

# the INDEPENDENT

Volume XXX Number 1

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

October 16, 2023

## New principal adapts to high school, sets expectations

Aims to take input from student body, department chairs

By Charles Lations  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

New principal Julie Sgroi is working to adapt to what she describes as a school environment unlike any she has worked in before.

"You can't find a school that has the size that we have, that offers what we have, with the staff being so dedicated," she said.

Sgroi graduated from Woburn High School before attending Framingham State for her bachelor's degree in Spanish and earning her master's degree in education at Salem State University.

Previously, she taught Spanish at Woburn High, Latin at Lynnfield High School, and French at Hampton Academy in Hampton, New Hampshire, before becoming the Vice Principal at Danvers High School from 2020-2023.

She has also worked outside of

teaching as a production assistant in Hollywood and at EF Educational Tours in Boston.

Sgroi said one of her goals for the year is to take input from the student body and incorporate their ideas into the decisions of the administration.

She said she's been impressed by the student body's response to difficult situations, such as the lack of parking at the beginning of the year, and their willingness to put forward ideas that they feel would improve the school.

"I've been surprised by the amount of big ideas and bright ideas that the students are coming [up] with," Sgroi said.

Foreign language department chair Michelle Magaña said she is excited to have a principal with experience teaching foreign languages and is encouraged by her willingness to communicate with the staff.

"I think that as a new administrator ... it's great that she's open to listening to the department chairs and what our opinions are and our ideas are ... this is the



PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTOS



INDEPENDENT ARCHIVE

The new principal, Julie Sgroi, is often in the dining hall alongside the new dean of students, Elisabeth Drinkwater. Sgroi suited up as the hornet for the new administration's first pep rally.

first administrator I've ever had that has experience in a world language classroom," she said.

Senior Aiden Brown said he appreciated Sgroi's commitment to being open with the student

body and setting clear expectations about stricter adherence to  
**NEW PRINCIPAL, page 3**

### FUN FACTS

- Huge fan of "Ted Lasso" & Disney.
- Training to become certified as a yoga instructor.
- One of 13 kids.
- Has competed in cooking competitions.
- Has run 3 marathons.
- Previously taught Spanish.

## Dean of students joins new administration, reinforces rules

By Phileine de Widt  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Elisabeth Drinkwater, the dean of students, has joined the new administration in her first administrative role.

She previously taught Spanish at Beverly High School for nine years.

Drinkwater also served as the world language department chair and director of the summer school program at Beverly.

French teacher Caroline Coshow formerly worked with Drinkwater and appreciates her kind leadership abilities.

"I think Ms. Drinkwater was an excellent leader [at Beverly] ... She is always there for you," she said.

Administrative assistant Mary Lumsden, who has known Drinkwater since she was a child, also said Drinkwater has excellent leadership skills and enjoys seeing the new administration work together.

Drinkwater said she has been working with the new principal,



PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTO

Dean of students Elisabeth Drinkwater has taken on traditional roles like greeting students as they come through the side door in the mornings.

Julie Sgroi, to make a smooth transition to the school community.

"I think it is really good that we are both new here because we are learning together, and it has truly made us a team. We've established a good partnership," she said.

Drinkwater received her Bachelor of Arts with a major in Spanish and her master's degree in secondary education at the University of New Hampshire. In May 2023, she completed post-graduate coursework with a major in educational leadership at

### FUN FACTS

- Lived in Latin America and Europe.
- Wants to visit Argentina, Hawaii, Grand Canyon, and Alaska.
- Certified to teach Pilates.
- Got married in Costa Rica in a rainstorm.

Salem State University.

As the dean of students, Drinkwater has taken on the traditional role of letting students in through the side entrance up until 7:45 a.m. and checking attendance regularly.

"I have just been reinforcing those simple basic rules so that everyone is safe," she said.

Senior Quinn Brady said he appreciates Drinkwater's approachability.

"She's open and willing to work with the seniors, which was something we were worried

**NEW DEAN, page 3**

## Spirit Week, pep rally games fuel enthusiasm for student body, staff

Students dress-up, seniors win competition

By Mechi O'Neil  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students and teachers participated in Spirit Week, dressing up each day and playing games and competing against each other at the annual pep rally.

Held in the first week of October, every day had a different dress-up assignment.

Monday was Bring Anything but a Backpack Day, Tuesday was Decades Day, Wednesday was Barbie vs.

Oppenheimer Day and Thursday was Hornets Pride Day.

To keep track of who participated, teachers tallied the number of students who followed the assigned dress-up day in their U blocks.

"I think the kids did a great job at showing up. The numbers really increased as the week went on," foreign language teacher

Erin Fortunato said.

Fortunato helped host the pep rally, but she said the senior class officers handled most of the planning.

"I checked in with the officers, and Ms. Brown and they did the rest of it," she said.

Senior class adviser Courtney Brown said the days were fun and she enjoyed seeing the students participate throughout the week.

"I think for the most part everybody joined in on the Hornets Pride Day. It was nice to see everyone standing in the bleachers in their colors," she said.

Senior class president Phileine de Widt said the seniors dominated Spirit Week and that there wasn't any threat from other grades.

"Ultimately, we got the win because, from the beginning, the seniors knew the deal, and I didn't really have to encourage participation too much," she said.

Despite the lack of competition  
**SPIRIT WEEK, page 3**

**'Your grade gets a lot closer during Spirit Week ... it's just really unifying and fun.'**

- PHILEINE DE WIDT

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# New history teacher brings ‘positive impact’ to department

Christian Weisse teaches EBA, US History I classes

By Alessia Omari  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Formerly a substitute at Marshall Simonds Middle School in Burlington, Massachusetts, Christian Weisse has joined the history department to teach Evidence-Based Argumentation, US History I CP, and US History I Honors.

Weisse grew up in Burlington, and attended Burlington High School.

They also graduated from Salem State University, receiving their Bachelor of Arts degree in history, with a minor in sociology, they said.

Weisse received a master’s in secondary education in a year due to being enrolled within a 4+1 program, which allows a student to receive a bachelor’s and mas-

ter’s degree within the span of five years.

They first did observations and student teaching at Woburn Memorial High School from 2021 to 2022.

More recently, they taught at Marshall Simonds Middle School for two years as a history substitute.

During their last year there, they taught health and wellness to seventh and eighth-graders.

This is Weisse’s first time teaching at a regional high school, and they said they’re excited to get to know the student population.

“This is new to me ... seeing the dynamic between both towns and seeing people come together is really unique. I can’t wait to hear about student experiences because I haven’t worked at a high school in a couple of years,” they said.

History department chair Lauren DuBois said she was impressed with Weisse’s quick integration into the school envi-



ALESSIA OMARI PHOTO

**Christian Weisse joined the history department after teaching at Marshall Simonds Middle School in Burlington.**

ronment.

“Right away Mx. Weisse was participating in all of our department discussions, providing ideas and insights about how to keep ourselves up to date ... they’re very thoughtful about lesson-planning and paying attention to

student interests,” she said.

Weisse enjoys the personalities of their colleagues and has adjusted well to the history department, they said.

“The history department here is probably one of the most welcoming departments I’ve ever been a part of. They’re very lively and vibrant, and that’s something that I’ve always wanted to have in colleagues,” Weisse said.

Freshman Natalia Porciello appreciates Weisse’s flexible approach to teaching.

“Sometimes they let us work on other homework,” she said. “They seem really nice.”

Weisse will bring a positive impact to the history department, DuBois said.

“With any new person that’s brought into the department, we get a whole new set of experiences and perspectives that we can use to broaden our resources and what we’re doing in the classroom,” she said. “I’m overall very impressed by their level of reflectiveness.”

## FUN FACTS

- Played bass drum in high school.
- Used to do theater.
- Hopes to see a musical on Broadway.
- Loves to listen to Cardi B.
- Works in healthcare part-time.

# Former science substitute returns to high school after teaching at Marblehead for seven years

John Herrick teaches Anatomy, biology, Physiology classes

By August Capotosto  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

New Anatomy teacher John Herrick returned to the high school as a replacement for the now retired Maria Burgess.

Herrick substituted in 2015-2016 when former science teacher Debra Nolan went on long-term leave.

He is currently teaching Anatomy and Physiology for both honors and CP levels, as well as one honors biology class.

Herrick grew up locally, attending Gloucester High School.

He attended Johnson State College in Vermont for his undergraduate degree in outdoor



AUGUST CAPOTOSTO PHOTO

**John Herrick returned to the high school after substituting in 2015-2016 for former science teacher Debra Nolan.**

education with a minor in small business management.

As a Vermont resident, he completed coursework at Johnson and

the University of Vermont.

Herrick later received his master’s degree in education with a biological sciences concentration at Gordon College in 2000.

He then spent years working as a Project Adventure administrator and running his own small charter and fishing business, which he still owns and operates.

Herrick said he enjoys taking families out on the water, teaching them but also giving them first-hand experience, which translates to how he is as a teacher.

“I love that piece of education, that hands-on kind of well-rounded education,” Herrick said.

During the winters since chartering was out of season, he was

in search of a part-time career to keep himself busy, he said.

When Nolan went on leave, Herrick took the opportunity to pursue his interest in education.

“He blended in beautifully with all the colleagues at that time,” science and math departments chair Kristin Umile said.

Herrick then worked as a science teacher at Marblehead High School for seven years.

He said working in Manchester saves him a half hour of commute time each

**‘I’m excited to be able to be a part of the community more.’**

-JOHN HERRICK

way. When Marblehead students would ask him to attend their games or performances, he wasn’t always able to go due to time constraints, he said.

“By the time I drove home and saw my own family and came back, I just couldn’t do it,” Herrick said.

He is looking forward to attending school events.

“I’m excited to be able to be a part of the community more,” Herrick said.

## FUN FACTS

- Was a commercial lobsterman.
- Has five kids.
- Ran the Boston marathon.
- Worked on the film boat for the show “Wicked Tuna.”

# Adjustment, Bridge counselor returns to staff, brings efficiency

By Sabine Cooper  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Adjustment and Bridge counselor and former staff member Amanda Rumble has rejoined the school counseling department after leaving Marblehead High School, where she was an adjustment counselor for three years.

Rumble grew up in Gloucester and graduated from Gloucester High School

in 2010. Later, she attended Endicott College, where she graduated in 2014 with a bachelor’s degree in psychology.

Rumble then attended Salem State University in 2019 to obtain her master’s degree in school counseling and school adjustment counseling.

Rumble said she always knew she wanted to work with teenagers and students.

Her first position was an internship at Manchester-Essex

High School in 2018-2019, when she was an adjustment counselor for a year, Rumble said.

The following year, she was an interim school counselor, filling in for school aca-



SABINE COOPER PHOTO

**Amanda Rumble returned to the school counseling department after teaching at Marblehead for three years.**

demic counselor Gillian Polk, who was on sabbatical.

Rumble was drawn back to the high school because she wanted to work in a school located in a

smaller community, she said.

“It is great to be back here ... I love the atmosphere and the environment of this school,” Rumble said.

Director of school counseling Beverly Low said Rumble was a great addition back to the school.

“She has really good skills. She’s authentic and realistic, and she brings great perspective to the job,” Low said.

Rumble is an adjustment counselor, but as lead clinician for the Bridge program, her office is located in the academic center, Low said.

School adjustment counselor Holly Brabson said she was excited when Rumble interviewed for the position.

“I am very excited to work with Ms. Rumble again. It was an easy choice because we have worked with her before,” she said.

Brabson said Rumble has already started establishing protocols for the Bridge program.

“Ms. Rumble is getting the program more organized, efficient, and creating a welcoming environment,” she said.

## FUN FACTS

- Has a dog named Cash.
- Likes to listen to folk music.
- Favorite season is fall.

# AmeriCorps worker joins middle, high school as new nurse

Alisha Gomes worked with AmeriCorps

By Bissy Mitrano  
INDEPENDENT STAFF

After being a part of AmeriCorps and working at a community health center, Alisha Gomes has joined the middle and high school as the new nurse.

Gomes said her experience includes serving a range of ages, from birth through geriatric.

After working with many ages, she wanted to focus on the high school age, she said.

Gomes said she accepted the position hoping to serve a new population after three years as a nurse in a community health center.

She became interested in a nursing career after traveling throughout California while part of AmeriCorps, an organization similar to PeaceCorps that performs community service work domestically.



BISSY MITRANO PHOTO  
**School nurse Alisha Gomes wanted to assist a high school population after working in community health centers.**

Gomes said she wanted a job that involved community work.

"I never had an interest in working in a hospital, so that kind of drove me into wanting to become a nurse so that I can be doing nursing out in the community versus in a hospital," she said.

She studied at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, obtaining a bachelor's degree in

exercise and health science. She later matriculated at the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions, where she earned her nursing degree, Gomes said.

Gomes said she is finding pleasure in working with her colleagues and students.

"Everyone is super friendly. The staff and the students, everyone seems to always be in a very good mood, very enthusiastic, and very helpful. When-

ever I have a question, there always seems to be someone available to ask, or if they don't have the answer right away, they always get back to me. So it's been a very pleasant experience so far," she said.

Sophomore Annie Pinkin said she visited the nurse's office after her nose began bleeding and had

a good experience.

"She was very nice. She gave me tissues and said I could stay. She's very sweet," Pinkin said.

Sophomore Addison Lai said she also had a pleasant experience with Gomes.

"Ms. Gomes is very nice. She gave me Tylenol for the pain in my foot and head [after] fainting," Lai said.

Gomes said she has encountered a few challenges working at the school.

"It is just hard to be one nurse for 700 students, so I am definitely very busy. That is something I am getting used to and adapting to,"

**'Ms. Gomes is very nice. She gave me Tylenol for the pain in my foot and head [after] fainting.'**

- ADDISON LAI

she said.

Gomes said she finds herself enjoying her position so far.

"The staff is very supportive and welcoming," she said.

Chorus teacher takes 'informative' approach with middle, high school

By Isabelle Donellan Valade  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After working part time with the middle school chorus since 2019, Ben Icenogle is teaching full time as both the middle and high school chorus director and as director of the SoundWaves.

Icenogle said he is also music directing the musical, co-advising the Music Honor Society, advising the Gender Sexuality Alliance club, and serving on the middle school School Council.

Icenogle attended University of Rochester in New York, where he received his bachelor's degree in music theory and history. He then received a master's degree in music education from Boston University.



ISABELLE DONELLAN VALADE PHOTO  
**Chorus teacher Ben Icenogle seeks to guide students with accomplishing their goals.**

Before coming to Manchester-Essex, he was working as a long-term chorus teacher substitute in Hamilton-Wenham. He said he was also teaching private and small group lessons at the New School of Music in Cambridge.

Icenogle said he's excited to be full time this year so he can implement long-term goals, such as expanding student ownership of the music program.

Music teacher and band direc-

tor Joe Janack said Icenogle will fit in nicely.

"He brings a lot to the table in terms of emotional intelligence and positive mindset and how to get that through to his students," Janack said.

He said Icenogle brings continuity and structure when bridging the gap between middle and high school.

Junior Josh Cohen said he likes Icenogle's educational approach.

"He's teaching us why the notes that we're singing are written the way they are, why they sound good ... it's a more informative approach, which I feel like is better for the long term," Cohen said.

Freshman Maggie Whitman said she agreed.

"He makes it so we learn a lot, not only about how to sing the

songs, but how to arrange them and other things about music theory," she said.

Whitman said when Icenogle teaches new songs, everything builds on itself, and she likes how he takes it step by step.

"He has a very go-with-the-flow kind of a vibe, and he's very just chill. I think it's nice to have more of a relaxed atmosphere when you're singing," she said.

Icenogle said he's known he wanted this type of job since he was a freshman in high school.

"I had some very influential teachers who were turning points in my life ... [and] I want to serve that same role for other students. I want to be a guiding figure to help people accomplish their own goals and dreams," he said.

**'He brings a lot to the table in terms of emotional intelligence and positive mindset and how to get that through to his students.'**

- JOE JANACK

## CONTINUATIONS

**NEW PRINCIPAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1** rules.

"I think she's great. She's been very upfront about expectations, and it seems clear that she plans on following through with them ... it seems like she's going to do a bit of a reset on discipline," he said.

**NEW DEAN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1** about," he said.

As the year progresses, Drinkwater said her priority is knowing more names and faces around the school so she can become more connected to the community.

"It has been an all-around positive experience so far. I wake up in the morning, and I'm excited to

come here," she said.

**SPIRIT WEEK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1** during the dress-up days, students brought their all to the pep rally, sophomore Lily Oliver said.

"It was really fun seeing each grade getting really into the games, and it was good to do something exciting and different before the long weekend," she said.

De Widt said Spirit Week is supposed to be a fun time, especially for juniors and seniors as their courses can be more rigorous.

"I think that your grade gets a lot closer during Spirit Week because you are competing against the other grades, so it's just really unifying and fun," she said.



MARY BUCKLEY-HARMON PHOTO

Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury dressed as he did in high school while seniors Pippa Spingler, Caroline Doucette, and Ali Viggiano dressed in '80s fashion for Decades Day. Seniors dressed in white for School Color Day and won the best hallway based on their 24-carat gold decor.



PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTOS

## FUN FACTS

- Enjoys listening to music.
- Has a pet cockatiel bird named Benny.
- Loves bike riding, yoga, and Pilates.
- Enjoys eating with friends and family.
- Loves to travel around the world to new places.
- Enjoys journaling.

## FUN FACTS

- Has a childhood cat named Cookie Dough.
- Favorite movie is "Ferris Bueller's Day Off."
- Favorite restaurant is Felipe's in Cambridge.
- Current favorite music is R&B.
- Loves to play sports.
- Likes to play video games.

# Student AI usage leads to changes in journaling program

Teachers adapt with new journaling program

By Sam Heanue  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Due to an increase in students' use of artificial intelligence as a method to cheat, the English department is experimenting with a new system of in-class journaling, English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton said.

With the new system, college prep and honors students in grades 9-11 will move from online to in-class writing, while Advanced Placement Language and Culture and senior students won't participate in any form of journaling, she said. "Every other Monday, we'll take 20 minutes out of class for students to write their journals and submit them. Then, at the end of each quarter, students will

choose one, and they'll edit them and refine them before posting them on Classroom," Edgerton said.

After the students have shared their journals to Google Classroom, there will be a commenting process similar to the past. Students will read and thoughtfully respond to their classmates' writing, she said.

This isn't the first time that journaling has experienced a revision, said English teacher Dan Koughan, who started the

program in the late 2000s.

Originally, students would hand-write journals in

notebooks, and Koughan would grade boxes of responses each weekend, he said.

Although the program has changed in the past, this has been the most significant alteration,

**'It feels much more like a defensive game, now, than an offensive game.'**

-DAN KOUGHAN



SAM HEANUE PHOTO

Students in Dan Koughan's English class sit and write their journals for 20 minutes. The English journaling program was changed to in-class writing assignments to ensure no AI is utilized.

Koughan said.

"It feels much more like a defensive game, now, than an offensive game. Previous changes have been because we thought we could make the program inherently better, but this feels like how we could prevent it from getting worse," he said.

Koughan said that AI usage has become an issue across all

classes and levels.

"Every single English teacher across the department has had at least one [student] submit a very suspicious journal," he said.

This rise in the use of AI represents a serious blow to the community that the journaling program created, said English department chair Debra Isensee.

"It devalued the work of the

students ... when a lot of kids admitted to using AI for their journals. It also really devalues our work in evaluating those journal entries," she said.

Isensee said the main benefit of the new system is that it ensures that every student participates in the program, and that they make a genuine contribution.

## Faculty tackles persisting AI challenges throughout classes

By Gwendolyn Berger  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an emerging concern for the administration and teachers, faculty members said. The creation of sites such as ChatGPT, which stands for Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer, can seamlessly write essays and answer prompts from students.

Principal Julie Sgroi, who taught Spanish at Lynnfield High School for almost 20 years and has had experience as an administrator at Danvers High School, said she thinks that AI is a tool, but the faculty will need to educate students about it.

"There's a place for [AI], but I think it's very important to teach students how it can help and hurt them," Sgroi said.

She said the administration understands that it's impossible to ban AI, but it definitely needs to be addressed.

"There are times where AI might be useful to [students], but passing it off as [a student's] voice and [a student's] opinion is the issue," Sgroi said.

Foreign language department chair Michelle Magana said while ChatGPT initially worried her, the department is dealing with it in the same way they did with the invention of Google Translate.

She said important writing assignments are done in person on paper, and although she does send students home with work, she hopes they don't utilize AI.

"I think you're cheating yourself as a language person if you're using any form of transla-

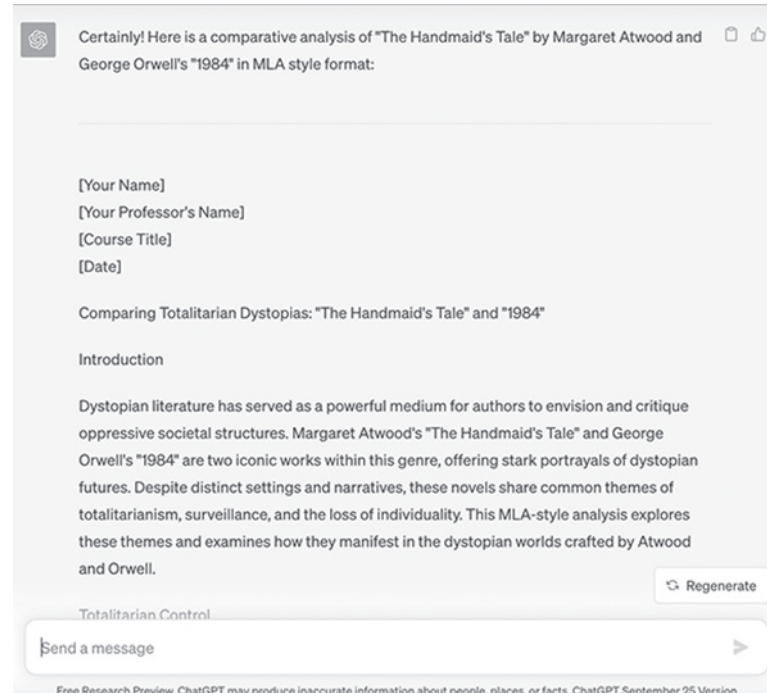
tion because a part of learning is writing out those words with a pen and paper as it processes the language in your mind and helps you learn it," Magana said.

On the other hand, she said that as a teacher, she is starting to explore how AI can help create prompts or stories that target specific vocabulary and grammar.

English teacher Angie Rice said she sees the value in AI for other departments, but for English, she dislikes the use of AI altogether and worries about its influence on incoming generations.

"[AI] scares me. I am trying not to be archaic about it, but I feel hesitant to embrace it. I am afraid that people are going to stop thinking alone and being creative," she said.

Rice said the English department has altered the process of writing journals because of AI. Journals were a weekly assignment where students alterna-



GWENDOLYN BERGER PHOTO

When asked to compare two books for an English assignment, ChatGPT produced answers that students can use to cheat.

tively responded to a prompt and reviewed a classmate's prompt. Honors and college-prep classes

now have an allotted time to complete their journal during class-times so AI is not utilized.

## School welcomes curriculum, technology director

By Whitney Turner  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Heather Leonard, who has joined the district as the new director of curriculum and instructional technology, said she has been adjusting to and learning about her new role.

Leonard said she obtained dual bachelor's degrees in political science and environmental science from the University of New Hampshire before discovering an interest in experiential education through taking several college courses.

"It was awesome, and I kind



WHITNEY TURNER PHOTO

Heather Leonard joined the district from Reading schools.

of fell in love with it," she said.

Leonard said she received her master's degree in elementary education from University of Massachusetts, Lowell.

She worked at O'Maley Innovation Middle School teach-

ing math and science, as well as working as assistant principal there and at Newbury Elementary School. Later, she served as an elementary school principal and STEM curriculum coordinator for Reading Public Schools.

"Throughout the course of the different jobs that I've had, I've really realized how interesting and complicated our education systems really are, and I'm fascinated by how we can create these interesting experiences for the adults and the kids in the system," Leonard said.

She said she became interested in this position after hearing positive feedback about the district, especially from living on the North Shore.

"It just felt like a place that really cared and valued education and schools and a place that

wasn't just sitting back and doing fine. They were pushing and challenging themselves to do better and willing to make changes and innovation, which is exciting for me," Leonard said.

Superintendent Pamela Beaudoin said she was looking for

someone with experience developing curriculum, and experience as an educator, who could move the

district forward in its improvement plan.

"She also has a lot of energy and a lot of vision, and ... aligned with the direction that we want to

go in," she said.

Leonard said her role centers around providing resources and support for teachers, students and families.

Principal Julie Sgroi said she and Leonard spent time together doing interviews and getting to

know the community better this past summer.

"Ms. Leonard is extremely intelligent; I think we're very lucky to have her ... I think she's going to do a lot of great things for the district and bring us

forward," she said. Leonard hopes to contribute to growth in the district as well as to make connections to and gather input from the community.

**'She has a lot of energy and a lot of vision and ... aligned with the direction we want to go in.'**

-PAMELA BEAUDOIN



COURTESY OF MARIA BURGESS

Science teacher Maria Burgess moved from teaching in the middle school to the high school in 2006. (Above)

Burgess sits in her home, holding her cat Gray. She hopes to renovate her house during her retirement. (Right)

## Science teacher retires after teaching in school for 20 years

By Avabella Mitrano  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Science teacher Maria Burgess retired this summer after working in the high school for 20 years, having taught a variety of science classes such as anatomy, biology, and independent research.

Burgess said she was fascinated with science ever since she learned about evolution in high school.

“I remember feeling like the sky’s the limit with science. You could propose anything and test it, and I think that’s what got me started in this field,” she said.

Burgess said she holds a doctorate in exercise and physiology from the

University of South Carolina and taught at many universities prior to coming to the high school, including Boston University.

She said she never expected to teach at the secondary level until she taught middle school science at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.

“It really got me interested in seeing kids go, ‘Oh, I get it.’ I still get goosebumps when that happens. So I think that the spark was always there. I think teaching was always there,” Burgess said.

After her late husband was diagnosed with liposarcoma cancer, she said she wanted to be closer to her home and their children. She started working at the middle school for five years and then transitioned to the high school.

“I’m so glad that there was an opening here at the high school. I was really, really fortunate ... I said I’d carry books for somebody, I’d do anything,” Burgess

said.

She said her favorite part of working was the students, as the school had some of the most invested students she had ever encountered.

“[My students] made me smile every time I came in. I could be as high as a kite for two weeks straight when a student got excited and realized something ... I think that’s the best part of our job. I think seeing students

go from ninth to 12th grade, and the growth that happens there, it knocks me over every single time,” Burgess said.

She said her favorite classes to teach were anatomy and Authentic Science Research (ASR) because she loved the hands-on

activities in anatomy and the independence in ASR.

“I would love it if the school could keep an independent research class going ... not just doing the Advanced Placement (AP) biology labs or the AP chemistry labs, but coming up with your own AP chemistry lab, or something that’s a little bit more organic and creative,” she said.

Burgess said that she truly misses teaching, as retirement was an incredibly hard decision for her; however, she felt that it was the best choice due to her memory issues.

“I thought I’d be 90 shuffling around the school shelving books ... I had hoped I would be, but anatomy and biology have a different timescale, so I just had to do what I had to do,” she said.

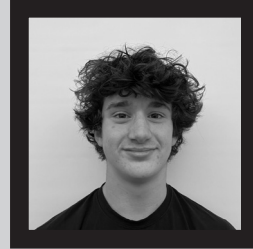
Special education assistant Liz Eichenberger said that she has known Burgess since their children went to school together 20 years ago.



AVABELLA MITRANO PHOTO



**Freshman Anne Stevens:**  
“This year I’m going to be Buzz Lightyear, and my friend is going to be Woody.”



**Freshman Jacob Zachareas:**  
“A stealthy ninja.”



**Sophomore Charlotte Earl:**  
“I was the Cookie Monster.”



**Sophomore Wren Shanks:**  
“When I was little, I was a pirate princess.”



## What’s your best Halloween costume?

**Junior Lola Fortunato:**  
“In 7th grade I dressed up as a frat boy with my friends, and we created a group chat called ‘Brotherhood.’”



**Junior Robert Silverstein:**  
“Jordan Belfort from ‘The Wolf of Wall Street’ because it matched up with the theme of a Halloween party I was going to.”



**Senior Adrian Kuehnemund:**  
“My ghillie suit just because of the extra uses it had during the night.”



**Senior Ava Doane:**  
“I was a cat from ages 5 to 10.”



## Hyland Athletic Field opens after delays, helps students feel safer

New turf comes with shock pad to absorb force for athletes

By Gwendolyn Berger  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Unexpected delays occurred during the Joseph M. Hyland Athletic Field's turf construction, but the field opened to athletes for the beginning of the fall season.

Athletic Director Cameron Molinare said the old turf was about 13 years old and was

overdue for a replacement, as the average life-expectancy of a turf is usually eight to 10 years with good maintenance.

Despite the field's age, it had passed Gmax testing, an evaluation that measures how much shock an athlete absorbs when interacting with the turf. However, if the turf were to fail,

student-athletes would no longer be able to utilize the field and would have to be on the road for a whole season, Molinare said.

She said delays over the summer were due to a misunderstanding with the company, who didn't get supplies to test for the chemical called per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

"Our district required the com-

pany to test the turf, shock pad, and the infield that was going in our field, and we wanted no detectable traces of those chemicals," Molinare said.

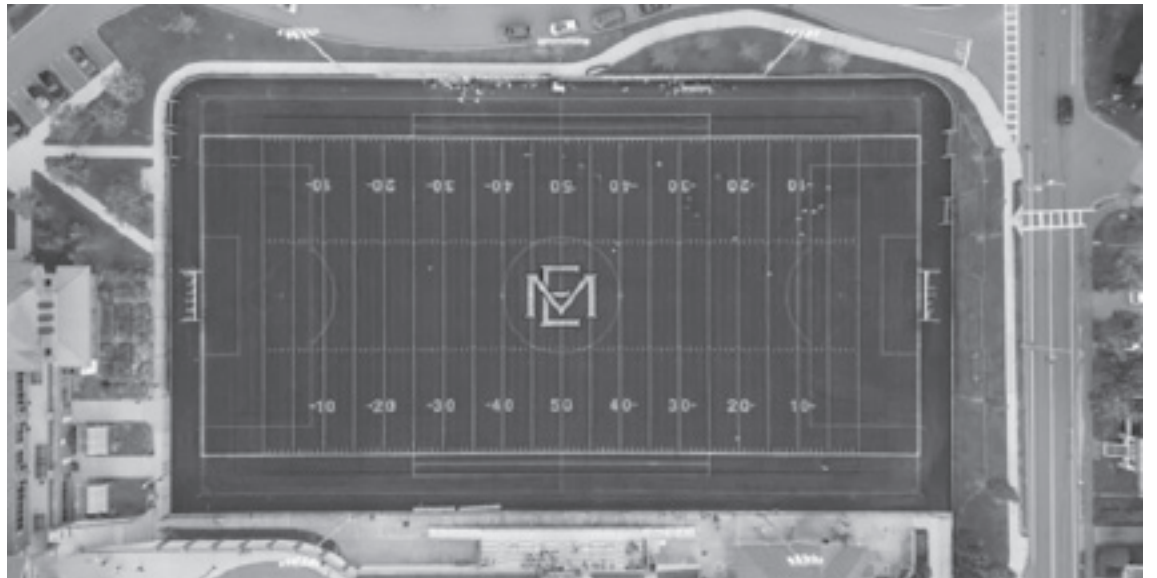
The new

turf comes with special improvements for athlete safety, Molinare said.

"The turf has a shock pad underneath the surface of the turf, which is new. It helps absorb the force of impact on the turf ... like if you fall really hard to the ground, it helps keep our athletes safer," she said.

**'I feel more safe playing on this new turf since it's all level, there's no bumps, and fewer possible accidents that could happen.'**

-ELLA ARNTSEN



COURTESY OF KEN LAWLER

Student-athletes have begun playing and practicing on the new and improved Hyland Athletic Field after a construction process involving several delays over the summer due to chemical testing.

Principal Julie Sgroi said the delay, although a nuisance, was worth it.

"The parking situation was definitely a minor inconvenience for a really great payoff, as the field looks fantastic ... I couldn't be more proud of the way [the students] dealt with it," she said.

Varsity field hockey goalkeep-

er junior Brigid Carovillano said the old turf was in rough shape and had become very packed down.

"The new turf is a little different and is much smoother. I have an easier time putting the ball out," she said.

Varsity soccer captain and junior defender Ella Arntsen said

the new turf is an excellent way of encouraging students to participate in the athletics program and keeping current student-athletes safe.

"I feel more safe playing on this new turf since it's all level, there's no bumps, and fewer possible accidents that could happen," she said.

## Students, special education teacher create new running club, hope to grow membership

By Ella Chafe  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Juniors Sylvie McCavanagh and Maggie Light started a new running club to stay active this fall.

Special education teacher and running club adviser Heidi Pallo said it was a collaborative effort between her and the students.

"It's a great way for the girls to stay active while not being in a super competitive environment that a school sport might bring," Pallo said.

Pallo said she participated in competitive sports throughout her whole life, and the competitiveness had a negative effect.

She said running is a way for her to stay active without the pressure of competition, which

led to her advising the club.

Pallo said she is hopeful for the group to sign up for races to place a goal on why they are running.

She said participation in the running club is beneficial for students, as happiness is related to physical activity.

"When we do a physical activity such as aerobic

exercise, dopamine is released in our brains, which impacts your mindset or mood," Pallo said.

McCavanagh said the club meets Tuesdays and Thursdays directly after school.

She said there are no fall sports that interested her, but the running club now gives her an outlet to stay active.

"I was nervous in the beginning because I don't like running a lot, but it's been good, and it gets me to move my body," McCavanagh said.

The club usually runs routes through Manchester, such as running to

Singing Beach, she said.

Light said she hadn't run much in the past, but she is enjoying the running club, as it's given her a new interest in running.

**'It's a great way for the girls to stay active while not being in a super competitive environment.'**

-HEIDI PALLO



ELLA CHAFE PHOTO

Juniors Maggie Light and Sylvie McCavanagh started a running club with adviser Heidi Pallo to exercise outside of an official school sport.

She said the club currently has four members and is hoping to expand.

Light said the club isn't very serious compared to a team sport,

and she likes how the group can have fun while exercising.

Those interested in joining the club can contact Sylvie McCavanagh for more information.

## English, science elective teaches forensic studies

By Mechi O'Neil  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In response to student interest in forensics, as indicated by a school survey, the high school has added a new course, Once Upon a Crime, this year.

The class is a semester-long co-taught English and science elective where students will learn elements of forensics such as fingerprinting, DNA, and evidence/analysis.

The class is split into two sections: one is taught the science material by science department chair Kristin Umile, and the other is taught by English depart-



COURTESY OF KRISTIN UMILE

Students in the new Once Upon a Crime elective investigate a crime scene before beginning to study crime-related literature.

ment chair Debra Isensee.

The sections switch halfway through the quarter, or every five weeks, to ensure that all students will have equal time in both classes.

On the science side of the class, students just finished

learning about crime scene investigation, Umile said.

"The students are given a crime scene, and they have to secure the scene, collect evidence, draw what the scene looks like, and submit their final re-creation of the crime scene," she said.

Senior Natalie Brunner said learning about the process of CSI was interesting.

"I really enjoyed understanding what makes a crime scene important and what detectives are looking for," she said.

In the English section, students have been learning about the history of detectives and crime, Isensee said.

"We are going to get into specific kinds of crimes, how we tell stories about them, and why we are interested in them," she said.

The English class will be reading the novel "In Cold Blood" by Truman Capote, Isensee said.

Senior Logan Desouza said he

has enjoyed reading the material given in class.

Isensee said she has enjoyed teaching the class so far.

Guest speakers will also be coming in and talking about their experiences, Umile said.

"We're hoping to get differ-

**'I really enjoyed understanding what makes a crime scene important.'**

-NATALIE BRUNNER

ent people that represent different areas of forensics to come into the class, whether it's a detective, somebody that does autopsies, or a criminal

defense attorney," she said.

Desouza said he is looking forward to learning about fingerprint and ammunition analysis.

"They sound like they could have a lot of fun components and a lot of hands-on work," he said.

# School Safety

Should all students be required to bring clear backpacks to school?

**Pro**

**Bissy Mitrano**

To ensure safety in our communities and reduce the growing problem of gun violence in schools, clear backpacks should be required in all public schools

Students can easily bring banned and unsafe objects like knives, guns, or matches into school in traditional backpacks, whereas clear backpacks hold students accountable.

“Clear backpacks in school could provide an element of safety in that we wouldn’t be concerned about what people were bringing in ... and seeing what’s inside people’s backpacks,” Principal Julie Sgroi said.

Opponents may argue that clear backpacks are an invasion of students’ privacy and could make students feel uncomfortable while at school.

However, permitting students to carry personal items in smaller bags too small to hold guns solves this problem.

Some districts have started the process of banning non-transparent backpacks, according to a Washington Post 2023 article titled “Schools Afraid of Gun Violence Are Requiring Clear Backpacks.”

Four percent of public schools have banned or are beginning to ban backpacks that are not clear.

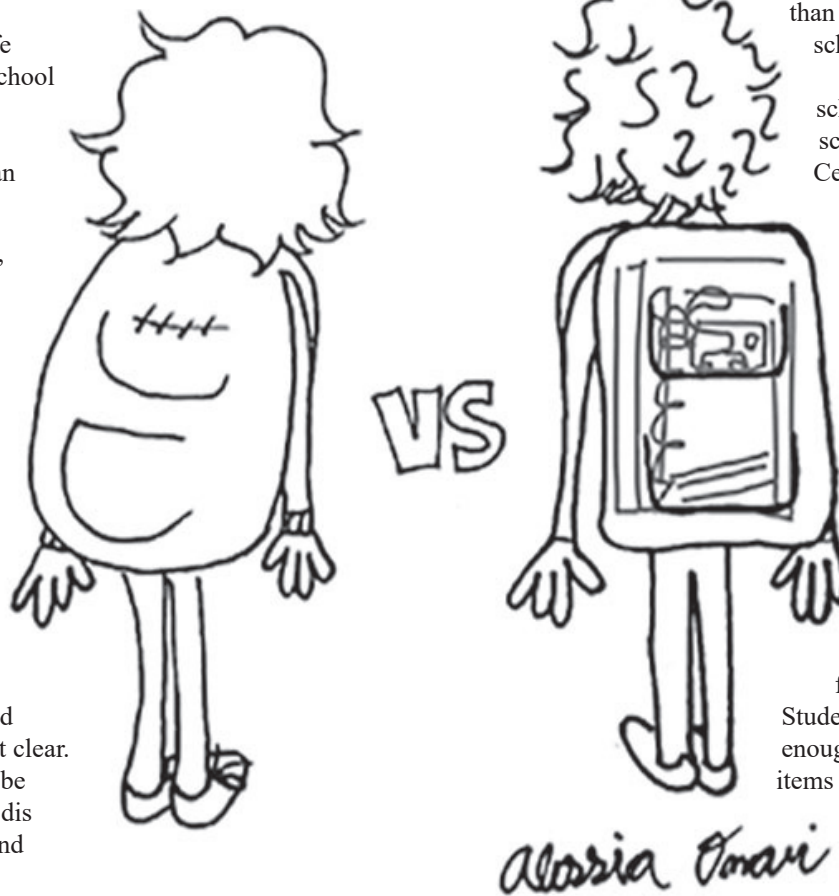
Even in smaller districts, teachers may not be aware of all students’ personal lives. Smaller districts can never be too careful with security and safety among their students, Sgroi said.

Safety measures are necessary in every school setting as many unpredictable situations can occur. One incident can have detrimental impacts on the lives of many students and their families.

Clear backpacks will not be the only solution to the serious problem of gun violence in schools but can certainly help.

Students knowing their school is ensuring their safety each day can help lessen the stress of the school day.

Clear backpacks can help districts move towards the important goal of school safety and make students and families feel more at ease when arriving at school, seeing that every available safety measure is being implemented.



**Con**

**Isabelle Donnellan-Valade**

Although it is understandable why clear backpacks would be mandatory for other public schools, it would do more harm than good to require students to use clear bags in our school.

In the 2019-2020 school year, 4.4 percent of public schools banned backpacks or required clear ones on school grounds, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

In the implementation of this ban, the administration would put responsibility onto the victims, instead of placing emphasis on how to prevent students from having access to weapons.

Principal Julie Sgroi said it makes sense why other districts might need to require clear bags for safety reasons, but there aren’t many people in our district showing concern about backpacks not being clear right now.

“If a group of students or members of the community were to raise that concern to me, we could definitely take a look at that and see if it’s an option that keeps us as safe as possible,” she said.

With this type of rule, an element of distrust would be created between the student body and the faculty, leading to an uneasy environment for students.

Students who need medications or hygiene products have enough problems finding a time to discreetly remove these items from their bags during the day, and if their bags are transparent, they would lose all sense of privacy and normalcy.

Junior Tori Moulton said there are more than just issues with privacy to consider.

“Students could feel like they are losing even more freedom and security while in school,” she said.

Another issue would be taking away a student’s ability to choose how their bag represents their personality.

Backpacks allow students a way to add a personal touch to their school life.

When forced to exclusively have one type of backpack, students lose an outlet of self-expression.

When schools begin to mandate the use of clear backpacks, the effects on students are far more detrimental than helpful in the long term.

## Paper straw usage connected to health, environmental issues

**By Avabella Mitrano**  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Due to the harmful effects of paper straws on health and the environment, businesses should work toward eliminating straws altogether.

Increasing pressure on businesses to practice sustainability has led to paper straws replacing plastic in many situations.

A 2023 Fortune Business Insights analysis entitled “Paper Straw Market Size, Share & COVID-19 Impact Analysis ...” predicted that the global paper straw market size is projected to grow from \$1.51 billion to \$2.23 billion by 2030.

There are myriad variables contributing to its growth in the market, such as a shift toward a more sustainable economy and bans on plastic straws in countries like the U.K.

The Fortune analysis stated that straws, in general, are one of the major products used in the food service industry, which has also experienced growth and cor-

relates with the increase in paper straws.

According to a Morning Consult Pro poll entitled “U.S. Adults Show Strong Support for Plastic Straw Bans,” 67 percent of adults in the U.S. supported companies using recyclable paper straws instead of plastic straws.

However, a 2023 Taylor & Francis Group study titled “Assessment of Poly- and Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Commercially Available Drinking Straws Using Targeted and Suspect Screening Approaches” found that 69 percent of 39 straw brands contained a group of synthetic chemicals known as PFAS.

PFAS are often found in non-stick pans and raincoats. They are water-resistant but are known to cause numerous health problems, such as kidney cancer, liver damage, thyroid disease, and

increased cholesterol levels.

The study tested several brands of paper, bamboo, plastic, glass, and stainless steel straws.

Of the brands tested, PFAS were found in 90 percent of paper straws, the highest rate in the study.

Paper straws that include PFAS have adverse effects on the environment. The study claims that PFAS can remain in the body and the environment for years, becoming non-

biodegradable.

Since PFAS have been banned worldwide since 2020, the study is unsure whether the PFAS were from contamination or were ones being intentionally used for water-resistance.

Businesses need to adapt to these findings quickly to protect consumer and environmental health.

Since straws are only necessary for frozen drinks, businesses should switch to using open lids.

Individuals should buy a



PEXELS.COM / CUP OF COUPLE

**Paper straws may appear to be a better choice for the environment at first, but studies show that they have harmful effects both in terms of public health and environmental impacts.**

stainless steel straw if they need one, as stainless steel is the only material tested that does not contain PFAS.

The situation is a good opportunity for businesses to minimize single-use products and shift toward reusable items.

## STAFF EDITORIAL

## Senior year starts off slow, promises more opportunities

Senior year is arguably the most anticipated grade level of one's high school career. So, what does it feel like once you've actually reached it?

Having only lived through less than a quarter of 12th grade, we can conclude there is a lot of eager anticipation.

Unlike in other grade levels, the realization of being a senior hits the second you enter the building.

Having no class of students older than you is an odd feeling that definitely kicks in instantly.

The sentiment of feeling celebrated, however, approached more slowly this year as many traditional activities and customs were different from what we've seen before.

Due to the delayed Hyland Field project, athletes had odd schedules, including few home games and scrimmages and many practices on the infamous "Sweeney Swamp" when the Brook Street turf was occupied.

The new turf undertaking also forced teachers to park in the student lot and, consequently, pushed many seniors to be

dropped off by their parents on the first day of school.

Though this signified a full-circle moment since our parents dropped us off a majority of our academic careers, we didn't get that feeling of true freedom one should experience at the start of senior year.

Likewise, we were unable to enjoy the traditional chalk drawings on our parking spots on the first day of school. In fact, these decorations were continuously delayed due to weather.

As in the summer, the start of school brought rain, rain, and more rain, meaning, unfortunately, no celebratory chalk drawings until much later.

This rainy weather also limited the senior privilege of sitting outside during lunch. Even on the odd occurrence of sunshine, however, the sun shone too strongly, or there was a flood of bees swarming our faces.

On the extracurricular scene, this year has been rather tense. The Robotics Team experienced some uncertainty as they searched for a new adviser.

**Many traditional activities and customs were different from what we've seen before.**



PHILEINE DE WIDT PHOTO

**The senior class is excited for the rest of the year despite a rough start with rainy weather and the turf project, which delayed the seniors' feelings of being the oldest students in the building.**

Likewise, HOSA is in search of an adviser, and the Science Team had to work harder than usual to encourage new memberships.

As seniors, many of us have the opportunity to be captains or leaders of groups, and without the proper engagement and organization, these roles prove to be difficult.

As we experienced this slow start, however, we are not as pes-

simistic as we may seem.

Senior athletes were the first of many generations to play on the brand-new home turf. Our first day officially back to parking in the student lot served as a second "first day."

When the spots were finally decorated, the lot was filled with happy colors, celebrating the seniors and marking the first school week of wonderfully sunny fall

weather.

Clubs were able to participate in the Club Fair on Oct. 4., and us seniors took home the well-deserved trophy during Spirit Week.

Though the true feeling of being a senior was abnormal and came slowly, we are excited for what is to come and know that this will be the special year we have dreamed of for so long.

## Car-dependent cities burden Americans

By Libby Mulry  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Car-infested cities hamper accessibility for poorer communities and have many health risks.

The overwhelming sameness of all American cities is not due to similarities in architecture or landscape but in their car-centric design.

American cities were bulldozed for the convenience of the car.

For example, according to urban planning website Segregation by Design, the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway in 1947 forcibly displaced tens of thousands of people and divided a densely



FLICKR.COM

**Car-centric cities and sprawling highways economically impede Americans by forcing them to own a car to participate in society.**

populated and vibrant community into two.

"For as long as there have been cars, car manufacturers have aggressively been seeking to shape our cities for one primary reason: to design cities where that will help them sell more cars," urban planning consultant Brent Toderian said in conversation with American business

magazine Fast Company.

Car-dependency is further encouraged by zoning laws that have minimum parking space and parking lot requirements.

Vast parking lots and a lack of sidewalks leave pedestrians with no other option but to buy a car, but car ownership is increasingly inaccessible.

According to the American

Automobile Association, owning a car costs \$10,728 per year.

Those that cannot afford a car, cannot participate in society to the same extent that those who do.

While living car-free allows people to save money, one must own a car to buy food, apply for unemployment benefits, and to go to job interviews and work.

According to the Bureau of Transportation, 45% of car trips in the U.S. are three miles away or less. But Americans don't make the choice not to walk places because they're overweight like stereotypes may portray.

In reality, obesity is a byproduct of unwalkable cities.

"Car-dependent places have higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, and chronic respiratory conditions," Diana Ionescu wrote in "How Car-Oriented Infrastructure Harms Public Health" for urban planning website Planeti-

zen.

Obesity and car-centric cities go hand in hand, but an inverse relationship appears between access to public transportation and unhealthy lifestyles because public transportation encourages active transport and thus physical activity.

According to research conducted by the National Library of Medicine, "an increased level of access to public transport may have a health promoting effect and hence prevent the development of childhood obesity."

Buses, trains, and subways foster healthy living and a sense of community more so than individual cars on the freeway.

Public transport also encourages equality by giving disenfranchised communities greater access to their neighborhoods and forcing upper class communities to be more ecologically responsible.

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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.



## FOOTBALL

**Coach:** Joe Grimes

**Captains:** Seniors Troy Flood, Stephen Martin, Henry Thurlow

**Record last year:** 7-4

**Current record:** 3-3

**Goals:** Win their league title in the Commonwealth Athletic Conference, make a deep run in the playoffs, win their Thanksgiving game

**Rivals:** Kip Academy, Lynn Tech, Lowell Catholic, Whittier Tech

**Impact players:** Seniors Troy Flood, Stephen Martin, Henry Thurlow

**Coach's quote:** "Every game is precious. It's not like soccer, where you're playing three times a week ... you have eight times to go out there every season, and all of it matters." -Joe Grimes

**Captain's quote:** "I feel like I have a moral obligation to be a leader out there. When I was a junior, I would kind of let the seniors take control ... I have to show [younger players] what it means to be disciplined and responsible." -Stephen Martin



Henry Thurlow



Troy Flood



Stephen Martin

## GIRLS' SOCCER



Mackay Brooks



Mechi O'Neil



Ella Arntsen



Pippa Spingler

**Coach:** Christo Manginis

**Captains:** Seniors Mackay Brooks, Mechi O'Neil, Pippa Spingler; junior Ella Arntsen

**Record last year:** 9-8-4

**Current record:** 6-6-3

**Goals:** To build team spirit, work together as a team

**Rivals:** Hamilton-Wenham, Georgetown

**Impact players:** Seniors Mackay Brooks, Mechi O'Neil, Pippa Spingler; juniors Ella Arntsen, Charlotte Crocker, Madi Cook

**Coach's quote:** "The focus [is] on conceding less goals ... [and] being more organized defensively, because I think we were, at times, a little all over the place." -Christo Manginis

**Captain's quote:** "I think we started off with wins and a solid tie against Hamilton-Wenham, and then we faced our first loss, and I think we were all a little taken aback by it, so I think we just need to be really resilient." -Pippa Spingler

## BOYS' SOCCER

**Coach:** Robert Bilsbury

**Captains:** Senior Logan Desouza, junior Sammy Bothwell

**Record last year:** 7-10-3

**Current record:** 3-8-3

**Goal:** To go far in the state tournament, continue playing well

**Rivals:** Hamilton-Wenham, Ipswich, Rockport

**Impact players:** Junior Sammy Bothwell, sophomore Tao Ramos

**Coach's quote:** "We show moments in matches where we just dominate because we pass and play our type of soccer." -Robert Bilsbury

**Captain's quote:** "We have a lot of talent on the team, and as the season goes on, we will just get stronger." -Logan Desouza



Sammy Bothwell



Logan Desouza

## GOLF

**Coach:** Bill Melvin  
**Captain:** Senior Lilly Brigham  
**Record last year:** 8-8  
**Current Record:** 6-9  
**Goals:** To make it to the State Tournament, see each individual player improve throughout the season  
**Rival:** Hamilton-Wenham  
**Impact players:** Sophomores Gray West, Jack McCavanagh, Matthew DeOreo, Jake Zschau  
**Coach's quote:** "[This team is] willing to learn, and they're very easy to coach. [They are a] great group of student athletes. They're fun to be around ... and they want to get better every day. They come to practice or to a match wanting to improve."  
 -Bill Melvin  
**Captain's quote:** "Last year we started off not too great, but then we made it to States. It was my first time making it to States, which was pretty exciting." - Lilly Brigham



Lilly Brigham

## CHEERLEADING

**Coach:** Casey Economo  
**Captains:** Seniors Ella Aieta, Allie Delaney, Caroline Doucette  
**Upcoming events:** Think Pink Invitational on Oct. 21 and CAL competition on Nov. 2  
**Goals:** To make it to the Regional competition, for the team to improve their skills on game days  
**Coach's quote:** "I think we have really good leadership skills on our team with the captains. They've really stepped into their roles as captains of a varsity sport."-Casey Economo  
**Captain's quote:** "We're always cheering for each other, and I think it's super warm and welcoming. We're like one big family."  
 -Caroline Doucette



Ella Aieta



Allie Delaney



Caroline Doucette

## CROSS COUNTRY

**Coaches:** Steve Whittey, Rachel Mitchell  
**Captains:** Seniors Finn O'Hara and Charlie Lations, juniors Sabine Cooper and Whitney Turner, Gloucester seniors Faith Castellucci and Colby Rochford  
**Record last year:** 3-2 (boys'), 4-1 (girls')  
**Current record:** 3-1 (boys'), 2-2 (girls')  
**Rival:** Hamilton-Wenham  
**Goals:** To place at Divisionals, make it to All-State Meet  
**Impact players:** Seniors, Finn O'Hara, Charlie Lations; Gloucester seniors Faith Castellucci, Colby Rochford; juniors Sabine Cooper, Whitney Turner, Henry Stevens; sophomore River Silva; Gloucester sophomore Lyall Cunningham  
**Coach's quote:** "We really want to see our runners improve, see their love for running improve. That really is the goal of the team."  
 -Rachel Mitchell  
**Captain's quote:** "We have a bigger team than we've had in years past, and our upperclassmen are looking forward to having a bigger team and being more competitive." -Finn O'Hara



Faith Castellucci



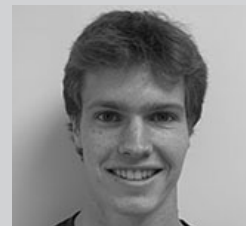
Sabine Cooper



Whitney Turner



Charlie Lations



Finn O'Hara



Colby Rochford

## FIELD HOCKEY

**Coach:** Courtney Brown  
**Captains:** Seniors Ella Chafe, Phileine de Widt, Torrin Kirk, Caelie Patrick  
**Record last year:** 16-4-3  
**Current Record:** 11-1-2  
**Goals:** To advance in the state tournament, score more  
**Rival:** Newburyport  
**Impact Players:** Seniors Ella Chafe, Phileine de Widt, Torrin Kirk, Caelie Patrick; junior Brigid Carovillano; sophomore Abby Kent  
**Coach's quote:** "We really want to play every game one at a time and think about what we can do in the moment." -Courtney Brown  
**Captain's quote:** "Playing Newburyport this year was a really big deal for us, we beat them 3-1, so winning against them really shifted our energy and gave us a lot of courage going forward."  
 -Torrin Kirk



Ella Chafe



Phileine de Widt



Torrin Kirk



Caelie Patrick

# Poetry Club offers students creative environment

Members share, discuss their original poetry

By Stella Straub  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Meeting regularly on Monday afternoons, the Poetry Club has between 10 and 12 members, said senior president Libby Mulry.

She said meetings typically include a structured lesson about a poet, followed by time to write poetry and share ideas.

“To just write and to be able to share what you’re writing is really important. Every single person is sharing their poetry in Poetry Club,” Mulry said.

Mulry said she has always liked poetry and felt it wasn’t as

incorporated into the school curriculum as she would have liked.

In the future, she said she’d like to write poetry out in nature or have local poets come in to present.

“I also really want to either create a zine, publish our poetry, or work with The Inkling and submit our poetry to that,” Mulry said.

Club adviser and English teacher Elizabeth Edgerton said there is something for everyone in a Poetry Club meeting.

“We laugh a lot, but we’ve also read poems that make some of us cry, so we really experience a lot of different emotions, but it feels like

a very safe, welcoming space. That’s what we’re going for, so that people can join at any time,” she said.

Edgerton said the club has learned about poets such as Mary Oliver and Instagram poet Kate



STELLA STRAUB PHOTO

Sophomores Augie Capotosto and Riley Mckinnon, and junior Harper Jay share their poetry during Poetry Club, which meets regularly on Monday afternoons in English teacher Liz Edgerton’s room.

Baer so far.

She hopes students in Poetry Club gain confidence in their ability to access poetry, she said.

“Sometimes people think that poetry is something that you can’t touch because it’s too

smart, but I want people to feel like anyone can read poetry; anyone can access poetry,” Edgerton said.

Junior club member Harper Jay said everyone is supportive of each other during club meetings.

“Poetry is about expressing yourself, and expressing yourself through writing and emotion. Taking part in a club where you’re encouraged to do that, I think it helps people learn about poetry,” he said.

## Manchester’s Harvest Festival features students, returns for first time since 2013

Young performers able to display musical talents

By Summer Demeo  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After nearly a decade, the Manchester summer carnival will return as the Harvest Festival this fall.

All money generated by the festival will go to the Boosters to fund athletics at the high school, said Emily McCavanagh, Boosters member and primary organizer of the festival, which will take place on Oct. 20, 21 and 22.

In 2017, McCavanagh and the Boosters tried to reinstate the carnival but were unsuccessful

because the company they were working with canceled, she said.

Tyler Pinstein, a Manchester local who grew up attending the carnival and now lives here with his family, approached McCavanagh about bringing back the carnival, McCavanagh said.

She said the festival has helped bring the Manchester community together.

“There’s a feeling sometimes in our town that old and young don’t get along, or new residents and existing residents don’t, and this has shown me the opposite,” McCavanagh said.

There will be rides, food trucks, local artists, a variety of activities including a pumpkin toss, and live music at the festival, she said.

Friends of the Manchester-Es-

sex Performing Arts (FOMEPA) will provide the festival with singers and other musical groups, McCavanagh said.

Carolyn Vendt, liaison to the board of FOMEPA, said the groups performing at the festival include the band “Kicked off the Bus” from Gloucester Middle School and High School, the high school chorus, jazz band, and Soundwaves, along with individual student performers, Vendt said.

“It is such a great community event, and we’ve missed [the carnival] for the past several years,” she said.

Vendt said the festival will help students reach a larger community.

“I’m looking forward to hearing the school groups ... it’s a great opportunity for them to



EMILY MCCAVANAGH PHOTO

The upcoming Harvest Festival will raise money for the Boosters organization and will showcase local student musicians.

perform to an audience they might not usually reach,” she said.

Junior Josh Cohen, a member of both chorus and Soundwaves, said he thinks the festival will bring more visibility to the performing

arts.

“I’m excited to perform at the Harvest Festival. It isn’t something we’ve ever been able to do before in our community,” he said.

## Drama club prepares for new musical

By Libby Mulry  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Due to declining participation in theater, the Drama Club has encountered many challenges performing “Freaky Friday,” which will debut on Nov. 17, music director and chorus teacher Ben Icenogle said.

Icenogle and director Tyler Garrafalo, dance teacher and a fourth grade teacher at Manchester Elementary, choose musicals based on the character and size of the show, Icenogle said.

“We have to narrow it down by our limitations first,” he said.



LIBBY MULRY PHOTO

Members of the cast of the musical “Freaky Friday” rehearse with director Tyler Garrafalo. The show opens on Nov. 17.

Getting the rights to shows can take months, so Icenogle and Garrafalo have to pick which musical the club will put on before knowing how many students will

audition, Icenogle said.

Low participation this year has made the musical more complicated to put on, senior Caroline Quinn said.

“‘Freaky Friday’ is supposed to have a pretty big ensemble, but every person casted is a lead,” Quinn said.

The decreased participation has led the Drama Club to bring in younger actors, she said.

“We’re relying on some middle schoolers to audition,” Quinn said.

Younger students and freshmen have stepped up since a majority of the students in the club last year graduated, junior Josh Cohen said.

Loss in participation is also a result of COVID, Icenogle said.

“In a lot of ways the arts programs are still in recovery from the pandemic,” he said.

Icenogle said he hopes that participation in theater increases once more people see this year’s musical.

“People can see how much fun kids are having with it and how

much they get out of it and how inclusive of a space it is, and we can draw people in that way,” Icenogle said.

The theater fosters community between students, Cohen said.

“In the same way that the school offers sports or extracurriculars for math or debate, having theater gives students another option to come together outside of school,” he said.

Many students also work together as theater techs on the lighting and stage crew, Icenogle said.

Quinn said she is enthusiastic to see what the tech crew does for the show.

“I’m excited to see what the tech will look like because there will be a lot of weird lights to demonstrate the magic of the show,” she said.

## ‘Oppenheimer’ contains many impactful stylistic choices

By Alessia Omari  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Oppenheimer” presents a haunting immersion into the life of Julius Robert Oppenheimer, (Cillian Murphy) with a focus on his involvement in the creation of the atomic bomb.

The film, directed by Christopher Nolan and released under Universal Pictures, is heavily inspired by the 2005 novel “American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer.”

“Oppenheimer” is Nolan’s first attempt at directing a biopic.

The film centers around the life of the physicist, Oppenheimer, switching back and forth from his time in college to his 1954 security hearing during the McCarthy Era.

The main focus is Oppenheimer’s involvement in the Manhattan Project, which led to the invention and deployment of the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Oppenheimer’s life leading up to the Manhattan Project is one of the two main timelines in the film, the second timeline focusing on Oppenheimer’s security hearing due to his leftist affiliations.

All scenes involving former United States Secretary of Commerce Lewis Strauss (Robert Downey Jr.), are filmed entirely in black-and-white, depicting his clear-cut mindset.

**Cillian Murphy authentically portrays the somber ... Oppenheimer.**

This stylistic choice contrasts starkly with the main timeline of Oppenheimer’s life, which is followed in a chronological order of events.

This style emphasizes the



This is the face of the nearly \$900 million grossing film, “Oppenheimer,” which depicts the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, a physicist who was very heavily involved in the creation of the atomic bomb.

alternation between the two timelines in a way that is confusing at times but nonetheless engaging.

Cillian Murphy authentically portrays the somber, morally-conflicted Oppenheimer. From the scenes where he’s giving his

first lecture to when the bomb is first tested, every line and mannerism from him feels raw.

The film is filled with dialogue. However, a large portion of the dialogue feels redundant. Characters spoke too quietly at times, and

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS PHOTO

audio mixing could have made certain lines louder and easier to comprehend.

The overall themes of “Oppenheimer” present a thrilling story about a man who forever changed the course of history.

## ‘Barbie’ reveals its important life message

By Phileine de Widt  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After watching Greta Gerwig’s unique and creative “Barbie,” any pop of pink will serve as a reminder of the silly yet serious record-breaking movie.

Released in theaters on July 21, the movie attracted viewers because of its unmatched advertisement strategies. In the weeks leading up to and following the release, there was rarely a day where “Barbie” was not mentioned.

According to the CNN article, “‘Barbie’ is now America’s highest-grossing movie of 2023,” the movie made \$155 million just in its opening weekend.

“‘Barbie’ ... crossed the \$1.2



WARNER BROS PHOTO

The two lead actors of the record-breaking “Barbie” movie are Margot Robbie (Stereotypical Barbie) and Ryan Gosling (Ken).

billion mark globally, after hitting the \$1 billion milestone ... a feat achieved by only about 50 films in history,” senior media analyst at Comscore Paul Dergarabedian told CNN.

The movie partially takes place in Barbieland, a charm-

ing wonderland where women can be anything and, indeed, are everything.

Barbieland is home to President Barbie (Issa Rae), Physicist Barbie (Emma Mackey), Writer Barbie (Alexandra Shipp), and Lawyer Barbie (Sharon Rooney).

The Supreme Court is only women, only the women have dream houses, and the men, (the Kens), are just there.

The main characters, Stereotypical Barbie (Margot Robbie) and Ken (Ryan Gosling), travel to the real world to help Stereotypical Barbie overcome her human-like and thus terrible qualities including flat feet and anxiety. While there, the two experience a contrasting life. Through successful comedy and sarcasm, the movie highlights what’s wrong with the world.

The movie has a unique style, mixing cartoons and fun with sad realities. It envisions perfectly the Barbie franchise, a doll made to uplift women but ultimately outlined the stereotypical actualities of the world.

By having Stereotypical Barbie enter the real world, Gerwig declares the need for these “Barbie” dreams to become a reality. She creates and encourages a world where double standards no longer exist and women can indeed be

anything they desire to be.

Arguably, the biggest reason for the movie’s success, however, is what happened beyond the scenes.

The advertisement and influence the movie portrayed are unmatched. Not only did this bring the franchise great monetary success, but it also impacted everyday people.

“Barbie” even reached school, as a whole Spirit Week dress-up day and the junior hallway theme were dedicated to the pink-tastic movie.

In class, “Barbie” was mentioned. Business teacher Barrett Alston said he made a lesson plan teaching his Sports and Entertainment Marketing class about the incredibly successful and inventive advertising strategies of the “Barbie” movie.

“Barbie” is a truly impactful movie that already holds enough influence in the movie industry to affirm that the world has truly entered a “Barbie” era.

## Taylor Swift releases new album, ‘Speak Now (Taylor’s Version),’ highlights talent for narrative storytelling

By Hannah Davis  
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Taylor Swift’s newest re-recorded album, “Speak Now (Taylor’s Version)” showcases her storytelling abilities along with her talent for switching genres.

“Speak Now (Taylor’s Version)” was released on July 7, 2023 after Swift announced the album on May 5, 2023, while she was on her Eras Tour.

In 2019, Swift announced she would be re-recording her first six albums in an effort to own her work. She has already released “Fearless (Taylor’s Version)” and “Red (Taylor’s Version).”

“Speak Now,” her first fully self-written album, was released when Swift was 20 years old. She

decided to write her third album herself after critics began to question her songwriting abilities.

The album opens with “Mine,” a sweet love song with country and pop influences. Swift’s new vocals give a feeling of nostalgia to the song and to the rest of the album.

Her impressive storytelling is showcased throughout the album, especially on the title track, “Speak Now.” She beautifully tells the story of a girl crashing a wedding and conveys the emotions of her character.

On the fifth track, “Dear John,” she tells the story of a young girl’s relationship with an older man. The six-minute song has always been a fan favorite, and the re-recorded version is just as

moving as the original version of the song.

Swift manages to channel the emotions of the original version, even 13 years after the song was first written.

The re-recorded version of the album also contains six “Vault Tracks,” which are previously written songs that were not released.

Rock band Fall Out Boy is featured on the first vault track “Electric Touch,” and the lead singer of Paramore, Haley Williams, is featured on the fourth vault track “Castles Crumbling.”

On “Electric Touch,” Swift embraces her rock side with electric guitars and drums.

“Speak Now (Taylor’s Version)” beautifully tells the story



STORE.TAYLORSWIFT.COM

Taylor Swift announces the release of a new album, ‘Speak Now (Taylor’s Version),’ in Nashville, Tennessee on her Eras Tour.

of growing up and becoming a young woman with her usual

poignant truth and absolutely heart-wrenching authenticity.