

Destination America: a French exchange student's view

Sylvie Becchia

Contributing Writer

As I am attending journalism in West Linn High School, Ore., USA. Ann, the journalism teacher, suggested that I write an article about the great experiences I am having here in America, and immediately I agreed.

My name is Sylvie and I'm 15 years-old. I'm in this journalism class (which is not an elective at my school) thanks to my high school English class exchange program.

I arrived here on March 30 with great excitement. Entering the parking lot where I would depart to meet



Sylvie Becchia, French exchange student, hangs out at a Marylhurst neighborhood park on a nice day in April. Her journey to America was the highlight of her sophomore year and she hopes to return some day.

Photo by Shoshana Koon

my host family (Shoshana Koon and Rachel Metzler, sophomores), I saw American families shouting and waving French flags with great enthusiasm, which is not a typical custom in France. After having hugged my friends, I was ready to go home to share a different way of life in a totally new country.

For my first day of school, I shadowed Shoshana who was very welcoming and immediately made me feel comfortable and at home. First I was amazed by the many differences I was able to notice. For example the classrooms I found were way more decorated than those in France. Here, the entire school is indoors and the students walk from classroom to classroom each changing period, whereas in France it is the teachers who

change classrooms every time.

It was a very new experience when I took the school bus because all of them were yellow and identical! The school buses in France are the opposite because each one is unique and colorful.

Looking back on the beautiful weekends I spent with my host family, it was truly amazing. I visited gorgeous sites such as Multnomah Falls, OMSI, Saturday Market and the Oregon Zoo.

Now that I have lived here for the past three weeks and I only have two days left before I return home, I want to thank you all for this wonderful present you've given me by welcoming me in your awesome country and for the experiences I lived on the other side of the

Budget cuts will reduce staff, teachers

Budget Cuts

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However, given the amount of staff members retiring this year, or leaving, the difference has been resolved.

"The problem is that not all staff members are leaving from the correct departments," Woehl said. This issue could force the School Board to dismiss some of the newer teachers while still hiring specialty teachers.

For example, Hitomi Tamura, the Japanese teacher who is retiring at the end of this school year, cannot be easily replaced by current staff members. Another option the School Board may utilize is expanding class sizes so

that fewer teachers will be needed.

According to Woehl, the School Board must come up with a number to gage the budget for next year. The School Board wasn't informed of the official budget for next year until May 15, but they predicted it would be between 5.4 and 5.9 billion, so they appropriated for 5.7 billion.

However, the State allocation to the district does not account for the full \$5.7 billion. That is a two year state-wide budget of which the district receives a share based on the number of students enrolled in the WLWV District.

Given that the average amount the state has given the district in the past has

been about 6.4 billion, it is a major cut. That will translate into about a four million dollars in deficit the schools will need to make up in order to maintain the current state of the schools and staffing according to Woehl.

There has also been talk of Oregon schools either cutting back on their athletic departments or completely eliminating them to make up some budget loss, but West Linn will not be among them.

"We are in a better place than most school districts around the state," Woehl said. "For the amount of money we pay for coaches for what they do, it is a small amount for how much time they put in."

According to Woehl, removing this extracurricular activity would barely put a dent in the deficit. This is why the School Board is going to monitor the department very closely and put a freeze on the funding for next year.

A change for next year is the dismissal of all early bird class funds. This decision came from the question, "What is a normal school day?" The board determined a typical school day can be broadly interpreted, which is why they decided to include the fee for early bird in the budget.

"With athletics, early bird classes, class materials and other fees, parents are already paying about \$1,000 per student. We are going to lift the burden from the parents' shoulders onto our own," Woehl said.

With only a small amount of time left in the school year the WLWV School Board was notified there would be nearly a two million dollar budget cut.

"This is, has been, and continues to be, one of the most difficult and complex budget process we have ever faced," Woehl said.

Sunny days beckon to students

Patrick D'Arcy

Staff Reporter

The sunny days I spend inside during school make me feel that my soul is somehow being sucked out of my body. I find myself daydreaming about being

teachers to make the call. But Bailey has stated that he will not tolerate any classes interfering with other classes. He said teachers should use caution in letting students go outside of class unsupervised because some students will abuse that privilege. Making



While discussing "Romeo and Juliet", Lisa Root's English 9 class enjoys the outdoors. The administration does allow teachers to go outside with classes if it is constructive. Photo by Patrick D'Arcy

outside. I wonder why we can't discuss "Siddhartha" while communing with nature. I can understand if the class is doing a lesson that requires an overhead or a TV, but for lessons that don't require note taking, I think we should be able to go outside. Students are usually in a better mood when they are outside on nice days.

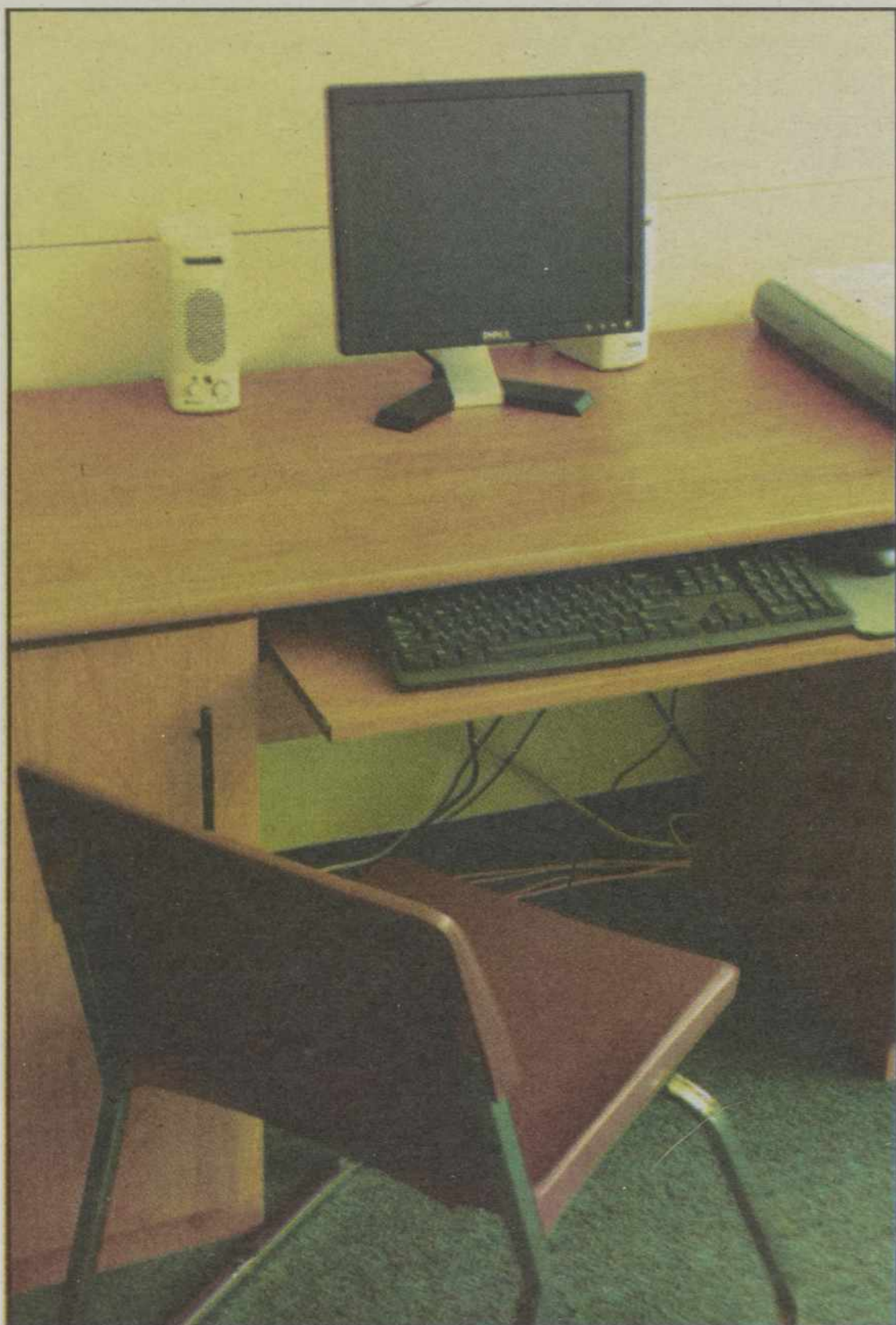
The administration, led by former Principal Kim Noah, was very strict about classes going outdoors. No class was to be taken outside unless it was related to the lesson that was being taught. This rule didn't help class attendance, as many students would opt to skip class and go outside, especially during the end of May.

The new administration has given teachers the choice of whether or not to go outside. Lou Bailey, principal, trusts the professional judgement of

up reasons to go outside just because it is a sunny day is also not acceptable.

So what does this mean for students? We finally have a set of guidelines outlining rules and cautions that come with the privilege of going outside during class. The maturity of some of the students is one of the things teachers have to consider when a class is going outside. Many of my classmates lack the basic maturity necessary to be trusted on computer porches or to read quietly in class which puts the opportunity to go outside in question.

If the administration trusts us and we act maturely by finding appropriate times to go outside and not badgering our teachers every single day about how nice it is, we should be able to go outside. Balancing classwork and enjoying the nice weather is now possible.



As expected budget cuts continue over the next two years, empty teacher desks may become a more common sight due to staff layoffs. Teachers voted to sacrifice two days of pay this year to help offset the immediate shortfall.

Photo by Mark Poppert