News Release

MHS Students to Participate in School-Wide 'Digital Detox' Experiment: Powering Down for 24 Hours to See How It Impacts Their Lives

MAMARONECK, NY, November 15, 2016 – Mamaroneck High School's (MHS) Student Council -- in collaboration with the English department -- is organizing and leading 'Digital Detox' from 2:30 pm this Thursday, November 17 to 2:30 pm on Friday, November 18, a full-day tech-free retreat where students and faculty will turn off all electronic devices and examine how technology impacts their daily lives. Then, on the following Monday, MHS English teachers will ask students to reflect on the experiment in class; they will discuss students' observations, recap, and draw some conclusions.

"We see this as a great opportunity to slow down, reduce stress and incorporate a more interactive way of learning, both in the classroom and during after-school hours," said MHS Student Council member Brooke Smith, junior, who is serving as Chairperson of this event. "The ultimate goal is to help us all understand that we have a choice in how to handle technology in our lives."

In this era of constant technology and an over-abundance of screen time, teachers too look forward to this experiment of "unplugging" for a day. Some teachers are creating lesson plans involving the impact of technology on our lives, and many have agreed to give homework that evening that is not technology dependent.

MHS English teachers Mary Beth Jordan and Michele Viviano, who for the past several years felt it was important to devote one day each school year to 'Digital Detox' in their English 10 class unit on *Digital Identity*, are thrilled this is now becoming a school-wide initiative. "Students would go offline for 24 hours and live to write a reflection about it," Ms. Jordan said of her past experiments. "In addition to talking about the benefits of the detox, students also said that for future detoxes it would be so much easier – and more fun – if everyone in the school did it at the same time. Thus the idea for a schoolwide digital detox was born."

Ms. Jordan has provided all Mamaroneck High School teachers with TEDTalks, videos, podcasts, and articles to read about the topic so they can mix and match for their own lessons. She points to some helpful background from an article in The Atlantic, based on an interview with Sherry Turkle, a clinical psychologist and sociologist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who has spent the past 30 years observing how people react and adapt to new

technologies that change the way we communicate. Turkle argues that replacing face-to-face communication with smartphones is diminishing people's capacity for empathy.

Activities planned for the day include a bagel sale in the morning, along with a Zen Tiger key chain giveaway for all students participating in Digital Detox; lunchtime events such as Make your Own Stress Ball, Tea Mixing, Flag Football, Spike Ball, Cupcake Giveaway and an Interactive Art Project; and an after-school Students For Senegal Soccer Tournament.

Student Council worked with MHS Info to produce a TV announcement that is being broadcast in classrooms throughout this week to inform students of the Day. Posters and stickers are also being displayed in hallways and classrooms to promote the event.

# # #

The Nuts & Bolts of Mamaroneck High School's Digital Detox:

- Schoolwide experiment planned so we can all experience the impact of spending less (even no) time on our various screens and mobile devices.
- Purpose is to find more time in our day to do the things we like and be more efficient at the things we don't like.
- Purpose is also to relax more: By taking away the stress of constantly checking messages, emails, and posts, we are hoping students, teachers, and staff will live more in the moment and have more face-to-face conversations.
- By turning off at 2:30 one day, students, teachers, and staff will get to experience the detox at home AND school, with friends AND family.
- What to expect: Your English teachers will talk to you about the detox. You may have a writing reflection assigned after your day of unplugging.
- Homework will be posted on the boards in your classroom; you should not have to check Google Classroom Thursday night. Depending on your class, you may need your iPad in school on Friday: Some classes are going no-tech, others are going low-tech.
- You will have homework Thursday night….hopefully it will not be digital….and hopefully, if you stay away from your phones, you'll get it done faster.

The "Rules"

- **TURN OFF YOUR PHONE** -- Use only for emergencies.
- **SKIP SOCIAL MEDIA:** Stay away from Snapchat, Instagram, FB, etc. except for mandatory class/club business.
- **DO NOT POST OR SEND PHOTOS:** Live in the moment. Hold on to the memory with words or poetry.
- **IGNORE EMAIL:** Come on, admit it, you're looking forward to this!
- **AVOID (ALMOST) ALL SCREEN TIME:** Don't watch movies & TV on your mobile devices. Can't break completely? Form a viewing party & watch on a Big Screen with friends!
- **AVOID THE INTERNET**...except for mandatory homework and research. (Teachers will post homework on the board so you can avoid Google Classroom Thursday night.)

- **PLAY ALL KINDS OF GAMES <u>EXCEPT</u> THE VIDEO KIND:** Card games, board games, ball games, guessing games, lawn games.
- **PUT THE EARBUDS AWAY:** If you like listening to music, use the speakers, not the headphones.

<u>Exceptions:</u>

- You can use your cellphone as a phone (call people & talk!).
- You can read eBooks (we ARE English teachers, after all).
- You can use electronic devices to write/take notes if you need to.

<u>More About Addictions/Usage</u>:

- According to a new poll by Common Sense Media, 50% of teens ages 12-18 believe they are addicted to their cellphones. (CNN, July 2016)
- In that same poll, 59% of parents believe their children are addicted to their cellphones.
- 52% of teens believe they spend too much time on their mobile devices.
- And while some countries have made "internet addiction" a recognized disorder, the United States has not…..That said, how easy is it for you to put down your phone?
- 88% of teens ages 13-17 have or have access to a mobile phone; 73% have smartphones. (Pew Research Center's Internet/American Life Project)
- How often do you check your phone? Almost 80% of teens say hourly: 72% say they "felt the need to immediately respond to texts and social media messages"
- 28% of teens feel their parents are addicted to their mobile devices.
- According to Holland Haiis, author of *Consciously Connecting* and hailed as the Digital Detox Expert on CNN and other news media outlets: "The dopamine in our brains is stimulated by the unpredictability that social media, emails and texting provide. It's a vicious cycle and in order to break that cycle, you need to find the same unpredictability and stimulation which is out there if you are exercising. You never know what's around the bend when out for a jog, bike ride or walk."

<u>Quotes from Ms. Jordan and Ms. Viviano's Students from Previous Class Experiments:</u>

"I walked my dog to entertain myself. Then I caught up on a book, chatted with my family, cleaned my room (yes, I was that bored), and even made banana bread! I don't think I have ever been that productive."

"I had a lot more conversation with my parents, and when I went outside I had my head up instead of down."

"I actually wrote something for pleasure! I also cleaned up my room and started my homework early."

"I was able to clear my mind of a lot of stress I had, and I felt really accomplished with all I had gotten done that day. I'm even thinking of going unplugged one day every week."

"This experiment is kind of a wakeup call because we need to ask ourselves why it is so hard to go a day without these things, things that didn't exist 10 years ago."

“It was odd, but in a way, tranquil and refreshing."

“The most surprising thing is I don’t mind not being in constant contact with my friends.”

“I had a lengthy conversation with my mother, which I enjoyed.”

“I realized how much time I wasted checking checking checking.”

“My hand kept going to where I usually keep my phone (front pocket left side) almost instinctively. It was funny and scary.”