



Jeff Steinberg performs on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to deliver the message, "You're a masterpiece in progress" through original songs and stories at an assembly sixth hour. photo by Jordan White

Tiny giant, lasting impression

Jordan White
News Editor

Schools were closed as students observed a cold Martin Luther King Jr. day in Jan. Jan. 11 through Jan. 15, leading up to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, featured a different activity geared towards one main theme: Leadership.

"Every year we have a goal [and a theme] to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day," teacher Caitleen Haglund said. "This year our theme was Leadership: Lead the Way, and our goal, like always, was to have every single student touched in some way."

Mon., Jan. 11 jump started the school week as the poster contest winner was announced. Tuesday featured a video focusing on Martin Luther King Jr.

The following day, Lieutenant Colonel Scheidler gave a powerful message to the students as they saw pictures of his time spent in Iraq.

Thurs. allowed high school students the chance to volunteer for local organizations.

As Fri. approached, there was a sense of excitement masked by a smell of curiosity in the air. To set the day in motion, students participated in a banner stamping focusing on leadership throughout the lunches.

Following the banner stamping, a much anticipated assembly was scheduled for the school.

While students and teachers filled the rows of bleachers, an echo of whispers saturated the air of the gymnasium. An incredible amount of inquisitiveness came from those whispers.

"We wanted his speech to be even more powerful, that is why we kept it a secret," Haglund said.

Standing four feet six inches tall, Jeff Steinberg, a man comfortable with his limitations, talked, sang, joked, and most of all captivated students in an assembly celebrating the culmination of many activities based around Martin Luther King Jr. on Fri., Jan. 15.

Captivating the students and

faculty, Steinberg conveyed a message that everyone understood.

"I thought the assembly was great; a good way to teach us about being unique," junior Anneke Hoogenstryd said. "I had tears in my eyes at the end."

Through song, Steinberg challenged each person to pay attention to the lyrics in which he communicated his message with an added amount of power.

Steinberg not only focused on his disability, but he told stories of his life as a child. A hard life was normal for Steinberg as he spent a significant amount of his young years in a hospital.

In his 37 years of traveling, Steinberg has had the opportunity to be a guest speaker in places where some people would never go.

"I've been to schools, I've been to prisons, and sometimes, I've been to both at the same time," Steinberg said.

What started off as a way for many students to get out of class, turned into an experience that was incredibly influential.

"The assembly was an eye-opening experience that made me appreciate not only myself, but others as well," senior Heather Pietrzak said.

The students walked away with a firm grasp of what they believed Steinberg's message was, but what did Steinberg truly want us to understand?

"I want [the students] to come away from here seeing possibilities," Steinberg said. "I wanted to show them an example of diversity. The question I have is do you think the [students] got it?"

With the large positive response, the students understood what Steinberg was trying to convey.

"The assembly was a great way to end such a positive week focused on Martin Luther King Jr.," senior Andrew Fiebert said.



Hartland High School hosted Jeff Steinberg as a guest speaker on Jan. 15. Steinberg spoke about acceptance and tolerance. photo by Jordan White



Steinberg and Principal Chuck Hughes pose together after the assembly to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. day. photo by Drew Wagner

IN MY OPINION...

Raising standards for the New Year

Governor Granholm signs reform package raising dropout age to 18, which will go into effect in 2016.

Caitlin Wineka
Photographer

Governor Granholm is taking the initiative to explore further down the line of academic regulations to boost the caliber of Michigan's students.

As of Mon., Jan. 4, a reform package signed by Granholm will raise the dropout age of high school students from 16 to 18. The package, which makes Michigan eligible for federal money from President Obama's 'Race to the Top' initiative, goes into effect starting in 2016.

Recent economic troubles have left Michigan in a state of turmoil. Jobs are becoming more scarce, and competition is heavy.

To ensure success for one and one's family, a high school diploma is crucial to have. The newly instated drop out age lawfully forces students to continue with studies until the approximate age of graduation.

Making the decision to drop out of high school is a huge decision that may not have immediate repercussions but can cause serious barriers to career development.

Not only does this prohibit students from moving on to a university and getting a professional degree in a specific field, but it also limits job options. Even as an adult, the option of obtaining a college degree later in life is not available for a dropout.

Many students who drop out at sixteen fail to see their future clearly without a high school diploma. It is rare to find a young adult who is ready to make such a life altering decision as this, and one who is fully prepared for its effects.

As much as it is a student's job to stay in school, it is a school's job to provide resources and help in order to prevent students from believing dropping out is an option.

Granholm's reforms are gearing to benefit schools. Schools around the country that make efforts to reform and have noticeable change are made eligible for \$4.35 billion in federal money from Obama's initiative. The governor's reforms not only have educational benefits but also provide an opportunity to improve our economy, schools and resources.

Our current times are much more demanding, since the year that legalized sixteen year old drop outs. Michigan's legal dropout age has been sixteen since 1865 when jobs didn't require higher levels of education, and providing for families was achieved with jobs held by students directly out of high school.

Now, emphasis has been placed on where and what kind of degree has been obtained, rather than viewing each college equivalently.

As we transition into a new year, it is vital to ensure that our educational programs are moving with us as well, and Granholm's dropout age increase has definite potential to encourage and ensure career opportunities for Michigan students.

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