

# Dread *notes*



## THE ARTS AT DEXTER

*In times of stress and uncertainty, the creative arts are an outlet for many to unwind, express emotion and lift up spirits. During the current pandemic, the arts are more important than ever to the mental health of our students. At Dexter Schools, teachers of music, visual arts, drama, writing and speech are continuously innovating ways to engage their students' creativity despite the restrictions posed by remote instruction.*



MUSIC – P. 3

VISUAL ARTS – P. 7

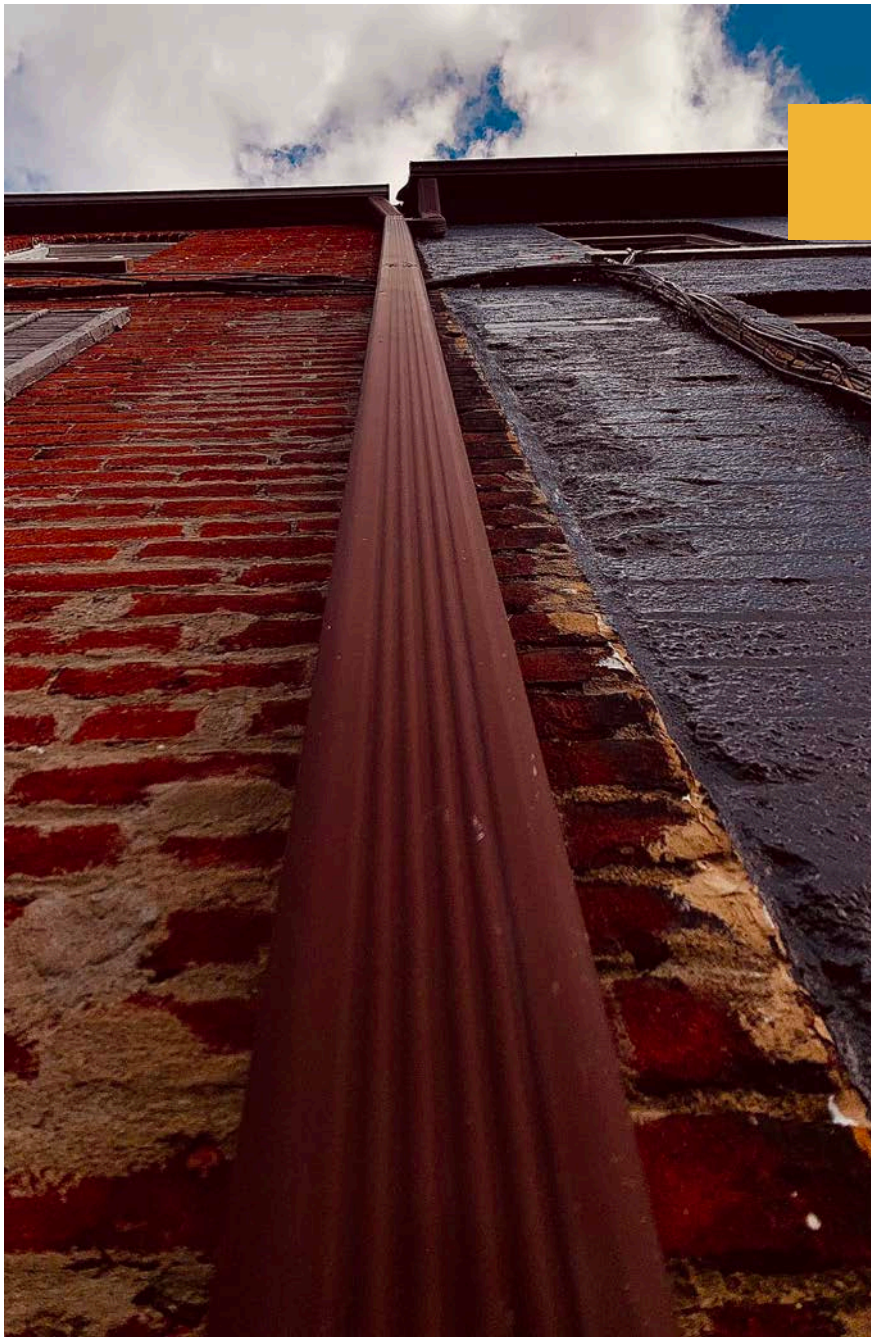
DRAMA – P. 12

WRITING/SPEECH – P. 15



DEXTER  
COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS





## DCS ARTS STAFF

### **Music**

Julie Bassett, DHS & Mill Creek Choirs  
Liz Berghorst, Beacon Music & Creekside Choirs  
Alison Campbell, Mill Creek Orchestras  
Andy Damman, Mill Creek Bands  
Matt Deloria, DHS & Creekside Orchestras  
Anthony Koch, Wylie Music & Creekside Choirs  
Ken Moore, DHS Bands  
Robin Radcliff, Anchor Music  
Rachel Wilson, Creekside Bands

### **Visual Arts**

Krickett Chamberlain, DHS Art  
Ashley Dorr, Beacon Art  
Valerie Eninsche, Wylie Art  
Amara Karapas, Mill Creek Art  
Barry Mergler, DHS Yearbook & Photojournalism  
Jane Montero, Creekside Art  
Dennis Stockwell, GraphX  
Kristin Walters, Anchor Art

### **Drama**

Jodi Helmholtz, DHS Drama  
Erin Palmer, DHS Drama  
Patrick Stolkey, IB Theater

### **Writing/Speech**

Chris Mackinder, The Squall  
Deb Marsh, Debate & Forensics





# MUSIC

## DEXTER ORCHESTRAS

In a remote learning setting, orchestra students playing together as an ensemble during class time is not a viable option due to the latency experienced via video livestreaming. Dexter orchestra directors Matt Deloria and Alison Campbell are providing the next best option: knitting together individual student submissions into ensemble recordings to share with families and the community.

This past October, Deloria, with assistance from DCS Theater Manager, Martin Ruhlig, spent many hours lining up individual student recordings and mixing them into a final product: videos of both the high school chamber and concert orchestras performing short Bach chorales ([Chamber Orchestra](#) | [Concert Orchestra](#)). Orchestra families enjoyed seeing their students perform together again, albeit in a different manner. Shared out to the DCS community, these recordings will replace live concerts for the near future. Since then, Deloria and Campbell have recorded and released additional pieces ([DHS](#) | [Mill Creek](#)) in this manner, with an added educational benefit of teaching orchestra students about sound production; a topic they usually don't have time to explore.

*"Student engagement and enjoyment is everything right now."*

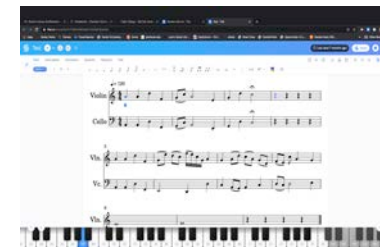
Technology may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of music education, but with the restrictions on face-to-face instruction, web-based software has become as integral to the orchestra curriculum as it has to core classes. Products such as [Soundtrap](#) and [GarageBand](#) allow students to record and edit their instrumental submissions, and enables teachers to conduct live in class while students play along (muted) to the program's guide track through their headphones. While students can't hear one another play, in this way they are still able to work together as an ensemble. This method is used at the high school, middle school and Creekside.



*Soundtrap - each line is one student*

Another new addition to this year's orchestra curriculum, which both Deloria and Campbell share will most likely find its way into their regular lesson plan, is a long-term project due at semester end. High school students have four pathways from which to choose: learn and perform a solo or duet, similar to Solo &

Ensemble contest; compose a piece of music using [flat.io](#) (a free music notation software available online); songwriting, perhaps transcription of a published song or adding variation/parts to an existing song; or "choose your own adventure" – perhaps create a music video, write a jingle, etc.



*Flat.io – DHS student composition*

Middle schoolers are also assigned this project with the same pathways, but a teaching option takes the place of songwriting. Mill Creek students can choose to teach their instrument to a family member, recording their progress along the way.

Both Deloria and Campbell share that the submissions they have received are nothing short of remarkable, and they hope to share some with the DCS community once the projects are completed.



*Mill Creek student teaching project submission*

# MUSIC

## DEXTER BANDS

The DHS Marching Band completed their first remote marching season this past fall, performing at several DHS home football games. In lieu of Dexter's traditional band camp, selected student leaders led their squads independently during the summer in preparation for the upcoming, hoped-for season. Once rehearsals were allowed, the marching band began preparing their halftime show, but in a way never-before envisioned. Students wore playing masks (masks with holes cut to fit around instrument mouthpieces), bell covers to contain droplets coming from the ends of instruments and remained socially-distanced the entire three months. Dr. Moore, Director of DHS Bands, created a show in which student positions were six feet apart at all times. "The students did an amazing job." Moore shared, with about 2/3rds of band students electing to participate in the rehearsals and football games (all in-person activities were voluntary).



*Ryan Maki Photography*

Now that marching season is over, the DHS bands are working on scales/fundamentals, sight reading, rhythm reading, and full band arrangements during their twice per week class time. Students are also been working on an independent musicianship project in which each will prepare a traditional solo or ensemble performance, arrange or compose a classical/jazz piece, arrange an existing work or write their own pop/rock song. Due at the semester's end, this project must include the student's primary band instrument. Dr. Moore recently created a [webpage](#) featuring several outstanding student submissions.

Students 6<sup>th</sup> grade and above have the benefit of already knowing the basics of their chosen instrument, so they are able to continue with band instruction in a remote setting. Although students aren't able to play together as an ensemble due to video stream lag, they are still able to play individually and submit weekly recordings via Canvas.

A recent 6<sup>th</sup> grade band lesson on theme and variations had students compose their own variation to the well-known song, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," then record themselves playing their composition on their instrument. The resulting recordings were very impressive, 6<sup>th</sup> grade band director Rachel Wilson shared. [Click here](#) to hear an example.



*Ryan Maki Photography*

At Mill Creek, the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade bands spent the beginning of this school year working on various activities such as sight reading, learning new fundamentals, exploring a variety of professional musicians and lots of creating. Mill Creek Band Director Andy Damman recently assigned an Individual Musicianship Project, in which students will produce a virtual solo or small ensemble with little or no help from a director. Students will perform their piece at the end of the semester, which will take the place of the MBSOA Solo and Ensemble Festival which normally takes place in early February.



*Ryan Maki Photography*

*"There is nothing teachers want more than to see our kids in person."*





Creekside 6<sup>th</sup> grade choir virtual performance video

# MUSIC

## DEXTER CHOIRS

At Dexter, choir students are still able to sing “together” remotely, even if they aren’t able to hear each other live due to the lag encountered via livestream video. Anthony Koch, Creekside’s 6<sup>th</sup> grade choir director, has recorded guide tracks of songs using Dexter students’ voices, which allows each to sing along with their classmates and hear the group as a whole. During class, a video plays (created with the free video recording and editing online software, [Screencast-o-matic](#)) showing the music while a cursor guides the students through the score. [Click here](#) to see an example.

Middle school and high school choir director Julie Bassett is also focusing on virtual instruction and performance, using both Zoom and GarageBand to facilitate the process. The Mill Creek Singers, which includes approximately 60 students, meets in two sections each week due to the group’s size. At DHS, there are three choirs: Concert Choir, Descant Choir (a select group of treble voices) and Chamber Choir (audition-only group). These choirs meet daily to rehearse virtually, with students muted as they sing along to recorded music, hearing only themselves rather than the entire group.

But this is where the virtual performance aspect comes in, as Bassett has spent countless hours mixing and weaving the individually submitted recordings into a beautiful harmony of student voices. These [videos](#) will of necessity take the place of live performances, until the time when it is safe to again sing together in person.

*“I’m always trying to keep in mind the student as a whole person, not just as a musician.”*

Similar to the band and orchestra programs, Dexter middle and high school choir students are also pursuing a “choose your own path” musicianship project over the next several weeks. Whether it be composing a piece of choral music or learning a solo and receiving feedback from Bassett, students are free to explore their musical preferences and creativity.



DHS Chamber Choir

Students interested in composition have been introduced to a free, downloadable music notation program, [MuseScore](#), which allows them to create, play back and print sheet music.



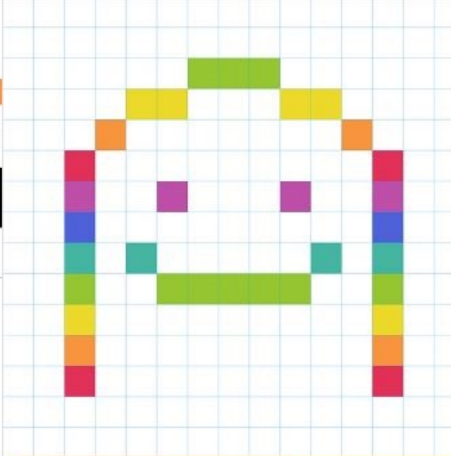
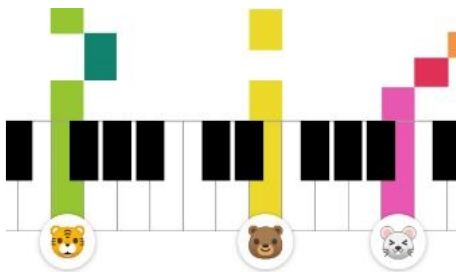
Mill Creek Choir

As a festive treat for Dexter choir families, Bassett and her students created a virtual holiday card featuring seasonal carols and a piece of art, photograph, voice recording or other submission made by each student. Holiday videos were made for both the middle school and high school choirs, which will undoubtedly fill families with the joy of the season.

[Click here](#) to visit Bassett’s YouTube channel and enjoy Dexter Choir’s virtual performances.

During the winter and spring, Bassett intends to offer mini vocal lessons during her weekly school office hours. This will allow students interested in fine-tuning their performance to have one-on-one time with their teacher.

## CHROME MUSIC LAB



# MUSIC

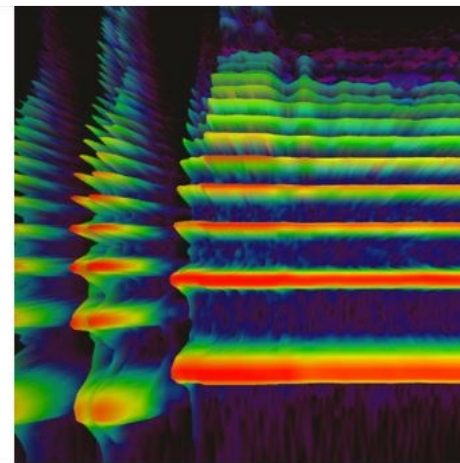
## ELEMENTARY | GENERAL MUSIC

One thing many Dexter 5th graders look forward to when starting at Creekside is choosing an instrument to play in either band or orchestra. This year, that option was not possible; nor was choosing to join the Creekside choir. However, Dexter has ensured that all 5th graders (and K-4) continue to receive weekly music education in hopes that by the 2021-2022 school year, those choices will again be available.

Rachel Wilson, Creekside's band director, has created a general music curriculum for all 5th graders

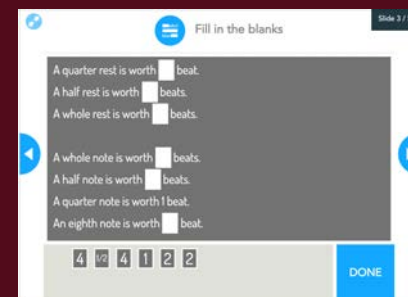
utilizing several interactive websites. Focusing on rhythm, note reading and listening activities, Wilson's lessons continue moving students forward with their music education despite not learning an instrument.

[Nearpod.com](https://nearpod.com) is an interactive slideshow website teachers can use to create lessons with interactive games, live fill-in-the-blank questions and fun quiz features. The teacher has control of the slides and can see students' responses in real time, allowing for immediate discussion and feedback before moving on to the next slide.

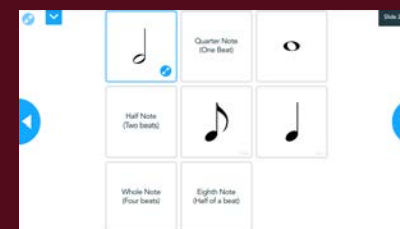


A student-favorite website is [bongo.cat](https://bongo.cat), which simulates the playing of bongos, marimba, piano, cymbals, tambourine and cowbell using computer keys. "It's a fun tool for the kids," says Wilson. "I can play a rhythm and ask the students to match my rhythm, or vice versa."

[Chrome Music Lab](https://chromemusiclab.com) offers many creative music features for students to explore including chords, strings, melody maker, rhythm and soundwave among others.



Nearpod.com



Nearpod.com

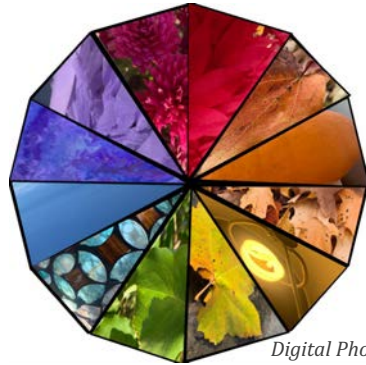


When DHS art teacher Krickett Chamberlain reviewed her previous years' curriculum in preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, she came to the realization that, given the correct supplies and knowledge, a good majority of art-related projects can be done at home. Art projects that are a staple to the DHS curriculum, for example the oil pastel flower project focusing on the work of Georgia O'Keeffe (hung in the library twice a year), are of such importance to students that Chamberlain knew she had to find a way to keep it in the Foundations of Art Curriculum. "The thought of taking something away from them, solely because we're not in the building was heartbreaking," she shared, and determined her curriculum would remain the same, albeit with some modification.

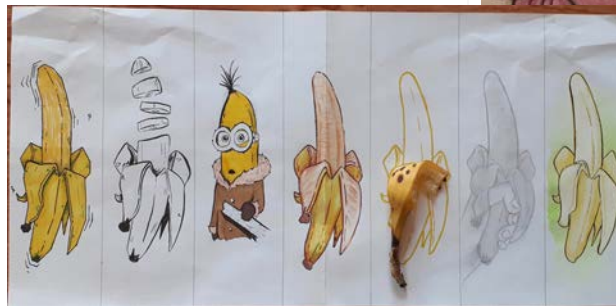
Project demonstrations are now done through a screen, rather than in person, and instructor feedback to students is via private chat, but Chamberlain is dedicated to facilitating the same imagination and creativity in her students, with impressive results. "The amount of participation when turning in projects and the work I am receiving is magnificent," she states. Many students' work is shared via social media through the DHS Art

Department's Twitter and Instagram accounts (@DHS\_FineArts and dhs\_fineartsdept).

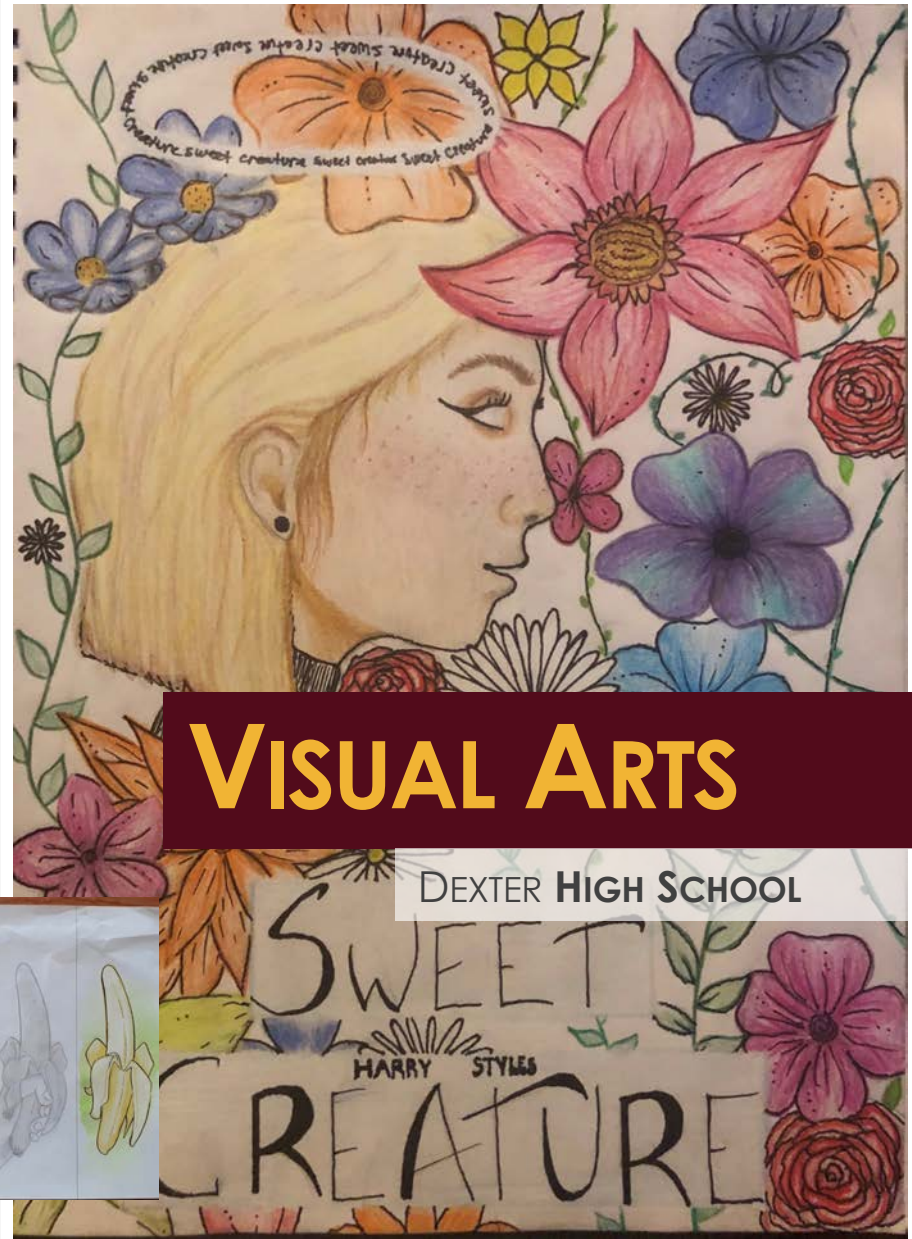
One fine arts class that could not be taught virtually this year was Jewelry, due to the safety procedures which must accompany the jewelry-making process, so Chamberlain instead offered a Digital Photography class. Students are learning basic smartphone photography skills and how to be creative with their images, resulting in amazing final products.



*Digital Photography  
color wheel project*



*Advanced Drawing & Painting accordion book*





# VISUAL ARTS

## DEXTER HIGH SCHOOL | GRAPHX

As part of the Consortium program, GraphX was at first allowed to have students in the classroom lab at 50% capacity this past fall. Until the 3-week Covid pause in December 2020, when high schools were closed to all, GraphX students were able to take their projects through the entire production process, from design to final product output. Due to the nature of the class, it is integral for GraphX students to be present in the workshop; when they are remote, students are limited to design work and cannot gain the necessary production experience required by the program.

The South & West Washtenaw Consortium provides career and technical education to the Chelsea, Dexter, Lincoln, Manchester, Milan, and Saline school districts.

GraphX Academy, housed at Dexter High School, provides skills and experiences for students interested in graphic arts/communications as a possible career or as background for advanced education after high school.

The latest project on which GraphX students are working is a series of social justice posters, commissioned by DHS teacher Jaime Dudash and funded by a grant from the Educational Foundation of Dexter. These 24x36-inch posters showcase DHS teacher-selected personal heroes; someone who has inspired a DHS teacher in some way (examples include Mike Rowe, TV host, writer, actor and trades jobs advocate; and Madam C.J. Walker, first African-American woman self-made millionaire), which will be displayed in the building hallways. While the students haven't been in the classroom recently, they have been



hard at work designing poster proofs for final approval. Certain design programs, such as Adobe Creative Cloud, InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator, which are usually only available on computers in the DHS building, have been loaded onto GraphX students' MacBooks so they



can continue the design process at home. If students aren't able to be back in the workshop physically after the 2020 winter break, GraphX teacher, Dennis Stockwell, will print the posters himself.

The school-to-work transition is a major focus of the GraphX Academy. Stockwell strives to bring realism into the classroom to ensure students are comfortable not only with all aspects of the production process but interacting with others in a business setting. Teaching them accountability and the importance of being a good team member (positive communication, friendly attitude, dependability, etc.) prepares students to successfully contribute to their workplace environment. Until students return to the workshop, Stockwell will continue to inspire their graphic design creativity via Zoom, while also focusing on creating a well-rounded and productive citizen.

*"I'm trying to make it as normal as possible for my students."*



# VISUAL ARTS

## PHOTOJOURNALISM | DHS YEARBOOK

Barry Mergler's Photojournalism students typically work in hands-on, small groups, collaborating on "photo missions" with cameras provided by DHS. This year, these projects have been scaled back, as they do not translate to individual remote learning. Rather than using DHS equipment, students are using personal cameras or smartphones to capture images; fortunately, smartphone cameras have evolved and take very high-resolution photos. Mergler's class goal is that each student will have a published work (yearbook, social media, *The Squall*, etc.) by the end of the class.

Currently, Photojournalism students are working on a 2-photo project featuring their personal home workspace; a space that the student sees everyday and may not really "see" anymore. The project encourages students to look with fresh eyes at something with which they are very familiar, submitting one landscape and one portrait photo of the space. In addition, students are required to submit 10 photos of anything they choose every two weeks in order to become comfortable with their camera.

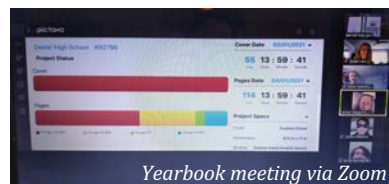


Photojournalism students can create photo stories featuring their images in Adobe Spark or other programs to which they may have home access. When in-person, students are able to use DHS-provided software such as iMovie, Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, etc. to edit their pictures and stories, but the free, web-based Adobe Spark is a creative substitute. Mergler encourages his students to submit their photos and photo stories to the *DHS Unsinkable* yearbook or *The Squall*, the high school's newspaper.

*"I'm so proud of these students, I can't express it enough."*

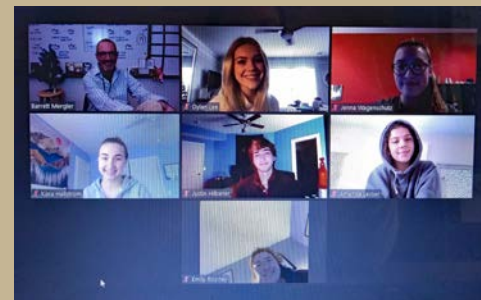
Students who have taken Photojournalism sometimes move on to the Yearbook class in order to be part of the *DHS Unsinkable* staff. 2020 is a historic year for many reasons, but for the *Unsinkable* staff it marks the first time DHS students have put together a yearbook virtually. With only 7 students on staff this year, one may think the task a Herculean one, but Mergler's "Special Ops" team is crushing it. "They are doing something no other group of yearbook students has ever been asked to do," Mergler says.

In addition to their own efforts, the yearbook staff has utilized crowdsourcing, Dexter parents and an increased social media presence to gather photos from any high school events that took place this past fall. "We are very proud of where we are, considering the situation," editor Jenna Wagenschutz, DHS senior, shares.



Yearbook meeting via Zoom

"It hasn't been easy without access to DHS photo editing software, not being able to attend events, etc.," Wagenschutz continues. "We have to give a huge shoutout to both Ryan Maki Photography and Wendy Martin for providing us with photos of events where spectators were limited."



DHS Unsinkable 2020-2021 staff

As several annual events did not take place this year (e.g. Homecoming), the staff is instead working to capture student voices describing experiences and expressing points of view on the pandemic. "We have to have the voices of the people living through this history included in this book," Mergler shares. Pulling content from student Tweets and Instagram posts, as well as from extensive student surveys, the 2021 yearbook will feature several pages of such material which will no doubt poignantly commemorate the school year. Boosting their social media presence since fall has also netted more student followers, leading to a better rate of responses for both senior picture submissions and ad sales.

DHS Unsinkable 2021 staff t-shirt design



And even a pandemic can't stop Mergler from continuing the annual tradition of 'Donut Fridays' for the yearbook staff. Meeting socially-distanced in the DHS parking lot the 2nd Friday of the month, these students have a short window of in-person bonding time which is vital to their team effort in creating a memorable yearbook.

# VISUAL ARTS

## MILL CREEK FINE ARTS

Mill Creek art teacher Amara Karapas describes her current online classroom instruction as “Bob Ross flipped on his head.” It is sometimes difficult to demonstrate an art concept live, so Karapas pre-records instructional videos that students can watch asynchronously. During her live Zoom classes, she spends time talking with students about their projects, offering critique or clarifying any questions.

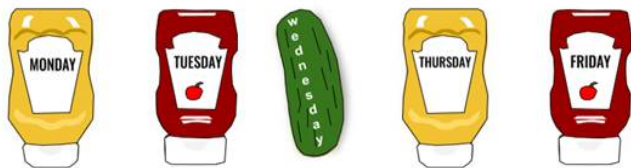
At the beginning of each quarter, students pick up an art supply kit which includes items needed to create 10 projects during their class rotation. In a typical year, middle school art students meet every day during the week, which allows Karapas to demonstrate the project hands-on. The remote learning schedule this year is two days a week live, so time is limited; Karapas prefers to spend class time answering questions and helping with next steps, rather than demonstrating a concept. But, having recorded instruction is helpful, as students can pause, rewind or re-watch as needed.



Altered sketch book project

During their art rotation, Mill Creek students work on a variety of art concepts, some of which are not possible now via remote learning (e.g. clay). This year's projects include street art, digital drawing, fiber work/felted beads and altered sketch books, where students are given a donated children's book and change the pages with drawings and new text. Students use the items provided by the school for these projects, but are always welcome to supplement with different materials from home.

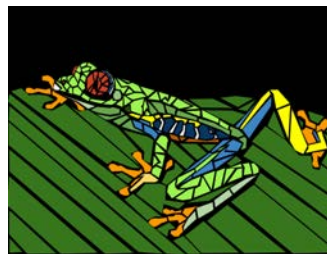
“The kids are doing really well,” Karapas shares. “I always strive to make sure they have a good experience and to help them with whatever they're going through.”



Digital drawing project - Google Draw

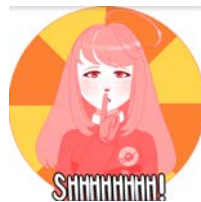
## CREEKSIDE ART

Zooming live twice a week with art teacher Jane Montero, Creekside students use the individual art kit materials distributed at the beginning of the 9 weeks to create incredible works of art. Whether at home or in-person, each project is based on the art paper, colored paper, oil pastels, watercolor paint set and/or black pen provided, using a combination of pre-recorded instructional videos and live demonstration.



6<sup>th</sup> grade mosaic art - Google Draw

“Teaching remotely has been an easy way to connect with students, as we have a chance to talk in a quieter setting,” Montero says. Using a small webcam, Montero can demonstrate projects live by sharing her screen with students. Students are also learning to advocate for themselves; communicating via email and/or submitting work virtually are two life skills Montero feels will be an integral part of their lives.



Art Club iPad drawing

*“A huge silver lining has been increased communication with students. I am hearing more from kids this year than ever before. Students are learning to advocate for themselves.”*

One thing Montero misses is not being able to display student artwork in the building. However, she has created exciting virtual exhibits and shares them on social media. Most recently, student projects were featured in a [heartwarming video](#) produced by Montero thanking the Dexter Board of Education for their service.

During this unique time of remote instruction, Montero is grateful for online communications with art educators all over the country/world. Organizations such as Online Art Teachers K12 (OATK12), National Art Education Association (NAEA) and Michigan Art Education Association (MAEA) have connected educators and provide free references, webinars, and support for continuing art education.

6<sup>th</sup> grade My 3 Orbs project - based on Detroit artist Jamea Richmond-Edwards



5<sup>th</sup> grade texture trees project



Beacon 2nd grade  
Nature Radial Design project



# VISUAL ARTS

## ELEMENTARY ART - WYLIE | BEACON | ANCHOR

At Dexter's three elementary schools, art instruction this year is done remotely whether students are in the building or at home. When in-person, students remain in their classroom for most of the day to limit exposure, consistent with state Covid regulations. However, being virtual doesn't stop the creativity of either the art teachers or their students.

At Wylie Elementary, art teacher Valerie Eninsche has changed much of her curriculum to adapt to a virtual classroom. Focusing on drawing and painting, students are still using mostly hands-on materials such as crayons, markers, paints or pens. "Digital drawing can be difficult for this age group," Eninsche explains, "and I don't want to stress the kids out; art should be cathartic and fun. Despite being virtual, students are still learning art concepts, stretching and exploring."

Eninsche's projects are flexible and engaging, using materials in different ways, including items they may have at home such as tinfoil, cardboard or paper grocery bags. Creating YouTube videos and Google slideshows to demonstrate project concepts has been a very effective way to keep students interested.

Seeing her students remotely only once per week, this flexible schedule gave rise to an exciting opportunity for Eninsche: a 3-week adaptive art class dedicated solely to special needs students.

Students with special needs usually participate in art with their homeroom class, and work on the classroom project with help from their paraprofessional. This fall, Eninsche created an adaptive art curriculum where students received their own art crate. Exploring painting using their art crate materials, student artwork was then turned into a Thanksgiving turkey to take home.



At Anchor and Beacon, art instruction is much the same as at Wylie: once per week, remote from the classroom or home. In addition to the class projects, art teachers Kristin Walters (Anchor) and Ashley Dorr (Beacon) create supplemental and optional enrichment projects students can do on Wednesday, the District's asynchronous learning day.

As an example of how teachers are changing their curriculum to meet virtual learning needs, Walters shared that in fall students are usually learning how to weave on a loom in a Navajo blanket weaving project. To not further strain parents by having them try to teach their

kids how to weave, the project was changed to Navajo blanket "designers" and the students instead created blanket patterns using construction paper, crayons and markers.

Dorr shares that art students are excited to participate in class, and she strives to keep her time with students fun and predictable. "I sign on and off each class in the same way," Dorr says, "in order to give students a consistency so they know exactly what to expect when they come to art." Using her document camera, Dorr demonstrates each project live to her students; seeing her hand movements while she creates is beneficial to students still learning fine motor skills.

With art materials in limited supply (art supply catalogs are backordered or out-of-stock), teachers have to be creative when providing materials. Unable to locate



watercolor paint sets, Dorr created paint strips using liquid watercolor for her students. The paint is dried on strips of paper, then students have only to add water to use them. Eninsche was finally able to locate paint sets at the Dollar Store, but all art teachers are telling their students to use whatever materials they have on hand. Art doesn't require fancy supplies, just the creativity of an imaginative mind.

*Dexter Drama Club fall production, "Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood"*



# DRAMA

## DEXTER DRAMA CLUB

Outdoor theater in Michigan in late October? Wearing masks and performing to both a live and televised audience? A live-streamed production with no previously installed wi-fi or power source? Dexter Drama Club: "Yeah...and?"

For their fall production of "Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood," DHS students pulled off all that and more, while continuing to follow state and District Covid protocols. While no other school (high school or college) in Michigan was putting on theater productions in fall 2020, Dexter students and staff committed themselves to the strict guidelines

required in order to move forward with their fall show. "It was so good for their mental health," DHS drama coordinator Jodi Helmholtz shared, "and they just lit up when they were together."

Live streaming the performance was a new aspect never before undertaken, and students met the challenge with the assistance of a New York-based company, "On the Stage," staffed by on-hiatus Broadway technicians. Not only did DHS students learn valuable video production skills such as camera angles and using multiple cameras, they gained valuable connections with industry

professionals. "Live streaming attracted a whole new group of kids to join Drama Club," Helmholtz said, "and it gained Dexter a wider audience, with people from New York to California logging in to watch the show." They hope to continue offering the live-stream option when they resume performances in the CPA.

Helmholtz expressed high praise for Rick Munir and the DCS Tech Department for their ingenuity in wiring the outdoor production, located several hundred yards from the high school building, for both internet and power. The show couldn't have gone on without their assistance.

In addition to the fall production,

Dexter Drama Club has been busy with master classes, improv and a newly-conceived film festival featuring the talents of Dexter students.

In person and via Zoom, drama students had the opportunity to work with Dan Cooney, former Broadway actor, and Founder and Producing Artistic Director of Dexter's own Encore Theater. During an in-person master class, Cooney answered student questions about auditioning, cold reads, networking and many other topics relevant to young actors. A Zoom master class with Sabina Carty, DHS Class of 2018 and an award-winning screenwriter, offered insight into scriptwriting and creating one-act plays.





*Dexter Drama Club  
2020-2021 officers*

# DRAMA

## DEXTER DRAMA CLUB

*Continued from pg. 12*

Improvisation, or “improv” for short, is acting without a script and another aspect of Drama Club that continues on despite Covid restrictions. The Off-Q Improv group (approx. 25 students) meets weekly throughout the year, and performs in front of an audience once a quarter. After “Sherwood” closed, students focused their attention on a weeklong series of improv workshops with David Mohn, local actor and Broadway performer, which culminated in a performance at the DHS Amphitheater. Performing outdoors in 30°F weather, with a buzzer to warn students of breaching the 6 ft required distance, the actors nonetheless persevered and had a great time creating on-the-spot scenes and sketches.

DHS drama students are currently working on their first-ever film festival. To create as many opportunities as possible to participate in Dexter Drama Club, the film festival is open to all Dexter students. Participants will create a 20-minute film (suggested themes include a secret, Christmas or a holiday or freestyle) which were intended to be premiered at a red-carpet event in the CPA in December 2020. However, as with many events, the festival has been

rescheduled for late winter, in hopes that it may be held in person rather than via live-stream.



The Dexter Drama Directing Series, affectionately referred to as “3D,” is also scheduled to continue as planned in early spring 2021. Now in its tenth year, this production's purpose is to “showcase the power of student-driven work.” All one-act pieces performed are student-directed by DHS juniors and seniors and, as always for Dexter Drama, student-acted and student-crewed.



*October 2020 Improv performance*



*Summer leadership training*

*“It was so good for the students’ mental health to move forward with the fall production of “Sherwood.” I am so proud of them.”*



*“Sherwood” costuming*

# DRAMA

## DEXTER HIGH SCHOOL | IB THEATER

The IB Theater course is a combination of performance, theatre history and general knowledge, developed and taught for the past 10 years by DHS teacher Patrick Stolkey. Due to the pandemic, the IB Programme has eliminated the biggest performance-centric task, the Collaborative Project. Given that students cannot be together to collaborate, it was removed it from the curriculum altogether this year. This has allowed Stolkey to slow down the other class requirements and focus on them individually.

In order to provide some kind of performance task, the first IB Theater class assignment was to create a pantomime scene where students, from their living rooms, basements, or often bedrooms, performed over Zoom a 1-2 minute scene where they had to tell a story without any words. Some students set this to music and developed their movements in line with the music. This exercise allowed students to see what needs to be considered while

giving a performance over Zoom. Students were successful and stayed in the mise-en-scène (arrangement of a play's scenery/stage properties) very well, Stolkey shares.

Dexter students also did a table read of "The Importance of Being Earnest," while learning about 'comedy of manners' plays. "Students seemed to enjoy the witty dialogue," Stolkey said, "and all attempted, though not successfully and definitely not prescribed, an English accent."



Along with learning about 'comedy of manners,' each student chose and researched a world theatre tradition from a list generated by the IB Programme and are currently preparing 10-15 minute presentations for their end-of-semester task.

In the presentation, students will provide an analysis of the origins and purpose of the tradition, an explanation and demonstration of a performance convention, a moment of theatre which showcases that performance convention in practice and a reflection.

"It's a monster of a task, but the students are tackling it well," Stolkey shares. Many recent Zoom meetings have been dedicated to practicing the performance convention and rehearsing the moment of theatre.

Next semester, IB Theater students will focus on Director's Notebooks, where students will select any play they would like to direct and go through the conceptualization and planning a director would undertake to put on the play. They are also scheduled to work with monologues (and possibly duo scenes), as well as continue to work on improvisation, which proved doable in mini-exercises at the start of the year.



*"While we're not able to do all of the things that I would typically do in-person, we're still managing to be creative and silly; allowing us all to perform and get some feeling of that rush, even from the safety of our own homes."*



*"The ultimate goal is that everything students have created this year will be included in some kind of print publication."*

As with so many others, the staff of Dexter High School's student newspaper, *The Squall*, has had to change their mindset in regards to how they create and push content this year. Student newspaper writers are usually thinking about layout space constraints and word count when creating stories for their print publication. Now those restrictions are no longer a priority, as a printed news publication is currently not an option and content is almost exclusively delivered digitally.

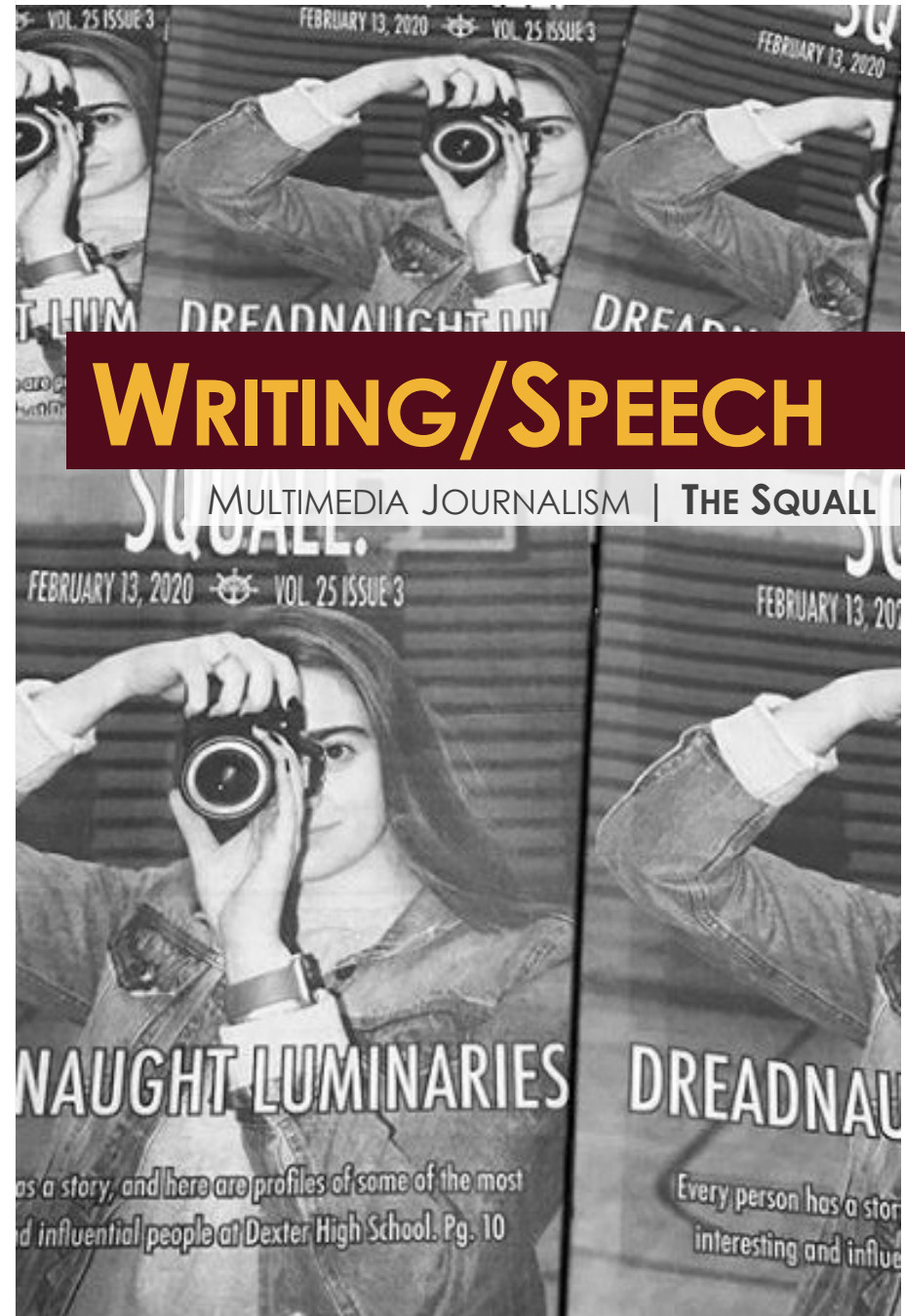
Typically, *The Squall* staff utilizes publication layout and photo editing programs such as Adobe InDesign and Photoshop to put together their narratives. These programs, available only on DCS computers located at the high school, are no longer accessible, so *The Squall* staff advisor, Chris Mackinder (or "Mr. Mack," as he's affectionately known), has instructed students in the use of Adobe Spark to create engaging content. Throughout the fall, many student stories created with this software have been published online; Mackinder is encouraging students to follow their interests and write about what is important to both themselves and their audience. "It is important to have student buy-in," Mackinder shares. "This isn't my paper, this is what is

interesting to the students; they drive the content."

And that can be seen in the stories published so far this year: after much controversy about the rock at the high school, the decision was made to remove it, resulting in a feature story about the rock's history, student opinion and administrative concerns. Another relevant (and of historical importance) topic to many Dexter students is how Covid-19 is affecting the DCS community. Several students have tackled the issue of restrictions placed on athletes: one gathered student opinion about wearing masks during play, another created a photo story on the overall effects of Covid-19 on fall sports. Stories have focused on student feedback and reactions to online learning, while others have detailed how local small businesses are struggling to survive.

Mackinder stresses that local news and opinion is of utmost interest to readers; if students are covering a national issue, such as politics or the pandemic, it is important to gather local opinion and reactions in order to make the story more relevant to readers.

Once a month, DHS Principal Kit Moran pops into the multimedia journalism class Zoom meeting to talk about current topics of interest. "It's sort of like a mini press conference," Mackinder says, "where students can ask questions in order to share out important info to their peers."



# WRITING/SPEECH

MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM | THE SQUALL

# WRITING/SPEECH

## MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM | THE SQUALL

A student innovation began last year, and recently relaunched, is a weekly digest of small stories and trending news, similar to CNN's or Axios's weekly wrap-ups. Sent to all DCS students and staff, these wrap-up emails can include local or national information, social trends, student surveys for future stories or photos of recent school events. In this age of primarily digital news, students are learning that most of what people read online originates from social media posts or pushed-out information. This email digest delivers tantalizing tidbits of information, prompting readers to click to a destination page (i.e. [www.thesquall.com](http://www.thesquall.com)) for the full story.

The Squall usually publishes a print newspaper four times per year, culminating in a senior issue dedicated to DHS graduates. Last spring, due to the pandemic, the senior issue wasn't physically printed, but released digitally (Mackinder later printed paper copies for the contributing 2020 seniors). For potential print issues of the 2020-2021 school year, students will submit their mocked-up photos



and stories to Mackinder, who will finalize the end product using Adobe InDesign. It's up in the air right now as to how many issues will be forthcoming, with Mackinder speculating there could be a cumulative 'yearbook'-style issue released at the end of the year containing all submitted student work.

The hardest part of putting together *The Squall* remotely is the lack of personal connection: in a production class like multimedia journalism, students work together, bouncing ideas off one another, and at the end of the day can point to their work and say, "look what we've accomplished."

Staff members are working together and building camaraderie as a team on Zoom, but that's not as easily attained as it is in person. However, these students are persevering and continue to publish engaging and relevant stories that keep Dexter students and the community informed.

Even though most teens at Dexter High School can't vote, they have been keeping themselves informed about politics and are using their social media platforms to inform others and speak their opinions.

Senior Maura Moller notes, "It's basically all I see, everyone is posting about politics."

With all of this in mind, a big question arises: Where does Dexter High School stand on Trump vs. Biden? While slightly less than 50% of DHS students said they were Democrats, 67.5% said they would vote for President and Democratic candidate Joe Biden. In contrast, about 20% of students said they were Republicans, which was similar to the 22.5%



## Saying Goodbye to The DHS Rock

THE "ATTRACTIVE NUISANCE" WAS MOVED AND MAY NEVER COME BACK

"Scoring the first goal of the game was such a relief," Tamer said. "It took a lot of pressure off, being able to play with a cushion. Pioneer always fights back harder though, so we knew we had to keep the pressure on".







# WRITING/SPEECH

## DEBATE | FORENSICS

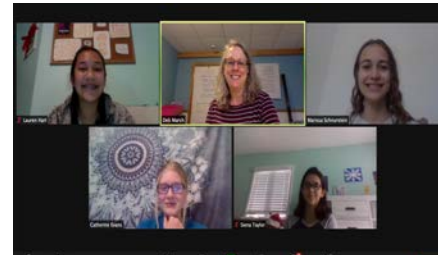
For debate students across the country, preparation and competition this year has been anything but normal. However, debating via Zoom did not deter Dexter's Debate team from bringing home more individual competition medals than ever before, at both the varsity and novice levels. Dexter won a total of 49 individual speaker awards, with several students winning 1st place individual speaker in their respective divisions. Additionally, the Dexter team as a whole won top honors in 4 different tournaments.

While it was hard to recruit debaters this year, as there was no DHS Club Day or the annual promotional visit to Mill Creek, the team roster was only short a handful of students. Fortunately, the team already had an established commitment to debate, and former team members guided newer ones in understanding how things worked.

For meetings/practices, team advisor and DHS teacher, Deb Marsh, opened her Zoom classroom three days a week from 3:00-5:00 p.m. Students would practice their rounds via Zoom in a similar format as would occur in tournament. Marsh also involved Dexter Debate alums and other former debaters to assist students with their preparation.

Marsh, who also serves as the Debate Committee Chair for the Michigan Interscholastic

Forensics Association (MIFA), helped to ensure Michigan students could still compete safely during the traditional debate season. Virtual tournaments were held twice a month this past fall, with Dexter hosting the final tournament before the state championships. At Dexter's December 5th tournament, DCS administration was able to set up a webinar feature for the final round so anyone interested could watch.



In order to allow students to compete online safely, and rather than try to adapt a current video platform, the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) created their own online platform named [tabroom.com](https://www.tabroom.com). The platform assigned individual online "rooms" (similar to Zoom) where debaters and judges would meet for competition. These rooms only allowed the two debaters and the judge to enter the room, so there was no threat of outside hackers. Using this software, the debate season could continue, for the most part, as usual.

One aspect that wasn't "usual" was the absence of camaraderie and networking debate students usually enjoy during tournaments. The lack of a common space frequented at tournaments to meet students from other schools and connect

as a team during competition prompted Marsh to think outside the box and recreate this experience virtually. Leaving her Zoom classroom open during tournaments, Marsh created a space where Dexter students could "hang out" between matches.

The team was also missing their "on the bus" time travelling back to Dexter after an away tournament, during which they would process the experience together. Again using Zoom, Marsh held a debriefing time after each tournament to review matches and discuss successes and future changes.

A silver lining of online debate was the opportunity for parents to watch their students in action. With students debating in their living room, bedroom, dining room or basement, parents could hear the debate live, a new experience for many.

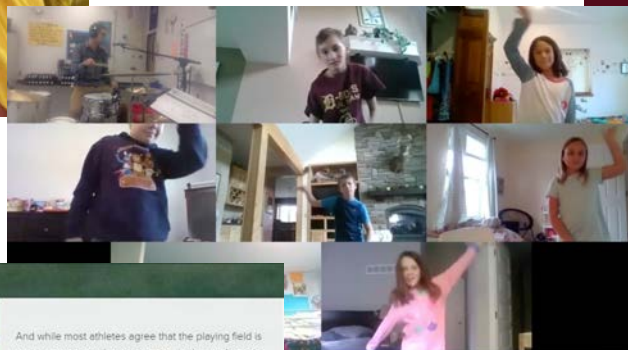


Forensics usually begins in winter, but this is proving a more difficult issue to tackle. There are typically 500 people present at a Forensics tournament, so figuring out how to make this work is a challenge. Some events won't translate, to a virtual setting, such as prepped debate where students are given a topic when they enter the room and they have a set amount of time to prepare then debate. These and other considerations are being discussed by MIFA and NSDA in order to move forward with the Forensics season.



*"Art is too important not to share."*

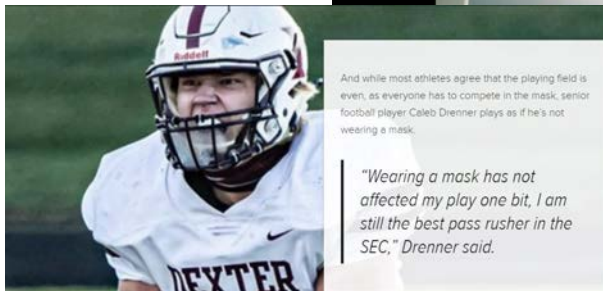
- Romero Britto



### Editor's Note:

*DreadNotes' contributors shared so many wonderful photos and videos of student creations that, while we would have loved to include every single one, this "newsletter" would have ended up a full-blown magazine. So, in order to experience the full scope of DCS student imagination, creativity and accomplishment, [click here](#) for a short slideshow.*

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