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High school in eighth grade By Brenna Guard

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This year I am in eighth grade, but that's not all I do. I am also in accelerated math and science programs. I have just finished taking Geometry at Central High School and am now taking Molecular Biology. Being a part of this program has helped me gain many new friends, but it also comes with many challenges.

The first challenge is scheduling. Because of the schedule difference between Central High School and JB Young, I have to leave class in the middle of fourth period so I can catch the bus and get to class on time. On Wednesdays, the schedule is even more difficult because I have to leave in the middle of lunch. At least my friends from Sudlow—yes, Sudlow—that ride the bus to Central with me have the same scheduling problems. They change and stretch for gym and then leave. Sounds like my kind of class. Anyway, there are a lot of up sides to what may seem like a difficult year.

We almost never have homework for 8th grade classes. It may give us a lot of time to spend relaxing at home, but it does absolutely nothing to prepare us for life at Central. At Central, you have homework for almost every class every night. You might even have homework over breaks, and you almost always have homework over the weekends. What a pain compared to the work load here. And as I learned my first day of Molecular Biology, nothing is accepted late. The teachers won't wait around for you anymore. They have expectations—high ones. The good news is that once I take my end-of-semester final on January 17, I'll be finished with math for the rest of the year.

That's the way all of the courses work. That's how high school students only have four—yes, four—classes a day. Each course only lasts a semester, but the down side is that they are each an hour and a half.

Lessons move quickly. And once you're done with a lesson, you're done. No going back. That's it. The teacher won't wait around for you to catch up so make sure to do your homework and study because there is such a thing as a pop quiz at Central. If you're not ready, they can be a big pain. You can fail out of a class. If you don't do

well enough the first term, they will bump you down for the second half of the course. Not fun.

All in all, this is turning out to be a very enlightening experience. It has really prepared me for what to expect at Central. Basically, they aren't going to let you slide with things anymore. It's their way or the highway—end of story. If you think that high school is going to be a breeze, think again. The teachers don't care whether you're ready to move on, but if you need help, ask questions because it is their job to help you figure out the answers.



Hazards of smoking By Josie Mumm & Jackie Howard

Bad breath, yellow teeth, and stinky clothes—these are some of the many side effects of smoking—along with lung disease, emphysema, the breakdown of lung tissue, organ damage, and heart disease.

These effects can limit what a person can do both physically and mentally. The effects of smoking can also be fatal. Smoking can cause loss of bone density, which increases the risk of osteoporosis. This causes bones to bend and break easier, which happens mostly to elderly people, but smoking can cause this to happen earlier in life.

When you smoke, not only will your clothes

Famous Words selected
by Tre'Chiondria Lathan:

“Don't go around saying the world owes you a living; the world owes you nothing; it was here first.”
—Mark Twain

Every time you smoke just ONE cigarette, it takes anywhere from 5-20 minutes off your life.

and furniture stink but also your hair will surround your face with *eau de ashtray*. The smell of cigarette smoke lingers so it's terribly hard to get out of many surfaces.

When you smoke not only do you endanger your own life, but also your friends' and family's—the people you care about. Second-hand smoke kills about 72,600 people a year. Every time someone lights a tobacco product, everyone around them is in danger. The easiest way to protect yourself and everyone around you from these symptoms is to avoid smoking. You can also try to talk your friends and family out of smoking.

Today, about 23% of high school students smoke. Peer pressure is one of the major reasons that teenagers start to smoke. If you get an offer to smoke, just say no or walk away. Even if they call you names as you walk away, you'll feel better knowing that you can still breathe. Another way to prevent smoking is to remind a smoker of all the reasons they need to quit. Many people will quit because they know that it endangers their families. So don't start. Help your loved ones quit and stay healthy!

Express yourself/ dress yourself By Mackenzie House

We all have our own personalities, and we can show them by the clothes that we wear. Everybody has his or her own unique style, whether it's preppy, punk, gothic, or you go for anything that says "I'm a tree hugger!"

When you're at the mall, have you ever noticed that those kids you define as creeps or weirdoes all shop at the stores you think are scary—like Hot Topic and Spencer's? And then you see the people who look like they just walked out of a magazine, you know, the ones who shop at Abercrombie, Hollister, and every other store that charges one hundred dollars for one pair of pants. But the fact is those stores make people who they are. I mean you wouldn't see a "hard-core rocker" walking in the mall showing off her new Gucci purse! It's just not natural, or in their comfort zone.

That's why all of us have our own unique style, because it fits our comfort zone. Our comfort zone is what makes us us. You shouldn't wear anything or change any part of you for somebody else. Just be you, and enjoy yourself!

Roller skating madness By Mackenzie House

Have you ever been sitting in your room on a Friday night with nothing to do? Well, how about going roller skating! Eldridge Skate Park is a really popular place for kids our age to hang out on Fridays. You can go roller skating, hang out with your friends, and listen to good music...what could be better? Instead of being bored at home, call up your best friends, get mom and dad to give you a few dollars, get some comfy socks, and head out to the skate park. (Fridays are late skates, 6:30-10:30.)

New Year's celebration By Meghan Essary & Anesa Lovedy

Some people start the new year by counting down until midnight. They wait until that glorious day of January 1, but the New Year wasn't always held on that day and it isn't a new holiday. In fact, it's one of the oldest holidays of all. It was first celebrated by the ancient Babylonians about 4000 years ago. Around 2000 B.C., this wildly/widely celebrated holiday began.

The Babylonians began the New Year with the first visible New Moon (crescent moon) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring). It was logical to start the New Year at this time because it was the time when everything started to blossom again. The Babylonian New Year celebration lasted 11 days, and each day was celebrated differently.

The "Baby New Year" tradition started in Ancient Egypt as a symbol of rebirth. Later, it was used in Greece around 600 B.C. The Grecians used a baby as a way to celebrate their God, Dionysus. They would put a baby in a basket and parade around with it as a way to symbolize the annual rebirth of Dionysus.

Another culture that is famous for their New Year Celebration is the Chinese. Another thing that some people traditionally do on New Years is try to affect their luck. Some people believe that your luck in the new year can be affected by what they do and eat. The Dutch think that it's lucky to eat doughnuts on New Year's Day. Whatever you think, it's a fresh start. Make the most of it.



Talent by Zach Meyer & Kenny Nguyen

Talent is something each and every one of us has inside—although you might not think so. Take funny faces. Funny faces can make people laugh or feel better. Last year the Talent Show was full of great performances from Abby, singing and playing the piano. This year, I hope we do just as well. If you want to know about how to get into the show, ask Ms. Lindskog for auditions times, practice times, and show dates.

Music--why is it so important? By Kinzie Hull

Today, most teenagers listen to music, whether it's rock, hip-hop, rap, country—ANYTHING! Music plays a really big role in a teenager's life. Music can help a person calm down, rock out with friends, or even do homework!

Different types of music express different types of feelings. For example, if someone were sad or depressed, she might turn up her stereo and blast some sort of rock music to get the bad memory out of her head and forget about it. Everyday the world changes, and everyday the music we listen to changes. No matter what, music will always play a big part in people's lives.

The problem with property taxes By Tyler Hurst

It is something any normal American would despise; PROPERTY TAXES. Every American that owns property such as a house has to pay PROPERTY TAXES or lose the house which they have *already paid for*. This ridiculous tax is unfair to those who have already paid the full value of their houses, oppressive to those who can't pay the tax because of other problems, and unjust to a person who winds up in a poor house in a wealthy neighborhood. (This is unfair because the tax is in part determined by how nice the neighborhood is.) Now, I ask you, "Why should we have to pay for a house we already own?" In my opinion, we should get rid of this ridiculous tax altogether.

As sad as I am to say it, Iowa ranks 12th in the highest property tax with a rate of 1.27%. This is a pathetically high tax rate when compared to Kentucky's tax rate of 0.67%, which is nearly half as much as we pay here. Now, to give you an idea of how high this tax is, pretend you have bought a \$100,000.00 home and paid off

the whole amount. (A 100,000.00 house is pretty cheap.) You would have to pay \$127.00 in PROPERTY TAXES each month. That may not seem like much, but over a span of 20 years, you would have paid greater than 30% of the house's original price or \$30,480.00. That is enough to buy you a fairly decent car. If you were to buy the same house in Kentucky and pay the tax for the same span of time; you would only spend 16,080.00. This is a clear sign that the PROPERTY TAXES in Iowa are too high. (Kentucky is fairly high compared to Louisiana's tax of 0.17%)

Thankfully, there are some things you can do to help compensate for these taxes such as carpooling to reduce gasoline expenses. You could also spend less time on the Internet, talking on the cell phone, and watching TV. There are many other ways to cut money; but these are just some of the more costly things. Of course, we would all prefer it if there were no PROPERTY TAXES at all, but how likely is it that the states will get rid of them?

Where the Wild Things Are By Tre'Chiondra Lathan

Ms. Lindskog's second period class created a musical performance based on Maurice Sendak's children's book *Where the Wild Things Are*. The participants were CJ Gales, Taylor Greenwood, Maya Bostic, Tra'shun Hickman, Anna Marie-Lyons, Keviana Wilmington, Veronica Moller-Francis, Jameel Muhammad, Nolen Fuller, and Jasmine Levi.

The offstage voices were Shelby Woolison, Kenny Nguyen, Tre'Chiondra Lathan, and Don Smith. The students added their own twist to make it cool. The music was both old and new. The students enjoyed the performance very much. A big thanks to Mr. Fischer and Mrs. Porter, too. Thank you, Ms. Mesick, for making the props. Great job!

Pain By Zach Meyer

Pain has very weird ways of coming to the surface. It can pop up and hurt you when you really don't expect it—just like when you give your heart to somebody and they just throw it away like you're not even there. Now, this isn't the only cause of pain, I know, but it can be one of the worst.

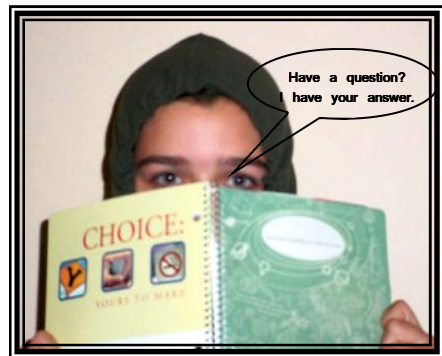
When you get depressed, it can lead to losing your friends and your heart. This is

the extreme extent to which pain hurts, but it can cause people to commit suicide. You think you can not live without the person who has hurt you. Although it will hurt for a while, you should never think of suicide. For in this world, there are people who love you. They may not show it at times, but they do love you. Also you may go through more heartbreak before you find the right person. This will be easier if you remember somewhere out there, someone is just waiting to find you as well.

Depression is the most common mental health disorder in the United States among teens and adults, and can have a serious impact on the lives of the many teens who suffer from depression. Statistics show that teen depression is a common problem:

- ◆ About 20 percent of teens will experience teen depression before they reach adulthood.
- ◆ Between 10 to 15 percent of teenagers have some symptoms of teen depression at any one time.
- ◆ About 5 percent of teens are suffering from major depression at any one time
- ◆ As many as 8.3 percent of teens suffer from depression for at least a year at a time, compared to about 5.3 percent of the general population.
- ◆ Most teens with depression will suffer from more than one episode. 20 to 40 percent will have more than one episode within two years, and 70 percent will have more than one episode before adulthood. Episodes of teen depression generally last about 8 months.
- ◆ Dysthymia, a type of mild, long-lasting depression, affects about 2 percent of teens, and about the same percentage of teens develop bipolar disorder in their late teenage years. 15 percent of teens with depression eventually develop bipolar disorder.
- ◆ A small percent of teens also suffer from seasonal depression, usually during the winter months in higher latitudes.

Teen depression can affect a teen regardless of gender, social background, income level, race, or school or other achievements, though teenage girls report suffering from depression more often than teenage boys. Teenage boys are less likely to seek help or recognize that they suffer from depression, probably due to different social expectations for boys and girls—girls are encouraged to express their feelings while boys are not. Teenage girls' somewhat stronger dependence on social ties, however, can increase the chances of teen depression being triggered by social factors, such as loss of friends.



Miss Understand

Dear Miss Understand,

My god-brother is suicidal. He has actually tried to kill himself. I'm scared to talk to him about it. What should I do?

**Sincerely,
Worried**

Dear Worried,

First of all, this is not your problem. You need to involve a trusted adult. Kids shouldn't have to deal with such things. Is he getting mental health help at all? This is why you need to involve an adult. Appointments need to be made. Grown-ups need to be helping your god-brother.

It's natural to be scared to talk about suicide, but you don't have to talk about suicide when you try to be supportive of your god-brother. Just treat him like you always do. Get him interested in something other than himself—be a good friend—and let the adults handle it.

**Sincerely,
Miss Understand**

Dear Miss Understand,

I have a friend that I like as more than a friend. I don't know what to do. His sister told a girl that he wants to go out with her. He doesn't want to, but then again, he does. His sister asked her out for him. I need advice. What should I do?

**Sincerely,
Dating Misery**

Dear Dating Misery,

First of all, why is his sister asking girls out for him? That's kind of creepy. Why do you have to do anything? He hasn't asked you out. Just wait it out. If he's likes you as more than a friend, he'll let you know. Otherwise, you can still hang out and be friends.

**Sincerely,
Miss Understand**

Invisible children: an in-depth response to the war in Northern Uganda

By Brenna Guard

In April of 2003, three young men planned a trip to Southern Sudan to get a first hand look at the war. They were not allowed to land in Southern Sudan because of the plane precautions that were taking place. They landed in Northern Uganda instead, and because of a car bombing that

blocking their path, they had to stay in Gulu.

Their first night there, they discovered what was really going on because of the war. The first thing that they discovered while there was a night commuter. A night commuter is a person who travels from point A to point B at night because they are scared that the LRA, which stands for Lord's Resistance Army, would kill them if caught during the day. The entire village is plagued with fear of death and the abduction of their children.

The bulk of the night commuters are children. They are forced to sleep in the bus parks and in underground tunnels because they are orphans. There is no one to take care of them so they don't have a real home. The saddest thing is that most of their parents were killed by the AIDS epidemic. Because of AIDS, that generation in Africa has been generally wiped out. Those that have not been killed and those older and younger than they are with kids only have one worry: the LRA abducting them and forcing them to become soldiers, fighting on the front lines.

Most of the kids who are taken are between the ages 5 and 12. The reason for this is that kids in the age range of 5 to 12 are the most moldable and the easiest to train to fight and kill. When their mentors first asked them to draw a picture of anything, they all drew a picture of death, blood, and war. Because they were abducted at a young age and that was all that they had ever been taught.

The good news is that there are many programs in place to help this land at war. One example is TRI, a program where participants give up three dollars a week to help with funds in Africa. For more information go to www.invisiblechildren.com.

Slice, Cut, EWW!!!

By Josie Mumm & Mackenzie House

The 7th grade Frog Dissection occurred on Wednesday, January 22. Many kids thought that it was disgusting—other kids couldn't wait to get started. After the kids were done with the human body unit, they were ready to dive into dissection. Mrs. Stolfa had the students use an instructional website to help them dissect the frogs. It wasn't a pretty site or a flowery smell, but almost all the kids had fun! Kids were separated into groups of 3 or 4.

Everyone in the group had to choose a job; to dissect, fill out the worksheet, or conduct the dissecting on the informational website. The students had to take safety precautions, too; they all had to wear rubber gloves and eye goggles. They also had to make sure not to get any of the frog juice on any of their belongings or the table. This project was an awesome experience for all the 7th graders. Special thanks to Mrs. Stolfa—and the poor froggies!



The Middle School Dating Game

By Bridget Cowley

Thanks to The Center kids, *The Middle School Dating Game* was a big success. Everyone didn't like coming out in the cold, but they had a warm heart after a hot bowl of chili. After that, it was show time. Everyone was pumped, but not as much as the cast and crew. Thanks to The Center kids and Mrs. Lindskog who worked on this production for 3 months. There were a lot of funny parts thanks to everyone with a big smile on their faces. Even if they forgot their lines, they went through the show adding parts here and there.

Everyone applauded loudly when the show was over. The cast and crew got a lot of congratulations from family and friends. Afterwards, all the cast and crew had a big cookie that said "Break a Leg," thanks to Brenna's mom. After the cookie was demolished, the cast and crew helped clean up the stage and the gym after the production.

Everyone did a fantastic performance and had an awesome attitude with all the stress that came the day before and the day of the performance. Mrs. Lindskog helped each one of us through our hard times—even if it was just helping out with lines or helping someone get through one more day of tense practice. Thanks to Mrs. Lindskog's daughter, who got it on tape. All

the Center students got to see how well we did and have a good laugh through the parts where they forgot their lines. Seeing them perform told me how much teamwork means to all the Center kids. Everyone did their best and that is what made the play unique.

Martin Luther King Day By Brianna Barclay



Our old hero, Martin Luther King, Jr., has changed the world, and the time to remember him is here again. January 21st is a day to remember this year as we celebrate his words of wisdom that taught our world to be fair. Even though this holiday may not be the biggest and best, it's still probably the most meaningful. Without this man, blacks and whites would still be segregated and stuck in total misery.

We owe thanks to Dr. Martin Luther King. His ideas are still capable of inspiring kids today. He did more than sit on the sidelines and criticize; he acted, standing up for what he believed. The following are famous words by King—words we need to understand and remember.

- ♦ "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."
- ♦ "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."
- ♦ "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."
- ♦ "One who condones evil is just as guilty as the one who perpetrates it."
- ♦ "Nothing in the world is more dangerous than a sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."
- ♦ "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
- ♦ "Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace—a soul generated by love."
- ♦ "Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it."

King was a great man—his words and ideals live on. Take the time to celebrate his body of work. Dig beyond the 3rd grade report information and learn who King really was.