



WASHINGTON STATE ASCD
Learn. Teach. Lead.

**Washington State Association for Supervision
and Curriculum Development**

“The Practitioner’s Best Friend”
www.wsascd.org

‘Critical Questions’ Series **June 2017**

Reflections on Senior Year: Should we “Just Keep Swimming”?

Senior year: a time for learning, a time for memories; the last hoorah of adolescence. As the dusty cars from summer road trips bustle into the school parking lot, students are reunited with hugs and handshakes, some thrilled and some anxious to begin their very last year of high school. As the weary-eyed students compare schedules, the sun slowly creeps above the houses of a familiar town and Senior Sunrise, the first bonding experience of senior year, is complete. Walking into the school, the students know deeply within their thoughts that this is not only a year for excitement and memories, but also one last year to challenge themselves in their high school career. The most difficult part of this year is managing the tricky balance between Friday Night Lights and physics homework, sports and submitting essays minutes before midnight, and college applications and Carpe Diem. If one can maintain this perfect balance, their senior year aspirations will be absolutely fulfilled.

Senior year poses many questions for students eager to graduate. Some of the most pressing may include: Is “senioritis” a treatable illness? Who is this guy “FAFSA” that my guidance counselor keeps talking about? And the most commonly asked question, how many long, arduous days until we can finally walk across the stage at graduation and receive our diplomas? By the end of the year, every senior will know the answers to these questions. Throughout the year, the challenges of applying to college, completing senior projects, and staying involved with clubs, activities, and friends allow seniors to learn valuable skills and lessons before they embark on their new endeavors following graduation. For those who have not yet experienced the struggles that senior year presents, I can offer a small, but extremely valuable piece of advice. I would like to comment on one of our favorite childhood characters, Dory from Finding Nemo, and her words that many seniors internalize in their last efforts to finish the year, “Just keep swimming”. These words have never seemed so fitting, but Dory’s mentality is just plain wrong. Don’t just keep swimming, but rather swim deeper into harsher waters, all the while noticing and enjoying your surroundings during the journey. Don’t just get through senior year, thrive during senior year. Take the hard math class. Try out for the sport you’ve always wanted to play. Tell your crush that you like them. Senior year is not just about academics and SAT scores, it is also about living; becoming the best person you can be and making lasting memories while doing it.

Ask any adult and they will tell you that some of their most unforgettable memories are derived from senior year. Skip day, weekend getaways with friends, and spirit weeks are few of the best and brightest reminiscences that this year has to offer. As a senior, you have the opportunity to grow and learn from challenges, but also to have fun. Don’t just keep swimming, stop and look around; take in the precious moments before they’re forever gone and only encapsulated in yearbooks and class photos. The last year of high school, in fact, of adolescence as a whole, is one that is filled with emotion, comradery, and many, many “lasts”. If you don’t truly appreciate these things in the moment, you might look back ten years from now, wishing that you could have done it all differently.

All in all, senior year is what you make of it. Finding the perfect balance between overcoming challenges and creating lasting memories is the greatest task that you will encounter upon entering the doors on the first day of the last year. However, those that strive to obtain this balance head-on will know that their senior year was not squandered, but rather, that their last year of high school was the best it could possibly be; the only thing one could wish for when closing this chapter and opening a new one.

Ryan Krout and Matthew Hickey
Seniors and Student Leaders @ Washougal High School
Washougal School District
Matthew_Hickey@Washougalsd.org
Ryan_Krout@Washougalsd.org

