

# the INDEPENDENT

Volume XXIX Number 4

Manchester Essex Regional High School 36 Lincoln Street Manchester, MA 01944

February 6, 2023

## Junior-senior dance succeeds in spite of challenges

Class officers hope  
Snowball dance  
becomes tradition

By Gwendolyn Berger  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Despite almost being canceled because of low ticket sales, the first Snowball, a new junior-senior semiformal dance, went well according to attendees.

The dance, held on Jan. 21 in the cafeteria, was organized by the junior and senior class officers and advisers. The \$10 tickets included the cost of pizza and sodas.

Senior class president Juliana Saunders said the officers planned the event because they recieved requests for a winter dance, specifically from senior girls.

“There was a big push to do a homecoming dance or a semiformal ... especially because we didn’t have one due to COVID,” she said.

However, throughout the week leading up to the dance, the offi-

cers and advisers were concerned that they may have to cancel the event because they hadn’t sold enough tickets, Saunders said.

“For any school dance, we have to have a minimum of 75 people for demonstrative interest that it’s an event people actually want to happen,” she said.

Math teacher and junior class adviser Courtney Brown said the officers managed to meet the quota for tickets sold and that the event went well.

“I think optimistically, people are glad that they went and people who did go made the most of it,” she said.

Although Brown said while the officers hoped for a larger turnout, the goal of the dance was achieved, which was to have fun together.

Business teacher and senior class adviser Barrett Alston said that 85 tickets were sold, but around 60 people attended the dance.

The attendees played games like ping-pong and cornhole, and the dance was a nice way to get



PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTO

In spite of low ticket sales, juniors and seniors came together on Jan. 21 for the Snowball dance.

everybody together in the winter, Alston said.

“I would like to be able to establish the idea of a winter semi-

formal as something we do here,” he said.

The officers are trying to start a tradition that classes in the future

can carry on, junior class vice president Finn O’Hara said. He said that although there was  
**SNOWBALL, Page 3**

## GSA achieves goal of increasing gender-neutral bathrooms

By Phileine de Widt  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After discussions with the Gender Sexuality Alliance, the administration made changes to bathroom accessibility.

As of the new year, one of the two faculty bathrooms on all three floors have been turned into gender-neutral bathrooms to be used by staff and students.

Previously, there was only one gender-neutral bathroom available to students on the second floor.

The GSA club brought the issue to principal Patricia Puglisi because students had to wait for a single bathroom on the second floor.

“Having [bathrooms on] all three floors is definitely more equitable for students,” she said.

Senior Wyeth Takayesu, president of the GSA, said the club has been more active than in recent years, allowing them to make an impact.

“It feels nice to know that this year we have so many members



PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTO

Students now have access to gender-neutral bathrooms on all floors, after discussions between the GSA and the administration.

that are really stepping up and are putting in the effort to make lasting changes like those bathrooms,” he said.

The new bathrooms are intended for gender non-conforming students, students who need a private space for health reasons, and teachers for whom the bathrooms were originally designed.

So far, the changes have been beneficial, according to GSA member Ava Rizzico.

“I think it is a great thing because ... for a long-time we only had one bathroom, so you had to wait there, there were kids vaping in the bathrooms, [or] there were teachers using it,” they said.

One remaining concern of stu-

dents and staff is that the bathrooms will be misused and won’t be kept clean.

Ben Icenogle, co-adviser of the GSA, said that communication would play a big role in student and faculty adherence to the bathroom rules.

“[We want to make] sure we are all on the same page and remind students on why those bathrooms are there and rely on people’s decency to respect it,” he said.

Puglisi also believes the school community will comply with the transition.

“We feel as though we have a very respectful school environ-  
**BATHROOMS, page 3**

## Faculty develop interdisciplinary electives to be taught next year

New courses focus on  
Vision of the Graduate

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Teachers and staff have been working together since October to create new course options for next year, Principal Patricia Puglisi said. Their ideas were shared with students to be voted on.

She said working groups have been meeting this year to focus on implementing the Vision of the Graduate. The groups are made up of teachers from different departments.

The Vision of the Graduate includes the skills and dispositions students should have upon graduating from school. Puglisi said the school is working on developing courses to build those skills.

“[We are] also planning to implement portfolios for students to show their growth in their skills

over time,” she said.

The courses the students voted on were created by an interdisciplinary working group that created courses that mixed different subjects.

The groups worked to create courses that would be new and interesting for both students and teachers alike.

“[When voting on the courses] there were some that jumped out to me as ... something that has

its own identity, [and is] bridging different subjects,” sophomore Josh Cohen said.

Puglisi said the two courses that “won” were Once Upon a Crime,

which mixes English and science, and Video and Graphic Design, which mixes photography and history.

English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton, who was a part of the interdisciplinary working group, said she enjoyed being part of this

**NEW COURSES, page 3**

### News

DECA District Competition  
- page 2

### Features

Valentine’s Day Centerspread  
- page 6

### Opinion

Elective Survey  
- page 5

### Arts

“Glass Onion” review -  
page 12

# DECA members compete, place at annual district competition

Students advance to States, hope to perform well, qualify for Internationals

By Mechi O’Neil  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At the 2023 DECA districts competition, 47 out of 81 students qualified for the state competition, which is 58% of the total number of students that attended. The event took place on Jan. 9 at Endicott College in Beverly. DECA teacher Barrett Alston said that of the 47 students that qualified for the state event, 10 finished first, 13 finished second, 13 finished third, and 11 finished fourth. These students will go on to participate in the state competition from March 9 to March 11 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston. “Based on the scores, the kids did really well, and it shows that

they put in a lot of work during class time,” Alston said. Students had been preparing for the district competition for the past month and a half by learning about different business concepts in class, he said. “[The classwork] is all focused around the DECA ideas that are specific to the students’ events,” Alston said. Senior Kendall Newton, who placed second in sports and entertainment management, said she was familiar with the process since it was her second time attending the event. “My role play went pretty well, and I felt confident with my performance,” she said. Junior DECA chapter officer Gabbi D’Andrea said the district competition was great for students to experience presenting in front of a judge in real life. “Everyone that I’ve spoken to has learned from their experiences and found ways they can improve,” she said. Newton agreed and said she



COURTESY OF KRISTIN UMILE

Sophomores Lily Stefanovich, Caroline Willwerth, Maggie Light and junior DECA Chapter Officers Ella Chafe and Gabbi D’Andrea attend the DECA state competition at Endicott College on Jan. 9.

has learned that there is no need to stress about the competition and presenting in front of a judge. “It can be overwhelming at times, but I am working on having more confidence in myself,” she said. D’Andrea said she hopes to have many students do well at States and qualify for the international competition. “Last year we had seven students attend Internationals so we are looking to meet or hopefully exceed that number,” she said.

# Seniors in class of 2023 apply early acceptance, early decision, make plans for after graduation

Clubs, activities help students decide on majors for post-secondary education

By Sam Heanue  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Most of the class of 2023 is college-bound, with many seniors applying early decision or early acceptance, said director of school counseling Beverly Low. “As of Jan. 13, it appears that 20 of the seniors applied early decision ... nine were accepted ... and eleven were denied,” she said. This split is fairly typical for the early decision applicants, Low said. “There are 123 seniors in the



COURTESY OF ELLA WARNOCK

Senior Ella Warnock was accepted early to the Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey. Her role as president of the Robotics Team influenced her decision to major in cybersecurity.

class of 2023 ... 80 students applied early to at least one college,” she said. Senior Ari Brzezinski was accepted Early Decision to Georgetown University in Washington,

D.C., where he plans on attending the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. “I’m going to try to explore a couple of things there and maybe do something related to government, since I’m going to the school of Foreign Service,” Brzezinski said. Brzezinski was born in Washington D.C., and his sister is currently studying at Georgetown, so returning there will be a full circle, he said. “[The School] has been imprinted on me for years, so it’s been my dream to go there,” Brzezinski said. Senior Ella Warnock applied early and was accepted to the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, where she will be majoring in cybersecurity. Warnock said she originally planned on studying computer science in college but settled on cybersecurity’s more math-intensive, computer science adjacent curriculum. “I was planning on going into computer science, and then I looked into a ton of different programs, and while I was looking at colleges, I decided maybe I want to go to college for cybersecurity,” she said. Warnock said being the president of the Robotics Team played a role in her decision to study cybersecurity. Senior Lucia Wendell hopes to stay close to home after she takes a gap year to do community service and earn money to pay for college. “School’s been such a jumble of stress and confusion. I need some time to relax for a little bit. I’m going to do a ton of community service, like Habitat for Humanity,” Wendell said. Wendell is hoping to attend Emerson College in Boston following her gap year, where she will study acting. “Over the summer I want to do acting ... I’m going to audition for community theater,” she said.

# Faculty collaborates to develop new report card comments

By Avabella Mitrano  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

To align with the Vision of the Graduate, changes in report card comments will be implemented next year. Currently, teachers are using report card comments less often because they are not applicable to how faculty provides feedback to students and families, Principal Patrica Puglisi said. She said the Vision of the Graduate is part of a district foundation strategic plan that was adopted last fall. It is fundamental to the objective of optimal student learning, based on input from

parents, faculty, and the Cape Ann business community, she said. According to the district’s strategic plan, the Vision of the Graduate emphasizes effective communication, critical thinking, social-emotional awareness, creativity, personal accountability, collaboration, and being an empathic global citizen. “We want the comments to reflect [the Vision of the Graduate] and to provide feedback to students and families about their progress on those skills and dispositions,” Puglisi said. She said the new report card comments will be more specific to the goals of this new vision and will connect to a student portfolio plan that is currently being developed. The portfolio will house the report cards and show student growth over time. Students will

## MERHS Vision of a Graduate Report Card Comments A. Empathetic Global Citizen

- A1 Developing as a global citizen
- A2 Needs to demonstrate better citizenship
- A3 Understands and accepts different cultures and beliefs
- A4 Demonstrates an awareness of current events
- A5 Recognizes cause and effect within a variety of global networks.

The new report card comments were intended to align with each element of the Vision of the Graduate, as shown in this example.

also have projects that are directly connected to the Vision of the Graduate, Puglisi said. “There will be specific feedback on how students did growing those skills. It’s really about growth over time and not really right or wrong,” she said. Foreign language department chair Michelle Magaña, who led the report card comment faculty group, said the group had considered phasing out the comments due to their current inability to give meaningful feedback. “[We] ultimately decided it would be good to give feedback where we can to each individual in the classroom,” Magaña said. She said the group went through the current comments to determine what to keep or revise, with a main goal to align each comment with the Vision of the

Graduate. Academic Center teacher Steve Padovani said he has enjoyed collaborating with teachers across different subjects on these revisions. He believes that coming together to provide student feedback beyond the letter grade is what makes the school special. “It changes your perspective a little bit, and it’s really powerful to collaborate, come up with new ideas, and to help each other out,” Padovani said. Junior Aidan Brown said the current report card comments are not that useful because they are not specific and are very similar for every student. He believes that the change will be beneficial overall. “It will make it more helpful for students and allow for better communication between the student and teacher,” Brown said.

# Former students discuss life in college on homecoming panel

Alumni give advice, share experiences with juniors, seniors

By Caroline MacKinnon  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

College students returned to the school to give juniors and seniors advice and discuss their different college experiences during the college homecoming panel on Friday, January 6.

Director of school counseling Beverly Low organized the panel and created prompt questions. She said the panel benefits both juniors and seniors who are at different points in the college process.

“For me, I want the process for everybody to be as transparent and as friendly and as open as possible. If you start those conversations now, that will help,” Low said.

The panel consisted of 2021 graduates Sylvie Oldeman, who attends Barnard College in New

York City; Olivia Ostermann, who attends University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Will Rodier who attends Plymouth State University in New Hampshire.

Oldeman stressed the importance of managing time as well as getting involved in the community.

“College gives you a lot of in-

dependence, so time management is a really great skill to have. I like to use Google Calendar to keep track of classes, meetings, and time I plan to spend doing assignments so I

know when I have free time to either take a break and relax or to spend time with friends,” she said.

Rodier had a different path getting into college than his friends but ended up finding programs he really enjoyed, he said.

“I am in Greek life and had to go early and make connections and create fundraising events. The other program that I was a part of at Plymouth helps transi-

**‘They talked about how important it was to be involved in campus life and extracurriculars, which is a nice thing to keep in mind.’**

-MADDIE MACHAIN



CHARLES LATIONS PHOTO

**2021 graduates Will Rodier, Sylvie Oldeman, and Olivia Ostermann returned to the high school to give advice about college to students. Each of them shared a different experience.**

tion students into college,” he said.

Ostermann said she chose UMass Amherst because it was affordable compared to her other options and she received a good scholarship. She stressed the importance of going to class and getting the most out of a college education.

“If you think about it, each class is \$1,000, and you will fail if you don’t go to class. You should do your work because they will not hesitate to kick you out. You also do not want to be on academic probation,” she said.

Senior Maddie Machain, who is planning to do extracurriculars in college to try something new, said the panel gave her good advice.

“They talked about how important it was to be involved in campus life and extracurriculars, which is a nice thing to keep in mind,” she said. Senior Sophie Zalosh said it was helpful to hear the graduates’ personal tips on how to be engaged in their community.

“I remember Olivia talked about going up to people and making conversations to make

friends with everybody, which is something I definitely want to do,” she said.

Junior Torrin Kirk said each panelist had a very different experience with their approach to college, why they chose the colleges they did, and their overall experiences in college.

“Will Rodier gave an interesting experience because he said he wasn’t really focused on college...and then his senior year he really drove. Sylvie had a completely different approach. She knew exactly where she wanted to go and applied early,” she said.

## Engineers visit high school computer science classes

By Stella Straub  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After graduating from the high school in 2017, mechanical engineer and former Independent editor-in-chief Maura McCormick and data scientist Nellie Boling returned to present to computer science teacher Steven Cogger’s classes on Dec. 9, 2022.

The graduates spoke about their paths to their careers at Applied Materials (AMAT) in Gloucester.

AMAT makes machines that alter silicon to sell to companies like Intel and Samsung, who program the machines to make



STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

**Nellie Boling and Maura McCormick, engineers from Applied Materials (AMAT), talk to students about their STEM fields.**

computer chips for various purposes, said McCormick, who participates in a rotational program where she currently works in software engineering.

“I’m going to be building an internal website to help engineers with their day to day tasks, and I’m going to be developing a machine learning script to improve the time it takes to set up the [machine],” McCormick said.

Boling’s team works on predictive modeling, using tool telemetry and metrology.

“They ask us to look at the data and see if we can find some discrepancy that leads us to the answer,” Boling said.

Identifying as gender-fluid, Boling said that while they have experienced sexism and road blocks, they know their company will support them. There are

many communities and organizations to support women and gender non-conforming people in STEM, they said.

“The community is becoming a lot more accepting, and there’s a lot more emphasis on your skills than who you are and what gender you are, which is amazing,” Boling said.

Cogger said it was helpful for students to be able to interact with people in the field of engineering.

“It puts some reality to the question, ‘Why am I learning this stuff? Why am I dealing with this coding?’ You get to see what you actually do when you get

out,” he said.

Freshman Tor Gjerde said it’s beneficial for the school to bring in speakers that can show

students what different fields look like.

“I don’t feel like teachers can give all the perspectives on every single thing,” he said.

After presenting, McCormick and Boling helped students in the Physical Computing class with their current projects on

**‘The [STEM] community is becoming a lot more accepting, and there’s a lot more emphasis on your skills than who you are and what gender you are, which is amazing.’**

-NELLIE BOLING

game design.

Boling said their education provided them with the skills needed to be where they are today and looked to visit again.

### CONTINUATIONS

**SNOWBALL DANCE**  
**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**  
a lower turnout than expected, the dance went well and people seemed to enjoy themselves.

“Our main goal was starting a Snowball Dance that will continue for years to come ... the idea is that the next class will continue it on,” O’Hara said.

**BATHROOMS**  
**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**  
ment and student culture, so we trust that students will use these spaces appropriately and be respectful of their peers,” she said.  
Though one of the bathrooms

on each floor has been changed to gender-neutral, it is still available to teachers as well.

English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton hopes that everyone will learn how to properly share the space.

“There are a lot of different people using that space and ... we need to make sure that it is clean and neat. It has not always been. There have been some people who have been using it and, I think, disrespecting the space,” she said.

To ensure the space stays clean, the second floor bathroom displays a sign to remind those using the bathroom of its purpose and asking people to clean up after themselves.

Digital Arts teacher Caroline Epp said she will put up artwork in those bathrooms in hopes of making them look nicer.

“Hopefully, if it is a little nicer in there, people will treat it a little bit better,” she said.

The bathrooms have only been in place since early January, but Icenogle said he has heard only good things.  
“People have been responding positively ... It has definitely been appreciated by a lot of people,” he said.

**NEW COURSES**  
**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**  
group because the products they came up with were shared with the students.

“It was fun to imagine what we could do, think of the possibilities, and just put our heads together,” Edgerton said.

Her group wasn’t trying to combine specific courses; Edgerton said their focus was rather on integrating any class that helps with critical thinking.

School counselor David Conwell was also in the interdisciplinary group. He said the diversity of teachers in groups was a positive.

“[There was] definitely representation from every department, but it was good to have a counselor from the guidance department who does scheduling,” he said.

The group tried to steer away from history and English pairings

because they are already quite common, Conwell said. They wanted something original.

Conwell said they debated between co-teaching and switching teachers for each quarter.  
“A lot of our discussion and debate was about [who would teach the classes],” he said.

Puglisi said that overall, the main goal with interdisciplinary electives is for the teachers’ passions to carry over to the students, which is one thing the electives help with.

“[Teachers] are able to move away from traditional structures ... which draws kids in, and it makes meaning for them,” she said.

# Valentine’s Day

Is the love-centered holiday just a capitalist cash grab?

**Pro**  
Gwendolyn Berger

Valentine’s Day is a corporate money grab that takes a romantic holiday and ruins it, becoming a commercialized stress inducer that puts too much focus on gifts and spending money.

The societal expectations put on Valentine’s Day has made it demanding and expensive when it should be a romantic holiday where people can enjoy spending time with their significant others.

In 2020, marketers spent over \$32 million on Valentine’s Day-related merchandise, according to research company Kantar, a private company that specializes in data analytics and brand consulting.

This year, Americans are expected to spend \$208 on average for their significant other, wrote Dawn Papandrea in the 2022 LendingTree article, “Americans Will Spend \$208 on Their Significant Other This Valentine’s Day, Up 44%.”

Corporate profits from Valentine’s Day are estimated to reach \$20 billion this year according to statista.com.

In the U.S. there’s a culture of excessive spending for this “romantic” holiday.

People feel pressured to fulfill these expectations. Unfortunately, 3 in 10 Americans have spent more than they can afford in past Valentine’s Days to impress a significant other, Papandrea wrote.

In 2022, “30% of Americans anticipate having to rely on their credit cards to pay for Valentine’s Day gifts and outings, which means paying interest on that spending, too. Among those who think they’ll take on debt, 43% plan to hide it from their significant other,” she wrote.

Ironically, the holiday also serves as a relationship terminator.

Relationships are more likely to end on or around Feb. 14 than any other time in the year, wrote Catherine Jansson-Boyd, a reader in consumer psychology at Anglia Ruskin University for the 2022 conversation.com article “Valentine’s Day: The Pressure of Shopping for Romance.”

Valentine’s Day is also especially tough on many teenagers who are often heavily influenced by peers, and the pressures to get a date can feel heightened.

High school can be a difficult time where teenagers feel that because everyone around them appears to be getting into relationships, they should as well.

Teenagers may feel hurt and isolated if they find themselves spending the holiday alone.

Valentine’s Day was originally meant to be a celebration of romance and love, but has turned into a money grab that ultimately harms people mentally, financially and romantically.

**Con**  
Hannah Davis

Valentine’s Day is a historically significant holiday and a great way to tell your loved ones how much they mean to you.

According to Britannica, the holiday originated in the 5th century when Pope Gelasius I outlawed the pagan festival of Lupercalia. The festival was replaced with St. Valentine’s Day, named after a Roman saint recognized by the Catholic Church.

Valentine was a priest in third-century Rome, according to History.com. At the time, young men were not allowed to get married, but Valentine went against the law and was arrested for marrying couples in secret. He sent the first Valentine while he was in jail and signed it “from your valentine.”

Valentine’s Day is a great way to connect with and appreciate your loved ones. This helps combat loneliness which, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), can lead to premature death.

Loneliness is tied to a 32% increased risk of stroke and a 29% increased risk of heart disease, according to the CDC.

Sending a card or even just reaching out to have a meaningful conversation with your loved ones on Valentine’s Day can improve your mental and physical health greatly.

Some believe Valentine’s Day is just a corporate cash grab to make money off of cards and flowers for significant others, but it doesn’t have to be.

You don’t have to be in a romantic relationship with someone and spend heaps of money to show affection and connection with loved ones on Valentine’s Day.

A great way to do this is taking time out of your day to spend time with your loved ones. This can include talking to them on the phone or doing an activity you both enjoy together.

It can be easy to forget how much your connection with your close friends can mean to you. Reaching out on Valentine’s Day can show your gratitude for the people in your life and will make you feel good too.

In an article for Psychology Today about the benefits of Valentine’s Day, Mark writes, “Expressing gratitude can also improve several positive emotions that are associated with happy relationships.”

Keeping up with homework and participating in after school activities can cause you to forget to take time to be with your friends and family.

Valentine’s Day can be a great time to take a break from our busy lives and spend time or connect with the people we care about. This can help reduce stress and make you and your loved ones happier.



ALESSIA OMARI ILLUSTRATION

## Tourism industry puts visitors, profits over native Hawaiians

**By Libby Mulry**  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Over-tourism in Hawaii has led to a decrease in the availability of housing and the degradation of Hawaiian culture.

The lack of affordable housing for native Hawaiians is caused by gentrification. Through Airbnb and the luxury real estate industry, indigenous Hawaiians are being priced out of their neighborhoods.

According to the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, Hawaii residents have been moving away from the islands in droves; in 2019, more than 13,000 people emigrated to the mainland.

Hawaiians can no longer af-

ford to live in Hawaii, causing the island to retain less and less of its cultural identity.

“So it’s real ‘eha,’ because you do get disconnected from the land, which we’re so connected to, being born and raised here,” native Hawaiian Kona Purdy said in a conversation with Associated Press’s Jennifer Sinco Kelleher after being forced to move to Las Vegas because of the high cost of living.

The tourism industry then profits from Hawaiian culture, turning it into a caricature of itself where hyper-sexualized hula girls dance for foreigners while hotel staff hand out fake plastic leis.

Tourism represents roughly a quarter of Hawaii’s economy

**Hawaiians can no longer afford to live in Hawaii, causing the island to retain less and less of its cultural identity.**



WIKIMEDIA PHOTO

**Tropical resort hotels dominate Hawaiian beaches, making the land’s ancestral shores and sea life exclusive to rich foreigners who feed into the toxic tourist industry by visiting, pushing away natives.**

and contributed more than \$2 billion in tax revenue to the U.S. government.

This tax revenue is seldom reinvested into the communities affected by over-tourism.

In Oahu, affordable housing waitlists range from six months to three years, Cassie Ordonio wrote in “A ‘Tremendous Need’ for Affordable Housing in Hawaii Leads to Long Waitlists” for Honolulu Civil Beat. Due to the government not delegating

needed resources to low-income housing, many Hawaiian families face homelessness.

The government prioritizing corporate interests over the heritage and well-being of Hawaiians has endured for decades.

According to the Bill of Rights Institute, American investors saw Hawaii as the ideal location for planting sugar cane in the early 19th century. These investors then systematically replaced traditional Hawaiian agricultural

practices like the slow cultivation of kava, taro, and ti leaves with a plantation economy based on capitalist systems of private land ownership and wage labor subsequently damaging the Hawaiian people, land, and language.

Travelers can participate in ending this cycle of profit by not vacationing in Hawaii. There can be no ethical tourism in Hawaii until its native people can live affordably and safely in their ancestral lands.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Student input should continue to influence course design

Using student voice to influence class offerings, such as using the recent elective student survey, benefits students and should continue to be used in the future.

Social Studies department head Lauren DuBois said she thinks that similar surveys

should be used sporadically to make sure students and teachers are still interested in the material that is being taught in class.

“I’m not sure it should be something to do every year.

I think there’s an opportunity to sort of revisit after a certain number of years ... Are these still the classes that people are interested in?” she said.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said similar methods of gauging student experience will be used in the future for other purposes, such as measuring how students feel about the classes that they take.

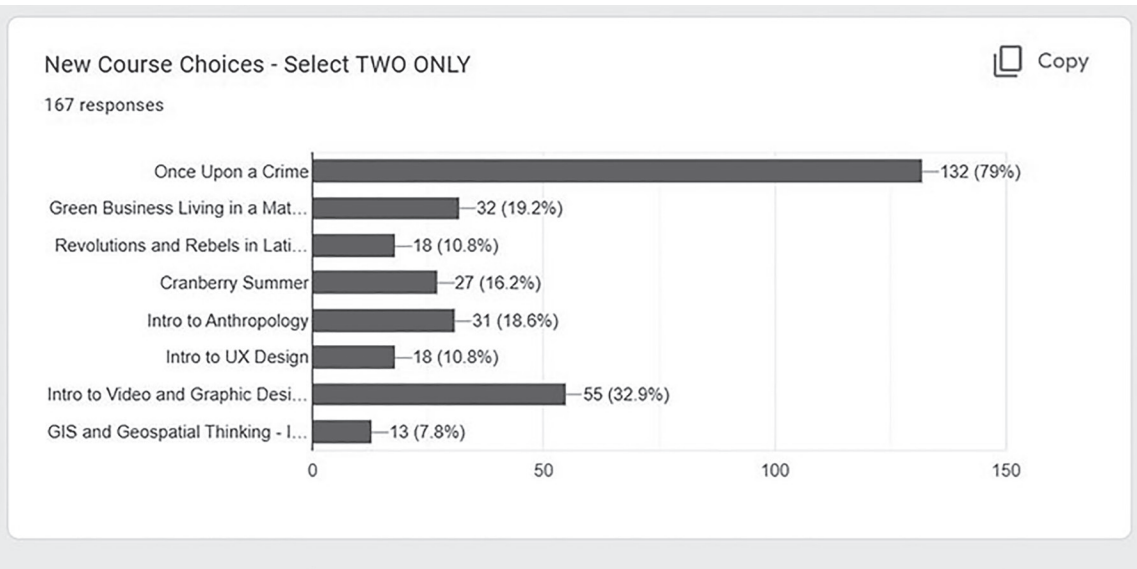
“A big focus of our goals in terms of student-centered learning is allowing for student choice and agency in their education, and we’re starting down that path, and we just hope to expand it more as we move forward,” she said.

Taking into account what and how students want to learn would help improve the high school experience overall, making students feel that they’re learning what they want to instead of what they have to.

According to an email sent out by Puglisi on Jan. 23, the two courses from the elective survey that will be added to the curriculum next year are Video and Graphic Design and Once Upon a Crime.

Video and Graphic design is an expansion of the course material taught in the Photography curriculum and will cover more areas that aren’t talked about in the main class.

Once Upon a Crime is an



COURTESY OF PATRICIA PUGLISI

A survey was sent to students to gain feedback on possible new classes. Of the eight possible courses, students could choose two they found interesting. The results show that students chose the classes **Once Upon a Crime** and **Video and Graphic Design**, which will be added to the Course of Studies.

interdisciplinary class combining English and science that focuses on true crime literature and forensic studies, with students examining cold cases and reading true crime novels.

These new courses give students the opportunity to expand upon their knowledge of subjects already offered in the curriculum and explore subjects that aren’t

available currently that both they and teachers find interesting.

Puglisi said the survey was sent out in order to help select which new interdisciplinary courses, developed by educator working groups, would be added to the list of electives for next year.

“[The groups] came up with some really great ideas, and we

couldn’t choose which one we should do. So, we took that opportunity to put it out to students to decide what they wanted in their program of studies,” she said.

Going forward, teachers and students will benefit from higher interest and engagement if students are given the ability to influence the subjects they learn.

NFL exploits, victimizes Black players

By Mechi O’Neil  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Damar Hamlin’s sudden cardiac arrest and collapse has sparked questions of how supportive the National Football League is of injured Black players.

On Jan. 2, Buffalo Bills safety Hamlin suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed on the field after a collision with another player. He received immediate medical attention.

After his heartbeat was restored on the field, Hamlin was transported to a hospital, where he suffered another cardiac arrest.

According to cbssports.com, the NFL wanted the game to continue, even with players and coaches in distress.



Damar Hamlin, a safety on the Buffalo Bills football team suffered from cardiac arrest, bringing the issue of race discrimination to the media.

Hamlin, 24, was in critical condition for three days before waking up.

According to an article from CBS News, his first question after waking up was, “Did we win?”.

Hamlin’s concern for his team’s success shows a deep care for his work in the NFL. Historically, the NFL has not reciprocated this care for Black

players in the league. Until 2021, Black players like Hamlin were discriminated against when seeking restitution from the NFL through a process called race-norming.

Race-norming was a practice used during brain injury claims that assumed that Black players had a lower level of cognition than their counterparts. It was practiced by the NFL using two

separate scoring systems for dementia testing: one for Black players, and one for everyone else.

The score that the players received was a determining factor in whether a player was eligible for a settlement.

Players who endured severe head trauma received settlements to supplement the lost income from being unable to work.

The practice of race-norming has kept hundreds of Black players from having access to financial awards that average \$500,000 or more.

Representatives for Black players estimated that white players qualified for the financial awards two to three times more

than Black players. The NFL did not end race-norming in good faith, either.

The process only stopped because Black players Najeh Davenport and Kevin Henry, who both played for the Pittsburgh Steelers, sued the NFL for the discriminatory practice in 2020 and won their case in March of 2022.

The use of race-norming in an industry dominated by

Black men shows that representation does not ensure that Black people are valued in spaces like the NFL.

There is a lack of proper care provided by the NFL for Black players, and these players are being exploited in an industry where they constantly put themselves in danger.

Until 2021, Black players like Hamlin were discriminated against when seeking restitution from the NFL through a process called race-norming.

Faculty Adviser

Mary Buckley-Harmon

Editors-in-chief

Phileine de Widt  
Charles Lations

News Editors

Avabella Mitrano  
Mechi O’Neil

Features Editors

Ella Chafe  
Caroline MacKinnon  
Amy Vytopilova

Opinion Editor

Wyeth Takayesu

the  
INDEPENDENT

The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class.  
We welcome letters to the editor from MERHS students, faculty, and community members. All submissions must be signed. 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 <https://www.mersd.org/domain/702>

Sports Editors

Hadley Levendusky  
Stella Straub  
Whitney Turner

Arts Editors

Jordie Cornfield  
Libby Mulry

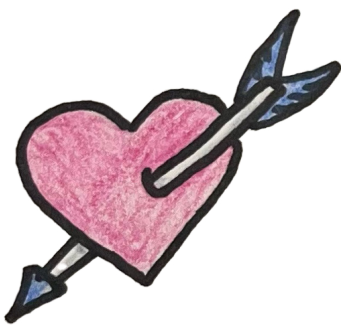
Staff

Gwendolyn Berger  
Summer Demeo  
Hannah Davis  
Isabelle Donnellan Valade  
Sam Heanue  
Alessia Omari

# Student Speak - What is your favorite romantic song?

Charlie Virden, grade 11:

“What a Wonderful World’  
by Louis Armstrong.”



Josh Cohen,  
grade 10:



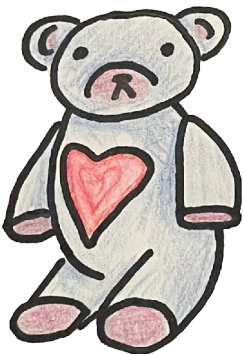
Lila Carpenter, grade 12:

“‘Lover’ by Taylor Swift.”

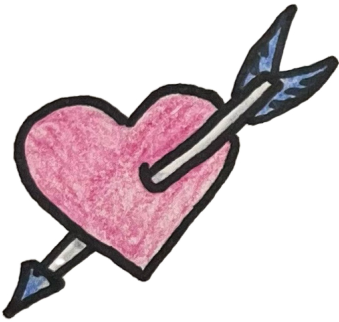


Morgan Laspesa, grade 11:

“‘Strangers In The Night’  
by Frank Sinatra.”



“I Only Have Eyes For  
You’  
by The Flamingos.”

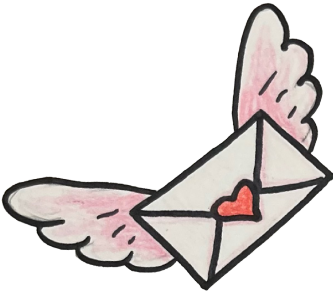


Mark Pollock,  
grade 12:



Charlotte Donnellan-Valade, grade 10:

“‘I GUESS I’M IN LOVE’  
by Clinton Kane.”



Joe Glass, grade 9:

“‘Bound 2’  
by Kanye West.”

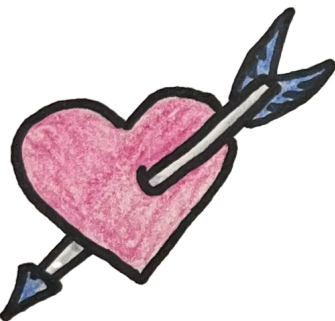


“‘Martin & Gina’  
by Polo G.”



Riley McKinnon, grade 9:

“‘Brooklyn Baby’  
by Lana del Rey.”



ALESSIA OMARI ILLUSTRATIONS

By Hannah Davis, Independent Editor

Nicole Meuse, social studies:



“I love  
‘The  
Notebook’  
because it  
has Rachel  
McAdams  
in it.  
That’s  
what drew  
me to it  
after she

starred in ‘Mean Girls.’ I just love  
the drama, and I love the ending,  
how they come back together and  
love each other forever.”

Nicholas Valle, aide:



“‘The  
Princess  
Bride.’ It’s  
just what  
I grew  
up with.  
My mom  
made me  
watch all  
these old  
romance

movies, and it’s just one that stuck in  
my head. It’s got some great fighting  
and comedy scenes in it.”

Angela Rice, English:



“‘The Prin-  
cess Bride’. It’s  
funny, it has  
a little bit of  
romance, a little  
bit of action.  
The characters  
are awesome,  
and I love that  
it’s kind of a  
parody of fairy  
tales.”

Teacher S  
What is  
favor  
romantic  
or movie  
why

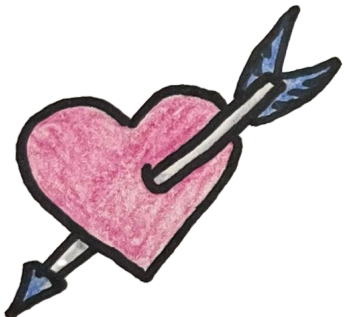
# Journarizzm - What is your flirting advice?



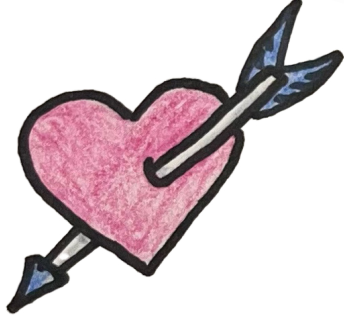
**Wyeth Takayesu, senior:**  
“Don’t be scared to take your shot and make how you feel known. Vulnerability is important. If it’s a no, it’s a no. Respect that, and do your best to move on.”



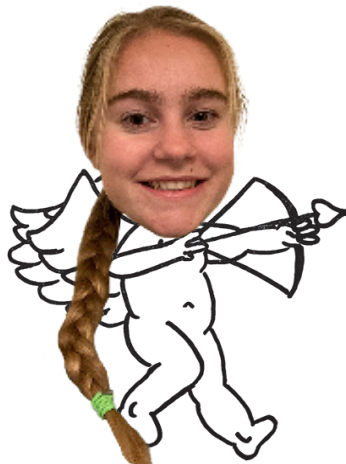
**Jordie Cornfield, senior:** “Be bold and confident. Don’t be too confident because then you’ll come across as narcissistic, but don’t be so humble that you seem like an insecure loser. No offense.”



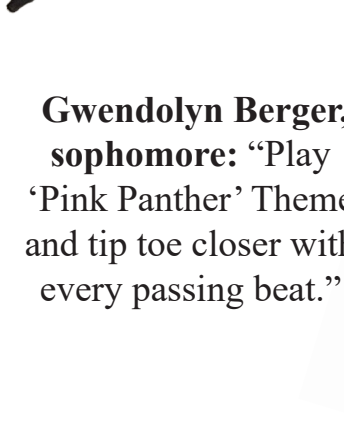
**Charlie Latons, junior:** “Ask her to run with you.”



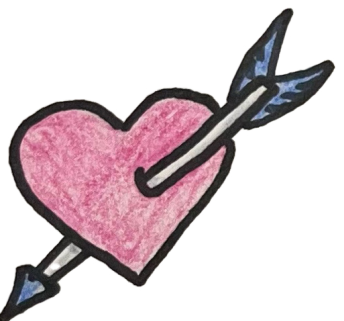
**Sam Heanue, sophomore:** “Make a person feel special. Tell them you like something that’s unique to them. And don’t forget to quote MF DOOM.”



**Phileine de Widt, junior:** “Make her feel like she’s in a movie ... and a little chocolate doesn’t hurt.”



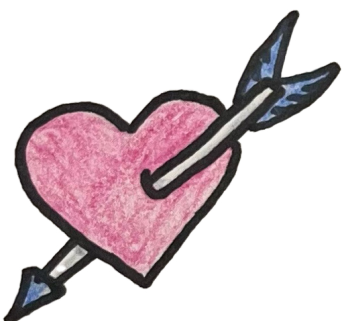
**Gwendolyn Berger, sophomore:** “Play ‘Pink Panther’ Theme and tip toe closer with every passing beat.”



**Alessia Omari, sophomore:** “Send them ‘Family Guy’ clips on Tik Tok.”



**Libby Mulry, junior:** “Pretend you’re interested in astrology and crystals.”



**Whitney Turner, sophomore:** “Become their best friend then confess your undying love.”



CAROLINE MACKINNON PHOTOS

By Caroline MacKinnon, Independent Editor

**Speak:**  
your  
ite  
book  
e and  
?

**Lauren Woodcock, mathematics:**

“‘The Bodyguard’ because it’s a classic. Whitney Houston was the first album I ever bought in the ‘80s, and it has an amazing soundtrack to sing along to.”

**Joseph Janack, music:**

“‘A Walk to Remember.’ It’s just a good movie, a sad ending, but it’s just good.”

**Gillian Polk, guidance:**

“Pablo Neruda’s poetry. His most famous one is ‘Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair.’ I love his poetry, and you can read it in Spanish if you speak it.”

# Students, staff enjoy new tunes in cafeteria during day

Music will continue throughout year

By Ella Chafe  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Music is now being played in the cafeteria during lunches to boost the spirits of students and faculty.

Team lead of food service Carin Grimes said she started playing music in December before the holidays. She started with Christmas music and then decided to continue it, she said.

Grimes said she often plays music for dancing from a playlist she created or music from a ‘60s and ‘70s radio station.

“We’ve had some middle schoolers dancing to ‘70s music like the band ‘Earth, Wind & Fire,’” she said.

**‘As long as no one is objecting to it, we’d love to keep it [the music] going all the time.’**

-CARIN GRIMES

Grimes said she avoids playing contemporary music, especially when the middle school has lunch due to the amount of profanity.

Grimes said she started playing music primarily because she and the other staff wanted to listen to it while the students serve themselves.

She said the music can calm the students down. She received feedback that the music is nice to have in the background, even if students aren’t entirely listening to it, she said.

Grimes said she brought her speaker in from home and plans to continue playing music through the rest of the year.

“As long as no one is objecting to it, we’d love to keep it going all the time,” she said.

Junior Liv Cahill said she immediately noticed the music in the cafeteria when it started.

She said it quickly puts her in



ELLA CHAFE PHOTO

**Juniors Caroline Doucette, Greta Gado, and Ali Viggiano smile while enjoying some ‘70s music during lunch. The music will continue being played to boost the spirits of students through the day.**

a better mood and brightens her day.

Cahill said she likes to hear upbeat music, as it makes her day better.

“I think music can have a big

impact on everyone’s day and keep people motivated throughout these tough winter months,” she said.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said she enjoys listening to upbeat

music in the cafeteria, although it is often difficult to hear.

“I think upbeat music can pep you up in the middle of the day when you are starting to get worn out,” she said.

## A World of Difference finishes their third full training day

By Summer Demeo  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

ADL: A World of Difference completed its third and final full day training session of the year and plans to visit ninth-grade classrooms to teach students about creating a tolerant and inclusive school environment.

ADL co-adviser Lauren DuBois said the trainings focus on anti-bias education. Students learn about types of bias, microaggressions, prejudice, and how they can have conversations about these things.

During the full day sessions, students also do activities to get to know each other because there are sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the group, ADL co-adviser Jessica Tran said.

DuBois said students have many thoughtful discussions and

ideas in these training sessions, and it is very impactful to her as a teacher.

“It just makes me feel good about where our world and where our country is going if we have minds like this out there. It’s always re-invigorating for me,” she said.

Now that the group has finished these three trainings, they will have a few preparation sessions before they go into the ninth-grade classrooms four times, Tran said.

In addition to educating ninth-graders, Tran said the ADL is hoping to expand the group’s impact in the community by working with the middle school

**‘I think the kids who want to get involved are informed and passionate.’**

-JESSICA TRAN

more than they previously have.

The goal of ADL is to make the school a more welcoming place for everyone, DuBois said. Students have learned valuable skills on how to discuss issues with others.

Senior Lucia Wendell said the group has learned a lot about microaggressions and “how to avoid them, how to confront someone if they do it to you or do it to someone else, in a way that’s not going to cause more of a problem.”

She said she is able to apply what she learns in ADL to her everyday life and that it has made it easier for her to confront people about problematic situations.

Tran said many of the students who get involved in ADL are very passionate about making



GWEN BERGER PHOTO

**ADL: A World of Difference hosted their final full day of training in the library. Students learned about bias and prejudice in the session.**

the school an inclusive place, and the group is trying to create that environment with the ninth-graders.

“I think the kids who want to get involved are informed

and passionate, and it’s really energizing, I think, as a teacher to work with these students and see how they want to improve our school culture and climate,” she said.

## Students want TriM Music Honors Society

By Wyeth Takayesu  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Middle school chorus director Ben Icenogle organized a proposal meeting for students about the institution of a Tri-M Music Honors Society chapter.

Middle and high school band director Joe Janack joined him at the meeting on Jan. 26 to support the chapter’s institution.

According to the Tri-M Music Honors Society website, the organization was founded in 1936 to create honors societies that aid in the cultivation, exploration, and expansion of music within



WYETH TAKAYESU PHOTO

**Middle school chorus director Ben Icenogle and high school band director Joe Janack advocate for a Tri-M Music Honors Society.**

schools and their surrounding communities.

The organization has over 2,100 chapters throughout the U.S. with over 84,000 members across the chapters, though there is no chapter currently in place at the school.

The meeting sought to establish a group of interested students who would join a new chapter at the school and help create musical opportunities in the surrounding community, Icenogle said.

“TriM would offer a great chance for us all to work together and expand our music program a little bit. We would be creating

a bridge between not only our high school and middle school but also possibly the elementary school and the surrounding community through whatever activities we can come up with,” he said.

Though the music department already tries to create opportunities to blend the grades and pursue different genres of music through programs like the Jazz Band and Soundwaves, a TriM chapter would cultivate a sustainable, wider connection, Janack said.

“Basically TriM would give us a lot of what we already try to do in our department, but with more people and more freedom and more devotion to real expansion and passion. It would be an amazing opportunity for anyone interested in music to jump in

and learn together through real experiences,” he said.

Seventeen students attended the proposal meeting, including senior choir member Maddie Machain, who thought the opportunities offered by a TriM chapter would be very helpful.

“Honestly, I wish I had something like this when I was a freshman because the way [Icenogle] describes it, it sounds super active and engaging and fun. It would kind of be a big crossover episode of all of our music programs, and I’d love to see that in the future,” she said.

A Google Classroom was created to plan future meetings and the eventual establishment of a chapter with other students. Any student interested in joining can email or visit Icenogle or Janack for additional information.

# Girls’ basketball team begins season with a strong start

**By Hadley Levendusky**  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Varsity girls’ basketball is off to a great start with a current record of 11-5, coach Lauren DuBois said.

“We started out very strong ... we have had a little lull in the past few games but we are getting back at it this week with a couple of tough games,” she said.

The team’s balanced offense and tough defense has worked well for them so far this season, DuBois said.

“We have been playing very solid defense and working really hard on the boards,” she said.

Rising to the occasion is very important this season, DuBois said.

“We have a very young team this year ... with that we have been able to get offensive plays out of our fast defense this season,” she said.

DuBois said the whole team has stepped up at different points this season.

“We have had different people

step up in terms of scoring leaders,” she said.

Additionally, with having a young team DuBois said she is pleased with how the freshmen have been playing.

Senior captain Kendall Newton also said she is happy with how the younger players have been stepping up.

“It has been really successful [this season] with our younger group and [we have] been able to play well against tougher teams,” she said.

On and off the court, DuBois said that Newton and senior captain Calista Lai have had great leadership this season.

Newton said she and Lai have been trying to lead by example this season.

“We both want to be good role models for the younger players and try to be good influences on the freshmen,” she said.

Lai agreed and said that she has been taking a hands-on approach to the team as a captain.

“I have been trying to scope out what each personal player on the team needs...I want everyone



COURTESY OF INSTAGRAM @HORNETSINTHEHIVE

Senior captain Calista Lai sets up to take her foul shot in the season opener game against Lynnfield. The Hornets won the game 42-35. The girls’ basketball record is 10-5 as they continue their season.

to feel included and valued,” she said.

With her teammates, Lai said has tried to make sure teammates feel equal despite grade level.

Newton said she and Lai hope to leave the team in a good place at the end of this season.

“We have started out the season very strong with good vibes and motivation. We have been playing with a lot of intensity even if the score is not showing that,” Lai said.

In the long run of the season, DuBois said she hopes the

season continues with this strong start.

“We want to win games and make the tournament,” she said.

Newton agreed with DuBois.

“We have proven that we are a team to be reckoned with,” she said.

# Boys’ basketball remains undefeated in the CAL

**By Hannah Davis**  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Teamwork and playing together are important for the boys’ basketball team success this season, senior captain Patrick Cronin said.

With a 14-2 record overall and a 12-0 record in the Cape Ann League, the team has many stand-out players.

Junior Cade Furse has been playing especially well recently, Cronin said.

Senior captain Brennan Twombly agreed.

“Cade Furse is definitely a standout player because he con-

tinuously drops 25-30 points a game, and he just puts the ball in the hoop,” Twombly said.

Head coach Timothy St. Laurent said the team gives it their all every day and is very talented.

“We’ve had some amazing athletes that work hard every day in practice and play hard in the game on the offensive and defensive end of the floor,” he said.

Junior Eddie Chareas is also a standout player on the team, St. Laurent said.

“Eddie Chareas can just stop everything at the rim and can score inside and, again, [he] plays with a lot of passion,” he said.



COURTESY OF AISLING TWOMBLY

Senior Sam Athanas plays defense in game against Pentucket on Jan. 10. The boys won the game 55-40 in front of the home crowd.

St. Laurent said the team has some big games ahead and is looking to continue working to improve.

“We got some big games coming up. We just gotta continue

to focus, play hard, and do what we’ve been doing,” he said.

Twombly said moving the ball has been an important tactic on the court for the boys’ basketball this season.

“I think playing hard defense, and turning defense into offense and getting steals and turning that into fast breaks [has been working well],” he said.

St. Laurent said he is proud of how the team has been playing this season.

“As long as they keep doing what they’re doing, I think we’ll see good things,” he said.

St. Laurent believes the team keeps improving as the season goes on.

“I truly feel like we have more talent each time we step on the floor,” he said.

Believing in themselves and playing together are key components of the team’s success, St. Laurent said.

“If we do what we do and believe in each other and play together, we’re pretty unstoppable,” he said.

# Indoor track building team spirit

**By Isabelle Donnellan Valade**  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Girls’ and boys’ indoor track teams are looking to create more of a team environment, varsity sprint coach Nicole Bembridge said.

“Track can be a really individual sport ... and sometimes it’s easy to get lost in that team atmosphere. Trying to come together and have some

team time together and connect with one another is a big goal,” she said.

Bembridge wants to bridge the gap between individual groups and the whole team.

“There are leaders that help bring up the spirit of their groups ... [however we’re] missing the celebration of the whole team,” Bembridge said.

Junior captain Finn O’Hara has a similar goal for the team.

“I want to try to build as strong of a community as possible ... I’m trying to build spirit,” O’Hara said.

He said senior girls’ captain Caroline MacKinnon brings spirit to the team.

O’Hara said the captains have been doing a good job.

“They’ve been stepping up, fulfilling their roles as captains, [and] making sure everyone’s feeling good,” he said.

Bembridge said the season has been going well.

“[The players] are staying committed, they’re doing the work, and they’re showing up,” she said.

Sophomore captain Megan Hurd is looking ahead to States.

“We’re all rested, and we had time to rejuvenate, and now we’re ready to get into States because that’s coming up,” she said.

Hurd said standout athletes for the girls have been freshman Abby Kent, sophomores Sabine Cooper, Summer Demeo, and Stella Straub, as well as sophomore captain Whitney Turner.

Bembridge said standout players for the boys have been senior captain Jack Newton, and junior captains Nate Gardner, and O’Hara.

“Although there are always players that will score, the beauty of [track] is you can see everyone’s individual growth,” Bembridge said.

Currently, the girls and boys both have a record of 2-2.

“[Their wins] are well-earned and well deserved,” Bembridge said.

She has high hopes for the rest of the season.

“I feel like the sky’s the limit, because they’re showing up with commitment, and as long as they do that, you get the result that you hope for,” Bembridge said.

# Gymnastics wins meet against Winthrop

**By Jordie Cornfield**  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Following their return to the mat, the cooperative gymnastics team recently celebrated their win at a past competition against

Winthrop High School.

The team, made up of students from both Manchester-Essex and Hamilton-Wenham, began their season in November and participated in their first competition together on Jan. 26.

The team includes students who are experienced in competing in gymnastics alongside those who are just starting out or returning to the sport.

“I used to do gymnastics when I was younger, but then I stopped for a little while. I joined the team after I had so much

fun tumbling while cheerleading in the fall when we had our competition in November,” said sophomore Audrey Smith, who competes in floor and vault.

The last gymnastics competition was held at IronRail Gymnastics Academy in Wenham.

The cooperative team won

against Winthrop with a score of 137.15, O’Flynn said.

The win is a source of motivation for the team, sophomore Lola Fortunato said.

“The win was really encouraging for us,” she said

The next competitions is the CAL All-Star Meet on Feb. 11.

# Swim team wins sportsmanship award at CAL meet

Several freshman standouts lead team

By Mechi O’Neil  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At the Cape Ann League meet, the girls’ swim team was awarded the Sportsmanship Award. The boys’ team placed fourth, and the girls placed fifth in the league meet.

The girls ended the season with a record of 5-2, and the boys with a record of 4-3, coach Caitlin Eramo said.

She said the girls have improved immensely since last year when they ended the season with an overall record of 1-5.

The girls’ team is mostly composed of either new or young swimmers, Eramo said.

“We have a lot of juniors who

have never swam before that are trying swimming out,” she said. Despite their age, the younger swimmers contribute greatly to the team’s success. Freshmen Sydney Hemme and Megan Graeter have been performing incredibly well, Eramo said.

Eramo said sophomore captain Libby McKinnon is the most spirited swimmer on the team.

“She’s always so supportive of her teammates and brings great energy,” she said.

McKinnon said she always tries to motivate her teammates to keep going during practices.

“It’s fun to keep the spirit high in practice

and at meets because it reminds me to stay positive and to bring a good mindset every day,” she said.

The swim team attended the Cape Ann League meet on Feb. 5 at the Lynch/van Otterloo



COURTESY OF CALISTA LAI

Freshman Megan Graeter, a standout on this year’s swim team, competes in one of the team’s final dual meets, finishing the season with a record of 5-2 for the girls’ team.

YMCA.

Prior to the meet, senior captain Ava Magnuson said she was looking forward to competing against other teams from the CAL and seeing how far the team

can go.

“I know a lot of my teammates and I are excited for this meet because we are trying to make Sectionals and States cuts,” she said.

Junior Ella Chafe said the team gifted each other posters and snacks before the meet to boost the mood.

“There was definitely a lot of energy there,” she said.

# Ski team remains motivated through scheduling issues

By Charles Lations  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Despite several races being canceled, the ski team has remained focused and has rallied around their new coach, 2011 alumnus Molly Friedman, according to senior captain Lydia Schwartz.

She said the arrival of Friedman has kept the team motivated and prevented them from losing interest due to the cancellations.

“I think we had a bit of a rocky start ... but since we got

our new coach, it’s been really great ... she’s kind of brought the whole team together. Everyone’s getting along; everyone seems to be having a good time,” she said.

Friedman said she has seen the team’s drive and desire to compete in spite of the challenges they have faced. “I think everyone is eager to keep going ... I know

that they’re hungry.”

Friedman named eighth-grader

Kiernan Day as a standout performer in their first race, and said she’s excited to see how she develops over the coming weeks.

Both Friedman and junior Sienna Crocker credited Schwartz

with maintaining a positive team culture and keeping the team

‘I think everyone is eager to keep going ... I know that they’re hungry.’

- MOLLY FRIEDMAN

motivated.

Friedman described the environment on the team as “uplifting,” saying that the team’s small size allows for a deeper bond between the athletes.

“It’s such a [tight-knit] group. They all feed off each other, and it’s fun to watch,” she said.

Friedman said in spite of the fact that most of their races have been canceled, the team keeps a large amount of energy in practice and works hard to prepare for every race, even if it ends up getting postponed or moved.

She said she’s been working to keep the team improving throughout this time with new practice strategies like film analysis to help the athletes improve their form and technique.

So far, the ski team’s only race that did not end up canceled or postponed ended in a loss to Masconomet, giving them a record of 0-1 for the season.

All of the team’s competitions are held at Ski Bradford in Haverhill, including championship races at the end of the season.

# Girls’ hockey team works to reach upcoming state tournament

By Libby Mulry  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With a record of 3-11, the Marblehead girls’ ice hockey team co-op with Swampscott, Hamilton-Wenham, and Manchester-Essex are working on reaching the state tournament, coach Brittany Smith said.

“We have a bit of a losing streak, but our attitude is awesome,” freshman Teyah Fleming said.

Fleming said junior assistant

captain Lily Francoeur supports her teammates on and off the ice.

“She has such a good attitude. She’s our assistant captain, so she’s a leader every day,” Fleming said.

Francoeur shared similar sentiments about Fleming, she said that Fleming is constantly working to uplift her fellow players.

“She always lifts your head up if you’re in a mood at practice,” Francoeur said.

Francoeur said by encouraging one another, the team plays well,

not just as individuals but as a whole.

Fleming said the co-op team leads to the creation of strong relationships.

“Being from different schools, because it’s a co-op team, we don’t really know each other that well, so getting along is amazing to have a good team foundation,” she said.

Smith said Fleming not only brings a lot of spirit but is one of the team’s top players.

“She has a great attitude all the time, but she’s also a really great player,” she said.

Seventh-grade student Melanie Earl also has a lot of impact on the team, Francoeur said.

“She is just killing it, and it’s really weird because she’s a

seventh-grader on varsity, and she just blends in,” Fleming said.

Because the team is so young, they’re working on consistency in their games, Smith said.

The team is also working on creating more opportunities in the offensive zone and scoring more, she said.

“Out of the games we have won, we’ve played really great, playing the whole 45 minutes of the game, and we never let up, and we kept pushing,” Smith said.

‘We never let up, and we keep pushing.’

- BRITTANY SMITH

# Boys’ hockey works on chemistry, continues to aim for playoffs

By Sam Heanue  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

With a 6-10 record overall and a 2-1 record in the CAL, the boys’ hockey co-op program between Manchester, Ipswich, and Rockport hopes to improve chemistry, coach Kyle Nelson said.

This record in the CAL ties them for the Baker Division title, senior Mark Pollock said.

He said although the team can struggle to get into the rhythm of the game, they have success once they find their footing.

“We struggle to get our offense going earlier in the ... game, but when we do, we dominate,” he said.

Pollock said the team consistently has to deal with unlucky bounces and that it is important they keep their heads up on the ice and off.

“We’ve got to work for playoffs. It’s going to be an uphill battle the rest of the season, but we’re optimistic,” he said.

Senior captain Dougie Pratt said the season record isn’t what the team had anticipated.

“The season isn’t going as good as we wanted. We’re [four] games below .500,” he said.

Despite their record, the team was victorious against their rival team, Hamilton-Wenham, earlier

in the season, Pratt said.

Although the season isn’t going as well as they’d hoped, the team has the strongest lineup they’ve had since coach Kyle Nelson first started, junior Quinn Brady said.

A strong offensive line, including Brady and Pratt, along with important defense by senior Finn Lawler, has been key to the team’s successes throughout the season, he said.

Although chemistry is high between some players, like Pratt and Brady, who have stepped up together to motivate the team this season, there’s room for improvement, Nelson said.

They’ve begun to engage in team-bonding exercises outside of practice, he said.

“We’ve been doing a lot of team bonding ... we have to understand each other before it’s too late,” Nelson said.

# Studio art project explores potential careers

Students research specific careers

By Whitney Turner  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Students in Tamera Burns’ Studio Art class will be exploring careers involving art and design in a project for the first time. She said students will research specific career paths and jobs that incorporate creative elements.

After they create presentations focused on a key area of interest, they will present their ideas at the school’s STEAM fair on March 30, Burns said.

She said the project connects with the district’s Vision of the Graduate by allowing students to think and plan for their life after high school and consider careers

they hadn’t thought of before. She hopes the project will open high schoolers’ eyes to the creative economy. “Creative economy means that whole umbrella of art and media and design paired with other areas like sales and marketing provide this vast, vast area of our economy,” Burns said. To inspire students, she shared her own story with them. “It’s by me telling my own story that they start to see that there are a lot

of twists and turns in careers. But if you’re really interested in something, don’t ever give it up,” Burns said. As another element to the project, students needed to look deeper into possible careers and explore considerations such as required education in their desired field, junior Caroline Doucette said. “I’ve always been interested in



TAMERA BURNS PHOTO

Sophomore art students Hayden Remington, Josh Cohen, and Maddie O’Grady work on projects.

interior design specifically, and I was able to go in deeper and learn about the education side, like what’s required, skills, and responsibilities,” she said. Additionally, Burns said that students will think about and pitch ideas for their senior year

SCORE projects, because students are often unprepared. “This is planting seeds, germinating ideas, to recognize there are so many different opportunities available to them,” she said. Sophomore Hayden Remington is interested in an art and design-

related career, but she said she hadn’t considered the details it would entail. “This will give me an insight on what it will be like [to be in a creative field] since I hadn’t really done any research before,” she said.

# Ethel Cain’s debut album ‘Preacher’s Daughter’ tells haunting, creative story

By Jordie Cornfield  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

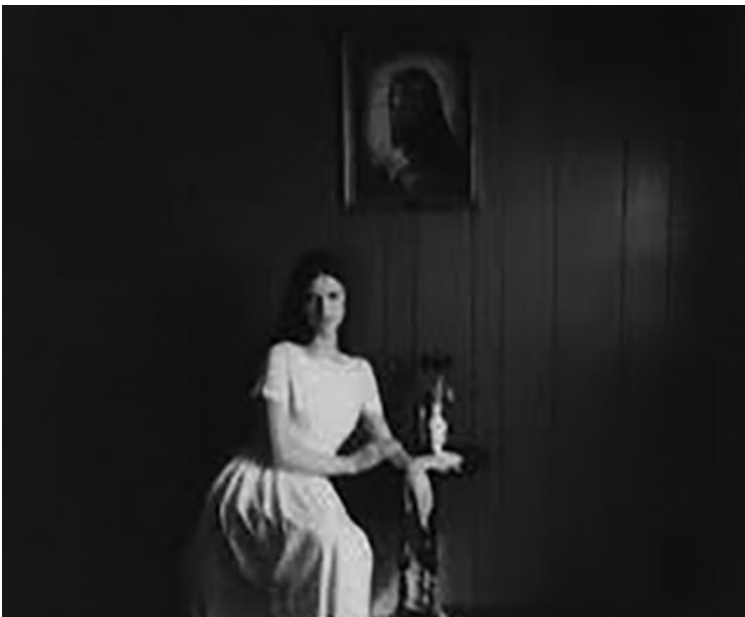
Hayden Silas Anhedönia, known professionally as Ethel Cain, is a singer-songwriter from Tallahassee, Florida. Cain’s debut album, “Preacher’s Daughter” is as raw as human flesh, centering around the life of fictional character Ethel Cain, who runs away from her devoutly religious home only to be killed and cannibalized by her boyfriend.

Cain’s lyricism is similar to the darkness of “Ultraviolence”-era Lana Del Rey, as she mixes themes of romance and violence, the line between the two thinning with each chord.

The first instance of violence is early on, in the opening track,

“Family Tree” (Intro). The song begins with slow bass behind a man reciting scripture, distorted as if it is playing over a recording in another room. The second track, “American Teenager” is the most upbeat song on the album. It has a similar sound to “Salvation” by The Cranberries, Cain’s voice displaying the same twangy resonance as the late Dolores O’Riordan. “American Teenager,” a satirical pop song that criticizes nationalism and modern American culture, is one of its kind in Cain’s discography. While the rest of “Preacher’s Daughter” is slow-burning, “American Teenager” serves as the first spark in Cain’s story of smoldering Americana and hints at the

upcoming darkness. In “Gibson Girl,” Cain seeks validation in the darkest places after she runs away from home and finds work as an exotic dancer. Men play the role of both villain and savior as Cain wrestles with her own sexuality. “Ptolemaea” is something out of a nightmare. As Cain begins to hallucinate from the drugs her boyfriend gave her, the song mirrors her mental state with distant screams that mimic the sound of wind on a stormy night. Cain repeats a haunting plea for her boyfriend to “stop,” her words echoing in the listener’s ears. This track features industrial drums and buzzing flies alongside disturbing lyrics with religious allusions, making it the most un-



DAUGHTERS OF CAIN PHOTO

Ethel Cain’s blurry album cover mirrors her poor mental state.

nerving song on the album. The final track “Strangers,” is a direct address to Cain’s killer. Even after being killed and cannibalized, Cain still loves her boyfriend.

“Preacher’s Daughter” is a disgusting yet beautiful collection of 13 songs. Cain’s use of gothic imagery gives a modern yet timeless feel to her fantastic debut album.

# Chemistry project incorporates music

By Alessia Omari  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

In chemistry teacher William Novak’s annual song project, students used songwriting to describe what they learned in the class.

The project required students to write their own song lyrics that related to the chemistry unit they had recently learned, an idea that had been created when Novak worked at a performing arts school. “There were a lot of drama stu-



TAMERA BURNS PHOTO

Sophomores Hannah Davis and Hayden Remington work on their song project for William Novak’s chemistry class.

dents and vocal students, and we tended to do things that would appeal to that,” Novak said. “When we switched to public school, it seemed to work out great.”

Students enjoyed putting their own creative spin on popular songs, sophomore Hayden Remington said when referring to her parody of Taylor Swift’s “You

Belong With Me” that covered various topics learned within the unit. Remington worked on her song with sophomore Hannah Davis. Students said the project was much more enjoyable than what would be expected in a standard chemistry assignment. “Honestly, the project was so much better than if we had to do a written assignment, and it was a lot more entertaining and engaging,” sophomore Hayden Spencer said. Students described working on the project to be a unique and

rewarding experience, helping students further understand the concepts that they had learned in the class. “It was fun to pick a song and write the lyrics,” sophomore Josh Cohen said. “But the big selling point is that every time there’s a question about one of the subjects, my mind goes to the song I made, and I can remember it.” Novak said his experiences with the project are very positive. “I’ve overall been pleased with the outcome,” Novak said. “This project has been equally as productive when compared to a traditional assessment.”

**‘This project has been equally as productive when compared to a traditional assessment.’**  
- WILLIAM NOVAK

# ‘Puss in Boots: The Last Wish’ revives beloved franchise

Director tells story of gratitude

By Wyeth Takayesu  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Puss in Boots: The Last Wish,” the newest addition to the Puss in Boots franchise, is a must-see film for all ages due to its impactful story and creative animation.

Beginning as a spinoff film from the Shrek franchise in 2011 titled “Puss in Boots,” the enigmatic cat Puss (Antonio Banderas) returned for the sequel film, that debuted on Dec. 7 2022, alongside partner-in-crime Kitty Softpaws (Salma Hayek) and new friend Perrito (Harvey Guillen).

After losing eight of his nine lives across numerous adventures, the movie focuses on Puss chasing after an old nursery rhyme that will grant him a wish,

allowing him to regain all of his lives and escape a final death.

In an interview with Animation Magazine, an American print magazine covering modern developments in animation, one of the co-directors, Joel Crawford, discussed the difficulties of balancing darker themes with humor fit for the whole family.

“When we tested it in a preview screening, we were worried it would be too scary for kids. At the end of the movie, there was

this sense of joy and celebration. One of the kids was asked what this movie is about and he said, ‘It’s

about appreciating your life!’ It’s trusting that you can have dark or scary moments, as long as the end message comes through,” he said.

The sense of celebration and joy for the PG-rated film was shared by all as the movie brought in thousands at each of its 100-minute runtime show-

ings.

According to Box Office Mojo by IMDbPro, the film earned over \$12 million on its opening night and has since earned \$297,770,825 worldwide.

In addition to a compelling story that makes viewers rethink how they spend their life and who they are spending it with, a large part of the movie’s appeal lies in its unique and colorful animation style.

Following animated CGI films like “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse,” a powerful movement has spread throughout animators to use the medium as its own form of art rather than a way to imitate reality, and the influence of the movement is felt in every part of Puss’s newest adventure.

In a separate interview with Yahoo!entertainment, Crawford explained the depths to which the animation team went to capture the magic of a fairy tale.

“Nate Wragg, the production designer, really spearheaded this idea: what if this movie looked like it was a fairytale painting? ... In the opening, we use more



DREAMWORKS.COM

Through colorful and unique animation, “Puss in Boots: The Last Wish” tells a story of Puss (Antonio Banderas) trying to fight off mortality.

hand-drawn techniques. When Puss is running on the rooftops, the motion isn’t always super-smooth. That was important to us, to feel like this is a fairytale that you’re being dropped into,” he said.

Though the movie is still available in theaters, it is also available to stream on Amazon Prime and Apple TV, making this must-see love letter to animation and folk stories accessible to people at home.

## ‘Knives Out’ sequel is inferior to original film

By Ella Chafe  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery” has been gaining popularity since its release on Netflix on Sept. 10, earning itself a 92 percent Rotten Tomatoes critic score.

This movie has a creative plot, but it can be confusing and cheesy at times. The original “Knives Out,” released in 2019, is a more intriguing mystery that keeps you on the edge of your seat.

“Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery” was written and directed by Rian Johnson and produced by Johnson and Ram Bergman.

Filmed in Greece, the movie



NETFLIX.COM

Daniel Craig returns to sequel “Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery” as detective Benoit Blanc with new star-studded cast.

begins with the millionaire Miles Bron (Edward Norton) inviting his five friends to his private island where he plans on hosting a murder mystery game.

These guests include Alpha head scientist Lionel Toussaint (Leslie Odom Jr.), controversial fashion designer Birdie Jay (Kate Hudson), Connecticut governor

Claire Debella (Kathryn Hahn), men’s rights streamer Duke Cod (Dave Bautista), and Alpha co-founder Cassandra “Andi” Brand (Janelle Monáe).

Famous detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig) also attends the trip, although he was not personally invited by Miles.

Craig’s role is noteworthy although it doesn’t compare to his performance in “Knives Out.” His character Benoit Blanc is less serious in “Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery,” which is different and difficult to watch after seeing him in “Knives Out.”

The real reason for Blanc’s attendance is later revealed in a flashback conversation between him and Andi’s sister Helen.

On the island, Blanc immediately

ly solves Miles’ game, and the movie quickly takes a turn when a guest is actually murdered.

Blanc must solve the murder and the reason for his presence, all while being tangled in his own web of lies and secrets.

Besides its witty humor and “whodunit” feel, the movie is

also famous for its cast.

It features the character Whiskey (Madeline Cline) who is exceptional as Sarah

This movie has a creative plot, but it can be confusing and cheesy at times.

Cameron in “Outer Banks.” Cline’s character isn’t integral to solving the mystery but is well executed and adds to the comedic feel.

The movie is rated PG-13 for strong language, violence, and sexual material and has a running time of 139 minutes.

## Netflix’s new docuseries ‘Harry and Meghan’ offers convincing explanation for highly publicized royal exit

By Phileine de Widt  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Harry and Meghan,” a Netflix documentary series about the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, reveals a convincing perspective on the timeless royal drama.

The controversial docuseries, which was released on Dec. 8, 2022, received mixed reviews from the world, yet its viewing was a huge success.

According to “Harry and Meghan Deliver Huge Result for Netflix Despite Couple’s Popularity Plummeting” by Lucas Hill-Paul, “Harry and Meghan” is Netflix’s second-biggest documentary series to date.

The series consists of six epi-

sodes sharing the lives the couple throughout their relationship.

This timeline of events is portrayed with heart-warming yet also heart-breaking graphics, such as sweet videos of their young children but also offensive headlines in the tabloids.

The series also includes interviews with people close to the couple. Meghan’s mother shares her viewpoint, as does Meghan’s friend and co-star from “Suits,” Abigail Spencer.

Meghan and Harry are also interviewed, and occasionally, their remarks feel rehearsed, but overall their story is saddening.

Though the two criticized certain members of the royal family, the main attacks were toward

the British Media, which next to the disturbing graphics created a convincing argument that is easy to sympathize with.

Especially with the involvement of their children, Archie and Lilibet, and Meghan’s mental health, their decision to leave the U.K. seems just.

The inclusion of Harry’s mother, Diana, and her tragic experience with the press, adds a believable perspective.

However, occasionally it seems like the similarities between Diana and Meghan are overdone to portray Meghan as the new beloved princess. Though Meghan and Diana certainly share a similar heart, this forced connection calls for too much pity for



NETFLIX.COM

In the Netflix docuseries “Harry and Meghan,” the Duke and Duchess of Sussex give the public a look into their relationship.

the couple.

Harry and Meghan have put a visible effort into revealing their truth, as seen in the groundbreaking Oprah interview, the new docuseries, and Harry’s new memoir “Spare.”

This continuous production has caused many to believe that this is all just a money grab and that Harry has overshared issues

between himself and his family.

Members of the royal family haven’t commented on the production, giving the audience only one perspective to rely on.

It is impossible to know what’s happening behind royal doors, but “Harry and Meghan” gives insight into the rift within the Windsor family and offers little hope for reconnection.