

The Railroader Rundown

WHITEHALL JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL

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CHANGES

by Mr. Burgess

What can we say about the year 2020? I say I'm glad it's almost over and good riddance! This year was a mess dealing us blow after blow. First, we have a pandemic then a flood! What's next, a tornado full of sharks? Let's get this year over before something else devastating happens to our Beloved School. I never expected to be virtual this long into the school year but I want to say how proud I am of every single student for persevering through these troubling and different times. It seems the year 2020 has been nothing but negative news a day filled with Debbie-Downers and frowns. Today's letter, to the student body, is one of hope and I'd like to tell you about a few changes we will be making as we move forward through the year 2021.

The first change deals with screen time. I know how difficult it has been to log into 40 + classes every single week and try to keep on top of all of the work that is happening in the virtual world. One way to reduce this screen stress is to move our district into what we call a block schedule. During a block schedule students will only have 5 periods of day including lunch; this means you will only be logging into four classes per day. We will have an A and B schedule so the classes you have on an A-day will not be the classes you have on B-Day. Each class will be extended from 40 minutes to 60 minutes and this extra 20 minutes a day to every class for teachers to run small groups and to focus on your individual needs. The concept is quality not quantity when it comes to our students schedule.

The second major change, to the school year, will be the addition of a series of teacher office hours from 1:10 till 2:10 every single day. While I am still ironing out the kinks, this will be a perfect chance for you to meet with your teachers and discuss individual struggles you may have been having in class and out. This block of time at the end of the day is also the perfect opportunity to complete your homework with fidelity and to meet with those students who are working on projects. Hopefully by 2:10 your academic day will be about 90% complete and we can cut down on the amount of screen time each student is logging per week. The block schedule is being built by your guidance counselors, as we speak, and we are planning to roll this new schedule out at the beginning of the third marking period. If this type of schedule works for us I plan on extending the block schedule into the next school year and hopefully we'll be back together in our building?

The Third hopeful change will be the opening up the Junior High Wing sometime this spring. I would love to open this Wing up immediately but my hands are tied by the construction work that is being done and the repairs that are also being made that were caused by our unfortunate flood. When the junior high Wing is open we will begin thinking about which cohorts of students will be coming in to learn from their teachers in a live setting.

I am hoping that these changes will make a more efficient learning day for every single one of our students. Your teachers are working tirelessly and countless hours well beyond the school day to prepare virtual lessons for you. Many teachers have had to learn new software techniques and had to learn how to revamp the way they teach in order to make learning most comfortable for you. They too have been put in a very awkward position and have struggled at times to keep their head above water but you would never know it because they're constantly greeting you with a smiling face. Your teachers care about you very much and I often talk with them after school hours and they discuss with me how very worried they are about you in this virtual world. I know this is not the type of school year that you wanted, but all I can say is keep pushing and slowly but surely we will return together as normal.

I hope every student has a restful Christmas break and recharges the battery for a hopefully better 2021. Your guidance counselors will be reaching out to you to help you navigate the new block schedule and I am hopeful you will find this as a positive experience.

Merry Christmas and Go Railroaders.
Mr. B



CHRISTMAS DECORATING

By Kaleb Lyman

Decorating for Christmas is a very, very fun thing to do. Decorating consists of putting lights up outside and putting the tree up inside. People also put some lights up inside and set up figurines. Some people even start decorating right after Halloween!

As most of you know Christmas is on December 25th which is just about a month after Thanksgiving. I, personally, think that people should wait until after Thanksgiving to decorate. I think this because if you decorate too early you will be sick of it by Christmas. If you want to decorate something for Thanksgiving throw up some fall things such as leaves and little pumpkins. And maybe even a blowup Turkey! Right after Thanksgiving is over I believe you should decorate a lot, but wait till after Thanksgiving!!



TRADITIONS

By Kaleb Lyman

Thanksgiving is a big family Holiday for most people. Most families will get together to spend the day together. While they are together they will make many memories together. The families will play board games, card games and many other types of games to get together and have a good time. Some people even have eating competitions to see who can eat the most. Sometimes it's just about one thing like the amount of rolls you can eat or the most scoops of potatoes wins. Some families can even have cook offs to see who is the better cook. Mostly this happens for dessert so there can be many different types of dessert.

I don't do many fun things for Thanksgiving, but my family has a great time. We normally wait for my sister to get out of work and then she comes over. My mom normally had food done by the time my sister got to my house so we will eat first. After that we will normally play some card games and board games. After that, we will go in the living room and play on the Wii to see who is the best at Mario Kart!

No matter what your tradition is, I hope you have an amazing Thanksgiving!

BENEFITS OF GAMING

by Gabe Wilson

If a child is spending time on a game for a long period of time, well it could be because that's their escape from reality. When they are depressed or upset and not feeling well, they can get on their games to play with their online friends, talk to them, and share laughs with each other just to have a good time. It helps them cope.

Not every kid wants to say what's bothering them. Gaming can introduce you to new people all around the world, as long as you are being careful about internet safety! Gaming has even been a way for friends to connect during quarantine. When you can't see your friends in school, then maybe you can jump on a game together and still find a way to connect.

So to end this I think gaming is very beneficial. Thank you YouTube, Twitch, and any other streaming site out there for letting me and millions of people enjoy life!

WINTER SAFETY

by Vinna Jensen

Winter storms and cold temperatures can be dangerous. To stay safe and healthy it is a great idea to plan ahead. Prepare your home and vehicles. Prepare for power outages and outdoor activity.

Although winter came as no surprise, many of us may still not be prepared. As the temperatures drop it is a good idea to be prepared beforehand.

Staying inside is no guarantee of safety, there are steps you can follow to keep your home safe and warm.

- Winterize your home
- Check your heating systems
- If you do not have a working smoke detector, install one. Test batteries monthly and replace them twice a year.
- Prevent Carbon Monoxide poisoning

It is also a good idea to make sure that your vehicle is in good condition for this winter season. To make sure your vehicle is ready for the weather conditions please make sure,

- Service the radiator and maintain antifreeze level
- Check your tires' tread or, if necessary, replace tires with all-weather or snow tires.
- Keep the gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- Use a wintertime formula in your windshield washer.
- Prepare a winter emergency kit to keep in your car in case you become stranded

For more information on ways to enhance the safety of you and your family see to information on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at,

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/features/winterweather/index.html>

CHRISTMAS DURING A PANDEMIC

by Vinna Jensen

This Christmas is looking a lot different this year, just like everything else. For many families, Thanksgiving was a smaller event than usual, with families staying home to avoid contracting and spreading this deadly virus.

Experts recommend that people take similar precautions during this Christmas season. They are asking that people try to modify traditional activities and avoid large gatherings to keep themselves and others safe.

An infectious disease doctor at Stanford University Medical Center in Stanford, California says, "Outdoor activities are generally safe. They're not zero risks but lower risk, especially if people are wearing face coverings and stay a good six feet apart."

To make sure you and your family safe this holiday season, I would recommend having a video chat with the family or friends that you may normally spend with.

Trying to avoid big holiday parties. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have issued guidance for the holidays that mirrors previous guidelines for Thanksgiving and other gatherings. According to the CDC, celebrations with members of your own household pose the lowest risk, while in-person gatherings that bring together family members or friends from different households can be riskier.

A COVID CHRISTMAS

by Jennifer Kelley

This Christmas is very different than anything I've ever seen before. All over the world everyone is trying to find a "solution" for us to live our everyday lives like normal, so Christmas can be that solution.

Each person is staying in their houses, around their family, avoiding parties and gatherings just to keep us all safe. For a normal Christmas you'd see people lined all over the streets to see the lights, Black Friday shopping and the huge holiday rush, but now everything seems empty. The lights aren't as bright, the people aren't as merry and the holiday just are not what they usually are. Everything just looks and feels different from every other holiday season.

While people are worried about hiding from COVID and the Christmas traditions completely changed, we can still have our Christmas gifts shipped to us, we can still drive by to see the lights and we can stay inside and safe. Those, at least, can help us keep the spirit within us this season.

DRIVING IN THE SNOW

by Jennifer Kelley

As we know the snow doesn't take lightly in upstate New York, so we have to learn how to adapt to our surroundings.

When the snow and slush is covering the roads be sure not to go too fast down any roads or on highway to prevent hydroplaning. Hydroplaning happens when your tires no longer touch the road due to the water, slush or ice under the tires. Avoid rushing and speeding especially when its cold and wet, black ice could ruin your life.

If you're traveling and run out of gas, you can become stranded, you could get lost or just simply freeze in the winter time. It is always recommended to keep a "car kit" for situations like this. Your kit can include things such as first aid items, matches, road flairs, a blanket and a spare gas can could save your life. Always let someone know when you are leaving and where you are heading so if you don't arrive at your destination, they will know where to send help!



SCHOOL: ANOTHER CHANGE

by Kaleb Lyman

There is word going around about Whitehall's Virtual learning will change to block scheduling. The last time Whitehall tried block scheduling it did not work well for us!

This time around, though, promises to be different. Our high school principal, Mr. Burgess, says that this will benefit our online learning because we will have more time with the teachers and will have more access to them when out of class. Teachers will now have office hours every day so students can seek out some extra help.

The change is set to take place at the beginning of the 3rd quarter. We are all very hopeful this will be a good change and benefit the teachers and the students. Change is difficult, but together, we can make it work!



Have a great school year, Railroaders!

School Tool/Parent Portal

Parents/guardians have the ability to view their child's information online anytime. You can view your child's:

- Schedule
- Attendance
- Grades
- Report Cards
- 3-8 Assessment Results
- Emergency Contacts

Access to this resource can be obtained by visiting www.railroaders.net and click "School Tool" at the bottom of the page.

CALL OR TEXT: 518-499-6038 EMAIL: tips@railroaders.net

Upward Bound

Whitehall students have the opportunity to apply to one of two Upward Bound programs.

One program is being run through SUNY Adirondack and the other one is through Castleton State College. Upward Bound is a program that offers extra support to help college bound students overcome barriers to success so that they can successfully complete a four year college degree. See your school counselor for more details. For more information please visit <http://sunyacc.edu/upward-bound> for SUNY Adirondack's program

Railroaders Store

We now have a year round online store for All Railroader attire and gear!