

Room for more teamwork in classrooms

Working together better prepares students for real world

by **Christine Chang**

Almost anyone who's been at MVHS since freshman year recalls the very reminiscent aroma of pig guts and preserving liquid from Biology class. The scent wafts out from the row of B-building classes towards the end of each year as freshmen partake in that notorious rite of passage: fetal pig dissections. While some happily recount their experiences excavating pig testicles, others are not so quick to share. But there is one thing most everyone agrees on—pig dissections could not have been as successful without the help of our lab groups.

Cheesy as it is, teamwork is crucial to so many aspects of the world beyond high school. Unfortunately, its values are often overlooked at MVHS. Pig dissections aside, countless programs on campus revolve around individual study or activity. Many of the academic classes we take require us to devote several hours each day closed off from any human contact in our rooms, studying so that we might be the one student to set the curve or gain recognition. For the sake of “standing out” during college applications, individualist values tend to dominate our student body. As a result, we lose out on collaborative experiences that give us perspective on real-world experiences. We miss out on working with others to accomplish something meaningful, something beyond semester grades

and test scores.

The emphasis on independent work ethics helps us become competent students. But when we strive for individual excellence, we often overlook the benefits and learning values of working in teams. Many clubs on campus, for instance, are structured so that members compete individually for hours rather than joining one another in a collective effort to serve the community. So why not make more hourless associations, like Baking Club, in which the entire club comes together as a team to bake for

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a good cause?

It's time we started building up more team programs. MVHS students are intelligent. We have the knowledge. We have the resources. The challenge, now, is to take what we've learned and collaborate with others to achieve meaningful goals beyond a stellar college resumé. Some organizations held on campus have already taken it to this next step. Robotics, for example, brings together students with an interest in technology to engineer robots that could potentially become a part of our future. Their successes were the results of a

collective effort, not just one individual managing the entire process. The newly emerged Government Team has also inspired students to explore politics and law not just through individual study but through the joining of 26 students who each contribute perspective and a sense of purpose. Members of the team learn to communicate goals with one another and take on others' challenges in addition to their own. Many in the class agree that it is because of a team effort that the curriculum is so enriching.

Unfortunately, the significance of working with others is often lost in the muddle of getting ourselves where we want to be. But once we're out of school, survival depends on how well we communicate and work with others. Whether it be a newspaper staff or a science research team, we can't make it by ourselves. And when individual competition is set aside and people join forces to take on a challenge, we begin to see people focusing on the goal, not the grade.

Remember, shoveling out a pig brain takes more than a pair of hands. It takes a surgeon, assistants, and a contribution of moral support. Let's take that into account by embracing the idea of teamwork. After all, some of the greatest things are achieved through the collaboration of several people working together toward a common goal.