

AP English students take the pizza prize

Ms. Jennifer Mattingly's AP English IV students won the door decorating contest held in the English hallway Tuesday, October 14. Their theme, "Pathways to Symbolism," won them a pizza party paid for by the other English teachers. At right, Becca Alsip applies some decorations to the door. Below, Sarah Mullins works to complete the project by the 2:00 PM deadline.



Freshmen participate in scheduling experiment

By BILL BURDETT

Over fifty freshmen are listed on English teacher Shane Shoemaker's first block attendance roster. So does math teacher Lana West.

The high numbers aren't caused by an increase in the student body; instead, it's the result of a split block schedule, an experiment that could lead to changes next year.

"We have two classes that are taking full block math and full block English, and two classes that are using split-block," said RCHS Principal John Hale. "They were randomly grouped so we should get a pretty good idea of how much impact the schedule's had on the students' performance."

By creating a class that is only 45 minutes long and meets all year (instead of 18 weeks for 90 minutes) split block scheduling is designed to allow the students more time to learn material.

"It doesn't allow the students to get bored in class, and we can go at a slower pace," said Mr. Shoemaker.

There have been some adjustments to make, especially for teachers who are used to planning for a 90 minute period. Modifying their classes to fit the 45 minute period has proven to be a challenge.

"It seems like the teachers never finish their lessons [in a single

class] because they aren't used to it yet," said Jonathan Robbins, one of the students taking the split block.

Mr. Hale is expecting enough data to be collected by the end of the year in order to compare the schedule's effect.

"If our research pays off we would probably increase some of the offerings for freshmen next year, especially in the areas of math and language arts. Any other offerings we would have would likely be in elective courses," Mr. Hale said. "We haven't made any definite decisions, but we are exploring."

Budget problems cause questions at RCHS

By KYLA FRENCH

Recent budget cuts at Rockcastle High may prove the school to be "a day late and a dollar short." Supplies have been cut from several areas, creating many difficulties.

RCHS Principal John Hale says the cuts are not the fault of the school itself, but the students play a major role in funding.

"The budget committee for the school can merely suggest to the [SBDM] council a budget. The council makes the final decision," says Hale. "However, student attendance boosts our financial aid."

The war in Iraq has also had an affect on the slowing of economy in Kentucky. This has trickled down to Rockcastle, worsening the financial crisis.

"Money is being drawn out of the treasury, leaving less for education," says Hale. "War is expensive. Freedom comes at a price."

Main departments at RCHS have been unexpectedly denied state funding for key materials.

"Our chance to get new textbooks was this year," says math teacher Morissa Hayes. "We were very disappointed." The textbook ordering has been put off until next year.

Chorus director Letha Hembree is anticipating problems for the future of her class.

"I run out of money in March," says Hembree. "Whatever we do in April or May will have to be paid through fundraising or out of our pockets."

Supplies in general are also depleting quickly.

"We have to use pocket money to pay for markers and other supplies," says English teacher Angela Baker. "Once these things are gone, they're gone."

Not only are teachers experiencing drawbacks in funding, but they are subject to new bid lists, preventing the ordering of customary materials.

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"We aren't able to order our usual supplies," says Social Studies Department head Debbie Coleman. "We have to be very selective about what we order."

Many are questioning how the school has suffered so many cutbacks with classroom necessities, but was able to fund the moving of the counselor's offices.

"That money came from capital outlay, which only funds building projects," said Hale. "We will hopefully be using that money to build an area technology center or bleachers on the other side of the football field."

Students themselves are becoming involved in the school's spending plan as they examine why the school has new benches and trashcans, but no new textbooks.

"The Spanish Club thought they would make the new additions for the convenience of the students," says Hale. "They and Ms. Powell paid the bill 50/50."

Even with cutbacks, RCHS has been very fortunate not to lose teachers.

"Our system has managed their money well," says Hayes. "I'm very thankful that there were no teacher cuts this year."

Students are also realizing the impact of the financial dilemma RCHS is facing.

"We can't have outdated materials," says junior Emily McKinney. "If the state wants us to go on, and be successful, they need to provide us with the proper resources."

Teachers have developed an understanding of the cuts, but not a comprehension of why the state will not emphasize education.

"I hate to see the cutbacks, but I understand that they are a necessity," says Coleman. "It's important that our state lawmakers take a look at our budget and keep education first."