

# What's the Deal with MHS Class Elections?

- Kathleen Alexandrou

This Wednesday, May 25th, was Marblehead High School's class elections, an annual event that, for the majority of the school, provides a nice break from the tedium of education. The class elections are organized and run by Student Government. Each class votes in a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary to serve a yearlong term. The freshman elections take place in September, but for every other class the elections are sometime between the end of May and the beginning of June. Anyone can run for a class officer position, whether or not they are in student government. People run for a multitude of reasons as well; some do it for college applications, some do it on a whim, and some do it because they are bursting with school spirit and passion for their class.

Class elections are something that most high schoolers only think about on one day: the day of their class elections. There are a select few who actually run for a class officer position, and even fewer who run for and *win* a class officer position. For the ten to fifteen that run for a position, the week leading up to election day can be incredibly stressful. I can't speak for everyone who has run before, but I believe that running for a class officer position is one of the most terrifying experiences someone can put herself through, though if you do it right it is unbelievably rewarding. If you're brave enough and feel like it could be something you would enjoy, I absolutely encourage you to run for office— you will learn so much about yourself and your class.

So, what does running for a class officer position entail? For starters, there's the speech. All candidates are required to compose and present a campaign speech explaining why they are the best candidate for their chosen position. As we are explicitly forbidden from putting up posters or advertising on social media, the speech is the most important aspect of our campaigns. I ran for vice president freshman year and lost, then ran again sophomore year and won. The only real difference between the two years is the amount of effort I put into the speech. Freshman year I spent minimal time on my speech, writing it the weekend before and editing it maybe once or twice. Sophomore year I began my speech as soon as I decided I was going to run for office. I edited it myself as much as I could, then passed it off to as many people as were willing to read it, from the senior class president, to the editors of this paper (Headlight), to the cast of a show I was working on. There was a big difference in the quality of my work, and I believe that is why I won. Writing a good speech is difficult – you have to hold the attention of your audience while also throwing information at them that they probably don't want to hear. Speech writing is not a core class (or a class at all) at MHS, so as you can imagine it's difficult for students to figure out how to write one, especially on top of everything else going on in their lives. Somehow, amazingly, every candidate manages to come up with a decently coherent mass of words. That's a slight understatement: I've never heard a bad speech given by a candidate. Unnecessarily long, yes; slightly awkward, also yes; but never bad, and I think that's quite impressive.

Once the speech is complete, there's a period of waiting. This is when I always doubt myself the most, and rethink the fact that in a few days I will be reading my speech to a room full of teenagers and trusting them to listen to said speech and (hopefully) vote for me – an immensely frightening experience. Very few high schoolers are comfortable speaking in front of a crowd, and even fewer are okay with that crowd being full of teenagers who are most likely judging

their every move. Personally, I don't get all that stressed out about speaking in front of my class, the part I get really worried about is the voting process. By putting yourself out there and asking your peers to vote for you, you invite respect. However, you also invite ridicule, and you present your fellow students with the opportunity to share their opinion of you with a very black-and-white check of the box. It's nerve-wracking, to say the least. Nonetheless, whether you win or lose, you will be able to say that you have tried.

Class elections are infamously harsh. Anyone literate can run for office, as long as they get appropriate signatures from teachers and parents. Only four students come out victorious, and the rest of the candidates are often forgotten. Having the guts to stand up in front of a couple hundred people and allow them to judge whether or not you are the right fit to run their class is admirable. Even if you never run for office, please remember that those who do are remarkably brave, and listen carefully to their speeches.