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New TouchView boards require faculty adjustment

Teachers explore, use new technology of updated boards

By Gwendolyn Berger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

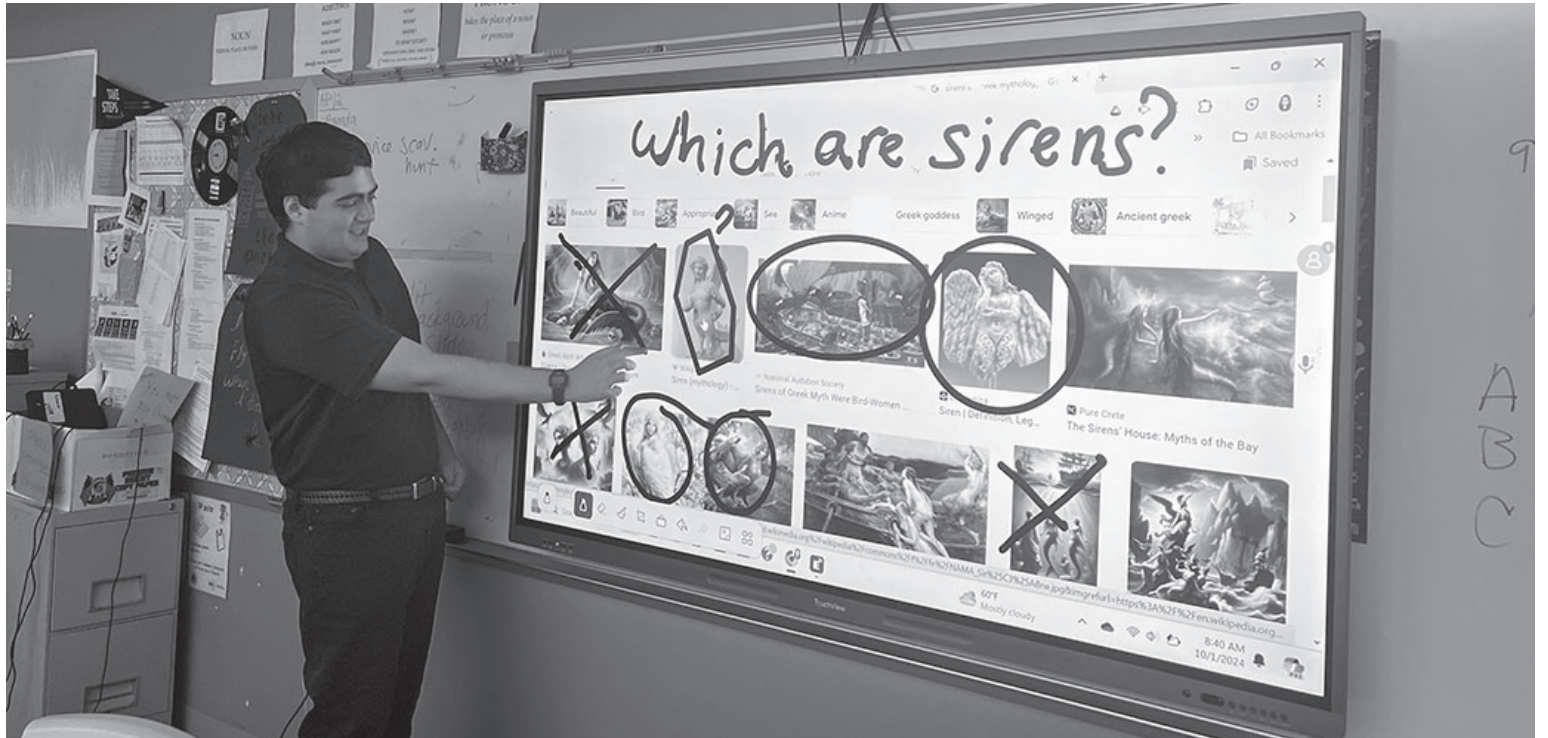
Due to a delay in shipment, the new Ocker's TouchView boards replaced the old Eno boards later than expected. The new boards were installed on the first day of school, Aug. 28, Principal Julie Sgroi said.

Outdated technology led to the replacement, she said.

"A lot has changed in technology since those [old] boards were first installed ... the technology department really researched to discover what would be best for our staff," Sgroi said.

She said that although she received abundant positive feedback about the new boards, many teachers felt they needed training to use the new boards properly.

"Teachers are reporting that the new boards have better connectivity ... but some [teachers] are struggling with navigating the boards," Sgroi said.



Senior Josh Cohen uses the annotation tool of the new TouchView board in his AP English Literature class. As a result of the delayed delivery of the boards, many teachers are still learning how to use them, though there has been a positive response to the change.

GWENDOLYN BERGER PHOTO

Math teacher Lauren Woodcock said she had a difficult transition due to the late installation of the boards.

"I'm not sure [the teachers] know all of [the board's] capabilities

and thus cannot maximize its potential," she said.

English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton said although the transition required significant troubleshooting, she prefers the

TouchView boards over the old Eno boards.

"I prefer the new boards. I think the old ones outlived their usefulness really quickly ... I do miss a little bit of the whiteboard

space," she said.

Edgerton, who teaches in different classrooms, said moving is significantly easier since the boards are connected via Google

NEW BOARDS, page 3

Administration seeks to connect with community in second year

Looks to increase interdisciplinary learning in classes

By Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In their second year at the high school, the administration is looking forward to learning more about the school community and incorporating interdisciplinary learning into curriculums, Principal Julie Sgroi said.

Sgroi's biggest goal is to help students and teachers become better versions of themselves, she said.

"I want to make this year, for our students and for our faculty and staff, be one of their best years," Sgroi said.

She said that although she has aspirations for the year, she believes it can be harmful to implement too many changes at once.

"I would like to do more listening than talking to all of our stakeholders and to realize change does take time, and we have to stop and think about what



COURTESY OF ELISABETH DRINKWATER

Principal Julie Sgroi and Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater celebrate their first graduation in June 2024. Their goals for the year include focusing on supporting teachers and students.

works best for our community," Sgroi said.

Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater said that in her first year at the school, she felt that she was still meeting many stu-

dents, but she recognizes most faces now.

"Getting to know the student population is really important for me," she said.

Drinkwater said her goal for

the year is to get into classrooms more.

"I want to see what the students are really doing. And I got into a lot of classrooms last year, and that's my favorite thing," she said.

In terms of curriculum, Sgroi is most excited about implementing more interdisciplinary learning in order to make learning more relevant for students, she said.

"I probably am most excited about that because it's just going to benefit the culture of the building. It's going to help us realize we have a lot more in common than we thought," Sgroi said.

By learning in an interdisciplinary way, students are prepared for their future where jobs will require them to apply different skills, district curriculum director Heather Leonard said.

"That idea of interdisciplinary is that, inherently, things are

so interconnected, and there's so many opportunities for using skills or content we learn in one area to apply in another," she said.

Leonard said professional development days at the high school, when teachers and administrators can begin to implement these changes, are coordinated by herself and Sgroi.

She and Sgroi have been planning and brainstorming what interdisciplinary learning could

look like at the high school level, she said.

"Opportunities and spaces can be both large scale, like a full year class, and small scale, like may-

be a single assessment or learning opportunity," Leonard said.

Another goal of both Sgroi and Drinkwater is to encourage communication between teachers, students, administrators, and families, they both said.

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New director of school counseling creates programs

Introduces
Counselor Corner,
other changes

By Annie Pinkin
INDEPENDENT STAFF

With the start of the new school year, new director of school counseling Samantha Pindara said she is connecting with students, families, and the community.

A Massachusetts native, Pindara graduated from Chelmsford High School, where she played lacrosse, field hockey, and track. Pindara said she pursued her love of sports after college through coaching, specifically field hockey since 2015.

She continued playing lacrosse at Longwood University in Farmville, Va., and then attended Springfield College in Springfield, Mass., where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in history/education, she said.

Pindara earned a master's degree in education in school counseling from Rivier University in Nashua, NH. She said she recently received a certification in educational leadership from Salem State University in Salem, Mass.

Pindara was a counselor at Reading Memorial High School for two years and at Lynnfield High School for eight years. One year after she received her certification, the director of counseling job opened up at MERHS, allowing her to use her new knowledge, she said.

Upon coming to the high school, Pindara was impressed with the students, she said. Everyone knew their expectations, knew what they were supposed to do, and were eager to chal-



Samantha Pindara, the director of counseling, has 10 years of counseling experience.

lenge themselves, Pindara said.

"One student used the phrase, 'It's a work-hard play-hard kind of place,'" she said.

Pindara said she is looking forward to making new changes in the counseling department, specifically strengthening connections with parents and the community. She said she and the department are focused on bringing in parents and the community into the school. Pindara said this could help them understand what counselors do and answer important questions they might have.

"If we can bring families in and continue to have strong communication with the community, that's only going to help the students in the long run," she said.

Additionally, the counseling department introduced new resources for students, especially for post-high school planning, Pindara said.



ANNIE PINKIN PHOTOS

Counselors Samantha Pindara, Gillian Polk, David Conwell, and counseling fellow Michael DeSalvo meet to discuss Senior Night and other events to assist seniors with post-secondary planning.

She said they have already done a college application "boot camp" for seniors, brought in college representatives, and are starting a new program, "Counselor Corner."

Counselor Corner helps families gain a deeper understanding of what

goes into planning for the future, Pindara said.

Six times a year, families in the community can come into the school and learn about specific topics in a group setting, as opposed to one on one meetings with only one counselor.

On the last meeting of the year, recent alumni will have the opportunity to speak about their experiences both in and out of the high school, she said.

Interacting with the community and taking the counseling department to the "next level" is

exactly what the administration department was looking for in a new head of school counseling, said Principal Julie Sgroi, who worked with Pindara in the past and was familiar with her work ethic and dedication.

"We all knew the moment she walked in she would be the perfect fit for MERHS ... she has a lot of great ideas, she has great energy, she's focused on what's best for her students," Sgroi said.

Sgroi said her favorite thing about working with Pindara is how reliable she is, and she knows they can work together to improve the school.

"I feel like I have a great teammate," she said.

Counselor David Conwell, who has been working at the high school for eight years, said the transition between directors has been surprisingly smooth.

"I already feel like I've been working with her for a long time," he said.

Conwell said counselors work not just with students but teachers, parents, administrators, and the community. He said having

'She's always quick to help you. If she sees a student that needs help, she's very quick to offer guidance.'

- GRACE RUMBLE

FUN FACTS

- Enjoys spending time at lakes with family.
- Loves to coach field hockey.
- Favorite movie is "Mamma Mia."
- Favorite music genre is country.
- Favorite high school subject was history.
- Favorite book is "The Nightingale."

someone who knows how to get the job done has been great.

Junior Grace Rumble transitioned from former director of school counseling Beverly Low, to Pindara. She said Pindara was helpful and supportive.

"She's always quick to help you. If she sees a student that needs help she's very quick to offer guidance," Rumble said.

Pindara's goal is to help students get on the right path for them, whether it is community or four-year college, or a job.

She said she's incredibly excited to support the seniors and to see where all the seniors end up next year.

Administration simplifies attendance codes to comply with DESE, encourages timeliness

Seeks to improve attendance, emphasizes student communication

By Whitney Turner
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Following the release of new guidelines from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the high school has streamlined its method of recording absences, Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater said.

Drinkwater said the language of the attendance policy found in the high school handbook has not changed, but absences are being recorded differently.

"The only part that's different is in terms of DESE ... an absence is an absence. It doesn't matter the reason," she said.

The state now requires that absences be considered either documented or undocumented, Drinkwater said, meaning that

The state's compulsory school attendance law (G.L. c. 76, 1) applies to all absences from school, even if they are considered "documented" at the school level. Certain absences can be considered "documented" at the school level if they are due to:

- Medical
- Bereavement
- Religious
- College Visit (HS only)

In order for an absence to be marked "documented," students/guardians must provide written confirmation (email is okay) to the main office for each day the student is absent from school. This documentation must include the date absent, the reason for the absence, and the parent/guardian's signature. If the absence is anticipated (for example, in the case of a college visit), parents/guardians should notify the school in advance of the absence. Teachers are not required to provide schoolwork in advance of planned absences.

The school emailed families a list of documented absences.

if a student misses school for a doctor's visit or a college visit, they must have documentation to prove it.

In Aspen, the digital platform the school uses for grades and attendance, students will be marked as either tardy, dismissed, or absent, with a designation for documented absences, Drinkwater said.

However, she said that documentation can get "blurry" in some instances, such as if a parent informs the school that their

student is ill but has no doctor's note.

Drinkwater said that absences are considered to be documented if they are accompanied by a signed note from a parent or guardian and are for medical reasons, bereavement, religious reasons, college visits, and nurse dismissal.

Math teacher Richard Brown, who was a member of the teacher attendance working group that helped streamline the Aspen codes, said changes in attendance

codes will hopefully help with communication between teachers and students.

"Any clarity that we can get on the attendance codes in Aspen is good because I think ... it has been unclear to us what the codes mean," he said.

Despite appreciating the clarity regarding attendance codes, Brown said he also believes that students benefit from having

conversations with their teachers about missing class.

"I think the best thing of all is if kids would just talk to teachers and let them know," he said.

Principal Julie Sgroi said that although some of these changes were made due to poor attendance as a school, the administration also wants to emphasize the importance of showing up to learn.

"The Department of Education gives us a rating on things, and the one place where we really need to work on is attendance ... But beyond just the numbers and

because they told us to, it's really that we want [students] here," she said.

When it comes to enforcement of the tardiness policy, Drinkwater said she hopes to open conversation lines that open up communication with students, families, and the school.

"Every three tardies, I'm definitely checking in with students, and depending on the circumstances, they

may receive a detention, or they may receive a warning," she said.

Junior River Silva said that while she has certainly noticed this increased out-

reach regarding tardiness, though she hasn't noticed uniformity in the enforcement of the policy.

"I know that some people are getting [tardies] now, but there's also a lot of people who just aren't getting them," she said.

Sgroi said the administration hopes that this new policy will teach good attendance habits and will assist in instilling positive skills of resilience in students.

'The only part that's different is in terms of DESE ... an absence is an absence. It doesn't matter the reason.'

-ELISABETH DRINKWATER

New library aide brings knowledge, ideas for change

Hopes to create resource center, reorganize library

By Summer Demeo
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After working for Conant Middle High School in Jaffrey, NH, for three years as their library media specialist, Megan Peura was hired as the new learning commons aide, bringing changes to the space.

Peura is certified as a librarian in New Hampshire but is waiting for Massachusetts to certify her, she said.

She graduated from Southern New Hampshire University in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in human resources.

She worked as an auditor before earning her master's degree in library information science from San Jose State University in 2023, she said.

Peura said she is working to reorganize the books in the library, also known as the learning commons, to make it a usable space and to create a resource list for students, so they know what materials the library has.

In the future, she said she wants the space to be user-friend-

ly and to feel welcoming to all.

"It's a resource center, so it's somewhere people can come and get the information they need for different activities and classes," Peura said.

She also said she has been talking to librarians from the Manchester and Essex public libraries about possible collaborations such as a book borrowing system or helping students sign up for library cards.

"They're a community partner already, so we figured why not try to see what we can do with them," Peura said.

She will also be working with teachers and their classes to show what the learning commons can be used for, such as helping students with research for essays and projects, she said.

She plans on creating handouts to help students with the research process and is hoping to teach lessons on how to do research in the future, Peura said.

Peura said she expects students to work quietly in the library, be respectful of the space, and clean up after themselves.

Principal Julie Sgroi said the district wanted the learning commons to be more than just a place where students go when teachers are absent.

"The vision of the district was to see the learning commons be-



SUMMER DEMEO PHOTO

New library aide Megan Peura catalogs books at her desk. Peura is hoping to create a usable space for students to work.

ing used more as a place for students to go to access information, to learn, and to work collaboratively," she said.

But, senior Tori Moulton said it has been unclear whether or not students can use the space at all.

Junior Aaron Crompton also said he has been unsure of the rules for the space and has not been using the library to do his work like he did last year.

Sgroi said seniors can still sign out of the cafeteria and the auditorium to go to the learning commons when they have a study hall or teachers are absent. They can also go there during U-block,

which Sgroi communicated to seniors in an email, she said.

Underclassmen can ask aide Casey Economo to go to the library to work quietly if they have a study hall or a teacher absent. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on how much space is available, Dean of Students Elisabeth Drinkwater said.

Initially, Drinkwater said the administration had told students they weren't allowed to go into the learning commons because they wanted to make sure Peura had space to get started on reorganizing the library.

FUN FACTS

- She is a coach for the middle school cross country team.
- She is an avid runner and plans on running the Honolulu Marathon in December.
- She has a twin sister, who is also a librarian.
- Her favorite book series is "Harry Potter."
- She loves to travel.

Sgroi said Peura is very knowledgeable about current library practices and has a vision for the learning commons.

"It's great to work with someone who knows what we could do to that space to bring it to the next level" she said.

New nurse looks forward to working with students

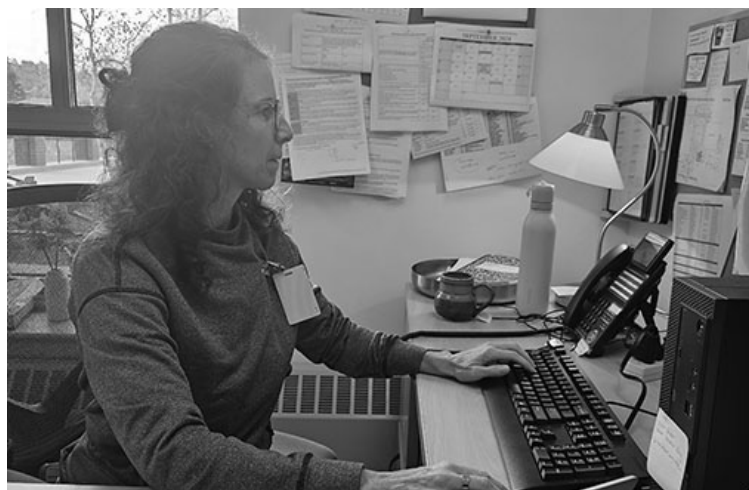
By Sabine Cooper
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After a career shift from clinical care in hospice and geriatrics, Elizabeth Keane joined the school district as a middle and high school nurse.

Keane grew up in Chelmsford, Ma., where she graduated from Chelmsford High School in 1997.

Later, she attended the University of New Hampshire, where she graduated in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in creative writing and English, she said.

After college, she worked at EF Educational Tours for six years. Then, Keane, looking for a career shift and inspired by her father, who was sick with lung



SABINE COOPER PHOTO

Nurse Elizabeth Keane is working outside of clinical care for the first time after having worked at a community health center.

cancer, went back to school to obtain her R.N. at Simmons University in Boston in 2008, she said.

Before moving to Ipswich in 2018, Keane worked at a community health center in Dorchester. After relocating to Ipswich, she did home visits for geriatric patients and hospice work with different organizations, she said.

Keane said she took the open position at the middle-high school because she was looking for a direction shift again and was ready to work with a different population.

Though this is her first position outside clinical care, Keane said she is excited to be involved in the school community

"I want to become someone

that the students trust and that the teachers trust," she said.

Being more integrated into the school atmosphere is a new goal that both Keane and Principal Julie Sgroi have for the position this year, Sgroi said.

"The location of where the office is can be somewhat isolating, so I want to make an effort to make sure she feels included in the community," she said.

More specifically, Sgroi said she is also working towards getting Keane more involved in meetings when a nurse would be appropriate.

"She could have some insights on safety or when talking about student mental health with counselors," she said.

Having worked with Keane before at EF Educational Tours, Sgroi trusts that Keane is well

suited for this role due to her caring nature.

"Liz has a great spirit in terms of putting students at ease, which is very important. Students need to feel safe and comfortable in the [nurse's office]," she said.

Sgroi also said Keane's experience will translate well into the school environment.

"I have no concerns about her working in a school, but learning about what it means to be a school nurse is new to her.

There are things like ALICE training that don't happen in other places," she said.

Senior Faye Bourgeois, who visited the school nurse earlier this year, agreed with Sgroi that Keane is very knowledgeable.

"She definitely helped me out a lot and had a very calm and patient demeanor," she said.

'I want to become someone that the students trust and that the teachers trust.'

-ELIZABETH KEANE

CONTINUATIONS

NEW BOARDS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 Drive. The board has all the necessary tools for teaching, she said.

"I like how with just one board and a couple of buttons, I can do what I need to do," she said.

Senior Tori Moulton said she enjoyed watching her teachers experiment with the boards during the first few days.

"My first impression was that the teachers were a bit unpre-

pared, but it was fun to watch everyone try to understand how the board worked," she said.

Moulton said she wondered how the change would affect math teachers, who primarily taught via the whiteboard. However, the change has not affected her learning yet, she said.

"It's impacting the pace of lessons ... but not the actual content," Moulton said.

Social studies teacher Jessica Tran said that while she originally struggled with utilizing the

TouchView boards, she is becoming more comfortable navigating them, especially after the professional development day.

"The professional development day was very helpful ... we went through tips and tricks," Tran said.

Digital learning specialist Matt Tangney said he was responsible for connecting the boards to the internet and ensuring they were working.

He said although some of the staff welcomed the change and

others did not, the faculty was very understanding.

"One of the things I've always liked about this [school] is the prevailing attitude. Even when people are really frustrated, they do a very good job at separating their frustration with the situation and with the people associated with the situation," Tangney said.

ADMIN. GOALS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 that I continue to work with students, teachers, parents; I want

people to know they can come to me if they have any concerns and that they walk away feeling that they've been heard," Sgroi said.

She said her monthly high school newsletters were well received last year, and she looks forward to continuing to create them.

Sgroi said she would like to continue to share student accomplishments with the community.

"I think we've done a good job trying to communicate to the public and to the community the great stuff that happens here," she said.

Boston Magazine ranks high school third in Boston area

Principal Julie Sgroi credits school community

By Hannah Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Boston Magazine ranked the high school third, overall, out of the best high schools in Greater Boston.

The article, written by Boston Magazine staff, said the rankings are compiled using the most recent statistical data

available to the magazine at the time of publication.

“This year’s rankings offer a statistical analysis of the top-performing high schools in the Greater Boston area,” the article said.

Boston Magazine used data of schools’ average class size, student-to-teacher ratio, MCAS

scores and SAT scores to create the 2024 rankings.

Principal Julie Sgroi said she is proud of the school’s ranking but does not place much emphasis on it.

“I want to make sure it’s important to the students that I don’t care as much about the ranking as I care about their experience here,” she said.

Math and science department

chair Kristin Umile said she thinks small class sizes have contributed to the school’s high ranking.

“It allows for more differentiation of instruction

when you have a smaller group of students in front of you so that you can make sure that you’re reaching all your learners,” Umile said.

Social studies department chair Lauren Dubois said she attributes the school’s ranking to students’ dedication to their education.

‘We are fortunate to live in a community that places value on education.’

-JULIE SGROI



HANNAH DAVIS PHOTO

Social studies teacher Jessica Tran’s AP Psychology class is one of the many Advanced Placement courses offered at the school, enhancing the academics and boosting the rating of the high school.

“I’m very proud of all the students ... Our students work hard; they’re motivated to succeed, so I’m glad that they’re recognized for doing so,” DuBois said.

Sgroi said she thinks the school community played a big part in the school’s high ranking.

“Value on education I think... start[ed] ... the moment they’re in kindergarten,” she said.

Boston Magazine used data of schools’ average class size, student-to-teacher ratio, MCAS scores and SAT scores to create the 2024 rankings.

Sgroi said the article gives a list of quality schools that provide the administration with outstanding districts to learn and improve from.

“It gives a good basis as to who the districts are that we should look up to,” she said.

Teachers reminded to lock doors during school hours

By Stella Straub
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Though the school’s Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate (ALICE) training has encouraged the practice of locking classroom doors for several years, Principal Julie Sgroi said she sent out an email to teachers following the Sept. 4 Georgia school shooting to remind them to keep doors locked during the school day.

She said that there has been no change to policy or protocol.

In the event of an emergency, teachers are able to slide away a magnet on the door lock instead of having to locate keys, Sgroi said.

“If doors are locked, [and] the magnets are on there, then it’s one less thing to worry about if

we need to lock down,” she said.

Sgroi said that after reading the report of the school shooting incident in Georgia, it seemed to her that the intruder was not able to enter many classrooms because the doors were locked.

“The recent incident ... definitely informed and reminded me that I should send that reminder out to teachers.

But really, in theory, nothing has changed, and ... it’s good practice to do every year... it’s one of those beginning of the year things,” she said.

Sgroi said keeping the doors locked should not impact students’ days.

‘I guess it always been just good practice ... nothing’s really new.’

-JULIE SGROI

Social studies teacher Jessica Tran said she does not view keeping the doors locked harmful to students.

“I think it’s another piece of the whole puzzle that we have as teachers ... to keep [the school environment] healthy,” she said.

Tran said she has had issues with students getting locked outside of class, due to both the magnet falling off the door and

as a result of the varying implementations of door locking procedure between different teachers that share a classroom.

“I just get so caught up in my

teaching that I maybe forget a student has signed out to go to the bathroom and that they’re going to try to get back into the classroom. So luckily, other students are listening for them,” she said.



STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

The school uses magnets to help keep students safe by being able to lock and unlock classroom doors quickly, in case of an emergency.

Senior Finn Birkeland said he was locked out of room B123 during his AP Psychology class, but a classmate had to let him back into class.

He said the incident was a small inconvenience for an im-

portant cause.

Seniors Clara Grant, Abigail Clark, and Claire Clark said none of their classes lock their doors and that they have noticed no change this year compared to years prior.

Computer science teacher joins high school

By Charlie Baker
INDEPENDENT STAFF

New computer science teacher David Kaufman joined the high school faculty after teaching technology classes in Revere, Dorchester, and Everett.

Kaufman said he is teaching five classes this semester: Introduction to Coding, CAD, Robotics, Physical Computing, and AP Computer Science.

Kaufman grew up in Peabody and went to Peabody Veterans Memorial High School. He then attended UMass Amherst before receiving a master’s degree in



CHARLIE BAKER PHOTO

Computer science teacher David Kaufman wants to expand computer and technology classes.

technology and education from Lesley University and a doctorate in education from Boston University, he said.

He began his college path by majoring in psychology before switching to a career in computer science.

“When I was in college, I was supposed to graduate in 2000,

when there was this, I’ll call it a tech Renaissance ... Everybody [got] into it; it became cool. So I started taking courses in it, loved it, felt like I had an aptitude for it, and I thought that would be a fun thing to teach,” he said.

Kaufman’s students appreciate his teaching style. “He tries to look and understand the way I think, so that he can help me learn,” sophomore Riley Corrigan said.

Corrigan isn’t the only one who has benefited from the way Kaufman teaches.

Sophomore Peter Langendorf said, “He has a hands-on approach. Every class he has one of us share our screen to the board, and he uses that to show us how we can improve our code.”

Kaufman said he was hired very late in the summer after

former computer science teacher Steven Cogger’s unexpected retirement.

“It was... a last-minute switch, but in teaching we’re ready to pivot at a moment’s notice,” he said.

Despite the timing, he decided to take the job.

“I’d heard great things about the community, and then I learned that there’s a focus on the student, with thought given to smaller class sizes. And that sounded very appealing to me,” he said.

Kaufman said he hopes to grow the computer science program by adding new classes in the future.

He said he is also interested in adding more classes to the technology program like AP Computer Science Principles.

FUN FACTS

- Has run a marathon in 21 different states.
- His wife is a special education teacher.
- Has three daughters.
- Has two mini goldendoodles.
- Had water flood through the ceiling during a class.
- He is vegan.



COURTESY OF ANDREA LOCKE

Daisy, the comfort dog, wears her Manchester Essex bandana.



COURTESY OF ANDREA LOCKE

Sophomore Colton Sharp, junior Aaron Crompton, senior Cian Brennock, and freshman Eli Amigo sit down in the front hallway of the building to pet Daisy.



COURTESY OF ANDREA LOCKE

Senior Libby Lawler visits Daisy and gives her a hug during her lunch break.



COURTESY OF ANDREA LOCKE

Andrea Locke kneels down to play with Daisy next to Locke's SRO desk in the front hallway of the building.

Welcome, Daisy!

School resource officer's comfort dog supports students, staff

By Augie Capotosto
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Through the efforts of students, faculty, and the Manchester Police Department, the school has welcomed a comfort dog to support students and staff, School Resource Officer Andrea Locke said.

The comfort dog, Daisy, is a 10-month-old yellow lab that officially belongs to the police department.

She is assigned to Locke who brings her in during school hours to improve students' mental health, Locke said.

Junior Aaron Crompton said Daisy positively affects him and other students.

"I see her every day, and it's really nice. She just calms me down," he said.

Locke said she has already been seeing a constructive response from students.

She said she conducted a poll on Sept. 9 to record the number of times people interacted with Daisy in a single day.

Locke said that despite coming in an hour and a half after school started that day, Daisy received 280 visits, and on any given day visits are upwards of 300.

"I think [that number] is just going to continue to grow once more people begin to understand the benefits of having her," she said.

That figure isn't just composed of students and faculty but also people who have business in the building, Locke said.

"The other day, [Daisy] and I were out front, and a mother and little girl stopped by to say hello because they'd heard about her. Or sometimes the parents that come in to drop off their kids' lunch [greet her] as well," she said.

Locke said one of the main effects she has seen is Daisy bringing different people together.

"The first few days of school, there was a senior and two freshmen, and they had a conversation over which classes and teachers they had," she said.

Daisy typically receives the



COURTESY OF ANDREA LOCKE

Daisy, Manchester Police Department's comfort dog, reads The Independent's graduation issue while visiting the main office.

most visitors during lunch and high school free blocks, Locke said.

"New students who haven't quite found their group eat lunch here with us, and then conversations start," she said.

Locke said it was uplifting to see Daisy bring people together who probably wouldn't have had a conversation otherwise.

The idea for a school comfort dog came from sophomores Scarlet Lee and Cate Vendt during their Civic Action class last school year.

Civic Action teacher Nicole O'Rourke said the Civic Action Project is a quarter-long initiative where students explore solutions to a school, local, or state issue.

Lee and Vendt decided that they wanted to make changes in their school system to mitigate the negative effects of school on students' mental health, Lee said.

"I've dealt with that; I've seen

other people deal with that, so just doing [anything] we can to try and improve that was important to us," she said.

Originally the pair looked into solutions such as trying to get school to start later, so they experience less stress due to a lack of sleep.

"We decided that it would be too large of an undertaking for us to accomplish," Lee said.

Vendt said that after researching online what other schools had done to support students struggling with mental health issues, they found that some chose to invest in comfort dogs.

Through looking at different websites and companies that sponsor these animals, they discovered that multiple districts had gotten dogs through their police departments, she said.

"That's when we initially contacted Officer Locke ... [and she] told us that the [SRO] at

Gloucester High School had [a comfort dog] on their grounds," Lee said.

They contacted the SRO, Peter Sutera, and interviewed him about Ace, his comfort dog.

"We came up with a proposal and presented it to the Chief of Police at the Manchester Police Department and Officer Locke, along with one other lieutenant. Once the idea was there, it was kind of out of our hands," Vendt said.

Elisabeth Drinkwater, dean of students, said Superintendent Pam Beaudoin had to construct district parameters and reach out to lawyers about having an animal on the premises.

Drinkwater said she and Joe Janack, the middle school dean of students, were put in charge of policies revolving around Daisy.

"In terms of allergies, [Mr. Janack and I] sent out an opt-out form for students that had any allergies or aversions so we could ensure that if Daisy was going into a classroom, we could notify those students ahead of time or avoid the room entirely," Drinkwater said.

She said the policies they have implemented around Daisy have been formed in direct alignment with The Manchester Police Department to ensure that the comfort dog is being used for her primary purpose.

The Manchester Police Department purchased Daisy from a professional canine services program out of Middleborough, through a trainer named Charlie Young, Locke said.

He trained Daisy for two weeks and now offers monthly training that Daisy can attend if she begins to have issues, she said.

The funding used to purchase and sustain Daisy so far has come from various sources, Locke said.

"[The police department] had a

previous canine a few years ago, and there was money left in that account. There is also a mental health grant that the police department gets that has covered some of that funding," she said.

Locke said that the Manchester Hooper Fund donated a substantial amount of money to support Daisy's startup cost.

Another large contributor was the Class of 2024, who provided funding as their senior gift to the school, Lee said.

Despite diverse sources of funding, Locke said that the

'I've been told ... that this is one of the best things that's happened in the school.'

-ANDREA LOCKE

police department only has enough money to sustain Daisy for another six months, roughly.

"I don't think that the town would let her go. I think

people would step up and would figure out [solutions] because I think she's a great benefit. But I also think it'll work itself out, so I'm not panicking," Locke said.

She said the police department has been working with the Manchester Town Hall to figure out new ideas for fundraising. They also encourage any kind of outside support from town citizens.

"If any students wanted to make [raising money] into some sort of project or club, where they could get community service hours for it, I'm open to any and all suggestions," Locke said.

She said with help from a social media expert at Town Hall, Daisy is being promoted on both Facebook and Instagram, where her tag is manchestermappeddaisy.

She said interaction with Daisy's accounts on social media could be another opportunity for Daisy to help bring the school community together.

"I've been told multiple times that this is one of the best things that's happened in the school ... I'm excited to see how she continues to affect the [community]," Locke said.

SCAR receives \$2,500 from The Hooper Fund for speaker visit

Will host professor, hip hop artist to discuss activism

By Annie Pinkin
INDEPENDENT STAFF

The Student Coalition Against Racism (SCAR) received a \$2,500 grant from The Hooper

Fund, which allowed the club to hire a speaker for Black History Month, said Allison Krause, SCAR adviser and English teacher.

The grant permitted the club to invite University of Massachusetts Boston professor and hip hop artist Akrobatik to speak at the school this February about activism and becoming a changemaker, she said.

"I did not expect the grant to be funded in full," Krause said.

"I was really floored that [The Hooper Fund was] being so incredibly generous and supportive of our request."

According to its website, The Hooper Fund is a non-profit organization in Manchester by-the-Sea that has historically raised money for education in the community.

While planning their Black History Month program, SCAR said that hiring Akrobatik, whom they heard speak two years prior, would benefit their club and the school.

Last fall, SCAR reached out to numerous organizations. In the spring, The Hooper Fund responded to their grant proposal with \$2,500, Krause said.

"It meant a lot to the students to just know that people in our wider community are really supportive of the work that we're trying to do," she said.

'I was really floored that [The Hooper Fund was] being so incredibly generous and supportive.'

-ALLISON KRAUSE



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

SCAR adviser Allison Krause informs members of their \$2,500 grant from The Hooper Fund, which will fund professor and hip hop artist Akrobatik's visit to speak during Black History Month.

Krause said she created a slideshow highlighting the group's work throughout the past year and surprised them with the grant at the end of the slideshow.

SCAR leader senior Lily Stefanovich said the moment they found out they had received the grant was exciting.

"It felt so rewarding because we do so much work that

sometimes does go unseen," Stefanovich said.

SCAR leader senior Henry Stevens and Stefanovich both said they joined the club because of its mission: learning about history, amplifying marginalized voices, and standing for justice and positive change in the community.

"I've always been interested

in getting involved in causes for social action, ... and SCAR provides an interesting opportunity, especially in a school that is not very racially diverse," Stevens said.

Krause said students who are interested in activism and positive change should stop by a SCAR meeting on Fridays at 10 a.m. in room B217.

Civic action project targets school's lack of databases

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Since the high school has gone almost four years without an official resource database,

sophomores Bianca Torri and Emily Rattray used their civic action project to encourage the re-implementation of a database for students to utilize.

Torri said their project was initially targeted toward the lack of a system to check books out of the school library, but they were redirected.

"Originally the school had access to a library database through

the school website, which we don't have now ... And so we were going to pose the question about what happened and see if we could get it reinstated," she said.

'It surprised me that a school district that is constantly ranked so high in the state didn't have research resources.'

-NICOLE O'ROURKE

Digital learning specialist Matt Tangney said without a librarian the school cannot have the database.

Social studies teacher Nicole O'Rourke said she steered

the students towards databases as a civic action topic after her first two years teaching here showed her that the library was not being utilized to its full potential.

"It surprised me that a school



ISABELLE DONNELLAN VALADE PHOTO

Sophomores Bianca Torri and Emily Rattray used their civic action project to promote the re-implementation of library databases.

district that is constantly ranked so high in the state didn't have research resources. There weren't places where students could go to conduct research as a group. They didn't have the resources that ... I felt like a

school library should have," she said.

O'Rourke said she was ready to support Torri and Rattray's project because their interest in the project showed that the lack of a database was affecting

students.

Torri and Rattray said they spoke to Principal Julie Sgroi regarding presenting this civic action project to the new learning commons aide, Megan Peura, but they have not approached her yet.

Despite not yet knowing about the project, Peura feels similarly to Torri, Rattray, and O'Rourke about the necessity of databases in schools.

"[They] provide students the skills they need as they enter college and the workforce in how to utilize these databases that will be used throughout their education. The sources you find are vetted and reliable," Peura said.

Torri and Rattray said they feel passionate about continuing with this project.

"We want to move further in using [the library] to its full potential and getting access to that information. There are so many databases online with archives and information that we should have access to," Torri said.

CLASS OFFICERS

Freshmen

President: Sophia Eagan
Vice President: Ava Dickerson
Secretary: Rosie Renehan
Treasurer: Keira Flynn

Sophomores

President: Charlie Athanas
Vice President: Ellie Virden
Secretary: Cate Vendt
Treasurer: Alex Hatfield

Juniors

President: Lila Brady
Vice President: Bissy Mitrano
Secretary: Emma Brown
Treasurer: Arielle Stafford

Seniors

President: Jack Cummins
Vice President:
Summer Demeo
Secretary: Gwen Berger
Treasurer: Luke Holmes

School changes class officer election system

By Bissy Mitrano
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Changes to the Student Council election process were recently implemented to provide more transparency about candidates' objectives, adviser and foreign language teacher Erin Fortunato said.

To improve the process, students are now required to provide more materials to support their candidacy.

"The potential officers need to submit a teacher recommendation, which is different this

year... and then they need to submit a speech to Ms. Fortunato," Principal Julie Sgroi said.

She and Fortunato have been attempting to bring back normalcy to elections after the pandemic altered the election process, Sgroi said.

During the pandemic, students sent a video describing their reasons for

running as a Student Council member, she said.

"I think videos were the best COVID-19 solution. We wanted people to see the candidates' faces and allow the candidate to

do something to show why they would be good in that position. It was the best way to do it with social distancing," Fortunato said.

Junior Addison Lai said she likes the new election system but said a few changes should be made.

"How we decide the vice president should be changed, maybe the runner up should be vice president. I think this because usually the runner up also does a lot of campaigning work, and they should be able to use the ideas for council," she said. Students were pressured to

'We made this process a little more similar to what the process would be for a true election.'

-JULIE SGROI

vote for a particular candidate in past years, when students voted on a Google form, Lai said.

"I know in years past candidates have stood behind voters, threatening to make students vote for them. They would use unethical tactics, which is not okay," she said.

Sgroi said voting was held in the learning commons this year using a paper ballot in an attempt to make voting more private.

"We made this process a little more similar to what the process would be for a true election, which is great practice for the students to stay informed," she said.

The new system has encouraged students to take more of an active role in choosing student leadership, Sgroi said

Phone Bans

Should schools place restrictions on cellphone use?

Pro

Bissy Mitrano

Locking up cellphones in school will help students develop fundamental skills and promote a more engaging learning environment.

According to a 2017 Educational Psychology study, “Dividing Attention in the Classroom Reduces Exam Performance,” students who used cellphones in class scored five percent lower compared to their peers. In addition, a correlation was found between cellphone use and worsened memory retention in students.

The Columbia University Department of Psychiatry said that cellphone usage leads to depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems.

Given the rise of dependence on cellphones, schools have spent \$2.5 million in an attempt to solve the problem, said David Ingram in the NBC News article “Schools in 41 states have spent millions on pouches to lock up kids’ phones.”

According to the article, students use an automated system developed by a California company Yondr.

When students enter school at the start of the day, they lock the Yondr pouches using a specialized magnet. This limits distractions and creates a more engaging environment for students.

Local public high schools, such as Ipswich and Salem, have implemented cellphone lock policies.

Ipswich and Salem students are required to place their phones in a secure locker for the school day, unless there is a medical exemption, according to the student-parent handbooks in both schools. The new policies were enacted because of mounting evidence indicating adverse effects of cellphone usage on teenagers, such as higher rates of mental health problems.

People advocate for free cellphone usage in school because of safety concerns, including a rise in numbers of school shootings and the needs of online tracking with students’ health issues such as students with diabetes, but treating more measures for student safety in schools, rather than using cellphones as a solution to a worsening problem, would be more beneficial. According to a 2024 Ipswich School Committee Newsletter, students have been happier without their phones and more engaged in the classroom.

If local students are benefiting emotionally and academically from the cellphone bans, then all high schools nationwide should consider the success of Ipswich and Salem’s policies and follow their lead in disallowing cellphones in the classroom.

Con

Sam Heanue

Rather than viewing cellular devices as an impediment, administrations should consider phones as potential tools and establish policies to teach respectful use.

Constant access to phones has enabled teens to become reliant on technology daily. Student-athletes, for example, often need access to sports schedules to coordinate rides.

Schools in the area have instituted restrictive technology policies for student mental health.

According to a June article in the Ipswich Local News by Ella Niederhelmen, 56 of 64 staff members in the Ipswich school district voted for a ban

on school cellphone usage.

Niederhelmen said proponents of the new system in Ipswich argued that student mental health has declined in recent years, and this can be attributed to cellphone usage.

These arguments, however, fail to consider the harmful stress effects associated with depriving teens of their phones.

A 2023 report for the National Library of Medicine by Kimberly Tuco indicated that approximately 100% of teens felt some degree of anxiety when separated from their phones.

Failure in these restrictive systems often results from student anxiety. Penny Levine-Stein, a junior at Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School (ENSATS), said ENSATS instituted a restrictive policy using Yondr Pouches in 2023.

She said these pouches are secure, student-held, and locked by magnets.

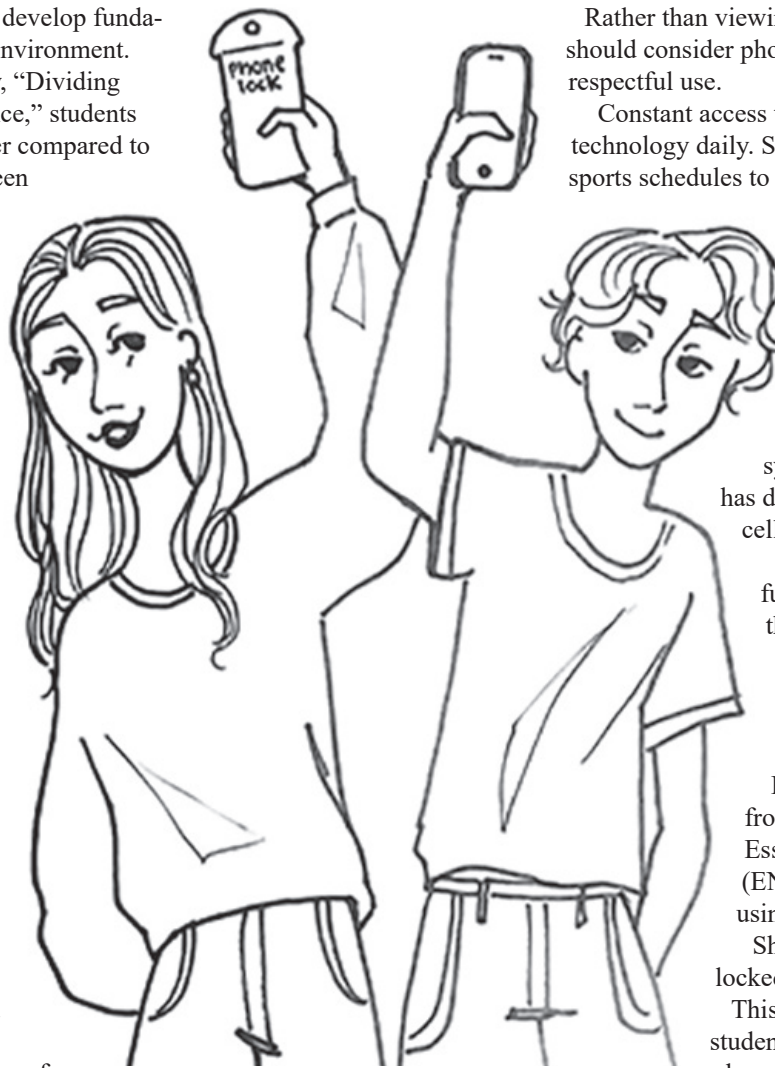
This policy, however, was proven ineffective. She said students developed methods to avoid losing their cellphones.

“Students would just bring their own magnets or break the locks on the pouches,” Levine-Stein said.

ENSATS stopped using the system because their phone restriction policies were ineffective due to student behavior.

Examples such as this show that restrictive phone policies are unable to reduce technology use among teens, rendering them unnecessary.

Student anxiety and reliance make restrictive policies impossible or impractical. Instead, schools should consider cell phones for their educational value and teach responsibility to ensure students properly use technology as they enter adulthood.



AUGIE CAPOTOSTO ILLUSTRATION

Music theory courses must be diversified, broadened

By Alessia Omari
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Academia’s modern day understanding of music theory has roots in Eurocentrism, and schools must make changes in order to make their courses more diverse.

Scholars and musicians alike often approach different components of music theory through a lens in which musical techniques are interpreted from a European perspective.

In her 2023 article “The Dust of Colonialism: Eurocentrism in Art Music,” Reza Vali explains that contemporary music theory favors white composers, neglecting to take into account the various people of color that have contributed to musical history.

“Structural elements of [all] music [are viewed] from a European perspective rather than in

the context of their own historical development and significance,” he said.

The musical contributions of people of color are often neglected in music theory courses.

In Jeff Williams’ 2024 article “Can Music Theory Education Overcome its Whiteness Problem?” for Current Affairs, Williams explains that important figures in music theory courses almost entirely consist of white Europeans.

“White composers and theorists are given priority in curricula, and the music of white people is held superior to the music of other peoples and cultures,” he said.

Contemporary music courses rely on teaching students the European twelve-tone equal temperament tuning system (12TET), which disregards the tuning systems used in dozens of

other cultures, Vali said.

“Many cultures based their music on the natural tuning system ... [An] over-reliance on 12TET has created an environment where people around the world are forgetting their own cultures’ tuning systems or music intervals,” he said.

Individuals that have an interest in music theory, even at the high school level, will largely only be introduced to tuning and scales common in European cultures. Consequently, students enrolled in music theory courses may be less informed on how musical scales from different cultures operate.

In The University of Chicago’s 2020 article titled “Toward an Anti-Racist Post-Tonal Analysis,” assistant professor of music and humanities Steven Rings claims the modern day music theory curriculum is generally limited to tone and pitch, leaving elements of music found in other cultures relatively unexplored.

“Timbre, improvisation, and process are not explored, and



PIXABAY.COM

Music pieces such as the one above are taught in schools, relying on the European twelve-tonal equal temperament tuning system.

Black avant-garde music – much of which is not composed or notated and in which pitch and rhythm are not always distinct – has gone unresearched,” he said.

The first step to combating racism in musical academia is addressing the biases in how the arts are taught. Music classes in the high school often neglect to teach songs that utilize scales such as the Middle Eastern Maqam scale or the Chinese pentatonic scale.

“[Diversifying music theory] is an opportunity for us to examine structural racism within arts and humanities education and to envision a programme of social and racial justice for arts education generally and music theory specifically,” Williams said.

Helping to diversify the course content taught in music theory classes is essential in promoting a future in which music is academically understood from a less Eurocentric perspective.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Schools should provide menstrual products to students

In order to support students better, Massachusetts should pass laws requiring public schools to provide menstrual products to all students.

The issue of limited access to menstrual products is often referred to as “period poverty” and is not limited to lower-income countries, wrote Nicole

Hassenstab in her 2023 article for American University, “Globally to Locally, Period Poverty Affects Millions.”

Hassenstab wrote that some groups of people are disproportionately affected by period poverty.

“In the US, homeless, low-income, and/or imprisoned women, transgender, and nonbinary individuals who menstruate are all impacted by period poverty at a much higher rate,” she said.

Students who fall into any of these categories should be supported at school, instead of spending their day worried about having enough menstrual products.

In a 2023 Harvard Public Health article, “‘It’s a dignity issue’: Inside the movement

tackling period poverty in the U.S.,” Allison Torres Burtka interviewed Jennifer Gaines, a program director for the Alliance for Period Supplies.

Gaines highlighted the increased risk of medical complications that accompany period poverty.

“People who lack supplies sometimes use tampons longer than directed ... Doing so can increase the risk of toxic shock syndrome,” she said.

For this reason, providing menstrual products is also essential for the health and wellbeing of

students.

In a 2021 NPR article, “The case for free tampons and pads in schools,” Mansee Khurana said that reduced access to menstrual products also acts as a barrier to good education.

She referenced a study conducted by PERIOD, a non-profit organization, in 2021.

“The study found that 4 in 5 menstruating teens said they have either missed class time, or know someone who missed class time, because they did not



ERICCASTRO/ FLICKR.COM

Providing pads and tampons in bathrooms helps prevent disruptions to students’ education by ensuring that students do not have to visit the nurse’s office when they need a menstrual product.

have access to period products,” Khurana said.

Not only would providing students with menstrual products support their physical and mental health, but it would allow students to focus on their learning while at school. Any action that can be made to increase learning while supporting students should be taken.

According to the website of the Massachusetts State Legislature, a bill was introduced in 2019 in Massachusetts that would require public schools to provide free menstrual products to students in grades six and above.

However, this bill never became a law. It also would not have provided any funding for

schools to implement the policy.

According to the Alliance for Period Supplies, in their web page titled, “Period Products in Schools,” 28 states and Washington D.C. all require students to be provided with menstrual products. Adding Massachusetts to the list of these states would help uplift the physical and mental wellbeing of students.

AP testing should remain on paper

By Summer Demeo
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

AP tests should remain on paper, rather than moving online, as the tests negatively impact student performance and concentration.

According to the College Board, in May 2025, 16 subjects will be completely online and 12 will be hybrid, meaning that multiple choice questions will be online, and free response questions will be on paper.

Only eight subjects remain unchanged. However, in the future, they will also be transferred online.

“Digital AP testing is student-friendly,” Trevor Packer, head



GWENDOLYN BERGER PHOTO

Students prepare to take AP tests digitally by completing practice problems on a site designed to mimic the Bluebook interface.

of the AP program, wrote in “Accelerating Our Transition to Digital AP Exams” from the College Board website.

However, this change is not as progressive as it seems. Contrary to what the College Board says, online testing can negatively affect students.

A 2023 study published in the

International Journal of Human-Computer Studies found that people who already struggled with reading comprehension on paper experienced a decrease in comprehension and recall when reading on a screen.

Students who experience reading difficulties will be placed at a further disadvantage compared

to their peers by the new online tests, disproving the assertion that online tests are better for students.

Additionally, according to a study conducted by the University of Valencia in 2020, on-screen reading leads to a decrease in focus and rapid information processing, especially when a task requires increased attention and efficiency.

The study showed that “taking exams on screen could prevent students from fully demonstrating their knowledge and skills, because they may struggle to adjust their attentional focus to their full potential.”

These results mean that on digital AP tests where additional focus is required, stress levels are higher, and there is a time limit, students will be more likely to become distracted, go off task, and struggle with reading materials.

AP test scores allow students to get college credit and can be used to strengthen a college application.

The effects of digital testing have serious ramifications that impact a student’s future. If students perform worse on these tests as a result of their digital format, they will be less likely to get college credit and may not be able to use their scores to aid them in the admissions process.

The negative effects of digital testing go beyond this, though. For example, a 2019 study published in the Economics of Education Review found that digital testing also widens the gap between low and high income students.

AP tests should remain on paper to maintain student performance levels, even out the playing field, and overall provide a better testing experience for students.

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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.

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BOYS' SOCCER

Coach: Robbie Bilsbury

Captains: Seniors Sammy Bothwell, Finn Birkeland, Ali Erdogan, Hayden Spencer

Record last year: 5-10-5

Current record: 7-2-1

Goals: Win CAL, go far in state tournament, work together

Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham, Ipswich

Impact players: Seniors Sammy Bothwell, Finn Birkeland, and Charlie Rubens; juniors Owen Olivier-Meehan and Luke Renzi; sophomores Charlie Athanas and Imir Mustafa

Coach's quote:

"We have high goals ... but all of [them] are going to be byproducts of the present tense grinding and growing and competing in practice ... our goal is to be switched on every day." - Robbie Bilsbury

Captain's quote:

"My favorite thing [about the season] has been the environment. Winning games together is fun. I think we have a good community and program overall."

- Hayden Spencer



Sammy Bothwell



Finn Birkeland



Ali Erdogan



Hayden Spencer

GIRLS' SOCCER



Libby Lawler



Madi Cook



Charlotte Crocker



Ella Arntsen

Coach: Scout Grifoni

Captains: Seniors Libby Lawler, Madi Cook, Charlotte Crocker, and Ella Arntsen

Record last year: 7-8-3

Current record: 5-3-2

Goals: Win the Cape Ann League, leave their legacy with their new coach

Rivals: Hamilton-Wenham, Georgetown

Impact players: Senior captains Madi Cook and Libby Lawler; senior Megan Hurd; sophomores Grace Scarbrough and Harper Brooks.

Coach's quote:

"It takes everybody to buy in, and it just takes one person to not buy in for everything to fall apart. So every single person who's on the team has made an impact, whether they know it or not." - Scout Grifoni

Captain's quote:

"We all have the talent. It's just about believing in ourselves and believing in what we can accomplish as a team if we work together." - Ella Arntsen

FOOTBALL

Coach: Joe Grimes

Captains: Senior Cian Brennock and junior Zach Hurd

Record last year: 3-1

Current record: 3-1

Goals: Win as many regular season games as possible, overcome strong opponents

Rivals: Lynnfield, Triton

Impact players: Seniors Cian Brennock and Jarrett Croft; junior Zach Hurd

Coach's quote:

"This is one of the most enthusiastic and excited teams we've had in a long time. We're all just approaching this season one game at a time and focusing on how we can improve." - Joe Grimes

Captain's quote:

"We have a strong team, and we know we can beat anyone we go against this season. We work well together." - Cian Brennock



Cian Brennock



Zach Hurd

GOLF

Coach: Bill Melvin
Captain: Juniors Jack McCavanagh and Gray West
Record last year: 9-8
Current Record: 9-2
Goals: Win CAL Baker Division, qualify for state tournament
Rival: Hamilton-Wenham, Rockport
Impact players: Juniors Jack McCavanagh, Gray West, Matthew DeOreo, and Jack Zschau; seniors Jack Lawler and Matt Graeter
Coach's quote:
 "We have a terrific group of young men this year who are coachable and who always want to improve and get better."
 -Bill Melvin
Captain's quote:
 "I think our team is doing a good job of locking back in. There's nine holes to play, so if you got a bad one, there's eight more."
 -Jack McCavanagh



Jack McCavanagh



Gray West

CHEERLEADING

Coach: Casey Economo
Captains: Seniors Elena Gangemi, Audrey Murphy, and Maria Rising
Upcoming events: 2024 Austin Prep Cheer Invitational and Qualifier on Nov. 3
Goals: Improve their tumbling skills and choreography
Coach's quote:
 "I really just want their mental health and them as a team to be good." - Casey Economo
Captain's quote:
 "As a team I feel like we're almost like a family in a way; we all get along ... This year we have such a small team; it's been so much easier to work with everyone." - Audrey Murphy



Elena Gangemi



Audrey Murphy



Maria Rising

CROSS COUNTRY

Coaches: Steve Whittey, Rachel Mitchell
Captains: Seniors Henry Stevens, Henry Chadbourne (Rockport), Sabine Cooper, Whitney Turner; junior Lyall Cunningham (Gloucester)
Record last year: 3-1 (boys'), 2-2 (girls')
Current record: 1-3 (boys'), 3-1 (girls')
Rival: Hamilton-Wenham
Goals: To do well in Divisionals, make it to the Meet of Champions
Impact players: Seniors Henry Stevens, Henry Chadbourne, Sabine Cooper, Whitney Turner; juniors Lyall Cunningham and River Silva; freshmen Isaiah Nicastro, Gus Hall, Kalin Bennett
Coach's quote:
 "The season has been going great so far. We have our ... first really big competition of the year, so it'll help us get ready for championship season."- Steve Whittey
Captain's quote:
 "We're really looking forward to the rest of the season ... I feel like we have a super impactful team."- Henry Stevens



Sabine Cooper



Whitney Turner



Henry Stevens

FIELD HOCKEY

Coach: Courtney Brown
Captains: Seniors Summer Demeo, Brigid Carovillano, Aisling Twombly
Record last year: 17-3-2
Current Record: 8-1-1
Goals: Reach the Final Four in the postseason tournament
Rival: Ipswich, Newburyport, Lynnfield
Impact Players: Junior Abby Kent, sophomore Sarah Broadbent
Coach's quote:
 "Our goal is to reach the Final Four [in playoffs]. Anything that happens beyond that is amazing." - Courtney Brown
Captain's quote:
 "We have this perfect mix of being super competitive but also having this connection that's not necessarily conventional for teams." - Brigid Carovillano



Aisling Twombly



Summer Demeo



Brigid Carovillano

Middle schoolers join high school drama club

‘Shrek’ show contains positive energy, messages

By Stella Straub
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Regarding the theater program that has grown from 12 to 40 students as a result of the merging of the middle and high school drama programs, senior Josh Cohen said the musical “Shrek” this fall will be an opportunity to show how far the program has come.

The production will take place on Nov. 15 and 16 at 6 p.m. and on Nov. 17 at 2 p.m.

Cohen, who plays the role of Shrek, is excited to be able to act as a character who is less reserved than himself, he said.

“Shrek is just a fun, crazy individual. So it’s nice to sort of cut loose a bit,” Cohen said.

He said the show is high en-

ergy and “euphoric.”

“Everyone’s going to have a great time. It’s just going to be fun. It’s going to be silly. It has a surprising amount of heart behind it. There are some really nice, sweet moments and messages to come out of it,” Cohen said.

He said the high school students have been able to see past versions of themselves in the middle school actors.

“For us, it’s really special.

They really look up to us and can

be inspired by us, and we are almost looking at them and seeing ourselves and thinking, ‘How would I talk to myself and show my-

self that there is this great person that you can be if you continue to give your all in theater?’” Cohen said.

Music director Ben Icenogle said his favorite part about putting together the show is that it allows students to explore outside of their comfort zones.

‘Everyone’s going to have a great time. It’s just going to be fun. It’s going to be silly.’

-JOSH COHEN



STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

“Shrek” cast members review a song from the upcoming musical production. Music director Ben Icenogle said his favorite part about the show is that it allows students to leave their comfort zones.

“It’s okay to be weird and just show your personality. Particularly in middle school, there’s a lot of ... peer pressure and social things that go on ... It’s always a very accepting space in the theater,” Icenogle said.

He said students are involved

in the production beyond the stage, with sophomore Maggie Whitman leading sound, senior Nicholas Haley doing lights, and senior Charlotte Donnellan Valade assisting as stage manager.

Director and choreographer Tyler Garofalo said she wants the

show to be distinct from the realistic fiction productions of the past two years.

“Costuming and sets are all going to be very different from what our audience has seen and what our actors have done before,” she said.

New photography teacher leads lens-based video, graphic design class

Hopes to give students useful skills in media editing

By Alessia Omari
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Photography teacher Andrew Lucas is teaching a course on video and graphic design during the first semester.

The class will teach both concepts in a single course, Lucas said.

“We’re going to learn a lot about the process of filming and editing video,” he said.

Lucas started teaching the course when he took over for photography teacher Caroline Epp after she took a medical

leave of absence in December last year. Epp then retired, and Lucas was hired to fill her position.

“This class existed when I got here, but teaching it is all brand new to me,” he said.

Art teacher Tamera Burns said graphic design will be taught during the beginning of the year, with video editing being taught later in the semester.

“Graphic design is being taught right now for one quarter, and then they switch to teaching video for the next quarter.”

Freshman Saskia Arnason said she hopes the course will allow her to gain important skills

related to photo and video editing.

“I do not have any graphic design experience,” she said. “I’m hoping to get some experience from this class because it seems like a very useful skill to have in life.”

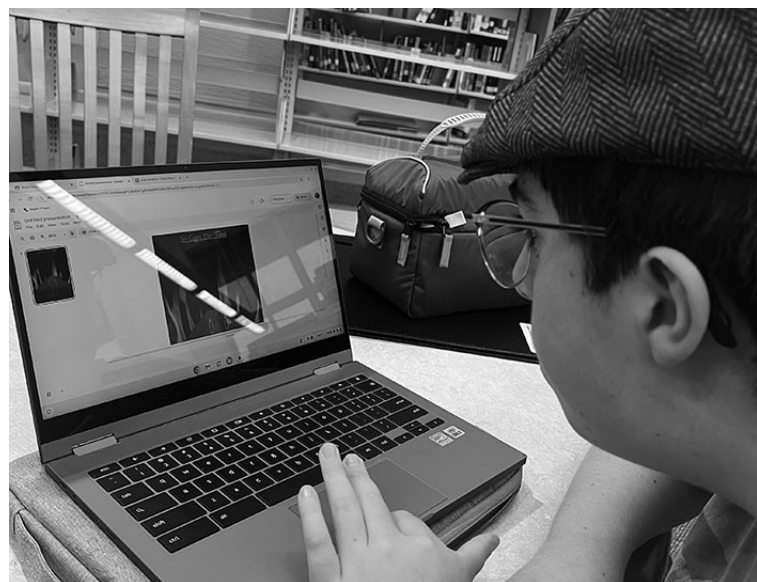
Lucas said his experience with photography generally revolves around lens-based media.

“I have a master’s degree

in fine art photography from The School of Visual Arts in New York City,” he said. “Graphic design kind of goes hand-in-hand with Photoshop and image manipulation, so it all goes well together.”

‘I’m excited to see what students bring to the table.’

-ANDREW LUCAS



ALESSIA OMARI PHOTO

Sophomore Adam Bradford designs a book cover for photography teacher Andrew Lucas’ graphic design class.

Burns said that skills in graphic design are extremely useful in many aspects of both school and life.

Lucas said he is most looking forward to seeing what students

create with video assignments.

“One of the assignments is trying to create an interesting video in a very boring room,” he said. “I’m excited to see what students bring to the table.”

Band director brings experience to department

By Alessia Omari
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Former Lynnfield High School band teacher Harry Wagg joined the music department to teach high school band and middle school general music.

Wagg grew up in North Reading and attended Saint John’s Preparatory High School.

He said his love for music began when he began playing instruments in high school.

“In my senior year, my school established a music program, and it was then that I started playing the guitar,” he said. “I later ended



ALESSIA OMARI PHOTO

Band director Harry Wagg’s love of music began in high school. Wagg said he hopes to connect with students who love playing music just like he does.

up going to college for guitar, and the rest was history.”

He graduated from Berklee College of Music with an under-

graduate degree in professional music and music education. Wagg later graduated from Boston University with a master’s degree in music education.

He also received a certificate in 16 millimeter film production from The New School of New York.

Wagg taught at both Huckleberry Hill and Summer Street Elementary School in Lynnfield for nine years. He then taught at Lynnfield High School for six years.

Wagg said he’s excited to build connections with students who are passionate about music.

“I hope to connect the middle school band with the high school band,” he said.

Following the departure of middle school Dean of Students Joseph Janack from the position

of high school and middle school band teacher, chorus teacher Ben Icenogle said he reviewed multiple candidates for the open position before deciding on Wagg.

“Something that I noticed was that he brought a lot of experience and creativity to the band program,” he said.

Icenogle said that Wagg has a friendly personality that blends well with the students in the music department.

“I noticed that he’s very considerate of the students and that he makes an effort to actively engage with them,” he said.

Sophomore Bella Hilton said that she enjoys Wagg’s teaching style.

“We get a lot done during class time,” she said. “He takes the time to help us perfect pieces that we are already able to play pretty well.”

FUN FACTS

- Worked for the Alaska State Parks.
- Lived in New York City for seven years.
- Worked for a recording studio where he helped make music for TV shows and movies.
- Was an assistant engineer on “The Simpsons” for seven years.

Boba Tea Snow Ice House offers impressive menu, cozy vibe

Gloucester shop boasts unique, new flavors

By Gwendolyn Berger
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Snugly situated in the heart of downtown Gloucester, Boba Tea Snow Ice House is a fun and cozy boba tea store.

Located at 206 Main St., the tea house was founded by Chhear Hang in 2018, according to their website.

At first glance, the store presents a warm and inviting ambience. Silly

mini-boba tea pictures decorate the door, and comfortable chairs and tables are situated inside, giving the store a cozy vibe

The store has a wide selection of menu items, offering a variety of treats and drinks. Customers can enjoy classic milk tea, with a range of flavors including honey,

banana, and watermelon.

Customers can also select an array of different drinks: fruit tea, Italian soda, special milk tea, smoothies, slushies, and snow ice. The prices are fairly reasonable, a medium is \$4.50, and a large is \$5.

Patrons chose their drink's size, sugar level, and ice level.

The most enjoyable part of the experience is deciding which fun flavors from the lists of jellies, pearls, and pops to add to the drink. Snow Ice House has uniquely flavored pops that tickle

the tongue, like kiwi or blueberry.

While a customer may feel overwhelmed in the face of so

many flavors and toppings, they can merely observe the posters on the walls that detail the most popular flavors. The posters nicely display a visual of the store's brown sugar milk tea and its caramel milk tea.

If a customer finds themselves hungering for a sweet treat, they

At first glance, the store presents a warm and inviting ambience.



At Boba Tea Snow Ice House in Gloucester, customers can choose from a variety of different macaroon flavours, including chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, raspberry, and pumpkin cinnamon.

GWENDOLYN BERGER PHOTO

can sample a macaroon from the impressive range of options, including classic flavors, such as chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla, alongside unique flavors like raspberry, pumpkin cinnamon, rose, and others. The macaroons are priced at a sensible \$2.50.

For the same price, the store

also sells mochi ice cream, which is disappointing when compared to the delectable boba. The mochi is hard and flaky and is stored at very chilled temperatures, causing a diminished flavor.

Further adding variety, the store sells bubble waffles: small, hexagonal, and decorated waffles with

raised circular bump, priced at \$4.

After ordering, customers can chat with friends or contemplate the themed decorations as they await their drink. Then they can enjoy a stroll down Main Street in Gloucester as they enjoy their tasty treat.

New tennis film 'Challengers' explores romance, artistic passion

Zendaya stars as tennis prodigy Tashi Donaldson

By Stella Straub
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Set in a world of professional tennis, director Luca Guadagnino's 2024 film "Challengers" appears at first glance to be a light, enjoyable movie about romance and sport, but it contains deeper messages about artistic passion and the nature of human relationships.

"Challengers" was produced by Zendaya, Luca Guadagnino, Amy Pascal, and Rachel O'Connor, and distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures and Amazon MGM Studios.

The film stars Zendaya as



SAM RUBIN/COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Zendaya stars as tennis coach alongside Patrick Zweig, who plays a rival love interest in the new tennis film "Challengers."

Tashi Donaldson, a tennis prodigy whose career was cut short due to a serious injury. Not willing to abandon the sport, she becomes coach to her husband, Art Don-

aldson (Mike Faist).

Vicariously living through her husband, Tashi turns Art into a world-famous tennis champion. That is, until he falls into a losing

streak, causing Tashi to enter him in a lower-level Challenger event in New Rochelle, New York, wanting Art to regain his confidence by demolishing any competition.

The film's main conflict centers around Art's opponent at the Challenger event: his former best friend and Tashi's former boyfriend, Patrick Zweig (Josh O'Connor).

Despite its appearance as a light-hearted love triangle movie, the characters in "Challengers" investigate an important question: What do they want out of life?

For Tashi, the answer is simple: tennis. Her injury prevents her from pursuing her passion, and the rest of the film acts as a dangerous warning against the all-consuming power of attempting to live vicariously through another.

Early in the film, Tashi tells Patrick and Art, "Tennis is a relationship."

The complicated relationships between these three main characters play out in dramatic

slow-motion on the court, where tensions run high. Tennis acts as a backdrop to explore themes of desire, competition, and artistic passion.

Guadagnino's signature style is evident from the beginning of the film, with colorful and clear cinematography that uses centered shots and sharp light contrasts to capture the intensity and emotional depth of the characters and their sport.

In the bold and visually striking film that pushes the boundaries of romantic drama and sports narrative, Zendaya delivers a powerhouse performance, balancing vulnerability with an assertive edge.

Zendaya's character navigates through complex emotions, demonstrating how passion can be both a driving force and a source of conflict. As she confronts her dreams, the film poses questions about what truly matters: success, connection, or the pursuit of happiness.

Dystopian film 'A Quiet Place: Day One' stars Lupita Nyong'o, furthers franchise

By Isabelle Donnellan Valade
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Co-written by John Krasinski and Michael Sarnoski, "A Quiet Place: Day One" extends the "A Quiet Place" film series as a prequel to "A Quiet Place" and "A Quiet Place Part II" as an emotional and riveting look at the early days of the invasion.

The film, starring Lupita Nyong'o as Sam, a terminally ill young woman, and actor Joseph Quinn as Eric, an aspiring law student from England, was released on June 28, 2024.

The movie follows Sam and Eric as aliens invade New York,

and the population attempts to escape the city.

As introduced in the original films, the monsters are completely blind, resulting in their only way to attack, their hearing.

In the film, silence is the only means of survival. The characters only talk throughout the series when louder sounds, such as the rain, drown out their voices.

Day One, as the title suggests, rewinds the clock to investigate how society encountered these deadly creatures and how the world was transformed within moments of their arrival.

After the attack, Sam and Eric find one another and begin jour-

neying to Patty's, a pizza shop.

Sam is shown to write poetry, but her passion for writing, as well as life, has dwindled.

She wrote a poem titled "Bad Math" that she shares with Eric.

He reads her poem aloud: "You said one to two years, and it has been two / You said four to six months, and it has been six / ... / And I used only simple maths / All my life / And I never needed more / ... / And less / ... / Until months / To days / To hours / To seconds / But to not now."

Her depressed behavior paired with her lack of vigor allows the audience to understand why she does not attempt to flee Manhattan but rather ventures to Patty's.

Sam does not seem to be afraid of death, only fearful of not eating from Patty's before she dies.



PARAMOUNTMOVIES.COM

Co-written by John Krasinski and Michael Sarnoski, "A Quiet Place: Day One" extends the "A Quiet Place" film series.

Their necessary silence worsens her inability and unwillingness to connect with others due to her illness, contributing to the compelling nature of Sam's story.

It's a surprisingly beautiful film, often portraying an unusual gentle-

ness between characters.

With so few lines and stifling silence, the emotional turmoil the characters go through is heightened, allowing the viewer to truly grasp their inner conflicts.