

VOLTAGE

Science Park High School

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STUDENT PROFILE: KEVIN HERNANDEZ BY JEAN-CARLOS ARENAS

Science Park High School prides itself on molding the leaders of tomorrow and taking already shining stars and turning them into supernovas. Kevin Hernandez has already started making his mark on the Science Park pavement, having co-written an article featured on the front page of the Voltage and having performed in front of the entire school during Pep Rally – and he's only a freshman!

Kevin admits that he does not have the heaviest course load, which opens up his time to contribute to the school via extra-curricular activities. He, along with Pamela Gomez and Monserrath Salas, is an executive editor for The Voltage, and he is also a member of the International Dance Club, with which he performed during Pep Rally. However, Kevin's intentions reach beyond just being a member of these organizations. He explains, whilst wearing his signature snapback, "I definitely want to do Peer Leading. I like to help people, and just seeing the Peer Leader program, it seems pretty interesting and like a good experience."

Being the quintessential well-rounded student, Kevin also expressed that he wants to join the baseball team when the season arrives, and that maybe next year he will try his hand at volleyball (unless he has a great season with baseball his first year) and swimming. In fact, the aspiring athletic superstar admits that he's slightly obsessed with bats, bases, and the diamond (his favorite team is the New York Yankees) and that baseball is a sport he would like to compete in when he goes to college. Kevin is thinking about applying to Rutgers his senior year, but confesses that he is not entirely sure about his future because he is still, after all, a freshman. He knows that a career as an engineer is a likely path, and if that does not work out, maybe he'll find luck as a professional baseball player.

When asked what class he would teach if he had the opportunity, he acknowledged that although math is his favorite subject since it comes naturally to him, he would much rather teach an English class, explaining that he likes the approach his current teacher, Mr. Schwamberger, takes to teaching the subject. He elaborates, "We do a lot of in-class discussion about the novels we read and we talk about the themes, and things like that interest me, and so being able to teach like that would be a good experience for me." Kevin's course selections coincide with his various interests; he would like to take Honors Physics next year and intends on taking AP Calculus, AP English Literature, and AP French his senior year based on the coursework he has done thus far.

Being a freshman, Kevin recently had to transition from his earlier academic environment (Dr. E. Alma Flagg Elementary School) to Science, but he is amazed by how easy the transition has been. He confesses that the first few days of Bridge Week, he was a bit lonely, but he made friends quickly. He is even more surprised by how friendly the upperclassmen are at Science. He clarifies, "You see movies



Fantastic Freshmen: Voltage Executive Editors Kevin Hernandez (left) and Monserrath Salas (right) are all smiles.

with freshmen being stuffed in their lockers by seniors. However, at Science, I'm being treated as a normal student. I'm surprised because I've seen those movies and having not been through the actual high school experience before, I assumed that was how it goes." Academically, he is also shocked that the coursework is not as difficult as he expected it to be, but he anticipates it will get more difficult as he gains access to more challenging classes as he continues his tenure at Science.

I asked Kevin who his role models were, and he jested, "Jean-Carlos, because of his large vocabulary," but then honestly answered, "Bill Gates – I hope to achieve the same success that he has one day." However, Kevin Hernandez is well on his way to not just following in the footsteps of a role model, but being one himself. ■

STUDENT PROFILE: MONSERRATH SALAS BY SERGIO SALAS

the perspective of her older brother, you might be wondering what kind of person Monserrath really is. Monserrath is the type of person who doesn't take "no" for an answer. She will do whatever it takes to win an argument and make it another short victory for her. I swear, you need to think twice before you try to disagree with this girl. I don't know where she acquired this type of personality.

No one likes to be proven wrong and Monserrath Salas is the perfect example of this. However, I know this quality would serve her well if she decided to become a lawyer. Anyone would be lucky to have someone so persistent as a defendant attorney.

Monserrath Salas always puts forth her best effort in school; she is a perfectionist. Monserrath has never gotten a B on her academic record and for her, this letter grade is unacceptable. She knows that it's not good enough because it doesn't reflect her academic performance in school when she goes above and beyond to excel in her classes. I hate to admit it, but she's smarter than I am. At home, she enjoys watching educational channels like the Discovery Channel, History Channel, Animal Planet and TLC. She also likes to kick back once in a while and watch comedy shows like George Lopez and The Big Bang Theory.

I asked Monserrath what she wanted to be when she grows up. She told me, "I'm going to be New York Times best journalist or the smartest lawyer in New York." I don't know what is it about her and New York, but she can picture herself working in New York City. She still has time to decide her future, but for now she's not sure. She is determined to work hard at Science Park High to be the valedictorian of the school just like she was at First Avenue Middle School. Afterwards, she intends on going to Harvard University and pursue an admirable education. I have high hopes for her, as should her peers.

This 14-year-old girl annoys during the weekdays and before and after school. We like to pick on each other, play fight and insult each other most of the time; however, on rare occasions, we watch a movie together and actually laugh.

Yet, as you know, this is what a real brother and sister relationship is like. I'm proud to write this article about her in order to let the future of Science Park High know with no reservations what a talented person Monserrath Salas really is. ■

Let's see, what's special about this year's freshmen class? This school is heavily diverse with people from various schools and different ethnicities. By coming to Science Park, they have opened new doors and created new aspirations in their lives. It is difficult to distinguish the students that really want to make a name for themselves and stand out from the crowd because no one can truly measure a young learner's academic ability. However, there is one particular student that has crossed my mind each and every day at Science Park High. I wonder if she will become the next President of the United States, one of New York Times' best journalists, or one of the smartest lawyers in the nation. Science Park High has been honored to accept Monserrath Salas into the class of 2015.

Well, from



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SPIRIT WEEK SPREAD: MON - WED

Monday

Mismatch Day



Tuesday

Twin Day



Wednesday

Nerd Day



TEACHER PROFILE: DR. ALLGOOD BY PAMELA GOMEZ

Dr. Dexter Allgood is one of those rare people that positively impacts the lives of those around him. His dedication and love for his students informs his commitment to making (and keeping) SPHS a magnificent school. Recently, I had the opportunity to inquire about the things that make him such a phenomenal teacher and individual.

Christmas season is busy all the time, but at SPHS the most excitement comes during the Christmas concert. What is it like being the director of the SPHS chorus?

Being here for five years at SPHS, one of the highlights of the year is of course the Holiday concert with the SPHS chorus and Honors Choir. I've always liked to prepare the students for this event by selecting the music and then preparing it, and then there is an excitement in the air the week before the concert. We get everything ready through the rehearsals on stage, the preparation of the instrumentalists, and of course we collaborate with the SPHS band. Our new band director, Mr. MacMiller, has been wonderful to work with and it's such a great time because the students are so enthusiastic about the concert.

What are the outcomes of the constant rehearsals with the chorus?

Along with the history and the excellent

reputation that Science Park has, that has also trickled down to the music department, especially our chorus. There's a feeling of excellence and I think that's so obvious when our alumni come back to see the concert and they enjoy it. Just to hear them say, "Oh wow!" makes the legacy continue to exist.

It has come to my attention that you have been a professor in many institutions. That being the case, why do you teach at SPHS? Is there any reward?

Oh, absolutely! I've taught at several universities but I have to admit, I've told my students several times this year that this is my greatest joy because I feel like I'm really contributing to the community by giving back to the students and then shaping students' lives in a positive manner and directing them in the right way as they go on to do great things beyond high school.

Do you know any famous people, and if so, how has this influenced you?

Hahaha, well I've worked with pretty influential musicians and singers. I've worked with Bill Cosby, Freddy Jackson, Clifton Davis, James Brown and others. The list goes on. That has its rewards also but I have to say the joy of teaching, especially here at Science Park High School, puts me at another level.

Where did you go for your post-secondary education? Did you know what you wanted to major in?

I think I've always wanted to be a musician. My parents wanted me to be a doctor but I wanted to be a musician and I knew that that was planted in me at an early age by taking piano lessons at five. Then of course I went to college, doing my undergrad at Virginia State University where I got my music degree. I had teachers and professors there who really supported me and encouraged me, pushing me to apply to the University of Minnesota, and that's how I got a scholarship to go and get my masters. Beyond that I was set on fire to continue my education and I got my PhD from New York University. I'm not going to say that it was an easy road, but I persevered through it and it was rewarding.

What is your advice for SPHS students and teens overall?

Oh, I say this to my students every day. I think it's very obvious in my teaching. Shoot for the stars, don't settle for less, and know that teachers are here to support you in any way. I know I can help a student achieve that goal. Go the extra mile, do extra studies to help you, but I think the most important thing for a teacher is to be there to support our students.

In his words: "I want to give thanks to Mr. Thomas and the administration for putting such an emphasis on music and the arts." ■

SPIRIT WEEK SPREAD: THURS & FRI

Thursday

Gender Switch Day



Friday

Pep-Rally



POETRY OUT LOUD BY NEWTON PORTORREAL

Poetry Out Loud is a national competition where high school students recite poems of their choosing before an audience to achieve the program's stated goal: "[to] help students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage." It begins in the classroom, where the students with the best recitations move on to a school-wide competition, where the student with the best recitation moves on to a regional or state level competition, culminating in a national competition, where the winner receives a \$20,000 award. The program is a joint venture between the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and U.S. State art agencies.



For the first time, Science Park decided to enter the Poetry Out Loud program. English classes held individual competitions that became grade level competitions. 9th grade winner Akiel Morris, 10th grade winner Naana Boachie, 11th grade winner Khaliah Peterson, and 12th grade winner Sarah Labrador competed for the school-wide title during this year's pep rally. Eventually, the 12th grade winner, Sarah, emerged the victor, and heard the loudest cheers from the auditorium. Her winning recitation of Robert Browning's poem "Life in a Love."

Congratulations to Sarah for winning the school competition. We look forward to next year's contest. ■

ASK ANNE

Dear Anne,
There is a girl whom I have known since first grade, and we have been best friends since then. Recently, though, she has been dating someone and has left me without a clue as to how I should react. This girl, who has always been a straight A student, now falls asleep in class, lacks motivation to complete assignments, and is nowhere to be seen at her athletic practices. I feel that if I tell her all of this, she will think that I am being a bother and will not pay me any attention, but if I do not do something to help her, all of her aspirations may be thrown away because of her infatuation. I do not know how to proceed in this situation. Please help.
Sincerely,
Confused Companion



Dear Confused Companion,
The way you should go about a situation such as this one would be to find the people that care most about this girl and let her know exactly what is happening. For instance, show her the grades she's been achieving, then compare them to her current grades to show her the difference. Remind her of her goals. Illustrate to her that if she focuses too much on her relationship, she will never attain those dreams of hers. Let her know that now is the time to shape the future. Don't let her throw it away.

Yours Truly,
Anne

The Voltage would be delighted to receive e-mails with opinions/recommendations at scienceparknewspaper@gmail.com.

VOLTAGE

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SCIENCE PARK TEACHER CROSSWORD

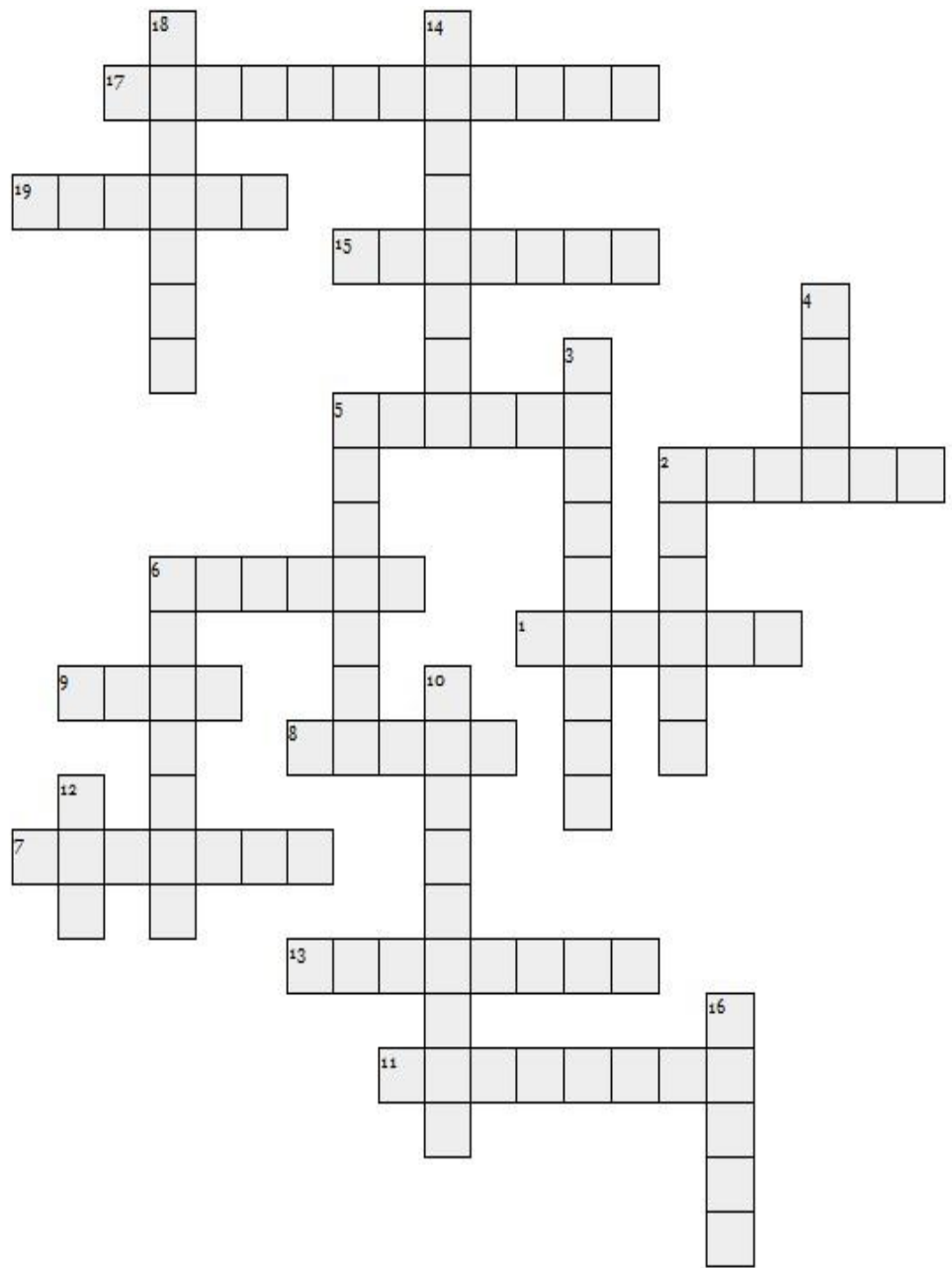
BY JEAN-CARLOS ARENAS AND XAVIER MWANGI

Across:

1. "Gooooooo, chargers!"
2. "Ayo, Moe!"
5. "Ayyyooooo! Iiight!"
6. "Claim, warrant, implication"
7. Jokingly asks his students if they "live in a barn" and calls them "savages"
8. Affectionately calls her students "folks"
9. Teacher who teaches AP Physical Education and AP Health
11. Teacher who uses a "discussion bear"
13. "Hold on (insert name here), I'm on a roll."
15. "It is what it is."
17. First teacher to be have a profile in the Voltage this year
19. Teacher who loves his weight room workout circuits

Down:

2. Refers to the bright minds of Science Park as "Gangsta geeks"
3. "Come on people, let's put these up."
4. "Physics is life."
5. Teacher known for giving "juicy" tests
6. "It's all good."
10. Teacher who occasionally gives her students organic lollipops
12. "WRONG-O!"
14. Math teacher who could pass for a foreign language teacher
16. Teacher who relies on the "Popsicle stick gods" to select students for participation
18. "Time, energy, and inclination."



ACADEMIC ROLLER COASTERS

BY SHIRLEY MORI

Student life at SPHS is like a roller coaster. One day, you feel in control, feel good with your grades and what's going on in class, feel aware of due dates and then the next day, you're like what, that's my grade, this was due, you can't be serious? And you thought your relationship was bad. The thing about high school life is that there's pressure coming from everywhere – your parents, peers, teachers, and especially yourself. It's a scary thing that your academics now can possibly define your future. But note I say possibly. It's never too late for change even though we're told otherwise. In fact, I've recently learned that Mr. McMahon, history teacher who we all know and love, has changed careers in his 30's! And it's pretty evident that's he's loving life. As students, we strive

to be the best, but in our pursuit we forget the significance of being your best. This is where the stress we students go through comes from – by taking a handful of AP classes, filling our lives with school-related activities, forcing our minds to process a whole lot, and juggling personal life with school life. Midterms have come and gone quickly, enough time to fight the battle of learning versus memorizing. GPA's and ranks keep becoming the big picture. College acceptances are reeling in along with financial aid and scholarships right behind. The drama always continues and so does the struggle of finding balance. Interesting question: Why do you think procrastination is so common? There have been both feelings of success and failure. We've been pushed to the edge. Do we know the dif-

ference between right and wrong? Or do we see it as every student for himself or herself? It's not that we don't know, we just lost control of our own education. Fortunately, as the days go by, as we mature, we question our actions, our motives, and differentiate what's worth it and what's not. This way we find the good in high school. It's our human nature to question, to change, and follow our heart with our mind in control. So do it.

Oh. And don't even think teachers have it easy either.

Shirley Mori
SPHS Senior & Peer Leader ■

A HIGHER PURPOSE

BY JESSICA TOMAZ

In the last few years, there has been an indication of student dissatisfaction in Newark. SPHS Students have previously acted to improve school lunches and succeeded, but eventually the food regressed in quality. In 2010, there was a district wide walk out protesting budget cuts.

With all the politics inherent in education, administrators, teachers, and students are focusing on smaller issues and missing the bigger picture: school is fundamentally about learning.

Learning is not always quantifiable through grades and test scores, but lately that's what schools and districts have been focusing on. While the "Five in five" at SPHS is a noble goal, this concentration on student data can contribute to a stressful learning environment.

While taking AP classes is beneficial because it gives students college credit if they score a four or higher and provides more in-depth knowledge than the usual college-prep course, taking too many of these

rigorous classes leads to stress and adversely affects the sleep patterns and physical health of students, which is easily discerned from a glance at the students with the most AP classes.

It appears that the district wants to use test scores as an indicator of learning to prove the quality of urban schools; however, Science Park High School has nothing to prove based on the caliber of the the staff and students.

Besides, education should be about quality of information and learning, not only about the quantity of information that is memorized in order to pass a test and then later forgotten. The emotional welfare of students has to be a priority.

Along with the enormous pressure of justifying a school and a school system, students are stressed by mutable rules and a sense of powerlessness among the student body.

The uniform policy has always been disliked, but with time many of the students began to accept the

policy and wore the polos and khakis, which were previously recognized as the official uniform.

Now the rules are changing and polos aren't allowed, only oxfords; however, polos are still being sold in stores as Science Park apparel. Some people bought the oxfords in October and feel that their money was not spent wisely due to lack of enforcement.

What do you think can be done to create an environment more conducive to learning and a happier student body?

Should there be a clarification of the uniform policy?

Should there be less emphasis on loading up on AP courses, at least for students who do not feel that they are qualified, that they are interested, or that they can invest the time?

What do you think?
Send an email to The Voltage with your thoughts. ■