to do well on them," Sundus Abdulahi (11) said.

Other ways to help the students who are fasting is to take the test in parts so the Muslim students can get breaks in between each segment.

Another problem Mus-

lim students face is where to go during lunch while they are fasting. Sitting around others who are eating is cruel. Currently, they are allowed to go to the ISS room, but it is already packed with over 40 students. This leads to wandering the halls or hanging out in bathrooms. If an adequate space were provided, they could stay out of trouble and work on school assignments.

"The library should be open during lunch time so could benefit academically during that time, which, right now, is wasted" Muna Ali (11) said.

Muslim students should be able to follow their Islamic beliefs and fast without it negatively affecting their education in regards to testing. Public education needs to make accommodations to ensure their academic success.

