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Students return to school under hybrid learning model

Nearly half of student body elects to stay remote

By Emma Ketchum
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students and staff returned to school on Jan. 19 under the hybrid learning system, which has come with positive and negative effects for both students and teachers and a small percentage of students choosing to return to the building.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said 229 students are currently staying remote, which is 49% of the student body.

The junior class has 66% of students staying remote which is the highest percentage out of all grades, she said.

Puglisi said students have been very back and forth with deciding whether or not to stay remote, which is an area where she wants the students to have less flexibility.

Since the first week of hybrid, many students that originally chose to go in person have switched back to remote, but some students neglect to inform the school of their decision to

switch back, which makes the percentage of students staying remote possibly inaccurate, Puglisi said.

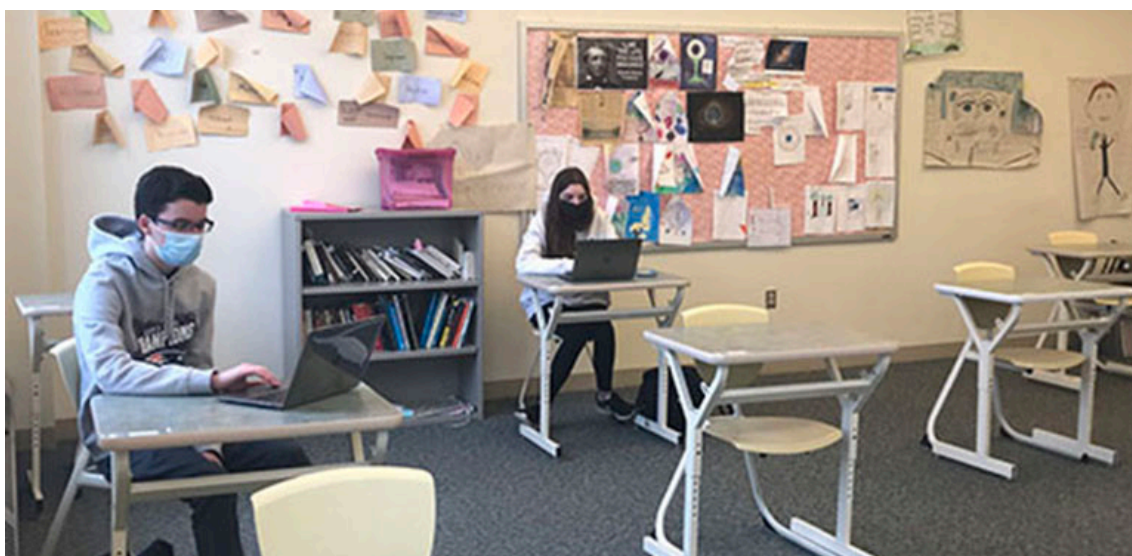
She said teachers will now reach out to the parents of the student if this situation

occurs, in order to keep an accurate record of who is not going into the building.

English teacher Debra Isensee said her largest class has 15 out

‘The teachers have been working unbelievably hard to teach both the kids in school and the kids at home.’

- PATRICIA PUGLISI



Sophomores Brady Friedrich and Mary Callahan, members of the Green cohort, worked on their essays for “The Crucible” while the rest of their English class participated via Zoom.

of 26 seniors, and her smallest class has two out of 20 juniors. In total, she sees 34 out of 87 of her students in hybrid.

Math teacher Amanda Frithsen said she sees about 10 to 12 of her students in total every day, with some classes only having one or two students.

Juniors Vaughn O’Leary and Parker Brooks said they would like if more people would participate in the hybrid system to be able to have more classmate interactions.

Brooks especially wishes more people would go in person because in a couple of her classes

she is the only one in school with the teacher.

Switching to remote has been a challenging adjustment for the teachers as well, but they appreciate how patient the students have been at home and in the classroom, Isensee said.

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Students adapt to new changes of online DECA competition

By Carson Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Members of DECA are learning to adjust and prepare for the competition season in a different way due to the new protocols while competitions are solely online.

Despite these difficult changes, 45 students qualified for the upcoming state competition from February 25-27, which was 82% of the school’s competitors, DECA adviser Dean Martino said.

“The DECA competition took on a new construct in a virtual setting allowing students the opportunity to acquire new 21st century skills while reinforcing other skills,” he



COURTESY OF LYNN BENALI

DECA competitions this year are being held completely online, which changes the testing guidelines for participants as well.

said.

In previous years, there were 100 questions on the exam in 90 minutes without resources allowed. This year, the time limit was reduced to 60 minutes for the 100 questions, but resources such as notes, the internet, and textbooks were allowed, Martino said.

“Students needed the ability to follow extremely specific directions, and in many cases, face disqualification if they deviated from the instructions,” he said.

Martino said role-plays, where

students are presented with a real-life scenario relating to the business world, continued online via video, and students had a three-hour window to videotape themselves and upload their videos onto YouTube and through the DECA website.

“Role-play contact time was expanded to allow for video of presentations and upload times. For example, many students had never produced a video of themselves, having to pay attention to backgrounds, noise levels, camera angles, voice modulations and a slew of additional factors to manage,” he said.

DECA member Remsen Demeo, a junior, in the DECA class, said he spent a similar amount preparing for this year’s competition as he did last year.

“Generally, I thought this year was easier, but I didn’t like it as

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Seniors commit to colleges, plan post-grad steps

By Izzy DiPasquale
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Seniors are starting to receive college decisions, commit to schools, and plan their next steps for after high school.

Senior Emma Francoeur said she recently committed to the Honors College at Boston University, where she plans to major in biology with a specialization in behavioral biology.

“There are so many different research opportunities there, which is what drew me to the school. Also, there are so many sub-majors within each major, so I can try multiple, which is great because I can be indecisive,” she said.

Francoeur said that she initially did not want to tour the school, but after doing some research, she decided to visit and eventually applied early decision.

“One thing I was worried about was picking the school that wasn’t the right fit for me, but after I did early decision and got in, I realized ‘this is a place where I am really meant to be,’” Francoeur said.

Senior James Wendell said he

is planning on joining the Marine Corps Intelligence because of the job and financial opportunities it offers.

“When I came to deciding between college and the military, I looked at the rate of people with debt after graduating college, and I figured that I can completely eliminate that and get a free education if I just put a couple of years into the military,” he said.

Wendell said he has been talking to a recruiter and hopes to go to the Military Entrance Processing Stations at the end of the summer and to finish basic training by Christmas.

Senior Fotini Parianos said she recently committed to Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I., where she plans to study business administration.

“I went on the campus and got this gut feeling. It seemed like the vibe I was going for. The campus is so pretty; it’s right on the water, and it’s close to town,” she said.

Parianos said that Salve Regina was not her first choice, and she was rejected by her top school; however, she said she is very happy with the decision she made and thinks that everything worked out for the best.

“I did put in a lot of work for the other school, so it made me feel kind of bad when I didn’t get

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College Homecoming panelists give advice to juniors, seniors

Alumni offer pandemic experiences

By Olivia Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Five alumni logged onto Zoom to participate in the annual College Homecoming Panel on Jan. 14. The panelists shared advice with current high school juniors and seniors for attending college during a global pandemic.

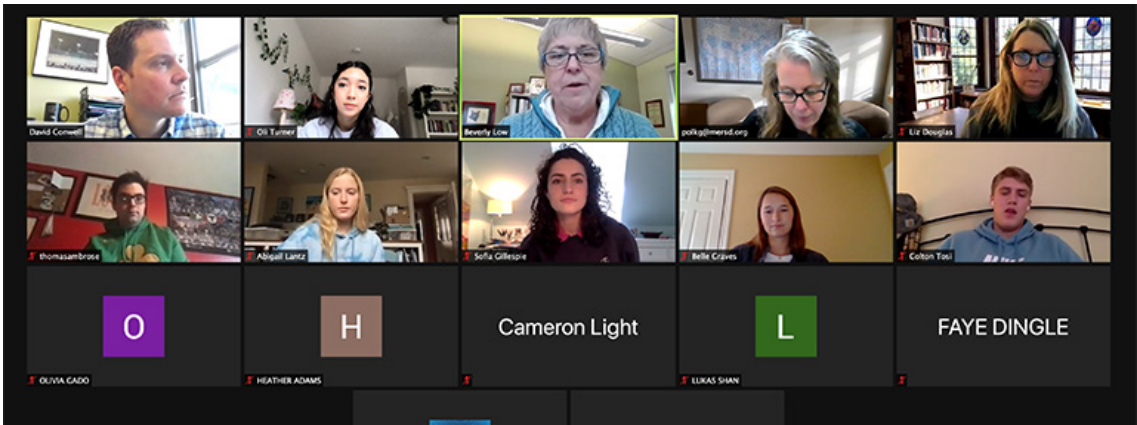
Belle Graves, a sophomore at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Amherst, Mass., was a freshman when the university sent students home due to COVID-19.

“It was kind of like panic because it was literally within one week. It was like normal college, and then they were like, ‘you’re all going home,’” Graves said.

UMass Amherst, with an undergraduate population of over 23,000 students, “rushed everyone out” but began to offer online classes well, she said.

She said she was disappointed she could not return in the fall. Graves stressed the importance of filling the extra time that accompanies online schooling if their colleges are remote in the fall.

“I’ve been able to find other hobbies and stuff like that...just within a small town, so it’s not the end of the world if you’re remote



OLIVIA TURNER PHOTO

Five alumni shared advice and their experiences for current students about the pandemic as well as the differences in college because of the pandemic. This included their classes, sports, and daily life.

next fall because I know a lot of people are worried about that,” she said.

Thomas Ambrose also attends college in Massachusetts but is much closer to home. He is currently a senior at Salem State University.

He participates in Salem State’s hybrid model.

Ambrose said the lack of a commute was the biggest difference in the fall when the campus was closed due to the virus. Now, students have returned to the dorms.

“While you’re still on campus in a little bubble, you’re still able to have that college experience, whether you’re remote or in person,” he said.

Colton Tosi, a freshman at Endicott College in Beverly, took a gap year with City Year after graduation, during which he was a fifth-grade teacher in Manchester, N.H.

He said the gap year allowed him to discover that he did not enjoy teaching and wanted to pursue different interests in college.

“Getting to decide whether I want to do teaching and what I want to do in my future...and spend thousands of dollars of money for...was really nice,” Tosi said.

He said Endicott College offered a relatively normal experience during the pandemic, housing all students on campus and holding hybrid classes.

“I had 8, 9, and 10 a.m. classes, so the hybrids were really nice just to wake up and log on instead of having to walk across the campus at 8 in the morning,” he said.

Abby Lantz, a sophomore at Lafayette College in Easton, Pa., said the ability to play Division I lacrosse drove her decision to attend, and when her freshman year was cut short in the spring of 2020, so was her lacrosse season.

“I had so much free time, and...I wasn’t playing lacrosse. I was able to explore so many other passions that I wasn’t really focusing on, and I was just the happiest I’d been,” Lantz said.

She said will not return to Lafayette in the spring, although she enjoyed the time she spent there.

To future college students Lantz said to try to make friends by reaching out first, even over Zoom.

“Everyone else is begging for someone else to be the one to reach out or just say ‘hi.’ A lot of the time just reminding myself of that kind of equalizes the playing field a little bit,” she said.

Sofia Gillespie started her freshman year at Boston College in the fall. She said she had a balance of half in-person and half online classes.

Gillespie said she enjoyed that she had a somewhat structured routine but could also create her own routine when she had extra time.

She said Boston College had strict rules about socialization.

“I think being a freshman and having your first semester amidst the pandemic is really hard because everything is kind of different than what you’d pictured...academically, socially,” Gillespie said.

Gillespie encouraged current high school seniors to try to enjoy whatever experience they have next fall.

“You just have to make the most of what you’re given...like learning to be comfortable with putting yourself out there,” she said.

Juniors, sophomores take PSAT

By Olivia Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Beginning at 8 a.m., the junior class and 40 sophomore students took the PSAT in person while the rest of the high school attended online school.

Principal Puglisi said the high school opted to administer the two hour and 45 minute test on Jan. 26, a date the College Board offered for schools that could not administer the test in October, when it is usually held each year.

She said the administration wanted to offer the test in order to allow for students to qualify for National Merit Scholarships, which are awarded based on students’ performance on the PSAT.

“It also helps kids just really be prepared and kind of see where

they need to work to improve for the SAT if they choose to sit for that later on in the spring,” Puglisi said.

Junior Colin Harrison, who took the PSAT last year as a sophomore, said the experience was similar to a normal testing environment except for the space between desks.

He said the students could take bathroom breaks if they asked a proctor, and students could bring water bottles and pull down their masks to drink.

Guidance counselor David Conwell said the testing environment did not differ drastically from a normal year.

“There’s not a lot of people getting up and moving around anyways during a standardized

testing environment, so they’ll mask up and come in,” he said.

Puglisi said students were divided between 13 to 14 classrooms in the high school, with a maximum of 13 students permitted per classroom.

Once an entire classroom finished the exam, that classroom was dismissed to go home, Puglisi said.

Harrison said he arrived at school around 7:55 a.m. and was dismissed around 11:30 a.m. After returning home, students who took the exam did not participate in synchronous Zoom classes, he said.

Puglisi said many people in the administration worked to ensure the test could be administered while a remote school day could

‘It...helps kids just really be prepared and kind of see where they need to work to improve’

-PATRICIA PUGLISI



COURTESY OF DAVID CONWELL

Students were physically distanced as they took the PSAT.

run smoothly for the rest of the student body.

“The standardized testing environment has been really difficult for the past year, and we’ve all kind of struggled with making these types of opportunities available to students,” she said.

Conwell said he hopes to reduce students’ anxiety about the college process by offering the PSAT.

“I want people to feel prepared

and mentally in a good place because the whole college process can be an anxiety-producing process anyway,” he said.

Puglisi said she hopes the standardized testing landscape will continue to shift after this year.

“I’m pleased to see colleges and universities moving toward test optional, and maybe this environment has provided a [chance] for them to rethink some of their admissions strategies,” she said.

CONTINUATIONS

HYBRID CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The transition to the new daily bell schedule has been difficult because it does not have a 10-minute break in between classes, or the 50-minute lunch like the remote schedule does, Isensee said.

Another challenge has been wearing a mask during the whole class, she said. Students cannot see when their teacher is smiling or laughing with the mask on, which can take away part of the student-teacher relationship.

Isensee said she finds it difficult to balance the attention given to the students in school and the students at home because the ma-

jority of students are choosing to be remote, meaning most of the class is on Zoom with only a few students in the classroom.

She said the best time to engage with hybrid students is when they are able to log off of Zoom while in a breakout room or a couple minutes before class ends.

Puglisi said she is pleased with how smoothly the first week of hybrid went and believes everyone is in “great shape.”

“The teachers have been working unbelievably hard to teach both the kids in school and the kids at home,” she said.

**DECA
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

much because during my role-play, I preferred actually talking to the judges and having them ask me questions,” he said.

DECA officer Lynn Benali, a junior, said she spent more time studying in order to be at the same level as people taking the class because she did not take it this year, and she had to adapt to the new protocol.

“My studying has changed significantly. Now I have to learn to utilize other sources that we were allowed to use,” she said.

With the changes, the competition exemplifies some of DECA’s main goals, but in the midst of the pandemic, everything has to adapt

in its own way, Benali said.

“I think DECA has done a great job of allowing students to participate remotely and safely while still having the opportunity to compete,” she said.

ACCEPTANCES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 in, but I knew that if I went there it would be super challenging, so it felt like Salve Regina was meant to be,” Parianos said.

Senior Tatum Jobe said she applied regular decision to nine schools. She said she was only able to tour two before COVID, so she mainly relied on research to inform her decisions.

“Once I started getting my

decisions, it made me want to look into the schools further [because] I did not get to tour most of them. I was also able to take into account the scholarships I received,” Jobe said.

She applied to the schools in October and began hearing back in December, with the exception of two schools. Jobe said she has a first choice in mind but is waiting until she hears back from all of the schools to make her final decision.

“I am keeping in mind my top school, but if I have the opportunity to tour a school or if I get a huge scholarship, I would still consider them,” Jobe said.

Feed the Frontlines North Shore provides meals to healthcare workers

Organization makes efforts to support medical professionals

By Izzy DiPasquale
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Feed the Frontlines North Shore is an organization that provides meals for doctors, nurses, and medical staff on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic, said Julie Clifford Smail, a physician with North Shore Physicians Group and co-founder of Feed the Frontlines North Shore.

According to the Feed the Frontlines North Shore website, the program’s mission is to show appreciation for all who are leaving the safety of their homes to help care for those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic while also supporting local restaurants.

She said that after talking with her Harvard lacrosse teammate, Kate DiPietro, founder of Feed the Frontlines NYC, Smail and her family decided to take action and bring the program to the North Shore.

Smail said it started off as a small endeavor, with their initial goal being to raise money



IZZY DIPASQUALE PHOTO

Feed the Frontlines workers set up a Cookie Monstah truck to lift the spirits of frontline workers working long Summer shifts.

as a family and drop off a few hundred meals to a hospital; however, the community began reaching out, wanting to get involved, and it quickly escalated into the program it is now.

So far, the program has raised almost \$80,000 and served over 10,000 meals and snacks to frontline workers.

Smail said their efforts have been received positively, and the

frontline workers are appreciative of the support.

“The healthcare providers were very isolated and scared, so having everyone bring in this food was like ‘the community cares, they know what we are going through, they are realizing the sacrifices we are making,’ and it was just so appreciated,” Smail said.

She said they also wanted to

support local restaurants and different food vendors on the North Shore that were struggling with getting business during the pandemic.

Smail’s sister and co-founder of Feed the Frontlines North Shore, Christina Clifford Comparato, said she is the restaurant liaison and her sister is the hospital liaison.

Comparato said the meals are prepared and delivered by the local restaurants, including C.K. Pearl and Black Arrow Provisions.

“Part of the main goal is to get nutrition in them. We always make sure that we are serving them full, big meals with protein and vegetables so we know that they can get through a good 12-hour shift without struggling,” she said.

In addition to meals, the program has also provided workers with snacks and treats as a way to lift their spirits.

“Over the summer, they needed more pick me ups and snacks to boost their spirits, so we did all these fun things like gelato and a Cookie Monstah truck,” Comparato said.

She said she has learned a lot from this experience and

feels lucky to be providing people an avenue to help the frontline workers.

“What I have learned the most is how much people want to help each

other. We’ve had people who had nothing giving us money on a monthly basis. It has been really heartwarming to see how many people really want to do something,” she said.

Comparato said that the program is continuing to raise funds and serve meals and that they always welcome new support. Information on how to contribute or to contact one of the team members can be found at feedthefrontlinesnorthshore.com.

‘It has been really heartwarming to see how many people really want to do something.’

- CHRISTINA COMPARATO

Humanitarian League continues to raise awareness during COVID

By Jordie Cornfield
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Continuing community service despite the pandemic, the Humanitarian League has made changes to their usual volunteer work.

While social distancing has made it difficult to have personal interactions, the Humanitarian League will not let this hinder their service, said senior Oli Turner, co-president of the Humanitarian League.

In December, the Humanitarian League collaborated with the Essex Senior Center on a holiday food handout.

“We handed out food to a line of cars of senior citizens

who had ordered food from a restaurant in town beforehand,” Turner said.

The Humanitarian League was able to foster new relationships with senior citizens despite COVID-19 regulations.

“We were able to interact with the community and get to know the folks at the Essex Community Center. It was a great start to the holiday season,” she said.

However, not all of the Humanitarian League’s traditions have remained in-person. The League’s monthly bulletin boards have taken a new form online.

“We use Padlet to create compilations of graphics and



COURTESY OF OLIVIA TURNER

The Humanitarian League meets over Zoom to brainstorm ways to improve their community and help people around the globe.

information from various sources and to raise awareness on different issues,” Turner said.

These Padlets are circulated by Patricia Puglisi in the school’s weekly newsletters, she said.

“We made Padlets for Transgender Awareness day in November and the humanitarian crisis in Yemen,” Turner said.

Educating the community is a key responsibility of the Hu-

manitarian League, said Molly Moore, senior and co-president of the Humanitarian League.

“People need to become more empathetic and more aware of what’s going on around them,” Moore said.

Moore said participating in Humanitarian League has had a positive impact on her.

“Being a part of the Humanitarian League has made me more aware, more willing to help out and educate myself, and to learn more about what’s happening both locally and globally,” Moore said.

Moore said that the current political climate makes community service more important than ever.

“America needs to become a kinder place. It’ll make us stronger in the end,” she said.

COVID-19 creates opportunities for fitness centers

By Ema O’Neil
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Since March of 2020, gyms have undergone many struggles. However, in the long run, many fitness centers have found that the pandemic has impacted their businesses more positively than negatively.

With the exception of small updates, the CDC’s most recent restrictions were released on Feb. 5, 2020. They include regulations regarding carrying capacity, hygiene protocols, staffing, and much more.

These recent implementations are not new for most gym owners. Emily McCavanaugh, owner of Fit House in Manchester-by-the-Sea, said she has been dealing with these restrictions since day one.

McCavanaugh said she was devastated last year when she closed her gym and thought

that her clients weren’t going to be able to reach their goals in her three-month TRX program. However, she said she was also excited for the challenge.

“[The pandemic] forced me to look at my business differently and find new ways to deliver my product to people,” McCavanaugh said. Her clients then got their own TRX straps, and she has been doing online training sessions ever since.

Despite the distance that communicating online creates, McCavanaugh said her remote classes have become a new way for her to connect with even more people.

Being fully remote also allowed McCavanaugh to focus more on her gym’s social media. She said during quarantine, she would dedicate a day to a certain mantra such as “motivational Monday” or “tough Tuesday” not

only to motivate others but also herself through difficult times.

McCavanaugh said, “It’s become an incredible part of my business.” She plans to continue her online presence after the pandemic.

Kevin Larrabee, owner of Allied Strength in Gloucester, said he has also been able to stay positive throughout the pandemic after a very successful year.

After working during quarantine to find solutions for his clients and making sure they received the same quality of training at home, Larrabee’s gym experienced its busiest summer yet, he said.

He credits this success to his business’ values. “I believe in the importance of providing people with a safe environment, with COVID or not,” Larrabee said.

Since his facility has reopened,



COURTESY OF KEVIN LARRABEE

Allied Strength, a gym in Gloucester, had its busiest summer ever after finding creative solutions that helped people exercise safely.

Larrabee has enforced many rules to maintain a clean and secure space for everyone, he said. Rules include requiring the use of hand sanitizer and wiping down every piece of equipment after it is used.

“At the end of the day, my responsibility is the health of everyone that steps in the door here,” Larrabee said.

Senior Dasa Hase has been

training with Larrabee since the spring of 2019. Hase said she was hesitant about returning to the gym when it first reopened; however, the number of safety precautions at Allied Strength, as well as her need to get out of the house, were what made her go back to in-person training.

“I think Allied Strength does an amazing job of providing a safe space,” she said.

COVID-Friendly Date Ideas

Have a virtual date

Zoom, Facetime, and other calling platforms will also help keep the sense of Valentine’s connection alive if going outside seems tiring or dangerous. The simple act of seeing a face again, digital or otherwise, can be refreshing and positively impact your mood. Additionally, using a screen share function or multiplayer games, ranging from chess to trivia, means there is no shortage of activities.



Go for a walk on the beach

Walks on the beach can be used in place of a sight-seeing date, offering nice views and space to keep safe distances for groups of all sizes. The ocean air is fresh and counteracts the stifling feeling of a mask, and if walking isn’t appealing, bring a blanket to rest on the sand instead. Getting cozy against the cold shore is a fantastic way to celebrate with some open air.



Have a virtual movie night

To recreate a classic night in with a movie, browser extensions like Teleparty allows for a movie to play on multiple screens at the same time. Netflix is needed for this extension, but other options are available for streaming services like Hulu. Settling in for a shared movie, romantic or otherwise, can create that sense of connection that distanced relationships miss.

Get some coffee

Coffee dates remain a staple in the Valentine’s Day scene for a reason. The process may be a little different than sitting down together, but few things can beat enjoying warm beverages in the cold of February. Taking to-go coffee and walking around or visiting a park gives the same close feeling it did before while putting the date in a safer, more open atmosphere.



Give a gift

Gift-giving, one of the five love languages, is not bound by the same restrictions as physical touch or quality time. Organizing a gift exchange with friends recreates physical bonds that may be lost right now. Thinking of friends in search of a good gift reignites memories spent together, and the gifts themselves do not pose great safety concerns as long as they are cleaned beforehand.



By Wyeth Takayesu, Independent Staff

Takeout Suggestions

Destino’s

Price range: <\$10



Although it may not be very romantic, Destino’s in Gloucester has some amazing and affordable menu items. Almost all of the soups, salads, sandwiches, and subs cost under \$10. The restaurant is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. This is a great option if you are spending Valentine’s day with friends.

Cala’s Restaurant

Price range: \$15-\$30



If you want to spend a little more money on a Valentine’s Day dinner, Cala’s is a great place for it. In downtown Manchester, Cala’s is open from 12-9 p.m. serves amazing appetizers, sandwiches, seafood entrees, and some classy Mac & Cheese (meaning you can add different things into it). If you want, you can drive up to Singing Beach and eat your food while looking at the ocean.

Willow Rest

Price range: <\$15



If you plan on staying in on the night of Feb.14, consider going to Willow Rest in Gloucester for a nice breakfast or lunch. Open from 8 a.m.-3 p.m., they have wonderful pastries and coffee, as well as delicious breakfast and lunch sandwich options.

Riverview Pizza Price range: <\$15



Riverview Pizza is a great place to get individual pizzas at low prices to avoid fighting over toppings. Located in Ipswich, Riverview is known for their thin, crispy crusts and tasty sauce. Open from 4-9 p.m., they are a great, simple option for a Valentine’s Day dinner.

Thai Choice Price range: \$10-\$20

Located in downtown Gloucester, this bright purple restaurant is hard to miss. Open from 4-8:30 p.m. on Sundays, Thai Choice is a great place to get takeout Thai cuisine to share with others. With numerous appetizers and entrees at reasonable prices, couples or just groups of friends can get a lot of food to share at a good cost.



By Elias Heanue, Independent Editor

Jennifer Coleman, history



“One of the things we started doing at the beginning of the pandemic was every afternoon we would go for a walk, just to

get out of the house to do something. We’ve just kept that up, and now every day when I get off from school and he finishes work, we like to go for our little walk through the neighborhood. It doesn’t sound like anything exciting, but it’s one of the nicest parts of my day.”

Courtney Brown, math



“My favorite memory from the pandemic is when [my boyfriend] Matt and I adopted our puppy. His name is Brooks, and we

got him when he was six weeks old. We adopted him in August, so we had a few weeks with him before school started, and it’s been really nice to come home to him after a long day of teaching. That’s the most exciting thing that has happened to us.”

Erin Fortunato, French and Spanish



“My husband’s kind of the full-time babysitter at home with our four-year-old, so being able to leave class and go see them and all the neat things that

he’s doing with my son and watching that side of what he does, doesn’t sound romantic to teenagers, but it’s just really neat to see. I feel like I’ve gotten to see their relationship in a whole different way, which is super cute.”

Teacher Speak:
What is your favorite experience with your significant other during the pandemic?

Robert Bilsbury, Spanish



“We had COVID, me, my wife, and my 10 year old. We were just chit-chatting [while] being silly and having fun together in the house, and

we were all sick, but it was kind of like we were all struck with this revelation. We can’t go out shopping, we can’t get out of this house, or do anything, but we were just laughing and being silly in the kitchen. I was definitely struck with the [thought] that if I had to be like closed in with other people, I’m so happy that I’m with my wife and my son.”

Allison Krause, English



“We started cooking together, and we bought this cook-book, basically, and we’ve been kind of cooking our way through it together, and that’s been

something that’s been really fun. We’re trying out different recipes and having that time together in the kitchen, trying to mix up what we’re eating, too. Since restaurants are closed, it sort of forced us to get more creative, and so we’ve been having a lot of fun doing that together. “

Jordan Edgett, athletics



“My girlfriend lives in Seattle, and I spent some time out there this summer, and we drove from Seattle to Teton National Park and spent some time

there. We also spent a couple of days at Yellowstone National Park, so we did a lot of hiking and a lot of sightseeing in both places. It was an awesome trip.”

Snow Days

Should the district still have snow days after gaining remote learning capabilities?

Pro

Hadley Levendusky

Although schools now have the ability to provide virtual curriculum during snow days, students should still have the day off.

When the school calls to announce a snow day, it creates excitement and joy for students and teachers. Getting to play in the snow or stay inside all day, and not worrying about school work, is something that all students can agree is a pleasant surprise.

Many students agreed that the one snow day we had this year was a nice break from Zoom and screens.

With school giving students the option to be hybrid or completely online, students are spending more than half of their school week on Zoom. In combination with online school work and homework, screentime for high school students has increased over the past year.

Too much screen time is damaging for both children and adults. An article written by Carewell Urgent Care explains that too much screen time can lead to vision issues, impaired cognitive issues, poor sleep, and other negative effects.

Another negative health effect that comes with too much screen time is depression and anxiety.

Aris Mosely, a board certified psychiatrist, wrote on Valleywise Health's blog that time spent on screen can negatively affect the emotional and mental wellbeing of both children and adults.

Experts say increased screen time can lead to a rise in suicidal-related behaviors.

Additionally, bad weather can lead to loss of power on a snow day, so some students and teachers won't be able to access work for a class.

Without knowing who may lose power or how bad the snow storm will be, it seems unreasonable for teachers to provide students with school work on snow days. This could cause a disruption in a lesson plan and make some students or classes further behind than others.

Snow days give students the opportunity to stay away from electronics and screen time for a day. Whether it is playing safely outside in the snow with friends or helping shovel the driveway, snow days give students the perfect opportunity to be children again and not worry about turning in an assignment on time.

Due to the detrimental effects snow days have on students, they should be replaced by remote days.

Con

Ryan Olivier-Meehan

Snow days can often feel like a welcome break to a school week and carry a significant amount of nostalgia with them; however, the implications of closing school for snow days, such as lower test scores and less summer vacation, mean that students lose out in the long term.

According to an article published by Education Next, during winters with average levels of snowfall that had an average of four snow days, the percent of students that were testing proficient in math was about 1 to 2 percent lower than in winters with little or no snow.

Utilizing remote learning to avoid snow days will allow teachers to more closely adhere to the school calendar and fit in more material. Such a change especially benefits AP classes, where teachers already have to make up for time lost as a result of COVID-19.

In a time where students and teachers already have experience with online learning, it's pointless to extend the year needlessly, senior Molly Moore said.

"After such a crazy year, I'm just looking forward to getting out as soon as possible," she said.

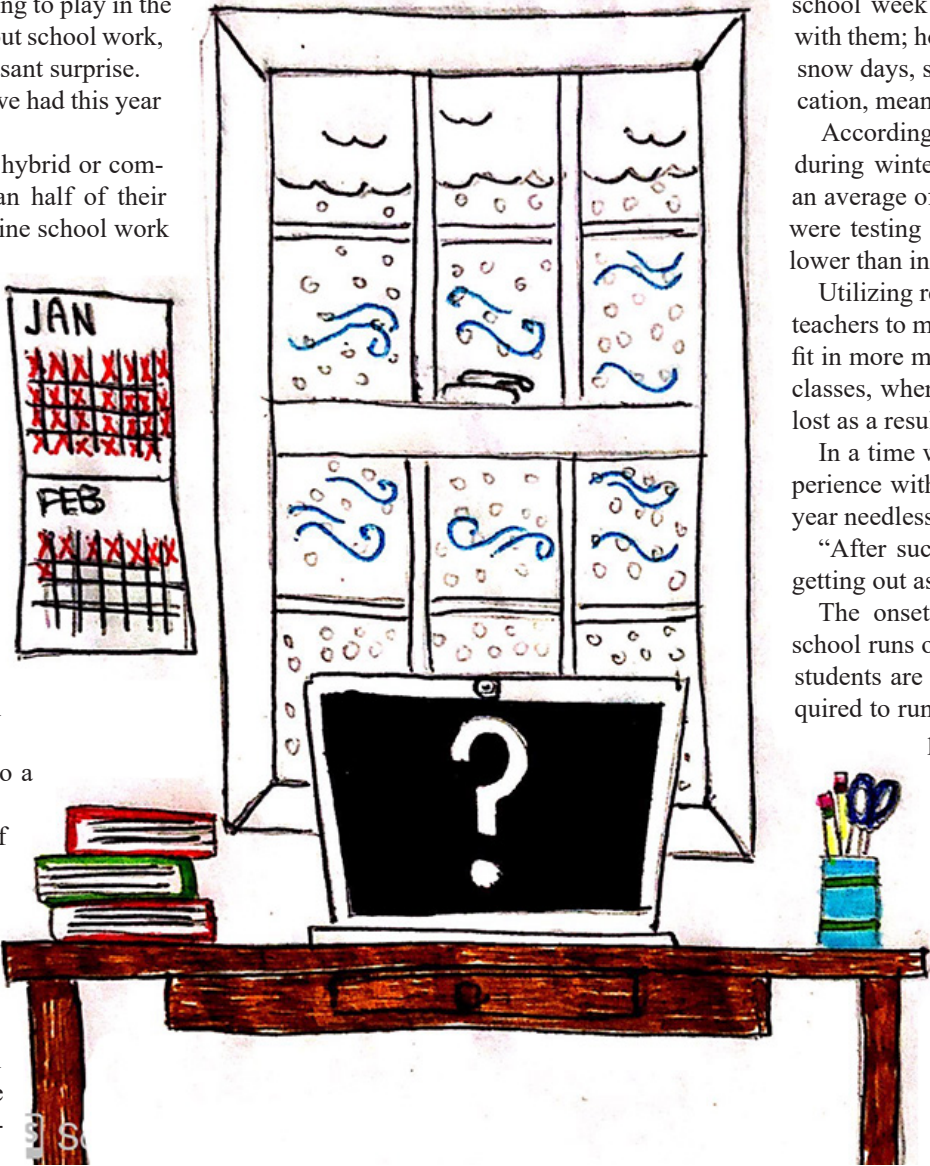
The onset of remote learning has changed the way school runs on a daily basis. In a time where teachers and students are already comfortable with the technology required to run school remotely, it would be silly to not experiment to determine whether that technology could be used as a solution to overcome extreme weather conditions.

Because the possibility exists for extreme snow to cause interruptions to internet service, schools should offer asynchronous work in the event virtual classes are unreliable.

By offering stand-alone lessons that can be completed without meeting with teachers virtually, students still have some break from the normal schedule while not adding on days to the end of the school year.

Junior Christopher Siems said, "I'd like to have a bit of a rest on snow days, but I would also like to get out of school early."

By utilizing the technology that has become widely available as a result of COVID-19, the school can streamline the school year, increase the duration of summer vacation, and improve student test scores all by retiring the obsolete concept of the snow day.



ELI HEANUE ILLUSTRATION

2020 heralded positive change

By Ema O'Neil
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Despite a year filled with many hardships and struggles, the good moments of 2020 must not be overlooked.

In March, the world was faced with a deadly pandemic that has killed over a million people. It is important to acknowledge those who have suffered a death due to COVID-19. However, recognizing the positive aspects that came from this virus can be helpful in such difficult times.

Since the start of the pandemic, scientists, doctors, and all first responders have worked tirelessly to keep their communities safe. Due to their dedication, many have learned to appreciate their selfless work now more than ever.

The commitment from scientists and researchers paid off

when the vaccine was finally made available in December. Now, front-line workers and the most at risk are getting vaccinated.

COVID-19 also made a positive impact on climate change.

Due to the global recession, carbon dioxide emissions vastly declined.

Although these emissions increased at the end of the year, the United States rejoined the Paris Agreement in early 2021. China also pledged to reach carbon neutrality by 2060. These

two events caused momentum for many to start taking the climate emergency seriously.

The year 2020 was also a year for social reform. A video was released in May of a white police officer kneeling on the neck of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man. The police officer continued to kneel on Floyd for

9.5 minutes and killed him.

The video sparked outrage and accelerated the Black Lives Matter movement. Thousands of protests across the United States caused individuals and communities to reflect on their actions. Speaking out against

racism also started reform in some cities and state capitals. Changes also took place in the

In 2020, the country elected the most Native Americans to Congress, the most transgender people to state legislatures, and a highly diverse set of nominees for the incoming Cabinet.



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The year of the COVID-19 pandemic caused positive change that was often overshadowed by tragedy, hardships, and loss.

White House in 2020. The country saw the highest voter turnout since 1900 and elected America's first female, first Black, and first Asian vice president, Kamala Harris.

A lot of other new faces have been elected for government positions. In 2020, the country elected the most Native Americans to Congress, the

most transgender people to state legislatures, and a highly diverse set of nominees for the incoming Cabinet. The Supreme Court also ruled that no one can be fired for being gay or transgender.

It is important to recognize many of the hardships that people endured in 2020; however, it is even more important to be optimistic for the year to come.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Law enforcement fails to address threat to national security

The events that unfolded at the U.S Capitol show the unpreparedness and irresponsibility of the nation’s law enforcement in the presence of an imminent and known threat to national security.

On Jan. 6, a large crowd of extremist Trump supporters stormed the nation’s Capitol in a riot incited by former President Donald Trump to prevent Congress from certifying the results of the 2020 election.

According to an article written by Laurel Wamsley of National Public Radio, many law enforcement and intelligence agencies were aware of the planned riot and chose not to address it as a serious concern.

In late December, “The DHS (Department of Homeland Security) and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) [did] not create an intelligence report focused specifically on the upcoming pro-Trump rally. That’s important because these reports go beyond raw intelligence —

they validate information and put it into context that would help local law enforcement develop a plan,” Wamsley writes.

Not validating this information prevented police departments and the National Guard from having evidential reasoning to secure the Capitol with more officers. This failure to properly address the severity of this riot was irresponsible and put the nation’s

lawmakers at risk.

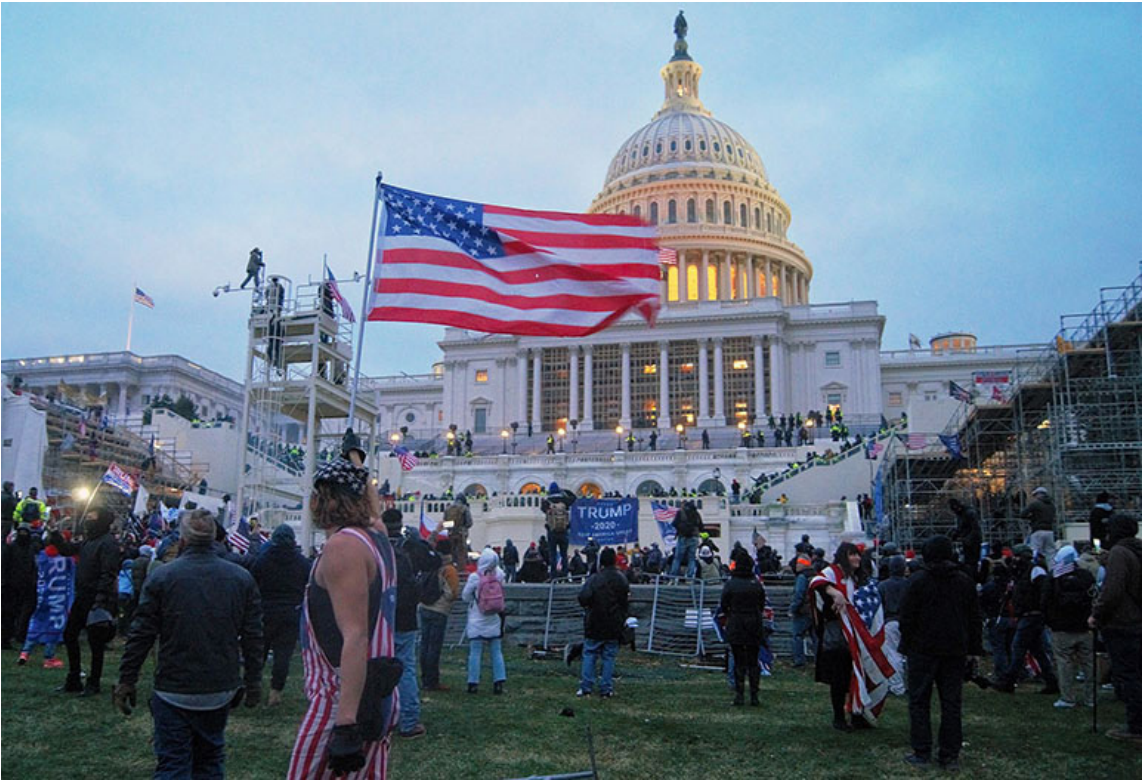
According to an article written by David Leonhardt of the New York Times, many members of Congress came into close contact with the rioters and feared for their lives.

‘As the mob closed in, members of Congress hiding inside the House chamber called loved ones and told one another to remove their lapel pins so rioters couldn’t identify them.’

-DAVID LEONHARDT

“As the mob closed in, members of Congress hiding inside the House chamber called loved ones and told one another to remove their lapel pins so rioters could not identify them,” Leonhardt writes.

Law enforcement should have prevented the mob from entering the building, let alone coming within close proximity of the



TYLER MERBLER/COMMONS.WIKEMEDIA.ORG

On Jan. 6, an unruly crowd of extremist Trump supporters was able to violently breach the United States Capitol due to a lack of security and attentiveness from Capitol law enforcement.

nation’s leaders and demanding violence. The idea that an angry mob was able to enter the country’s center of law and order and threaten the members of Congress is outrageous and displays a lack of responsibility in the security at the Capitol Building.

The riots that occurred at the Capitol could have led to the death of many lawmakers and

damaged our nation’s security. The people involved need to be arrested and punished for the actions.

Outside of the active participants in the angry mob, members of law enforcement responsible for the underprepared security at the Capitol need to face the consequences of their misjudgment. They deserve to lose their

jobs as they are unfit to handle the responsibility of protecting the country’s leaders.

In the future, tensions between Democrats and Republicans will be high, which poses a threat to the safety of the political figures of both parties. The country’s security needs to be prepared to face the dangers of an agitated partisan environment.

Students should be provided more peer assistance during college process

By Izzy DiPasquale
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Manchester-Essex should provide students, mainly juniors, with more opportunities to receive peer assistance during the college process.

Many students naturally seek out others who are going through or have recently gone through the process of post-secondary planning; however, not all students have a connection with upperclassmen or feel comfortable reaching out to people they do not know.

The peer mentors currently host a College Homecoming panel, which allows students to interact with recent graduates and discuss a variety of post-

secondary experiences.

While this panel is helpful, it is currently the only event in which students are able to get advice from other students, and the nature of the event does not allow for one-on-one feedback.

Guidance counselor David Conwell said that he would love to incorporate more opportunities like the panel for students.

“I think that as much as [the other counselors and I] have the knowledge and information about the college process and what some schools want or like, hearing recent first-hand experience is gold,” he said.

Creating a program through the high school would facilitate these connections between peers and provide all students with an



COURTESY OF BEVERLY LOW

The College Homecoming event features a panel of returning students who answer questions and provide valuable information.

environment in which they can ask questions and have conversations about college.

Students could gain a different perspective through their peers regarding information about the environment of specific schools. They could be connected with a

particular upperclassmen regarding their specific academic, social and extracurricular interests.

One of the functions of this group could be to share honest information and opinions about recent visits to schools. This is insight that some students may

not have access to unless they are touring the schools themselves, which could be crucial in making decisions.

Conwell said it is also important to account for the pressure that students sometimes feel when interacting with their peers, as they may question their decisions if they differ from someone else’s.

The peer mentors have received training in interacting and assisting their peers, so utilizing upperclassmen or other students who express an interest in sharing their knowledge, could alleviate some of that pressure, he said.

While there are multiple formats in which this assistance could be provided, the main goal would be to encourage students to find a college fit that is right and to help them get the information they need to do so.

Faculty Adviser
Mary Buckley-Harmon

Editors-in-chief
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Olivia Turner

News Editor
Carson Komishane

Features Editor
Eli Heanue

Opinion Editors
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Sports Editor
Emma Ketchum

the
INDEPENDENT

The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class.


Editorial space is available to all MERHS students, faculty, and community members. All submissions must be signed and put in the newspaper mailbox in the front office of MERHS. The Independent reserves the right not to print letters and to edit the content for clarity and length. While letters can be critical of an individual’s actions, they cannot slander or libel.

The staff editorial may be considered the opinion of the staff of The Independent.

By-line opinions are written by individual staff members and should not be considered representative of the entire staff.

The Independent staff hopes that all Manchester and Essex citizens will take advantage of this forum. The paper is meant to serve the school community, and we are open to suggestions to help it better serve its purposes.

Manchester-Essex Regional High School
36 Lincoln St, Manchester MA 01944
978-526-4412 newspaper@mersd.org
online at <http://www.merhs.mersd.org/domain/702>



Arts Editor
Isabella DiPasquale

Staff
Jordie Cornfield
Hadley Levendusky
Caroline MacKinnon
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Changes to swim team protocol due to COVID affect meets, practices

Swimmers continue to get best times despite meet changes

By Carson Komishane
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Changes to the swim team due to the pandemic have changed the protocols and meets, coach Amy Boyden said.

“It was a tough season with COVID, but all swimmers so far have swam amazing and the season has been solid,” she said.

As a precaution during practices, swimmers are spaced out throughout the pool, the meets are completely virtual, and times are submitted against the opposing team. Swimmers enter and leave in their suits, and they have to time for each other, Boyden said.

“Despite these changes, we

have had some best times this year, which is hard to do when there is no other team swimming against you,” she said.

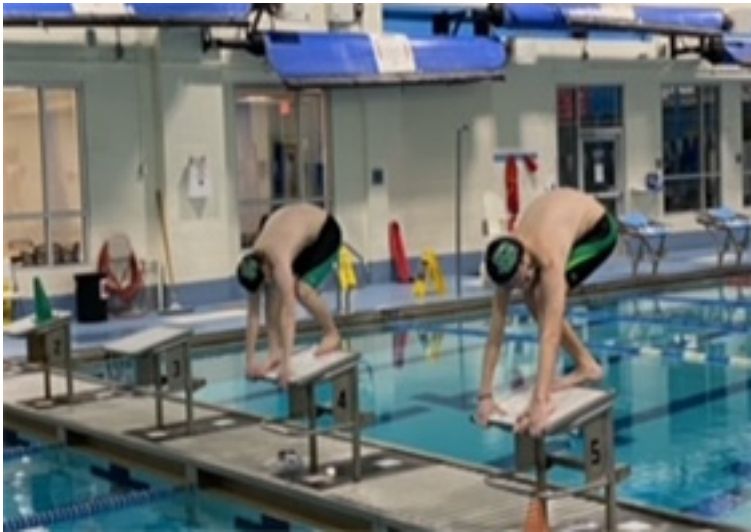
Boyden said the boys’ team, with five members, won against Ipswich, but lost against North Reading and Triton.

The girls’ team, with three members, lost all three meets due to the small team size. There are also three boy divers.

This change in members is due to a new rule that student athletes on club teams are not allowed to participate concurrently on school teams to prevent the spread of COVID, swimmer Aidan Cunningham said.

“The amount of students on the team differs from last year. Last year, there were 16 girls and nine boys on the team, but we had no divers,” Boyden said.

Co-captain Greta Dickson, a senior, said there are many



COURTESY OF AMY BOYDEN

Senior Sean Phelan and freshman Madoc Harden work on their starts during practice in preparation for virtual competitions.

benefits and challenges having a smaller team this year compared to the last.

“[It] brings different challenges, especially since swim meets

are impacted by the amount of swimmers that each team has. But since the numbers are lower, it is easier to try different events and feel more comfortable with

trying something new,” she said.

Dickson said despite the pandemic and the new changes, the team makes the most of it, and there are still some positives about this swim season.

“My favorite thing about swimming is the practices and meets. This year, practices are longer, which means a better workout and the meets are super short compared to the longer meets last season,” she said.

Cunningham, a junior, said he continues to enjoy the sport, but due to the smaller team, the overall environment is different.

“I miss the larger group, as well as the ability to cheer each other on during an intense race. However, I like that I can work more directly with my coach, and swimming gives me a way to alleviate stress from school and to get out of the house and exercise,” he said.

Boys’, girls’ basketball teams adjust to new rule changes due to pandemic

By Amy Vytopilova
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Despite the new changes due to COVID-19, the boys’ and girls’ basketball teams face challenges but are adjusting well.

As basketball season is an indoor sport, different rules are put into place.

Boys’ basketball coach Tim St. Laurent leading the strong teams’ record of 4-2 said rules are definitely different.

“There’s different rules put in place... limit talks before games, you’re spread out, no one is in the first free throw, no halftime... there’s just different rules put in place to limit time we’re around each other,” St. Laurent said.



COURTESY OF ABBY LEVENDUSKY

The boys’ and girls’ basketball teams have strict guidelines this season, including wear masks, no halftime, and no shaking hands.

St. Laurent said guidelines were strict to make sure it was safe to play given that the season is indoors.

“The MIAA, department of public health, and local boards

health came out with some strict guidelines on us to make it safe to play and to show that it wasn’t being spread on the court,” he said.

Senior boys’ basketball cap-

tain Frank Wood said this year’s team has good chemistry, ranging from playing style to team bonding.

“This year we’re more balanced, more guys are scoring, more guys getting the ball and we have good team defense, we’re playing good team basketball,” Wood said

Senior girls’ basketball captain Gg Huet spoke about an athletes’ perspectives regarding COVID-19 guidelines.

“Wearing a mask is definitely harder--no shaking hands with the other team, no jump balls and super weird adjustments, but I think we’ve done pretty good,” she said.

The girls’ team, with a record

of 3-4, is adjusting well to the season according to coach Lauren DuBois.

DuBois said she is proud of how her team is handling everything despite the circumstances.

“Our team has done really well with precautions, and everybody’s taking them really seriously. I’m very happy how our team is handling everything,” she said.

Limited preparation for the season was a challenge, she said.

“Considering the circumstances, I think the season is going really well,” she said.

There will not be a state tournament this season, but there will be a CAL two-game playoff over break, DuBois said.

Boys’, girls’ ski teams winding down the season

By Hadley Levendusky
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Boys’ and girls’ alpine ski teams have started off the season well facing challenges with COVID.

“So far I think it has been a good season, we have a lot of good races on the team this year,” junior captain Emma Wonson said.

Due to COVID, both the boys’ and girls’ are only racing once a week this year, but they are able to train twice during the week. Both teams are coached by Tim Wonson.

“We have tried to make the best out of the conditions COVID has put us in, and I think we are doing pretty well with that,” Wonson said.

Senior captain Ryan Clark agreed that the team has been doing well considering the conditions.

There have been many basic

adjustments for COVID, social distancing and mask usage. There has also been no fans allowed, which is a weird feeling that all athletes are experiencing, Clark said.

Another change that Wonson mentioned was there being no snack table for after the race.

Despite not having snacks for right after the race, “We have had a pretty lucky season,” she said.

Another adjustment for this year was that both teams only have four races, and there will be no States.

So far the boys’ ski team has had three races and the girls’ have had three races, with a 2-4 record.

“The other major adaptation is the fewer amount of in-person practices and races. Having the number of races cut from 12 to four makes each week especially competitive,” Clark said.

This year many athletes decided not to return to the team, Clark said. “Therefore the team has adapted around filling in roles they are not used to,” he said.

Both the boys’ and girls’ teams will finish out their seasons at Bradford Ski Area by the end of this week.

Hockey teams enthusiastic to return to ice

By Ryan Olivier-Meehan
INDEPENDENT STAFF

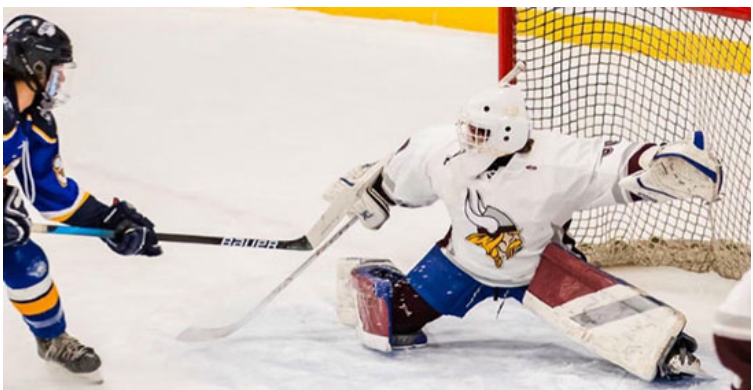
Despite interruptions due to COVID-19, the girls’ and boys’ hockey teams have continued to play and improve during the season.

Head coach of the boys team Kyle Nelson said the season has been difficult, but he has allowed the team the opportunity to acclimate to the more competitive Cape Ann League.

“We moved to the Cape Ann League, and the competition has been much stronger. Our goal has just been to hang with those teams and prove that in a non-COVID year, we could compete and stay in this league if given the opportunity,” he said.

Girls’ coach Brittany Smith highlighted the resilience of the players while they navigate a confusing year.

“They’ve been very cooperative through it all. It’s difficult because it’s such a change from what they’ve grown up playing, but they’re handling it well,” she said.



COURTESY OF RICK WILSON

Sophomore goalie Jack Crompton defends goal during game against Lynnfield, which the Vikings lost 6-0.

Sophomore goalie Jack Crompton said that while COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the logistics of having a season, he’s happy the COVID-19 precautions haven’t had a detrimental effect on game play.

“We have to wear masks at all times, and we can’t use the locker rooms to change, but those are the only big things. The pace of the game hasn’t really changed,” he said.

Despite these precautions, multiple players on the girls’ and boys’ team have tested positive for COVID-19, which has halted the momentum of the season.

Junior defender Jane Whitten said they managed to have three games, going 1-1-1, before

several positive cases led to the cancellation of several games and practices. However, there are still plans to continue the season.

“We still have access to the ice, and we have a lot of good players on the team. Now, we’re trying to fit in another game,” she said.

Despite the problems that have arisen over the past few weeks and a record of 0-6, junior forward Hayden Brady remains enthusiastic about the events of the season.

“Even if we’re not having a great year, I didn’t know if we would have a season at all, so being able to get back out on the ice and play has been great,” he said.