

THE TATTOO

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Terryville High classes shedding students

By **STEFAN KOSKI**
The Tattoo

Something is amiss at Terryville High School.

Its classes run like clockwork, its teachers are on time and grades are promptly distributed.

But why are its classes shrinking?

Although it may not be obvious at first, the number of students who start freshman year and the number of students who show up for graduation differs greatly.

Some, including the class of 2004, lose as much as 30 percent of their students. Other classes typically lose between 12 and 16 percent of their students during the four years of high school.

Where are all of these kids going?

The numbers tell an interesting story.

The Terryville High School Statistics for Disenrollment

show that out of the 124 students who left school between 2001 to 2004, 41 percent are moving, either out-of-town or out-of-state.

Another 23 percent transferred to a different school, including the Bristol and Oliver Wolcott technical schools, St. Paul's Catholic High School or Holy Cross High School in Waterbury.

But the most noteworthy of the statistics is the third category – the 21 percent who drop out completely. The national average is 10.5 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Terryville High School Principal Andrea Lavery said she believes that kids who are quitting school have any combination of family issues at home, a lack of motivation or support, discipline problems that have never been addressed or a general lack of success that has plagued them throughout their academic careers.

"You rarely find an A-B stu-

dent that goes to failing," she said.

Lavery said there are several reasons kids drop out.

"There are some that don't fit into a traditional high school, but there aren't any alternative schools," Lavery said.

She said that Terryville's small size and even smaller budget don't offer many options for students who are on the verge of dropping out.

A staff meeting handout entitled "Strategies and Programs Implemented to Address THS Drop-out Rate" noted that the Tunxis alternative high school and the Phoenix Program, both of which aided the "struggling" or "non-traditional student," have been discontinued recently.

A number of new ideas have been introduced to try to stem the exodus of non-traditional students.

"What we're really trying to do is get to students during

their freshman year," Lavery said, explaining how a new mentor program at Terryville High School is being utilized to assist students.

"We really want ninth grade

tactics, such as Saturday detentions and a freshman parents' night hosted by the guidance department, to reduce the number of students who might drop out.

having many outside alternatives remains.

Other than the Bristol Technical School and adult education programs, there isn't much for students who are looking for other options to get through high school.

"The only magnet school that we've sent students to is the Arts and Music Magnet School in Waterbury, but that's not going to attract the disenfranchised student," Lavery said.

Indeed, there seems to be little for the "disenfranchised" and "disenchanted" students of Terryville High School.

But preventing students from dropping out is always going to be hard.

"Kindergarten teachers always tell me that they can look at their kindergarten class and can tell who won't be successful in ninth grade," Lavery said.

Lavery said other steps are possible.

"We are investigating some kind of summer school here instead of Bristol," she said. "The typical summer school student is a freshman or sophomore who can't drive. How are they supposed to get there?"

Even though there are many in-house solutions to the declining class sizes in Terryville, the problem of not

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kids to understand that homework, participation and attendance are really important in being successful in high school," Lavery said.

The mentor program has had some success.

While last year's freshman class had 75 students (43 percent of the class) failing one or more subjects, this year's freshman class only had 26 failing (17 percent).

The school has tried other

Young love at Christmas

By **MONICA GLEBERMAN**
The Tattoo

When I was little, I knew what made December so special.

It wasn't because it snowed, or even because it's the month I was born. It's because during December all of the houses on my block are decorated with lights and I know that's a sign that Christmas is near.

Growing up, my parents were amazing when it came to Christmas. I lived in a house where Santa ate all the cookies, drank the milk we left out, and, for some reason, in the morning he would leave presents that both my parents knew about.

My parents were always willing to help my brother and I stay up late at night waiting for Santa. Eventually we would fall asleep, leaving my parents to work.

I am not new to Christmas. I have been celebrating it as long as I can remember. Some of my

best memories of home involve this holiday.

Every single year is basically the same. We always decorate the tree, help my mom out with cooking an awesome Christmas dinner, talk to my extended family, and then go to sleep in hope that morning will come a

Ho, ho, ho

lot sooner than I think it will.

However, this year isn't going to be like the last. I am a lot older and I now have a boyfriend.

He grew up in a small home where holidays weren't anything big. Christmas was never special, and the sight of December just made him realize that another year had passed.

But this year I invited him over for Christmas. I told him

that things were going to be so much better if he came over. There would be presents and good food. He finally agreed and I'm planning a huge surprise.

I'm going to take him downtown where there is a Christmas play and people in character costumes who walk up and talk with you. I have tons of presents to give him.

I'm hoping to make this the best Christmas and show him everything he's been missing. I almost feel like this is my first-ever Christmas because I am starting a new tradition by having my boyfriend over.

I'm hoping to share a lot of my family traditions with him. It should be an amazing Christmas.

I hope I change his mind and he thinks he should celebrate Christmas all the time. I hope he enjoys it because I want to bring him into a new tradition of celebrating the holidays – and into the spirit of Santa.

A winter wonderland at the Hoppers

A trail at the Hoppers-Birge Pond Nature Preserve in Bristol, following the first snow of the season.

Danielle Letourneau
The Tattoo



Teachers make or break us

By **MARESE HEFFERNAN**
The Tattoo

Teachers are people most of us teenagers have to deal with on a daily basis.

They are the people who help us, who help to broaden our minds.

Usually, once we leave school, those teachers generally leave our minds for the rest of the day. But what happens when those teachers start to have an effect on our personal lives and how we feel about ourselves?

What I say

Teachers can have a positive or a negative affect on us, depending on how they deal with their power and control. Unfortunately, some teachers abuse that control, using it to hurt their students, and there is only one name for those teachers: bullies.

I currently have a teacher whom I hate with a burning passion. She insults and degrades me and makes me feel small.

I am afraid to ask her questions for fear she might make me out to be stupid. She has shattered my self-esteem. I cry over her constantly.

Is this what teachers get paid to do: make students feel bad about themselves?

I don't think so, but that is what many teachers do, and many of them don't even realize they're doing it.

These teachers go to work every day and upset their students. The fact that this might have an effect on the pupil never even enters their mind. Students are not people to them; they are merely work acquaintances.

On the other hand, there are teachers who are great influences. Those are the teachers who make a difference in our lives, who inspire us and help us.

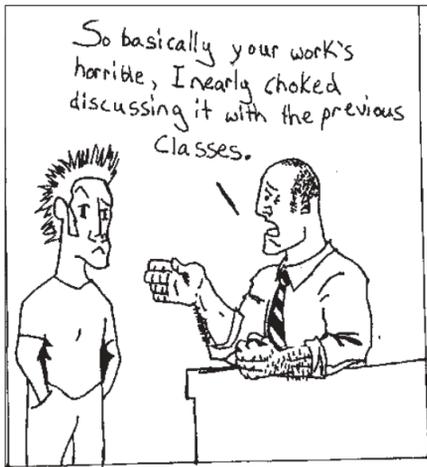
These teachers are valuable and rare. It is these teachers whose lessons we need to carry with us for life.

Life lessons from a teacher can have great impact and can help us become better people.

Teachers affect us in many different ways, but in the end, they are supposed to be helping us. Students don't deserve to be treated unfairly and our teachers aren't allowed to do it.

But if you have a teacher who is making you miserable, you need to speak out.

Teachers need to realize that what they say and what they do can have a big influence on



Tyler Wentland / The Tattoo

young and impressionable minds.

When a teacher starts to hurt your feelings, then you know it has gone too far.

Teachers shouldn't hurt us, in any way. They shouldn't diminish our self-esteem or make us feel stupid or low.

Teachers like that don't deserve to be called teachers. They are bullies and cowards, and they must be exposed, before it's too late.

Band gives rock 'n roll a Velvet touch

By **KELLIE MALLONEY**
The Tattoo

In early June of 2003 the music charts were as usual full of hip hop and R&B music. But, to everyone's surprise, a band arose called Velvet Revolver.

If you like bands like Godsmack and enjoyed the early days of Guns N' Roses and Stone Temple Pilots, you'll definitely enjoy this band's sense of rock.

The band consists of old Guns N' Roses members including Slash (guitar), Duff McKagan (bass) and Matt Sorum (drums).

Scott Weiland, ex lead singer of Stone Temple Pilots, joined the band as their lead singer early last year.

The band's debut album, Contraband, hit

stores this summer and rose with hit singles like "Slither," featuring Slash's original guitar sound back in the Guns N' Roses days, and their newest, "Fall to Pieces."

Fans everywhere are enjoying the music, and for the first time in years, there is a Top 10 hard rock hit on the charts.

There were many strong reviews about the band's album that ripped on singer Scott Weiland's voice. Writers criticized him about his singing, but the band pulled together and released another video on VH1, "Fall to Pieces," after their original video, "Slither."

I enjoy Velvet Revolver like I do Guns N'

Roses. I think it's good to have more rock on the charts and get people to stop singling out rock bands over hip hop groups.

There isn't a date set for their another album, but rumors are already flying about a new video for the next hit.

the beat

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