



**WALK** is an alternative education program in Charlottesville High School that provides online credit recovery assistance to students who have failed a class and are **at-risk for not graduating**



Maya is a senior at CHS. She likes the WALK program and appreciates having a quiet space where she can work at her own pace. Maya feels that traditional classrooms move too quickly and her teachers don't slow down to help. She says the main difference between the WALK staff and other CHS faculty is that "THEY CARE."



Aaron is a senior at CHS. He has moved 5 times during his high school career and drives from Waynesboro (or farther) to class every day. Aaron joined the WALK program when he transferred to CHS. Aaron, while brilliant, argues that he hates school and is mainly interested in sports at CHS. Aaron has expressed a budding interest in college, but has internally ruled it out as an option for himself.

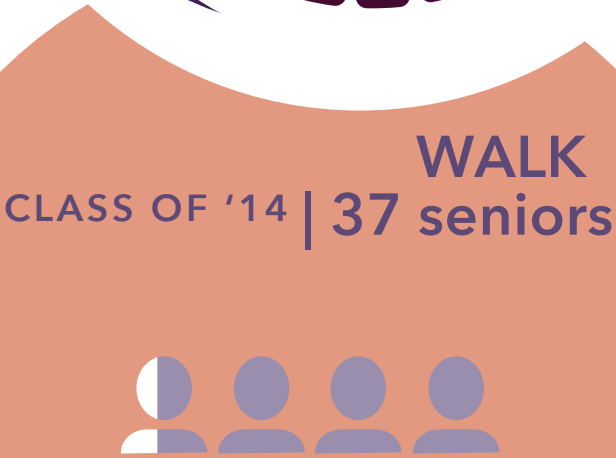
The Students



James is a former WALK student who graduated in 2018. During his time at CHS, James says he mainly struggled with school because of "stuff going on at home." He also attributed his poor performance at school to a problem with himself as a person. James felt like the responsibility was on him to succeed. He currently struggles with finding direction after graduation.



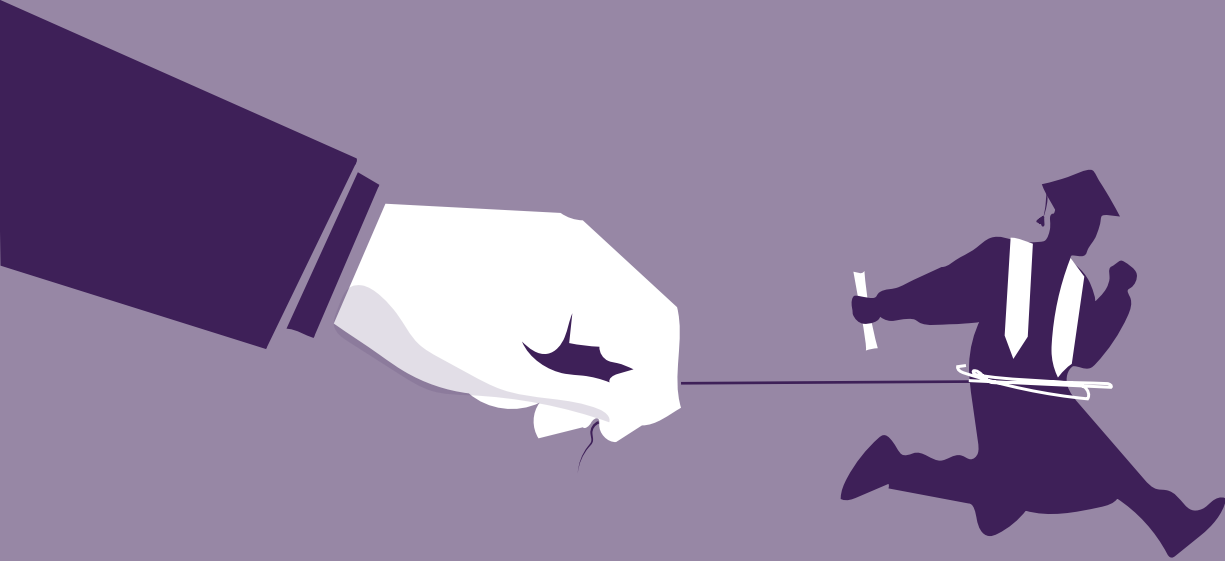
Erica is a former WALK student who graduated in 2014. She has faced challenges of losing a parent, living with epilepsy, and dropping out of college. At CHS, learning was hard for Erica because she didn't feel comfortable working with students who understood things better than she did. She was skeptical of online learning, but grew to like it with the help of the WALK staff's understanding and caring attitudes.



*It's really hard to focus on math when...*

Homeless HUNGRY  
Mom's in jail searching for drunk parent at 3 AM on a school night  
working two jobs outside of school nobody cares  
people give up on you

- Victoria Alvarez
- Blaise Sevier
- Jiayi Lu
- Wesley Kittelberger
- Rachel Delaney
- Makayla Whitehurst
- Madison Nguyen



# What's holding them back?



too fast paced

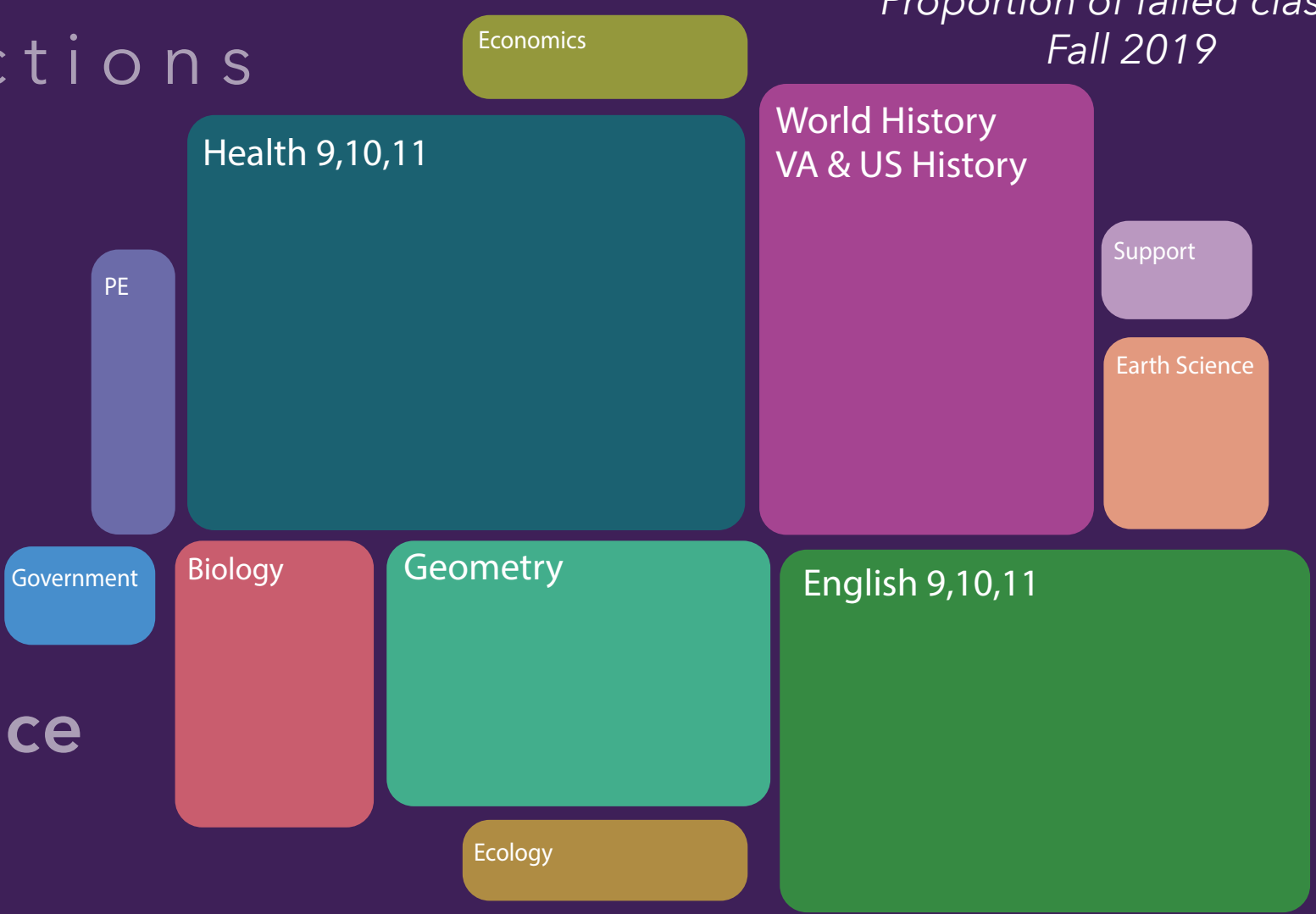
my teachers won't slow down to help

distractions

Proportion of failed classes  
Fall 2019

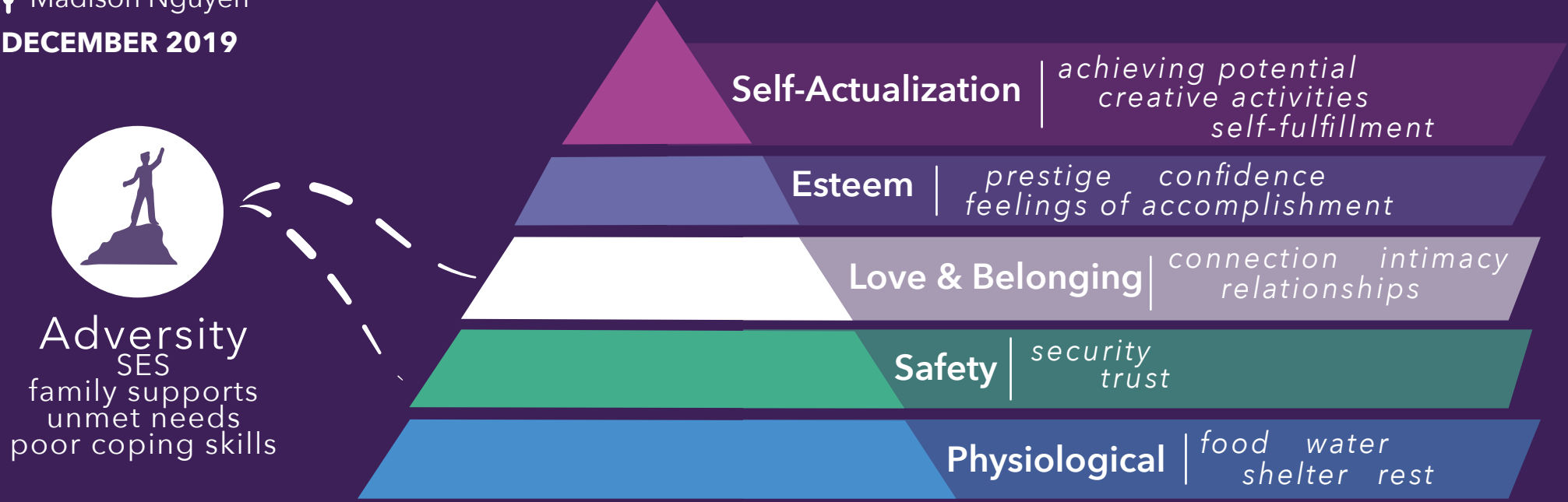
personal  
attention  
from  
teachers

attendance



# Maslow's Hierarchy<sup>3 4</sup>

For WALK students, it's hard to focus on learning when basic human needs are not being met and other priorities get in the way.



## Possible Selves<sup>5</sup>

WALK students have trouble envisioning what their lives could look like after high school. They lack the resources and social capital needed to help explore meaningful paths for success.



## Expectancy-Value Theory<sup>6</sup>

WALK students struggle with motivation for learning and have developed a poor relationship with school. Negative past experiences, internalized ideas about ability, and limited exposure to instruction beyond a computer screen make it difficult for students to perceive the value of learning.



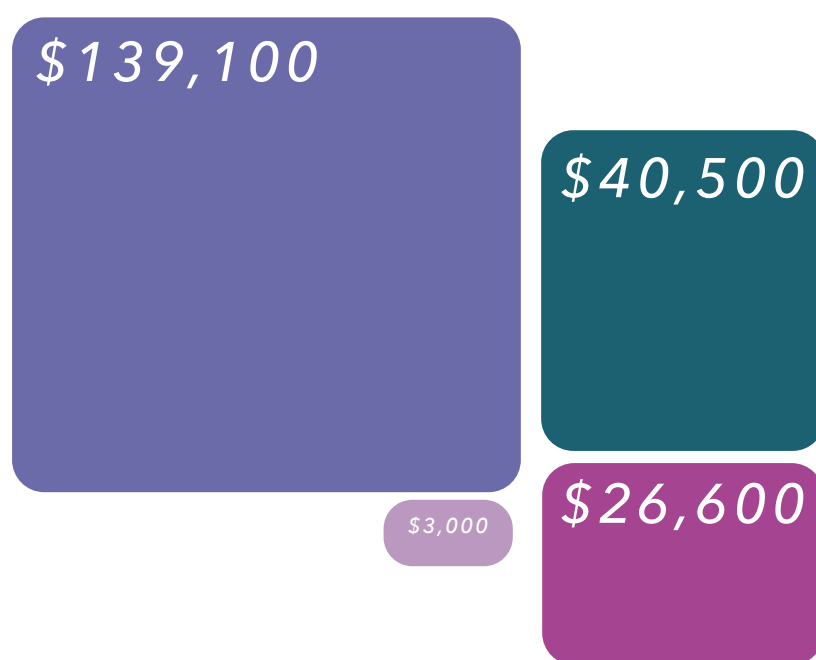
# Why should we care?

Outcomes for high school dropouts:



For every recovered or prevented high school dropout, the **average societal return** is:<sup>1</sup>

- Tax payments
- Public healthcare
- Reduced criminal activity
- Public welfare



RE

# IMAGINING WALK: OUR INNOVATION

Based on our research, we identify **MOTIVATION** as the overarching barrier to learning that WALK students face. Our aim is to increase motivation by supporting these students in 1) **fulfilling basic needs** 2) **transforming their relationship with learning** and 3) **envisioning successful futures for themselves after graduation**.



Create a design plan for a new WALK learning space to provide:

**Physiological need amenities**

**Project-based learning**

**Workplace & life skills training**

**Mental health services**



Create a handbook to guide WALK efforts in:

**Effective use of the space**

**Evidence-based practices**

**Exploration programming**

**Advocating for students**

Victoria Alvarez  
Blaise Sevier  
Jiayi Lu  
Wesley Kittelberger  
Rachel Delaney  
Makayla Whitehurst  
Madison Nguyen

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# References

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