Cross Country Team Claims Top Spots

Lady Eagles Junior Varsity Team took 1st place, the Varsity Team took 2nd place, and took 4 individual Top 10 medals in September

Photo courtesy of Coach Mirek

Students React to Jason Van Dyke Trial

By Andrea Irineo, Gabriela Diaz, and Omar Lepe

There has been much controversy surrounding the Laquan McDonald case. It’s caused many problems within the police and African American communities. This has not been the first police shooting that has resulted in the death of a person. Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke is currently on trial following the death of McDonald.

He’s being charged with first degree murder and official misconduct.

On October 20, 2014, McDonald was only seventeen years old when he was shot 16 times by Van Dyke near 44th and Pulaski. Van Dyke claims that he felt as if his life was in danger but once the police dash cam was released showing the events that occurred that night, the case sparked interest from the media.

The dash cam shows McDonald walking away from Van Dyke when the officer started to shoot and kept shooting after McDonald hit the ground.

Law instructor at Hancock Sarah Simons brought up the interesting question in her classes of “Are officers conducting their business in a truthful, open, and honest way? And what are we as the public going to actually see and believe?” The issue surrounding this case is transparency to many Chicagoans. Many people believe that some police officers are not being truthful when it comes to reporting the incidents in the manner in which they occurred. Simons believes we should be watching this case carefully. The tragedy happened “right up the street from us, and a lot of our students live in these areas,” she explains. If Van Dyke’s actions are found as a justifiable homicide, “there will be a new

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standard for police officers to fire at civilians.” She claims that several areas in Chicago, such as the South and West side, will be more affected because there will be a higher risk for situations like this to happen again. Many people believe they’ll fear running into police officers; police may shoot in less serious situations based on the decision the jury makes on this case.

Simons understands the reasoning behind the defense’s request to move Van Dyke’s case to another area outside Cook County, which was denied by the judge. She claims “it was a good motion because it’d be hard to find an unbiased jury.” She asked all her classes and only three students raised their hands stating they’d carefully review the evidence and make their unbiased decision on the evidence provided.

Simons believes she couldn’t be an unbiased juror. Simons portrays the beginning of the case as being “swept under the rug. It took the release of the video to shine light on what actually happened.”

We surveyed Hancock students about the Van Dyke trial, and 119 responded to our online survey. These are the students’ results as of the morning of October 5 when this issue went to print.

Tell us whatchoo got to say!
Believe it or not—Hancock cares whatchoo think.
Email your response to any ideas in this issue to Mr. Salazar at rsalazar@cps.edu.
Your comments might be included in the next issue.
What Some Hancock Students Had to Say about the Van Dyke Trial

“Although I am not of that color, I definitely feel affected in the fact that Laquan McDonald was a citizen like the rest of us. Now, it partially worries me if police will profile me for being Hispanic.”

“I’ve noticed that a couple of my friends, both fellow Latinos and African-Americans, have grown a stronger prejudice against white people simply because they are the same race as the police officers who commit police brutality.”

“The case has shown me how much power authority has. They took too long to start the trial and investigations.”

“It allows the people of the city to be aware of these kind of issues that are occurring. It’s a strong issue that yet needs to be resolved for the peace of everyone and have consequences for one’s actions.”

“It makes me wonder how the future is going to look if the police continues to get away with things. They just keep getting away with things that the common person, or that a person of color would get sent to prison for and serve many years to life in a matter of seconds while this case has been getting delayed for years.”

“Not all officers are bad, just some put racism before their eyes and destroy lives.”

“Although Van Dyke did kill someone (and, yes, this phrase might be overused), it was psychological. In his defense, how is it fair? He didn’t know what would happen.”

“It’s these types of things that cause the distrust between the community and the police enforcement. If there is no trust, there is no cooperation and if there is no cooperation from the people, the officers tend to become rude and we all know where that can lead.”

Students provided responses anonymously through an online survey.
Among the eleven Selective Enrollment high schools in the City of Chicago, Hancock is the most recent to be added to that list. According to “Selective Enrollment High Schools in Chicago: Admission and Impacts” published by the University of Chicago, “Selective Enrollment high schools are among the most high-profile and sought-out options.” Many of the Selective Enrollment high schools consistently ranked as top schools in Illinois. However, according to the article, students and parents have always tended to prefer a certain group of Selective Enrollment high schools such as Jones, Lane, Northside, Payton, and Young.

“I feel like the school has slowly been getting better over the years, but I don’t think we can be compared to other Selective Enrollment schools right now because we recently became Selective Enrollment compared to other Selective Enrollment high schools,” said Christopher Esquivel, a senior here at Hancock. Esquivel chose this school because it was near his home and was Selective Enrollment. He thinks the school could be at the same level with the most competitive high schools in a couple of years.

Esquivel has enjoyed his years at Hancock, mainly the communication between teachers and students. However, “This school needs to have more clubs, perhaps better technology, and the variety of classes that are available to us.”

The school’s freshman English teacher Paul Mirek gives his own personal experience of the change Hancock has gone through since his start in 2007.

Mr. Mirek spoke about his lesson plans and explained, “One of the things that changed is not so much in the lessons, but in the complexity of the assignments I ask students to complete.” He added that with the new Selective Enrollment students, “A lot of the students were coming in with a higher skill set. I knew that I could tweak the complexity of it and make it a little bit more demanding on the students.” But Mr. Mirek adds, “There is a loss in our immediate community,” when speaking about how the switch cost the school some losses in neighborhood enrollment.

The Hancock student body had problems and “drama” as Mr. Mirek puts it before switching to selective enrollment. Students were part of different gangs and tensions between them grew and were visible in school. The “drama” might not be the same now, but there’s still differences in the students that cause problems between them leaving some no choice but to leave the school according to Mr. Mirek.

The Illinois School Report Card Student Mobility Rate for Hancock College Prep states that 6% of students transferred from or to Hancock in 2017. Twenty percent of those students were African American, 26% were English learners, and 25% were students with disabilities. Student Mobility is “The percentage of students who experienced at least one transfer in or out of the school,” according to the Illinois School Report Card.

According to school enrollment data, 70% of kids come from the two zip codes that surround West Elsdon: 60629 and 60632.

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That's 498 and 207 students from those two areas, respectively, out of a total 1,013.

Becoming Selective Enrollment requires “a cultural shift” as Mr. Mirek puts it to set Hancock as the best Selective Enrollment school it could possibly be.

“Our school has become more diverse, so students need to recognize the richness and respect the diversity of culture and opinion,” Mr. Mirek adds. “For teachers, we need to rethink some of our approaches to the way we deliver instruction, and we must create classroom environments that guide students to truly respect the diversity of opinion.”

The school updated its mission statement in 2017: “John Hancock College Prep empowers students through academic and social engagement to create change in their personal lives and in their communities.”

The school brings some things, no other school has which is why it became Selective Enrollment just like Mr. Mirek says, “I feel like what we offered our students in our community was a solid education and that was recognized by downtown and that’s why they pointed to us to become a Selective Enrollment.” So maybe the school deserved to become selective enrollment since its education was “solid” as Mr. Mirek put it.

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**Hancock Wasn’t My First Choice**

Essay by Daniela Hernandez

Thousands of teenagers apply every year to some of the top ranked high schools in the city. Jones College Prep receives nearly 12,000 admission applications each school year but only 350-500 seats are open per grade level. For many of the applicants, their dream of getting accepted into their dream high school gets crushed, and I was one of them.

When I was waitlisted #633, I bawled my eyes out but I still had one more opportunity to get into JCP: Principal’s Discretion which grants students one last chance to appeal to the principal for admission; three weeks later I was rejected again. At a gut level, my body began to experience real physical pain, almost. Anyone who’s a “perfect” student their entire life is at risk of interpreting rejection harshly like me.

Today, I am a senior at Hancock, and I don’t regret coming here. Coming to Hancock allowed me to start accepting that there is a middle ground between perfection and failure. Most importantly, making mistakes, being rejected or coming in second place is real life: we can’t be the best at everything and we won’t be accepted everywhere. I had to accept the rejection from Jones. To be honest, I was applying because I was so caught up in going to a brand name school.

Fortunately, I have been introduced to a much similar but also different environment than Jones. Hancock has made me appreciate not only the Southwest side of Chicago but the diversity amongst my schools’ students, the rigorous curriculum of AP classes in combination with honors, and the loving staff. I have built a very close bond with my softball coach, Rudy Cano. Not only does he remind me to be on top of the game on the field but also off it. I am also thankful for the college English Dual Credit 101 and 102 courses I took with Professor Eric Splinter; all the material we’ve acquired thus far has been researched and translated into writing.

Of course, family pressure adds to the phenomenon that students have to attend a certain school but giving other schools a chance reminds us that life goes on. Soon enough, most students forget they ever wanted to go to another school! Instead, I have learned to embrace the here and now of my academic situation and delved into the activities and academics of the small horseshoe shaped campus.
Hancock Students Prep for Fall Play
By Froylan Castillo, Jr. and Miguel Placencia

People crave a new experience. Watching people perform live in front of us brings about a new experience. Theater is a collaborative form of fine art and incorporates a live performance in order to present a story that focuses more on characters. Going to the theater enables the audience to feel the emotions and the drama of what's in front of them. We are able to see the special effects such as lighting and movement. This is the goal for the drama students at Hancock.

Sarah Baranoff, the drama teacher, will help organize her 7th drama play at Hancock. The students from Drama II and Drama III will perform Ollphant Down's *The Maker of Dreams* and Tennessee Williams's *Impromptu*.

Baranoff states, “I don't want to spoil any of the plot details, and since some of them are very short, I'm going to hold off on the plot synopsis. I will say though that there are some major themes that are running throughout the show. Love is one, and absurdity is another.”

The process of organizing these plays is often a long and complicated one. With casting, for example, Baranoff states, “There are roughly about six or seven steps. Making an audition form, going through the responses, determining casting requirements (genders, ages, what parts can double) giving out the sides (pieces students perform at an audition), watching the auditions, making decisions, and sharing the cast list.”

Typically, Baranoff would manage all the steps for the structure of the play, but she revealed that this time there was a twist to the routine: “The students and Drama III actually handled the casting.”

Hancock senior Damian Martinez is an actor in the play and provides insight to the behind the scenes of preparing to be an actor.

Having only done one other play ever, this new production comes with its own set of challenges for Martinez. “Remembering lines, it's a lot and sometimes it gets real easy to forget,” Martinez explained. “I'm excited for everyone to see the work we put in and I think it will be a good time.”

Martinez says his motivation for being in the play was feedback, both positive and constructive. “I think feedback is great. It helps me work on my struggles and get better.” When talking about his process before a performance, he said, “What I like to do is practice when I can. I balance school and work, so it's easy to fall behind but I squeeze like 5 minutes of practice here and there to make sure I don't forget all my lines,” Martinez explained.

He continued to say that “it's not a hard task. You take the time to go over your lines and you'll have it. It's just easy to get them messed up.”

The students have also been part of the organization of scenes, the construction of props, structuring the date and time slots for rehearsal and the establishment of sales and promotion for the play.

Baranoff states “For the most part, the community has been supportive of the fact that there are plays.” The massive success of sales and comments have driven support towards the work of the drama classes. She says, “I know the kids felt like their work was reaching people who really appreciated it.”

The drama students will perform on November 8 from 4:00 pm - 6:30 pm, and on November 9 from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm. Tickets will start at $5.
How Long-Term Teacher Absences Affect Students

by Ivana Lopez

Teachers taking long leaves isn’t something students aren’t used to seeing. Every year, one or two teachers temporally or permanently leaves. This year, Hancock experienced the absences of two teachers. Mr. Quicio, the (now former) P.E. teacher for the upperclassmen left to go teach at Foreman High School, while a mathematics teacher took a leave of absence—creating a total of two teacher vacancies. How do students feel about their teachers leaving?

Maria Alvarez, a 12th grader in her math teacher’s college algebra and financial literacy classes says, “So far, it’s been a month without our math teacher and that’s a whole month of education that I can’t get back. I always struggled with math prior to this class and I always seem to struggle in the beginning of the course because of summer break. Now add a whole month to summer break—meaning not doing math for a total of three months. If I already have issues with math, what will it be like when our teacher comes back?”

Another student in Mr. Q’s P.E. class, preferring to remain anonymous, doesn’t even consider their first period a gym class. “My first period has been a free period for the past month of school. It does have its pros and cons though. I get to do homework during my gym time. However, since all we do is sit on the sidelines [of the gym] or go to the auditorium for 90 minutes, I feel that I'm gaining weight, and that defeats the purpose of being in a gym class in the first place.”

Assistant Principal Ms. Garfield sheds some light on this situation as well: “In regards to Mr. Q’s absence, I feel awful every day that you guys are sitting in the auditorium. We have hired a new P.E. teacher, but it takes CPS three weeks to approve the person that’s hired before they can legally start working at our school. I feel lucky every day to work with such patient and understanding students.

In regards to the math teacher’s leave of absence, Garfield said, “Teachers also have their own rights to leave. Remember: teachers also need to take care of themselves. Again—it’s not great for kids. All of the teachers in the math department are working to help the substitute teacher teach as efficiently as possible. It’s not perfect, but we’re trying our best. If students have another suggestion on how to resolve situations like these, I’m open to hear them out.”

The mathematics teacher is expected to come back sometime in November, and a new gym teacher is expected to start working at Hancock sometime in October.

Hancock Student’s Family in Hurricane Florence

by Samantha Estrada

My cousin Karina lives in Fort Mill, South Carolina, a suburb by the border of North and South Carolina. On September 14, Karina and her family evacuated Fort Mill and drove 10 hours to reach Florida. “Everyone thought it would be safer to leave down south to get away from the storm,” Karina explains.

As of early October, over fifty people died in the storm. Some of her friends and neighbors did not leave the state so Karina carried fear and worry for her loved ones as she went to Florida. Luckily, her family only faced strong winds and semi-flooded streets the last days they stayed.

The week before they left, her stepdad had to wake up earlier in order to get to work, and her mother struggled to find open grocery stores. “Everything was empty, as if it were an abandoned town.”

Driving back into North Carolina, Karina came face to face with homes being broken, parts of trees everywhere on roads, and people throwing away damaged property. She lives in a second floor condo, so none of her belongings were destroyed, but the basement was flooded, destroying washing machines and other supplies. “It’s not going to be easy for everyone to get back on their feet,” she states, “but I know we’re all strong enough to get through this.”
Think Before You Sell Those Nachos: Fundraising at Hancock
by Esperanza Vega

Students have always used fundraisers as a way to help their school, their clubs, and their planned activities. This is now difficult to do because of the strict CPS rules that limit fundraisers. Some of the best fundraisers include food sales, but the sale of food is now not easily permitted.

In order to fundraise, a club or group sponsor must fill out a fundraising form. The proposal has to include the items being sold, the amount of items, anticipated cost and profits, dates of sale, and the proposed use of profits. The sponsor then talks to Ms. Puentes, the assistant principal, and they both review it to make sure that the activity follows CPS policy. Ms. Puentes must then take it to a Local Student Council (LSC) meeting; there, it is reviewed a second time. If they approve it, it is then taken to one more office: the Central Office. Here, the Network Chief has to give the final approval. Overall, this process takes about a month to be completed.

“Generally, food is a no-no,” says Ms. Puentes. When Obama was President, there were laws that were established federally as part of a Healthy Foods Initiative. This policy created a long list of criteria that all food and beverages being sold must meet.

Food is only allowed to be sold after school or before school, but at least an hour must pass after dismissal or before dismissal in order for the fundraiser to not be bound by these policies. “You would have to start selling like at 7 in the morning, but the doors open at 7:30,” explained Ms. Puentes.

Another rule in fundraising is that money is not supposed to be going in the hands of students, so the staff have to be the ones collecting money instead. Jasmine Cevallos, a senior at Hancock, mentions that pep rally, prom, homecoming, and purchasing school materials is affected by these restrictions. “Because we can’t fundraise, students have to pay full price.” Last year, students paid $150 per ticket for prom.

“Prom, in general, in any hotel that I’ve gone to in downtown is, minimum, $15,000,” said Ms. Puentes. Usually small fundraisers like car washes or taffy apple sales only raise a couple of hundred dollars, “which will only bump down the ticket price for each student by about a dollar or two.”

In the past, Jasmine had been part of a fundraiser that sold lollipops. If the policies were less restrictive, she knows that selling things like lollipops would be successful. “Healthwise, we eat so many other things that really dictate how healthy we’re gonna be,” she says. Also, most people would purchase small amounts. They would probably only purchase one or two

“As a school, we’ve tried to host bigger school events to generate funds for clubs or after school activities,” explains Ms. Puentes. One of the big activities our school hosts is the comedy show, which students can’t attend but adults can.

Another suggestion would be to try to look for other places like Chipotle, McDonalds or Subway, which have helped our school fundraise in the past. If the school applies to fundraise with Chipotle, the school will receive 33% of the proceeds.

“Kids would be surprised by how many things we get because we reach out to our community. I would like for students to think about how we can fundraise outside of school,” says Ms. Puentes.