

# ↑ THUMBS ↓

The **ODYSSEY** staff's opinions on this month's issues.



## WORKING OVERTIME

Saturday School provides students opportunities to catch up, work in peace and improve their classroom performance.

## PRAISE FOR PARISH

Dr. Jack Parish's appointment as interim superintendent will provide stability for the CCSD during the new year.

## MR. 305

For University of Miami senior Marquez Williams, playing football for coach Mark Richt was a childhood dream, though he expected to be in a red and black jersey, not a green and orange one.

## PULLEN WEIGHT

Though CCHS alumna Cherelle Pullen was not able to return to her former high school to coach, she now serves in several athletic roles throughout the county.

## THE WEEKND'S END?

The Weeknd's latest release "Starboy" is an unfortunate stray away from his alternative R&B roots. Although it was a success on the charts, it was a failure for long-time fans.

## FAKING THE CLIMB

Graduation rates in the Clarke County School District's high schools are climbing consistently, but often times these rates are given more significance than substantial student progress.

## #BARBIESAVIOR

Variety Editor Jurnee Louder highlights the ridiculousness of "white saviors" and the mystification of African culture and civilization.

## LOCKER-ROOM TALK

Sports Editor Hannah Gale addresses her peers about overly-sexual behavior in sports and at CCHS, and the inappropriate conduct that takes place in female athletes' everyday lives.

# OUR TAKE

Year after year, around the end of the first semester, the headlines start popping up.

"Graduation rates rise for fifth straight year."

"Clarke County's graduation rate climbs 17 percent."

"National graduation rate leaps."

That should raise eyebrows.

If someone on a diet lost 20 pounds in their first week, questions would follow. Did they use diet pills? Did they just drop water weight? Did they stop eating altogether?

Why, then, aren't questions asked of a graduation rate which shoots up astronomically every single year?

The biggest clue is an obvious one.

Graduation rates continue to soar, including in the Clarke County School District, where over 80 percent of students graduate. Yet 60 percent of CCSD high school students read below their grade level, according to September 2015 Lexile scores provided by the district.

If the CCSD shifts its focus from high scores and pats on the back and towards the students it so proudly brags about, maybe we can be as successful as our district claims we are.

If high school is preparing students for the "real" world -- code for employment -- why are schools graduating students who read far below what the adult world requires?

And even after graduation, where do Clarke Central High School and CCSD students go? If students are unable to function in post-secondary options -- college, the military, the workforce -- a high graduation rate is essentially meaningless.

What happens to us students, who are often graduated despite being unprepared for what comes ahead?

Rather than crafting a graduation rate that is mostly water weight, the CCSD should ensure that graduates' diplomas mean something.

That means working on literacy initiatives from K-12, reforming credit recovery classes to be as rigorous and educational as their on-level equivalents and establishing mentorship programs to help students not only get through high school, but to find opportunities for the road ahead. That means being honest about the struggles students and schools face.

If the CCSD shifts its focus from high scores and pats on the back and towards the students it so proudly brags about, maybe we can be as successful as our district claims we are.



**Below:** GLADS TO GRADS?: The Clarke County School District is graduating more students than in years past, many of whom are still incapable of reading and writing above a basic level, leaving us to question the validity of these rates.

Story by Katy Mayfield

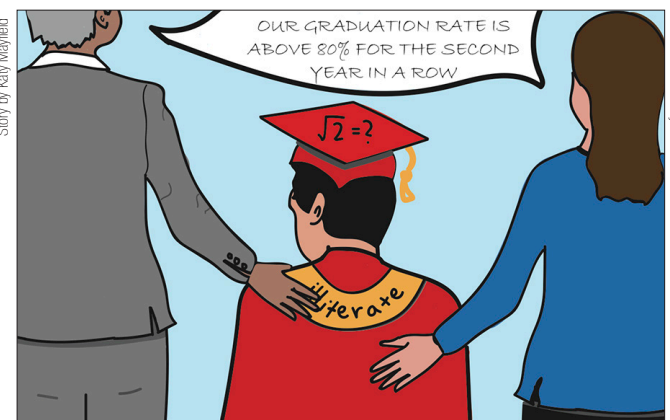


Photo illustration by Suncera Peake