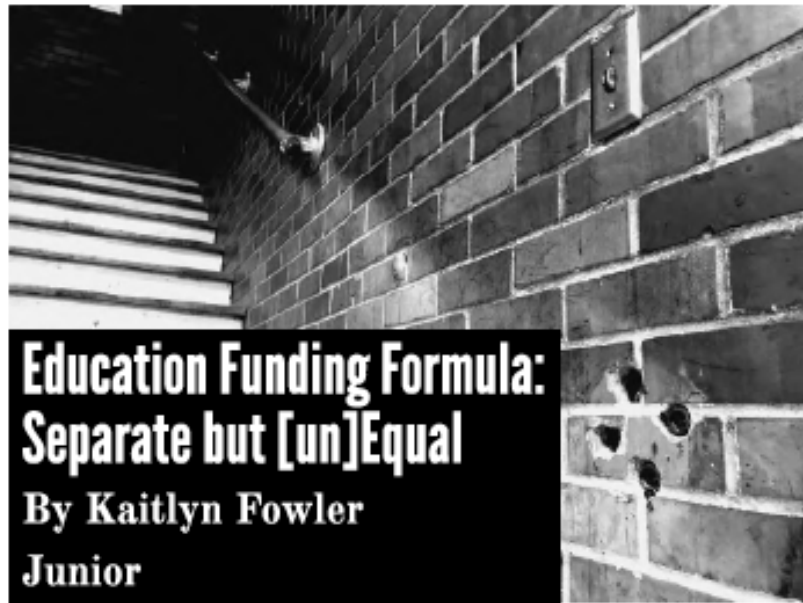


There is a relatively new historical fiction teen novel entitled *The Lies We Tell Ourselves* by Robin Talley. It tells the story of a the rough desegregation of public schools in 1959 Virginia. One of the African Americans chosen to move to the white school, Sarah, held a conversation with a white classmate in which she explained one of the reasons why the schools should be integrated: the separate but equal doctrine was not truly what it claimed to be, and the contrast of environment and supplies between the white schools and the black schools were glaringly different.

"Your Biology class at Jefferson has a microscope at every single lab table," she says, "At my old school we had one. For the whole class. We all took turns... Johns doesn't have enough textbooks for everyone to have their own, either... We share those, too. No one's allowed to take them home." Jefferson, the white high school, supplied their students through state funding -- funding that Johns, the black high school, did not have.

Today, at Murrah High School, one of the seven high schools in the Jackson Public Schools district, few classes have a full class set of textbooks, and even fewer have enough to send one home with every student. Several classes, including accelerated classes and PE classes, depend on an electronic textbook or, occasionally, a class set of textbook



## Education Funding Formula: Separate but [un]Equal By Kaitlyn Fowler Junior

the same textbook that are delegated to the students, both several years old. Microscopes are a rare sight, although occasionally enough are found for a class, if they're lucky. For the most part, toilet paper can be found, but paper towels and soap are harder to track down in the high school bathrooms. Air conditioning and heat are never guaranteed, and sometimes they're too guaranteed. Some of the bathroom stalls are empty because the plumbing is old enough that a broken toilet is difficult and expensive to replace.

The difference between this and some of the other schools in the state is astonishing.

This is not to say that primarily white schools or districts in Mississippi get the amount of funding that they are entitled. It is evident, however, that the disparity in funds and resources between minority school districts and white school districts is huge.

The Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP), a two decade old *continue reading on pg 10*

## Easy, Breezy, Entrepreneur By Mackenzie Williams Sophomore

Ally Kessee, a born and raised Jacksonian and an alumna of Murrah High School, is a Biology major at Tougaloo College. She wants to take part in the discovery of the many things still undiscovered. Kessee has been a science-lover since middle school, but it wasn't until she took Mr. Greg Powell's AP Biology course in 11th grade that a new appreciation for the subject was sparked. "There is just so much out there that we do not know about regarding science and there are so many jobs that need to be done to help the community and the world," Kessee says.

In the midst of her scientific studies as a full time college student, Kessee is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of her startup hair extension retail business, The Kessee Kollection. Kessee launched her "Kollection" of extension bundles in June of 2017. Growing up, Kessee was always surrounded by successful, hardworking people. The daughter of two business owners, ideas of hard work, self-sufficiency, and dedication were instilled in her at an early age. Her father, Patrick Kessee, is the owner of a business that specializes in bonding people out of jail. Shannon Jones, her mother, owns a law firm, which is a business is run by Kessee's mother, aunt, and grandfather.

Kessee knows that all of these people have played a major role in her development as a strong and hard working individual. "If it wasn't for my foundation, I would be a mediocre student not reaching my full potential as a person," Kessee says.

Kessee's original financial plan was to save the money she earned from her

summer job at school and use that to get her business off of the ground. However, when she called her father and told him about her plan, he agreed to be the Chief Financial Officer of the business and support her in her dream.

The 18 year entrepreneur started her business as a way to have her own source of income. Being a full-time college student didn't leave her much time to work a full time job. She thought of her business idea as a less time consuming way of being self-sufficient while being a full-time student. Kessee finds that the balance of running a business and getting her school work done fairly easy because her business is not yet as widespread as others.

To those who dream of being an entrepreneur, Kessee says to have patience. Although starting from the bottom and working your way up can be strenuous, Ally insists that the key to starting a business successfully is persistence.



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Editor-in-Chief



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August Harp  
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Copy Editor

HANDS.

Our hands are one of the most vital parts of our body. Hands text, swipe, type, write, clap, grab, release, and feel. Some might say that hands make up our very essence of being human. Now imagine having to guard another person, maneuver a ball, and guard a goal all while being prohibited from using one's hands. Now, to many this sounds impossible, but for Murrah High School's Boys and Girls Soccer Teams, impossible, in this regard, is not even in their vocabulary.

In order to be a good team, it requires three things: perseverance, a willingness to improve, and a love for the game.

Perseverance is a very intimidating word. In layman's terms, it means to carry dedication through all the struggles and still try one's hardest. Before Murrah's Soccer Teams became what they are today, they dealt with obstacles that most students and teams do not have to face. Murrah's Boys Soccer Team had no coach two years ago, yet they persevered through a loss in leadership, deciding to step up and hold their own practices. By doing this, they advanced in skill and in their bond as brothers.

"[Coach] Renauldo really turned us around," player August Harp explains. August is a senior this year balancing two AP classes and a full schedule of soccer. He plays center, attack, and mid. He is an experienced soccer player, and he knows all about the struggle and improvements his team has faced. August continues, "Renauldo came [my] junior year and before that we had been really a really bad team [sic]."

**Renauldo gave us belief that we could win against teams [who have] more resources."**

The Murrah High School Boys Soccer Team improves with every 1 hour and 45 minute practice that it has, and Coach Renauldo is a very important part of that improvement.

TOLERATION. LIKE. LOVE.

Love is exactly what Sellena Dixon, a junior that plays left and right mid on the Murrah High School Girl's Team, has for the game of soccer. "I just like the game...the teammates and

Junior soccer player Matthew Araujo



**Hands. Love. Soccer.**  
By Kayla Wilbert  
Junior

winning." Selena receives the same love from her teammates.

**"I feel like in order to be a good team you have to be a family," she says, "You have to have a good relationship to be a good team."**

"You have a brotherhood with the team," August agrees, "We are really close and we do ALL things together." The soccer team is a family, and in a family you have to have love in order to get through rough patches and help each other. Matthew Araujo, a junior that plays outside mid and forward, agrees,

**"We eat together, we go paint-balling together, we win together, and we lose together."**

SOCCKER.

A sport that bonds students of different backgrounds together without the use of any hands. Soccer bonds Murrah students through perseverance, through improvement, with hearts, and with brotherhood. Soccer is a strategic sport. Soccer, known as football in other countries, has the same effect on Murrah students as it has on people worldwide.

# Captivating Co-Captains

By Shyuanna Rodgers  
Junior

Tristan Jones and Julian Murphy are the co-captains of Murrah's baseball team. Although they are both diligent players, they couldn't be more different -- on the field and off the field.



Tristan Jones is an outstanding senior here at Murrah High School. He has played baseball since he was 4 years old and played at Grove Park. Originally he chose the sport because he is a legacy and wished to carry on his family tradition. His older brother is currently a college player, and his dad and uncle played when they were younger. Tristan grew a love for the sport "because it gives you a chance to show your skills and compete against great players. It also requires a high state of mind, and is a quite challenging game."

Outside of leading the baseball team, Tristan lives a "chill" but driven life. When asked about his hobbies he jokingly tooted his own horn, claiming, "Well, I'm a great writer." He writes variety of things but enjoys essays the most because they give him a chance to speak his mind uncensored. Tristan attributes this to his teacher Ms. Ballard for pushing him to be his best self and to push his boundaries with writing. Tristan also loves spending time with his friends and family and reading to pass time. He plans to attend college to major in math and eventually become a math teacher. He was chosen as the top male athlete based on grades, personality, and leadership for a scholarship.

Tristan Jones is a great leader. He finds inspiration in his team, and hopes to lead them down the best path to greatness. His advice to the world is, "Keep your head up, stay strong, and push through life with a positive mind."

Julian Murphy, Jones's junior counterpart, has played baseball since he was 5 years old, a total of 12 years. He was inspired to play baseball by his two older brothers and his dad, who all played a part in teaching him the sport. Julian's brothers are both college players, and his dad is the Murrah baseball coach. He his love for baseball developed because it gave him the opportunity to compete. It allows him to focus on honing his individual skills while still learning to work and play as a team.

Aside from baseball, Julian claims, "I don't have any hobbies." After much probing, he explains that he loves just hanging out with friends or sleeping. Although Julian doesn't know where he wants to go to college, he does have his plan for after high school in line. He plans to attend college, play baseball, and major in sports medicine because he wants stay close to the sports. While Julian isn't, as he says, "the biggest studier," he knows he believes he can be a doctor because he says, "If there is something that i want to do then I will find a way to make it happen."

Julian Murphy is a lively leader. His teammates look up to him for uplifting words and guidance. He makes sure everyone on the team is their best self as well as their best player. Julian's advice to the world is, "Be more open minded, because America is pretty much on a one track mind; they don't accept other people's ideas. Ideas are how the world grow[s]."

Both Julian and Tristan are exemplary captains. They compliment each other in the best ways. Where one is lacking the other picks up. The baseball team is lucky to have them as leaders, and they are sure to lead the team into victory.



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Business Editor



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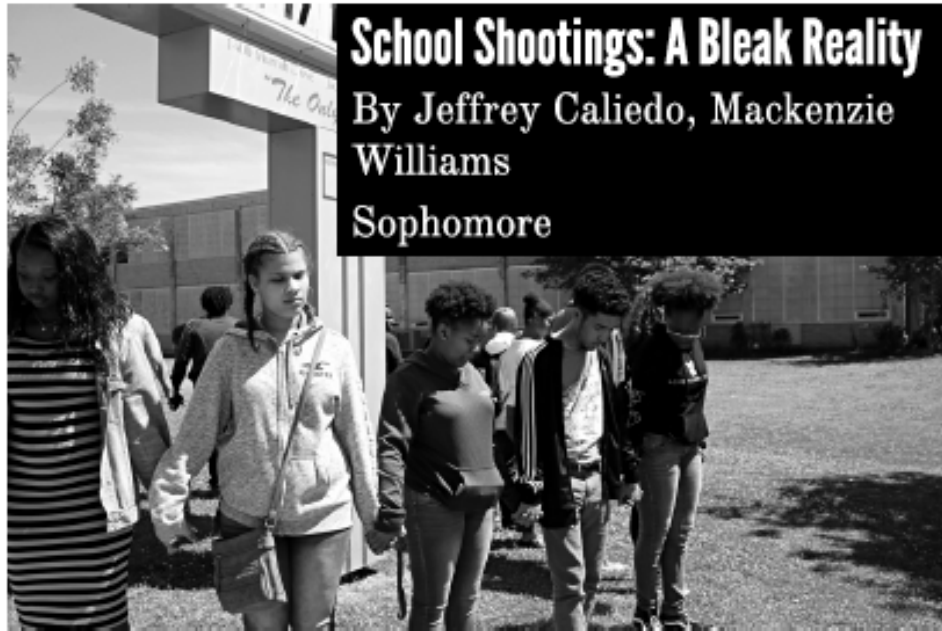
Imani Skipwith  
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## School Shootings: A Bleak Reality

By Jeffrey Caliedo, Mackenzie Williams  
Sophomore

As daybreak begins and sunlight peeks past the trees, a routine day of school begins in

Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012. Approximately 700 students stroll into the building, attempting to prepare for another adventurous day of elementary school. For Sandy Hook Elementary, cheers of laughter and chants of glee are not present for long. Unfortunately, many of us are aware of the way this story ends: with 20-year-old Adam Lanza replacing that laughter with horrendous cries of pain and blood-curdling screams.

**In the past, students dreaded going to school for fear of work assigned by teachers. Today, students dread going to school for fear of the safety of their own lives.**

The story of Sandy Hook is hardly a rare occurrence. In fact, after Sandy Hook, there has been over 200 school shootings in the United States alone. According to CNN, there has been approximately 1 school shooting, on average, every week since March in the 2018 year. America leads the world in amount of school shootings, despite the numerous amounts of fabricated claims depicting our country as the safest nation and as the land of the free.

As the United States continues through a year full of massacre and pain, how can change come forth during our desperate time of need?

### SCHOOL SHOOTINGS: EXPLAINED

Several people might be wondering, "What exactly constitutes as a school shooting?"

A school shooting is an incident that takes place at an educational facility involving the use of guns with the intention to kill or harm several people. Many people attribute the occurrence of school shootings or mass shootings in general to mental illness. While

this is sometimes the case, mental illness is not always the leading cause.

**In fact, a recent study showed that only about 22 percent of mass shooters suffer from serious mental illnesses.**

The other 78 percent do not. Symptoms such as antisocial behavior, extreme paranoia, bullying and anxiety cultivated along with stress or a significant traumatic experiences can drive one to commit something as extreme as a mass murder.

Due to the recent outbreak in school shootings, a serious call to action has been taken in regards to youth mental health. Several mental health specialists have been making efforts to try and catch these "red flags" in today's youth and put a stop to them so that we can prevent devastating attacks like these mass shootings from happening.

The school shooting epidemic started On October 1, 1997 in Pearl, Mississippi, when 16 year old Luke Woodham opened fire at Pearl High School with a Marlin Model 336 caliber rifle. The massacre started early that morning at the shooters home when he brutally stabbed and shot his mother to death. He then drove to his school and shot 9 students, killing 2.

### LEGISLATIVE ACTION (OR LACK THEREOF):

The fact of the matter is this: legislative action is and has been proven to reduce the amount of school shootings.

On April 16, 2018, a new Vermont gun law prevented an 18-year-old pondering a school shooting from obtaining a firearm which he could have easily obtained in another state. Gov. Phil Scott signed the bill which prevented anyone plotting a mass shooting from obtaining a firearm, essentially stopping the potential massacre before it could begin.

The bill allows restrictions on gun ownership, which included new background check requirements and age restrictions on gun purchases and a ban on bump stocks.

The suspect, Jack Sawyer, kept a diary entitled "Journal of an Active Shooter" in which he detailed a plan for a shooting at Fair Haven Union High School. Bills such as the one passed in New Vermont limit mass shootings, and implementing similar bills in the future would greatly reduce the number of school shootings in the United States.

### **America leads in school shootings because the United States Congress has been unwilling to make efforts towards gun control.**

Even after countless amounts of steadily increasing deaths, shootings, and massacres, the US government has remained at a standstill with no progress.

Despite having ample time and obvious reason to take legislative action, CNN Politics reports that "more than four months after the deadliest shooting in modern US history, Congress has yet to send any firearm-related bill aimed to curb gun violence to the President's desk."

In a nation where approximately 13,000 people are killed by firearms and 27,000 are injured in one year alone, legislative action to reduce gun violence is the only option.

Unfortunately, when the government does attempt to implement change, the approach is extremely lacking in terms of actual substance. Take for instance the "solution" to reduce school shootings after the massacre at Parkland Douglass High.

Five weeks after the historic shooting, students return back to Stoneman only to be greeted with mandated security checks and the abrupt requirement to wear clear backpacks at all time. These new security requirements are only counterproductive, as the shooter was not a student of Stoneman at the time. Forcing students to follow countless unnecessary precautions ultimately does not protect them and only creates a false illusion of security instead.

Isabelle Robinson, a senior at the school, told reporters that her experience returning to the school "felt like being punished." Robinson continued to comment on the school's decision to force all students to wear clear backpacks, even going as far to say, "It feels like jail, being checked every time we go to school."

Punishing students for situations out of their control is never the answer. During the time of these horrendous crimes, shooters like Nikolas Cruz and Adam Lanza did not attend the schools in which they committed mass murder. Therefore, punishing the students of these schools has no real impact.

**Progress is not created through detrimental repercussions on students; progress is made through active, effective legislative action that targets reducing the actual attainability of firearms.**

### **THE BIGGER PICTURE**

This year so far, about 24 people have been killed in school shootings and more than 40 have been injured.

It contradicts our constitutional right to life when several innocent lives are lost continuously without any responsive action and it will keep happening if no attempts are made to fix it. As cliché as it might sound, children are the future and if we keep killing them, there will be no future.

Although there has not been many legislative actions made to end gun violence as a whole, there have been genuine efforts made to raise awareness and bring conversation about the importance of gun control. The #MarchForOurLives Movement was jump started by survivors of the Stoneman Douglass school shooting to honor the lives lost in that massacre. This event was very popular worldwide and several influential people showed their support.

We all know horror stories of Sandy Hook, Pearl High, and Parkland Douglass.

**We all are forced to bear the bleak reality that the United States has approximately 300 million guns, nearly one for every member of the population.**

Ultimately, we can attribute these continuous school shootings to the United States' high gun ownership rates.

We cannot change the mistakes that plague our history. We cannot rewrite our past faults. However, we can continue to advocate for a change in our nation's future, one step at a time.

*To access the story's sources, view the article online via this QR code:*



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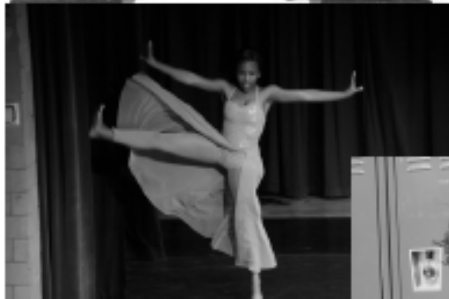
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## 20 Degree Weather and Waist-Deep Water

By Kaitlyn  
Fowler  
Junior

### 'PEANUT BRITTLE' PIPES

Snow days are a student's best friend: a day of relaxation, snowball fights, building snowmen, and making snow angels. Like most things, however, snow days are only fun and beneficial in moderation. After two weeks off of school for winter break, the students of the Jackson Public Schools District did not need another day at home. They definitely didn't need another two weeks at home. Sometimes events are inevitable.

### Jackson is not a new city, and it does not have new pipes.

It is usually not hit with below-freezing temperatures for more than a day at a time. When 2018 dawned in Jackson, MS, it brought temperatures in the teens and single-digit windshields.

As temperatures dropped, water froze in the pipes, and pipes began to break. Between January 1 and January 14, the city saw 156 water main breaks. Large areas of the city had little or no water pressure, and the whole city was placed on a boiled water notice. The Jackson Public Schools District was scheduled to resume classes on January 8; at this point in time, 70% of the Jackson schools had unreliable and nonexistent water pressure. In addition to needing water for things such as flushing toilets, many of the schools have heating systems that depend on water. The average price for the rental of one (1) porta potty for one (1) day is \$125-175. The price for enough porta-potties for enough students at all of the affected schools would be through the roof. This would not include the price for water tanks that might need to be called in for heaters. Food services would not have the ability to cook, and would have to serve sack lunches until the water mains were fixed. As each day of what was supposed to be the first week back at school passed, JPS was required to cancel school for the next day.

By the end of the weekend, enough pipes were fixed for accommodations to be made for the few schools with no water, and JPS was given the all-clear to resume school the day after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The Madison County School District donated water to the south Jackson schools that were still lacking water. Then, of course, a severe winter weather advisory was placed on the state, predicting snow and dangerous road conditions. JPS, following the example of most other districts in the state, canceled school for both Tuesday and Wednesday. Tuesday's snow still littered the ground in shady areas when students returned to school on Thursday. The temperature did not stay that low for too much longer; Friday morning, a significant number of water main breakages occurred as the temperature warmed up, leaving 60% of the Jackson schools without water, again. The schools closed in an emergency 60% day.

As of 1:30 p.m. on that Friday, the city had experienced 210 confirmed water breaks, many of which had been fixed or were currently being repaired. Mayor Lumumba explained in a press conference on Friday that

**the city's "peanut brittle" pipes are "over a 100-years-old... they don't consult with us before they decide to break."**

The past two weeks have shown lower temperatures in Jackson than in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Anchorage, Alaska. New York and cities such as Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Baltimore and New Orleans are seeing infrastructure issues caused by old pipes and cold weather similar to what Jackson is facing.

Jackson City Councilman Banks reassures the city's citizens, saying, "This is not the Titanic. Jackson's not going down."



**"THIS IS NOT THE TITANIC"**

And it isn't going down. The city is delivering water to those who have none and who called the city at 311 between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. At this time, the city does not have a mass distribution planned. Surrounding municipalities have offered help where they can, though they are limited because many do not have pipes as big as some of Jackson's pipes, and their teams aren't equipped to help fix those bigger pipes. State and federal help is still pending. The U.S. government partial shutdown may limit what they have the ability to fix. The governor declared a State of Emergency for the schools of Mississippi due to the winter weather beginning January 15. While dealing with the current water crisis, however, it is important to remember that Flint, Michigan still does not have clean water after high levels of lead were discovered in 2014. Puerto Rico, still massively without electricity, is lacking in trustworthy water more than 100 days after Hurricane Maria. First, of course, Jacksonians must mend their water issue and the issues it triggered.

In order to avoid the requirement of making up missed school days, the Mississippi Department of Education must also sign off on a State of Emergency. If they target the same dates as the governor did with his declaration, JPS will not have to make up the Tuesday and Wednesday that were missed following Martin Luther King Jr. day, but will still need to make up the five days missed prior to the holiday and, potentially, the half day of the following Friday.

It's safe to say that Easter Break will fill in two of those days, leaving either 3 or 5 more. While days have been tacked on to the end of the school year in the past, this suggestion is stirring up controversy this year. 2017-2018 graduation has already been pushed back once, and an extension of the school year would require the graduation to be pushed back a second time so that seniors receive their required course hours. Graduation of the 7 high schools takes place at a central location over the course of a couple of days, making it more difficult to reschedule.

Scheduling school on Saturdays has also occurred in the past. Usually, absences on the Saturdays aren't counted against the students, and not enough students can always come to warrant instructional time. This would also be a problem if spring break is used to make up some of those days.

Currently, the most popular make-up day option among both teachers and students is an extended school day. A certain amount of school days would be extended a certain amount of time until all of the missed hours are made up. Each day, for example, could be extended for twenty minutes. For high school, this would just extend each class block by five minutes. If an instructional time is already occurring, it is more likely to be maintained than if that time wasn't already blocked off for learning.

The most glaring issue with most of the possibilities – MDE declares a State of Emergency, the school year is extended, school is scheduled on Saturdays, school is scheduled for spring break – is that the dates for state tests and AP tests will not change, even if the dates for instructional time do. State tests, for now, determine whether or not students graduate, and, at this point in the school year, students who plan to take AP tests have already committed to paying for them. Without a waiver, AP tests cost \$95 a piece. With a waiver, they cost \$55 a piece. Every student in JPS who just lost two weeks of instructional time could very likely be two weeks behind in material when they take their exams, through no fault of their teacher, their school, or themselves. After all, people

have no control over the weather, nor do they have control over the surge of water pipe breakages that the weather brings with it. There are only so many crews and there are only so many hours in a day. Students will be prepared for their end-of-the-year tests, but it will require hard work, dedication and determination similar to that of the crews fixing these broken pipes in 20 degree weather and waist-deep in water.

*Editor's Update: The days were partially made up using the parent/teacher conference day and both Easter holiday days. The rest of the days were made up through an hour long extension of the school day for a set amount of time. Two extra days were made up this way in case another unforeseeable event causes the cancellation of school.*

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*continued from pg 1, Education Funding Formula: Separate but [un]Equal*

formula for public school funding in Mississippi, contains a crucial detail that largely affects the inequitable funding of various districts: the 27% rule. After a district's estimated needed funds are calculated, that district is legally required to provide 27% of those funds through their tax base, with the expectation that the state is responsible for the other 73%. If a district has a high property tax base and has the financial capability to provide more than 27% and does provide more, the state is still responsible for the other 73%. This gives those districts more funding than required by the formula and a higher percentage of funding than districts in which there is a low property tax base. Furthermore, the Mississippi Department of Education often fails to adequately pay that calculated 73%. This expectation of 73% is not supported by property taxes paid to the state, and must be supplied through general or earmarked state funds, limiting the funding of education to what the state can afford.

HB 957, a new education funding proposal named Mississippi Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPS) was recently proposed in the Mississippi Legislature. Previously, student poverty measure -- and subsequent numbers given by the formula -- was found through the free and reduced lunch program. Because of districts like JPS where the entire district receives free lunch, the new bill finds the student poverty measure using Census data. The Census data includes all students who reside in the district, even if they are home-schooled or attend private school. The community poverty measure is disproportionately calculated because high income families with students in private school are included in the formula for the funding of the public school district. A non-profit that helps states find ways to properly and equitably fund public education and that was hired by the state legislators, EdBuild, does not agree with this change, nor do they agree that the 27% rule should remain in the formula, which, so far, is remaining.

EdBuild used the numbers given to them by the legislators proposing the bill to calculate the estimated funding each district would receive, but those numbers were calculated from the Census data that does not accurately represent most school districts' income. Using Census data to calculate district poverty levels unfairly targets areas like Jackson, where the well-off white students are sent to private schools and everyone else is in the public school. The wealthy students decrease the district's poverty level, even though they aren't attending a school in the district. Usually this ends up hurting minorities.

**The private school kids outnumber the homeless kids, and the homeless kids are no longer factored into the poverty level as heavily. Once again, privilege has the power.**

If the 27% rule was to be removed from the bill, the state government would calculate the money each district needs and the money each district can provide through their area's property taxes. Districts in high property tax areas would be responsible for paying a larger percentage of their funding. These districts are underfunded under the current funding laws, but would be more underfunded if they could no longer provide the extra bit of money that is not counted in their 27% through property taxes. They would then be underfunded to the same or a similar degree as school districts with a low property tax base are now. They, too, would lack the number of textbooks required to send one home with every student. They, too, would

would carry a bottle of hand sanitizer with them every time they go to the bathroom because soap is never guaranteed.

spreadsheet with his constituents describing the differences between the actual funding received by school districts, the funding MAEP calculates for the school districts, the funding HB 957 calculates for the school districts, and the difference between the two calculations. Only a few schools gain in recommended funding under HB 957, and only one school gains a significant amount. Jackson Public Schools, already underfunded by around \$11,500,000 under MAEP, is calculated to need \$7,000,000 less than MAEP calculated when placed in the formula for HB 957 -- a formula that has yet to be officially established. The Madison County School district is slated to receive \$4,000,000 less than their MAEP calculation.

Our students are smart. They're enthusiastic. They want to learn. It's hard, though, when the classrooms are either 90 degrees or 60 degrees, when technology is unreliable, when the grant for computers ran out after only two years, when the food is edible but just barely.

**If we cannot afford the mundane necessities because we are underfunded, depriving us of more funding will not make things better.**

We cannot buy more buses with less money. We cannot buy more textbooks with less money. We can not fix the roofs with less money. The legislature's reworking of the school funding formula is nothing less than an attempt to place minority students at more of a disadvantage than they're already experiencing. The starting line has never been at the same place as the privileged, but now it's being moved further back than before.

While the legislators proposing HB 957 claim that it increases school funding, it, in reality, severely decreases funding from what MAEP suggested, which already underfunded education by about \$200 million in the last fiscal year and only fully funded education twice in its twenty-year life.

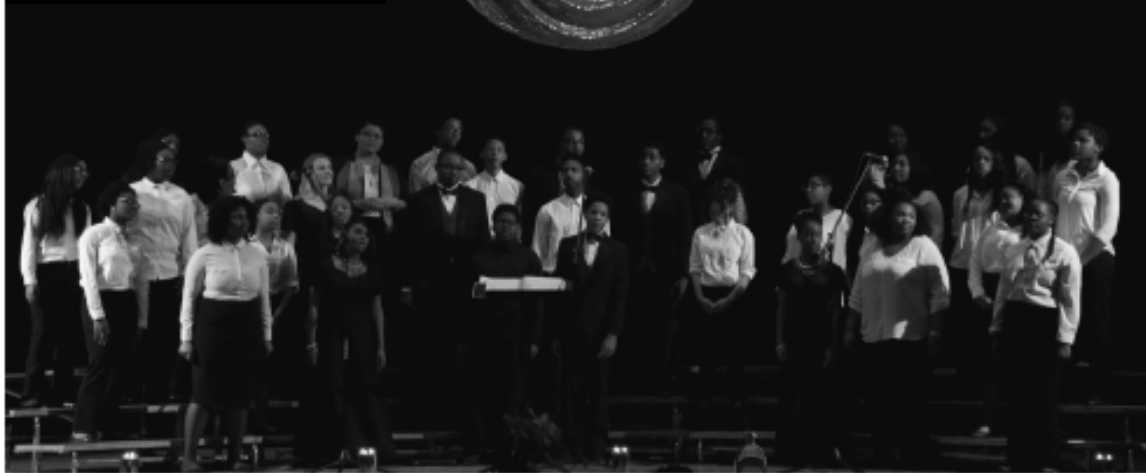
The MAEP formula harmed low income areas, but the new UPS formula will be worse. Coincidentally, statistics show that low income areas are mostly populated by minorities. It's no surprise that the majority white Mississippi legislature twists education funding to unfairly provide educational opportunities based on income, race, and geographic location.

**Half a century after school integration, it is clear that the promise of true integration and education equality was never intended to be fulfilled.**

*Editor's Update: In early March, the Senate voted to send HB 957 back to committee, effectively killing it for this legislative year. Some Senators expect it to appear again in another few years.*

## Legacy of Talent

By Imani Skipwith  
Sophomore



During spring break, Murrah High School's internationally known choir had the opportunity to travel to Italy in order to perform in and explore this foreign country. The trip included touring four cities: Milan, Verona, Venice and Rome.

The choir was granted such an opportunity because of their hard work and dedication. After competing and winning at a local festival -- the Reveline Core Festival -- in Florence, MS, they continued to the state competition, where they received all superior ratings. Soon after, the choir was invited to the Festival of Gold in Los Angeles, California which is for all choirs who have rated superior on a local and state level. At the festival, there is a massive concert where many choirs showcase what they have done throughout the previous year. After the concert is the competitive segment from which the Murrah Girls' Choir departed with a top score of 98, which is the highest score a choir can receive in this competition and the overall choir received some of the highest scores in the competition. Participating in all of these competitions led the choir to receive the international invitation to Italy.

Raising money to get to Italy, however, was a very challenging process. The trip itself was over \$100,000. According to Mr. Gallion, the choir director, the choir did a lot of fund raising in order to raise money so that the students could have this opportunity. A large amount of the money that was raised came from benefit concerts that started in the fall, as well as the winter concert that they hosted. The choir would invite people out to hear them perform, and in the midst of singing, the attendees would give. Other fund raising activities outside of school were selling cookie dough, World's Finest Chocolate, popcorn, and more. Often, the choir was featured in the news. They have done both televised and regular interviews so that the word of what they were doing would circulate and the number of supporters and donors would grow. One of their sponsors gave them almost \$20,000. Many other sponsors gave hundreds of dollars to help them reach their goal.

When it comes to actually being able to fund raise the money, a lot of the members say that it was quite challenging. Mr. Gallion states that it required a lot of strategic planning due to the fact that you must be able to build relationships, go out and not be afraid to ask people for support. There is a large amount of professionalism and articulation that goes into such a task; you have to be able to tell people what you're selling and what you need, because if you cannot get that support, you cannot

get the funds.

Trips for competitive purposes are not just about competing; they are adventures from which you can learn. Student choir director, Justin Bell, explains, "I am blessed to say that this trip will enable me to see more aspects of the world and others' culture, further understanding my own role in the world and building more empathy for others." As a musician, "exposure is key" and the opportunity to sing in such a great place molds and transforms the music into something greater and impacts the singers and the audience.

The students are clearly inspired by their choir director, as he said something similar. He frequently tells his students that music is an interdisciplinary subject. Within what they do specifically for choir, it's found in all types of disciplines and academics. DeVonte

Phillips, the tenor section leader, and Ashley King, the alto section leader, comments that going to Italy would allow their peers to see what goes on in a city other than Jackson and a state other than Mississippi. They are able to get educated on something completely foreign and different and it will affect them positively, as they will be receiving such extraordinary knowledge on a different culture. Of course, not only the underclassmen and juniors benefit from such an opportunity, the seniors would too. Sophia Bowley, the soprano section leader, illustrates, "It will definitely build me as a person and singer. Like I said, it's just pretty much exposure. Everything you learn pretty much has to do with exposure. The more you do things, the more you expose yourself to things you are unfamiliar with, the more you grow in terms of being able to understand more people." She continues on to say that being able to learn such communication skills will help in all aspects of your life and it gives you a more global view.

It is inspiring to see talented young people come together, work hard and show the world what they have to offer. In the interview, Mr. Gallion says that his goal was to expose the choir to as many situations as possible not just competitive atmospheres but world experiences that would help them be overall better citizens. His work and guidance, along with the youth's determination to discover something new led them to accomplish so much and reach new heights and it will continue on for a long time, being passed down from class to class, from student to student.

With the start of a new school year, new rules are inevitable. This was evident at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year when both rookie and veteran drivers of Murrah High School were hit with a new school policy. The Principal of Murrah High School, Dr. Buchanan made an announcement declaring that any students who were to arrive at the school after 8:45 AM would have to spend the remainder of their first block in school suspension (ISS). Enforcement of this rule causes students to miss valuable educational time that they won't get back.

Many of the students sent to ISS are bothered by the policy because they often have legitimate reasons for their late arrivals. Two Murrah seniors, Iyana Tolliver and David Rankin, shared first hand experiences they have had with the newly placed policy, stating that "it is unnecessary" and "walking around the school makes them late." Murrah's policy requires late students to walk around the side of the school from the student parking lot to the front of the school instead of just going in the side door, which is more convenient.

**Many drivers feel the new policy, even though it applies to everybody, is specifically targeted at upperclassmen drivers.**

Madison Gray, a veteran driver who usually makes it to school around 8:00, has difficulty adjusting to the new policy simply because it is so late in the school year and a daily routine is already in place.

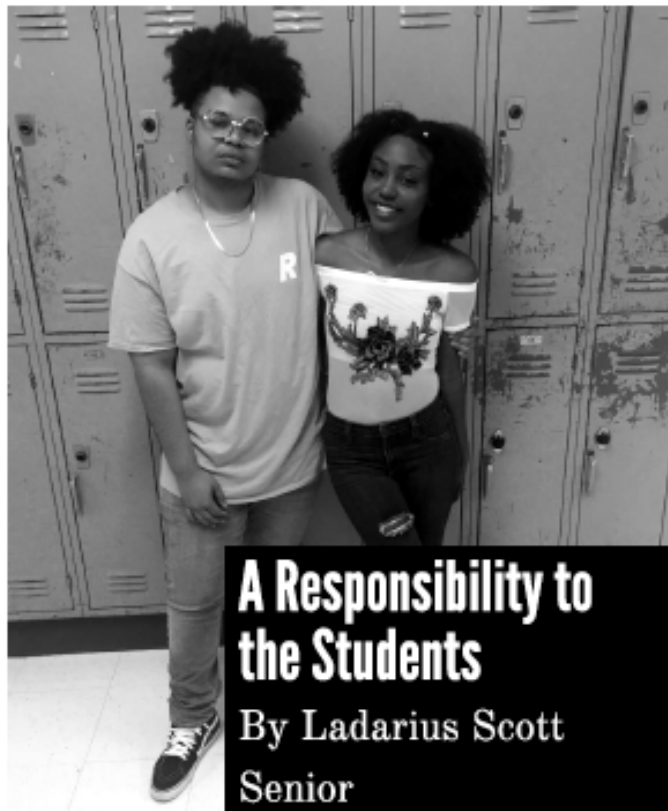
The ISS teacher, Mr. Nathaniel disagrees, stating, "The new policy teaches responsibility. When the students are taken to ISS they are given the opportunity to finish their work, most of the time." With so many spaces in ISS being occupied by late arrivers it can become an inconvenience for both the students and the teachers.

The policy was put into place because of the excessive amount of drivers arriving to school late and being placed on the tardy list. Even though the policy only shaved ten minutes off of our time at school, it makes a big difference to drivers. Many students have already become accustomed to arriving to school at a certain time, and with it being changed so late in our high school career it is a struggle to become adjusted.

**Valuable work time is missed, and therefore students are behind on work and forced to either catch up or fall behind.**

"It is impossible to catch them up, therefore their grades will suffer," Mrs. Brierly, an AP English teacher, feels that students miss out on necessary work when they are not in class at the proper time. AP classes are affected a little more just because of the workload put on students. Missing out on one day of instruction can cause students to struggle or eventually fall behind on important class work.

Many driving students have yet to realize that the policy was put in place for their benefit. "It instills life values of being on time," Dr. Brown, Assistant



## A Responsibility to the Students

By Ladarius Scott  
Senior

Principal, explains. She illustrates that the policy was created to insure the safety of the students and teachers. "There is simply not enough security staff to be at all entries of the school after teachers are off duty and have to start class," Dr. Brown continues to explain.

**When we come to school, we are put in the care of the staff: they are responsible for anything that happens to us, which is why policies such as these are put into place.**

Students may not like it or find it difficult to adapt to the new rules put into place, but it is for the benefit and well-being of the students.

*Don't miss Murrah's  
graduation!*

1:00 p.m.

May 23, 2018

Jackson State  
University