

RWA



News

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DECEMBER 2014–JANUARY 2015

## A Word From The Administration

Mr. Tony Pita, Principal

Mme Nathalie Cheff, Vice-Principal

Ms. Chantal Juhasz, Vice-Principal



The Administration would like to wish members of the Royal West community a peaceful and prosperous New Year! We hope you all enjoyed a restful holiday surrounded by loved ones. We would also like to welcome back Ms. Kissin and Ms. Gehr to the teaching staff. Their return means that Ms. Partington has left the school, and Mr. Thomasson has been reassigned as a substitute for Mme Ouellette who is on a temporary leave.

The past couple of months have been busy with a variety of activities! Once again, on December 8–12, students and staff came together for a great cause. Homerooms battled to collect money, non-perishable food items, and toys in support of Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre (*see page 2 for details*), the NDG Food Depot, and Westmount Park Elementary School. The halls were busy with students finding creative ways to raise money for very worthy causes. The week ended with the traditional “Penny Wars” that saw students from each grade battle to raise the most money. Despite a very close battle, the Secondary I students came out on top! This year’s drive raised \$8432 in support of Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre who, since 1927, has offered empowering,

supportive programs and services to the community of Little Burgundy in southwest Montreal. We are proud of the generous efforts of our students and staff during this time of peace and giving to those who are less fortunate. Special thanks to everyone for their efforts!

December was a busy month for performing students as the Bardolators presented Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* on December 2–5. This production was made possible by the amazing talents of the Bards, the great work of the sound and light crew, and the dedicated staff that included Mr. Floen, Mr. Northey, Ms. Westlake, Ms. Koyounian, Mr. Scrivener, and Mr. Leblanc. Special thanks to all the volunteers as well.

The Music Department held their annual Holiday Concert on December 11. This concert showcased the talents of our music students as they performed works befitting the season. Playing to a packed house that evening were the RWA Winds, A Capella Choir, RWA Jazz Band, and Honour Band. The Music Department also hosted its annual Winter Concert on January 15. Joining the above groups were the Secondary II and Secondary III bands. Special thanks to Ms. Purdy, Ms. Macleod, and the sound and light crew, for their efforts in organizing this event.

Royal West Academy also recently hosted its annual United Nations Debate on December 16. Students in Secondary V Contemporary World classes represented countries and organizations from around the world while debating United Nations resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Special thanks to our staff members Mr. Dupuis, Ms. Cayer, Ms. Holloway, and Ms. Ibrahim, for their efforts in organizing this valuable learning experience.

Royal West Academy put on its annual Variety Show on January 19 in support of the Make-A-Wish Foundation and the RWA Foundation. Spectators were treated to a



variety of acts that included a comedy act, improvisation, a Rubik's Cube show, a martial arts performance, and several song and dance acts, including one by several talented and courageous staff members. Special thanks to the SLA and Mr. Zigby, Mr. Northey, the sound and light crew, and Ms. Dillon, for all their efforts in showcasing these great performances.

On January 20, RWA staff and students traded in their books to participate in some skiing, snowboarding, tubing, snow shoeing, skating, rock climbing, and hockey. The 2015 Winter Carnival also included a day spent at a Rigaud cabane à sucre and an opportunity to

enjoy some in-school activities. Students and staff braved the cold in order to enjoy some of the fun and excitement that Canadian winters have to offer! Special thanks to the SLA, led by Mikaela Mailly and Rachel Copnick, for their efforts in organizing this wonderful day.

Students and parents have begun receiving the 2015–2016 Course Selection Forms. This document serves as your child's Registration Form for next year. Students presently in Secondary I will be required to select their arts course despite not having completed the three rotations in Music, Visual Arts, and Drama. We ask that students make their choice immediately, but students

## SHARING THE STAGE WITH YOU.

By Mr. Paul Broomberg, President, RWA Foundation

Since the completion of the gymnasium, the Royal West Academy Foundation has been steadily raising funds to renovate the very tired auditorium.

We have raised close to \$250,000 since the start of the capital campaign and have already invested \$80,000 in the new state-of-the-art sound and lighting system. Without any major corporate or government help, this is a great achievement, made possible by the ongoing support of all the families at Royal West Academy.

Last year the EMSB allocated a significant amount of funding towards the auditorium project, and with it we have been able to mandate architects and engineers to prepare preliminary drawings for the upgrade to the auditorium.

Our next target is to install an air-conditioning system which will make a tremendous difference to the comfort of the auditorium.

We have three current fundraisers we would like to remind you of:



The Raffle for 2015–2016 Canadiens Season Tickets. For only \$40 we are offering you the chance to win a pair of tickets in the Desjardins section (free food!). First prize is a pair of tickets for 15 games, second prize gets you two tickets to 10 games, and third, fourth, and fifth prizes are 7 games, 5 games, and 5 games, respectively.

This year we are also offering a 55" HD LED TV and a pair of Giant Bicycles for the sixth and seventh prizes. Eighth prize is 2 three-day passes to the 2015 Osheaga festival.

We have 4500 tickets to sell. We need every family at Royal West Academy to sell at least 5 tickets! Please purchase tickets online at [www.rwaf.ca](http://www.rwaf.ca), or if you need multiple tickets to sell to friends and family, go to <http://rwaf.ca/shop/raffle-tickets/canadiens-hockey-raffle-2015-16-season> and click on the "consignment" link. Tickets can also be picked up from the school office.

may revise that choice later in the year. Any student at any level can change their selections any time between January and June by forwarding to the Administration a letter signed by a parent. Placement in an elective of your choice is contingent on enrolment, grades, and prerequisites. If you are concerned about your child's placement in Math or French, we encourage you to meet with your child's teacher at the upcoming Parent-

Teacher Evening on March 12, 2015. If your child is not returning to Royal West Academy, please attach a letter to that effect and return it with the Course Selection Form.

We were extremely disappointed by the lack of interest in the Mont-Saint-Anne/Le Massif Ski Trip. Over 80 Secondary IV students chose not to participate this

## SHARING THE STAGE WITH YOU.

(continued)



Our second fundraiser is to replace the terrible chairs we currently use in the auditorium. We have found a Canadian-made, strong, stackable, and, most importantly, comfortable chair that we would like to purchase for the auditorium. We need 351 chairs in total. We are asking all parents, but especially families of the 2015 graduating class to each sponsor the purchase of a chair in the name of their child. If we get 100% participation, it will take only two graduating classes to purchase all the chairs we need. The cost of each chair is \$250.00 and, while this is not inexpensive, I look at the schooling my children have had and believe this is a reasonable token of appreciation we can make for the education and experience our children received at Royal West Academy!

The names of every sponsoring child or family will be mounted on a brass wall plaque celebrating the graduates of 2015 and the gift they have made to the school. Donations for chairs can be made at [www.rwaf.ca](http://www.rwaf.ca) and a tax receipt will be given for the full amount! We know that putting kids through school can be expensive but please reflect on the experience your children have had and the foundation this school has given them for all their future endeavours!



Last but not least, we are also hosting a theatre night for the Foundation. We are selling tickets to the Tom Stoppard play, *Travesties*, for April 15, 2015. On stage at the Segal Centre, this play is directed by Jacob Tierney, an RWA graduate! This promises to be a wonderful night at the theatre and we hope to see many RWA families there! Please save the date and purchase tickets online at [www.rwaf.ca](http://www.rwaf.ca)—a tax receipt will be issued for half the cost of each ticket purchased.

### You can play a part!

We are always looking for volunteers to join the RWA Foundation. No matter your experience or time available, everyone can play a role. If you have any questions or fundraising ideas, contact Jasmin Uhthoff, Vice-President, at [rwafoundation@gmail.com](mailto:rwafoundation@gmail.com) or visit us at <http://rwaf.ca>.

Make a donation! Just go to our website at <http://rwaf.ca> and give what you can. Every donation takes us closer to transforming our 80-year-old auditorium into a state-of-the-art Performing Arts Centre for our children.





year. A participation rate of less than 60% of the class forced the school to cancel this event. The grade level trips allow students to participate in enriching and educational activities during school hours and beyond. These trips help build lasting memories of high school as well as special relationships between students and staff that are built outside the classroom. RWA has been committed to the grade level trip program over the past decades, and we hope that parents continue to support the program. Financial aid is available to parents who may require it and can be requested by writing directly to Mr. Pita. Over the coming days and weeks, the staff will explore how to best address the Secondary IV situation. Please encourage your children to share their views and/or suggestions for future trips with their teachers.

Finally, we have been facing some rather harsh weather conditions that sometimes causes delays in getting to school. We request that students and parents plan for these possible delays during the winter months. As you know, the Student Agenda states that "all late arrivals require a note justifying their lateness. This note must describe the reason for being late. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action, such as school detention.

***Oversleeping, traffic, and missing buses or trains are not justifiable reasons for being late."***

Student tardiness is extremely disruptive, and it stifles the learning process. We ask that parents and students make every effort to limit late arrivals. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

On February 12, 2015, Royal West Academy will be hosting its annual Science Fair. Approximately 400 students are expected to participate while many others volunteer their services. **Parents are reminded that only those students participating in the Science Fair are expected to attend school that day.** Parents and students are free to visit the fair during the school day or evening session. February 13 is a Pedagogical Day, and regular classes will resume on February 16.

## Tyndale Week

By Libby Lassman



Royal West Academy's annual Tyndale Week was once again a great success! On December 8–12, every homeroom organized a creative activity in

which students and staff participated to collect donations for Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre ([www.tyndalestgeorges.com](http://www.tyndalestgeorges.com)). Close to \$8500 was raised for the Tyndale non-profit charitable organization, which provides services to the Little Burgundy community with educational, cultural, social, and recreational programs.

The most popular activity for Tyndale week that has become a beloved RWA tradition is the Penny Wars. Penny Wars encourages friendly competition between grades. Each grade has their own designated bucket on the first floor of the west wing, in which they try to raise as much money as possible by contributing coins into their respective grade's bucket. Each coin has a specific point value; putting in bills (aka "bombs") penalizes the grade and causes them to lose points. By the end of the week, when all five grades' buckets have been filled with coins, all the collected coins are donated to Tyndale. This fundraising initiative encourages a healthy competitive spirit between the grades, who are all striving to win the grand prize of an afternoon off from school. Secondary V managed to raise the most money by a long shot with \$1729. However, despite their great achievement, they couldn't benefit from the grand prize as they got "bombed", causing the victory to be transferred to Secondary I, who raised a respectable \$1491. As the famous expression goes, "all is fair in love and war".

Other creative activities organized in support of raising funds for Tyndale included a jellybean guessing game, selling raffle tickets for great prizes, and "pie-ing" a Prefect! On the last day of Tyndale Week, students paid \$2 each to come to school in free dress, further raising more funds for the Tyndale donation effort.

## Honour Band At CAMMAC

By Aaron Burke



On November 7–9, Royal West Academy's Honour Band had the privilege of going to the wonderful Canadian Amateur Musicians/Musiciens Amateurs du Canada (CAMMAC) band camp. From the moment we completed the long bus ride, we knew that the weekend was going to be great.

When we got off the bus, the view of the camp's stunning main lodge greeted us. The large modern

looking wooden lodge with its tall windows and rooftop garden was quite the sight. When we got inside and were given keys to our rooms, we had plenty of time to relax, explore the camp, or play ping pong. After a delicious meal following a short practice session, we had a fantastic night of bonding with all the members of the band by playing games all organized by the band's student executives.

The next day was one that I know I will never forget. For every section of the band, a coach was brought in to help us with our material and ultimately our skills with each of our instruments. I learned so much in six hours that I couldn't have imagined learning in six months.

From that weekend forward I think I can speak for the whole Honour Band when I say that we have all become better musicians as a result of this experience. All in all, this year's Honour Band CAMMAC trip was a memorable one—not only because we have become a better band, but also because we all became closer friends.

## Dance Show

By Genevieve Shemie, Dance Show Exec

This year's annual Dance Show is right around the corner! Clear your calendars for March 20, 2015, because this famous, student-run production is on its way. Put together by the Execs (six dedicated Secondary IV and V students) with the help of Mr. Zigby (their supportive and committed supervisor), the highly anticipated show will be a blast. All proceeds from the show, accumulated from ticket sales and sponsors, raised by a cast of about 90 talented dancers, will go to a charity called Dans la rue as well as the RWA Foundation.



Founded in 1988, Dans la rue has dedicated itself to providing assistance to homeless youth and youth at risk. They have helped so many with the necessities and tools required to develop an independent lifestyle. Last year's show, *Error*, raised approximately \$8000!

This year's show, like the many preceding it, will consist of many different dance styles originating from different cultures and influences. Bollywood, Greek, ballet, and hip-hop are a few you will be sure to see at the show!

Every year's show has a theme and a story line, which is kept secret until the show. The story is portrayed through a series of videos that divide up each scene, all filmed, directed, and edited by the Execs, with the help of other students.



This year the show will take place on March 20, in the RWA auditorium. Tickets go on sale two weeks before then. Two shows will take place, one at 6 PM, and another at 9 PM, each divided in half by an intermission. If you happen to be walking around on this day, you will be sure to see DJs, makeup artists, decorations, and dancers everywhere.

All are welcome to see the amazing show, to support incredible talent and a wonderful cause. So much heart and soul goes into the production every year, it is sure to be a great show.

## The Governing Board Report

By Mr. Kirk Kelly, Chair, Governing Board

This will be a short report this month though a lot has been going on at Governing Board.

First off, a final report on the technology review, begun in winter 2013, was presented to the board. Some details of the analysis and conclusions follow in a separate story. The entire report will be posted on the school's website in the near future.

The portal subcommittee, struck to look into how Royal West Academy can meet the need for an electronic portal (as expressed by parents, teachers, and students), presented some initial results and identified a number of possible solutions. Research is ongoing with the intent to have some of the stakeholders involved try the suggested solutions and provide feedback to the subcommittee.

A proposed life skills course for senior students moved a step closer to reality. It appears that the most straightforward way to proceed, while the Ministry decides whether or not to institute a life-skills course as a mandatory subject, is to offer it as an ECA starting in the fall of 2015. More news to follow.

No progress has been made in efforts to identify how teachers can be given more time during the school day to collaborate formally on sharing best practices and aligning their class teaching schedules. The possibility of setting aside an hour every 7-day cycle or every second 7-day cycle was examined and rejected as too complex for the time being, since it would involve a late start for students on the day designated for teachers to collaborate.

The school council has decided to study whether the current trip schedules and policies need to be re-examined in the light of some teachers' concerns that students are spending too much time out of class during the school year. Ms. Purdy has been asked to head up the effort. Should the school council recommend any changes, the changes will come to Governing Board for review and approval before becoming official policy.

Two important documents that form the foundation of the school's strategic planning process were submitted and approved. While both are Management and Education Success Agreements, one is an annual report that looks back at the past year, while the other is a plan for the year currently underway.

Each school's strategic planning takes place within the context of a three-year set of goals mandated by the Ministry. Each school board takes the Ministry goals

and sets appropriate goals for their school network. Each school in turn measures its performance against each goal and identifies and carries out actions to move the school closer to its Board's and the Ministry's goals. These goals form the basis of a signed agreement between each school and its Board. The goals cover academic success issues as one might expect. They also cover retention issues and feelings of safety and security for students.

The first Ministry-defined three-year plan has just come to an end and RWA filed its annual report on the year that passed as well as its performance over the plan's three years. Performance was excellent in academic issues and retention, and above average for safety and security issues though work remains to be done.

The second document is the school's plan for the first year of the current three-year plan as outlined by the Ministry. Royal West Academy intends to pay particular attention to moving the success rate for all courses to 100%, to increasing students' sense of safety and security at the school, and to fostering more opportunities for teachers to collaborate.

A mid-year budget update showed that RWA is operating within its defined budgets and that adequate funding remains in all budget envelopes to get the school safely to the end of the year.

The curriculum for 2015–2016 was presented and approved. The courses to be taught and their time allotments will remain the same as this academic year.

## The Technology Subcommittee Report

By Mr. Kirk Kelly, Chair, Governing Board

### Executive summary

There is a high level of interest and support at Royal West Academy among teachers, parents, and students in the use of technology to support the school's special mission of providing a structured milieu in which students are committed to academic achievement, bilingualism, mathematics and the sciences, computer literacy, an appreciation of the arts, an understanding of social issues, and a sense of community responsibilities.





Parents and teachers share a concern that the all-too-present fascination with technology does not trump good pedagogy but rather that, when used, technology act as an enabler of student success.

Three major findings come out of the study:

1. There is a clearly stated desire by parents, students, and teachers for an online portal that simplifies and opens up communications between the three stakeholder groups and offers up-to-date information on assignments, due dates, class notes where available, and source materials or links to such material. There is also a strong parental desire that the portal offer access to timely reports on student progress—this desire is not as strong among students and teachers.

There are advantages to each group in the adoption of such an online portal platform. For teachers, it allows them to centralize communications with students and parents, which will decrease the amount of one-off communications that take place now on relatively rote matters. For students and parents, and particularly students who miss a class, a portal offers an easy way to remain up to date with what is going on in class. For parents, the portal offers a window into the work going on at the school and an opportunity to monitor their child's progress.

2. There is an urgent need for significant upgrades to the school's information technology infrastructure. The current set up is not capable of supporting even the very low level of demand that exists today with service failures being a common occurrence. If teachers are to embrace technology where it can actually support the achievement of the school's special mission, the infrastructure will need to be far more robust with improved signal access in all corners of the school and much faster data transfer speeds.
3. All the technology in the world is useless if the teachers are not trained and comfortable with its use in the classroom. The concern is that budget will be found for equipment and infrastructure, but little or no budget will be available for training. This is already the case with the ubiquitous Smart Boards in the school. Some teachers have found ways to integrate them into their teaching. For

many others, however, this has not been the case because they are not comfortable with the boards and do not understand how to integrate them into their lessons.

Some tables from the report:

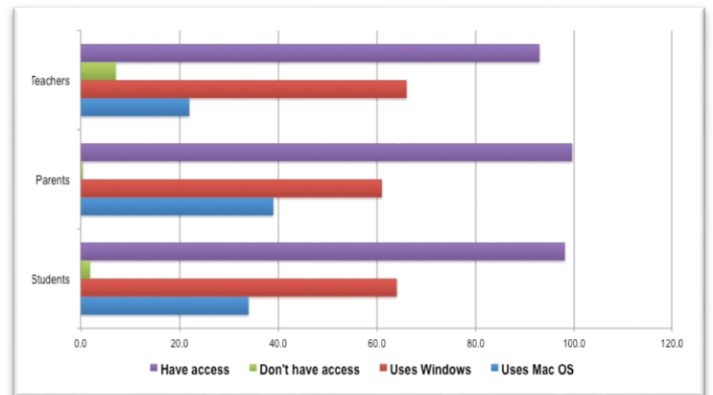


Chart 1: Almost 100% of students & parents have access to computers outside RWA with Mac OS running on about 50% of machines. Access is lower for teachers with 7% reporting no access to a computer outside RWA. (Students n = 548, Parents n = 248, Teachers N = 42)

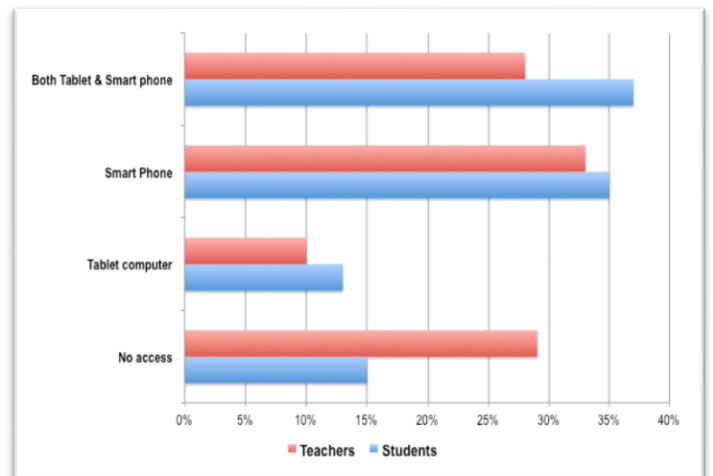


Chart 3: Level of penetration of mobile computing devices among students and teachers. Respondents could only choose one answer to the question; 85% of students and 71% of teachers have access to one or more mobile computing devices outside RWA. (Students n = 548, Teachers N = 42)

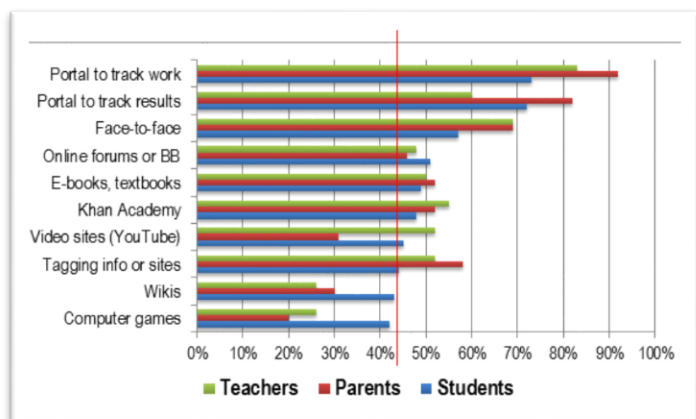


Chart 6: Stakeholder groups identify the technologies that should be used more in the classroom. (Students n = 548, Parents n = 248, Teachers N = 42)

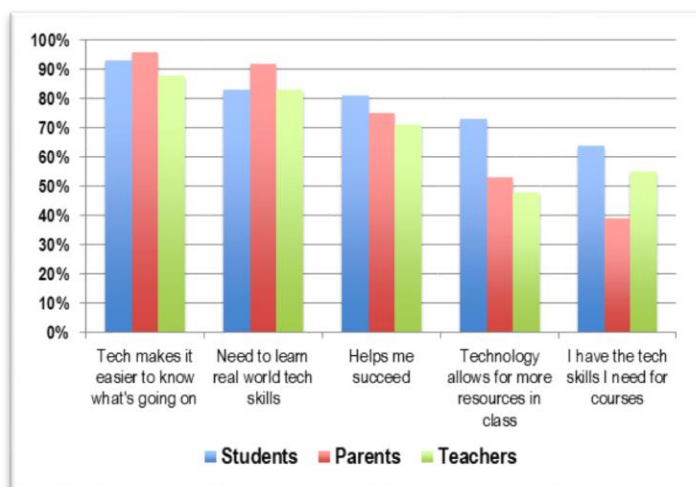


Chart 8: Opinion statements ranked by the level of agreement of students with each statement (Total of Agree + Strongly Agree).

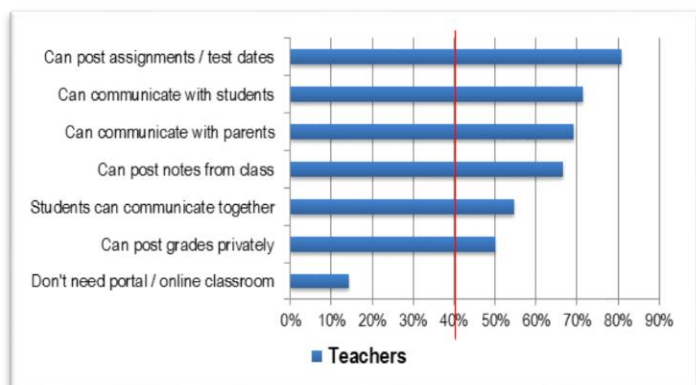


Chart 10: How teachers would use a portal if a functioning one existed. (Teachers N = 42)



## LOST AND FOUND POLICY

Please be advised that the Lost and Found boxes are cleaned out on the 15th of each month. While labeled items are returned to their owners, several bags of unclaimed unlabeled items are removed and donated to charity every month. So if you are looking for lost items, make sure to look for them before the 15th!

The Lost and Found bins are located in three areas at Royal West Academy:

- outside the new gym
- outside the guidance office
- in the main office under the teachers' mailboxes

In the meantime, please label all your belongings!



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Feb 3–6	Secondary II trip: Stoneham QC
Feb 3–6	Secondary V trip: New York NY
Feb 9–13	Staff Appreciation Week
Feb 10	RWA Foundation meeting @ 7 PM
Feb 11	Governing Board meeting @ 7 PM
Feb 11	Salon des Inventions
Feb 12	RWA Science Fair
Feb 13	Pedagogical Day
Feb 16–20	Social Justice Week
Feb 17	Home & School meeting @ 7:30 PM
Feb 25–Mar 6	Honour Band trip: Cuba

# RWA



# News

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**RWA News** is published during the academic year (from September to May) on the Royal West Academy website at [www.royalwestacademy.com](http://www.royalwestacademy.com). Articles, comments, and suggestions may be directed to the editor at [rwanews@gmail.com](mailto:rwanews@gmail.com).

