



BROWN & GOLD

Haverhill High School

January 2022



Morgan Croft
Gold Stars

The Hillie JROTC program was ranked first in all of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. The Marine Corps JROTC Drill Team had a fruitful outing at North Quincy High School, bringing home five trophies from the competition, continuing the Drill Team's win streak. They also ranked 28th out of 163 teams in marksmanship. Additionally, the Physical Training team is doing swimmingly and have high hopes of going to the national competition in California.

After a brief hiatus due to Covid-19, the Coffee House returned to HHS on December 14, featuring student and teacher performances. Sheeba Nabiryo, a junior at HHS, gave an engaging spoken word performance about her love for Minions. Mr. Jordan and Mr. Hayden both sang, accompanied by acoustic guitars. Jacob Spreadborough, a senior, also gave an excellent acoustic guitar performance featuring his first-ever vocal performance. The food drive student council organized in tandem with Coffee House was a great success. All proceeds were donated to St. James and St. Joseph's.

The annual Winter Concert this year spotlighted chorus and band members, along with talented student soloists. The chorus sang six songs, and the band performed nine. Soloists from the band include Carina Archer, Avery Becker, William Becker, Marc Ghen, John Prendergast, and Patrick Sainato; and from the chorus, Emma Serverius. Plus, many alumni chorus members came and gave a brief serenade in the lobby.

John & Abigail Adams scholarship recipients: Olivia Bolduc-Nicoletti, Nathaniel Buteau, Giovanna Huertas, Hannah Kiernan, Jaxon Kutschke, Brynne Lecours, Christian Melo, Amber Pagluica, Max Popoloski, Carli Quinlan, Charles Rastauskas, Patrick Sainato, Jacob Spreadborough

Golden Opportunities

The Drama Club is preparing for their winter productions of *This is a Test* and *The Brothers Grimm Spectacularthon*, which they are putting on later this month. Shows will take place on Friday, January 14th at 7:00pm and Saturday, January 15th at 2:00pm and 7:00pm.

The Drama Club will be hosting auditions for the musical *The Wizard of Oz* on January 26 and 27.

Mock AP Exams for AP Lit. & AP Lang.: HHS, Saturday, January 22, 8:00-11:00 a.m.

'I chose to come here because I believe in this place'

New Haverhill High School Principal Jason Meland reflects on his first six months as a Hillie

By Nina Hamel

HAVERHILL—Despite well-reported challenges, first-year Haverhill High School Principal Jason Meland's belief in Haverhill and its youth has not wavered.

When Principal Meland, a Wisconsin native, joined the Haverhill High School community as the new head principal in June 2021, there were many challenges before him. Not only is he tasked with contending with the challenges posed by nearly

2,000 students returning to an urban school in a pandemic, he also had to gain the trust of faculty and students. He is the third principal to take the helm in five years, and he is surrounded by an administrative team that is also new to their positions. These hurdles, however, have not seemed to dampen Principal Meland's spirits in the slightest. Reflecting on the last six months, Meland expressed optimism about the school's

growth and success and the strides HHS has taken towards cultivating a more inclusive, welcoming environment.

"I've never questioned why I chose to join this school community," Meland said. "I thought a lot about my decision to come here. I had a job, but I chose to come here because I believe in this place. I believe in the scholars that come to school here. I think that this school has so much to offer and I want to be a part of that. I want to make

sure that every single kid who walks through the door here has access to all the amazing things our school has to offer."

Education runs in Meland's blood. Ever since Meland was a kid, he was always intrigued by the world of education. His mother was a middle school teacher who held a firm belief in the power of education, and this belief rubbed off on her son.

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Principal Jason Meland

From mural to memorial



Diversity mural brought to a halt, sparks debate, arrives at compromise

By Max Popoloski and Amanda Hinkle

HAVERHILL—A mural was intended to put up images representing excellence, brilliance, achievements, artistry, and ancestors of the diversity of identities in our school community.

"It is an important image," said Principal Meland, "but it doesn't meet the objective of the project."

Speaking to *Brown & Gold* via email, Meland added, "What I've communicated to the Diversity Murals Club from the beginning is that this image they designed is important, beautiful, powerful, and deserves to be seen. But the murals project that I approved to be painted in the hallways of our school

was intended to put up images representing excellence, brilliance, achievements, artistry, and ancestors of the diversity of identities in our school community."

The mural that has gained attention remains penciled on the wall in the high school's M-wing.

The mural portrays three women without eyes and with x's on their mouths, along with the names of Black women who have died as a result of police brutality written across their faces. Above the three women reads: #SayHerName, and a prominent Black Lives Matter fist is raised in the background

According to students of the Diversity Murals Club, the mural was made with the intention of serving as a memorial to those whose lives have been lost to police brutality.

The Say Her Name hashtag refers to a social justice organization associated with the African American Policy Forum (AAPF). According to the AAPF website, "The #SayHerName campaign brings awareness to the often invisible names and stories of Black women and girls who have been victimized by racist police violence, and provides support to their families."

Prior to the mural being

started, club members reported bringing the initial designs of the murals to Principal Meland. But Meland denies this claim, saying, "I want to be clear that I did not see the image before it went up on the wall - I'm still not sure how this happened."

The Diversity Murals Club members believe that parental complaints about the mural's message being political is the real reason for the change of course.

Alexis Namulinda, one of the students who reported the club after a several-year hiatus, said,

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Eye on the future? CTE application window open

Prospective students must apply by February 25

By Elle Palumbo

HAVERHILL—For first-year Hillies looking for a pathway to a future career, Haverhill High School has you covered. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs at Haverhill High School are now accepting applications for incoming freshmen.

The application entails two parts: an online application and a short interview with the Supervisor of the CTE Programs to assess a student's interests and provide scholars the opportunity to choose a program that best matches their interests. No prior knowledge is needed to apply, just an interest in the subject. Applications for the program will be

due by February 25 and interviews will begin to take place in March.

"It's a nice way for students to spend time with professionals who are working in those careers and to learn about training options that might be available and career paths," said Lisa Hunt, the Internship Coordinator for the CTE Programs.

Students will be applying online for the first time in 2022, which creates a faster and easier way to enroll in the program. Parents can find the application at <https://cte.haverhill-ps.org>.

The CTE Program provides students with technical skills and experience

and work-based learning opportunities to help students get the specific education they need in order to work in a specialized field after graduation. Students will engage in hands-on learning and indulge in activities to learn more about their intended field with opportunities such as listening to guest speakers, going on tours at different facilities, internships, and job shadow days.

Hunt has been a part of the CTE Program as the Internship Coordinator since the program began in 2015.

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Students hard at work in one of the many CTE offerings at HHS.

Brown & Gold

The mission of the Brown & Gold is to provide the Haverhill High School community with accurate, socially significant, and thoughtful news. As an organization of dedicated, conscientious, and curious journalists, we honor and revere our responsibility to ensure that our readers are equipped with all of the necessary information to make the mature and deliberate decisions that are the foundation of rich and ethical lives.

CTE APPLICATION

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Speaking on her experience in the program, Hunt explained how it creates a community of like-minded, career-oriented scholars.

"The program provides students with a circle of friends who have similar interests," she said. "It's a huge school with a lot of students, so it's nice for students to be able to join their freshman year and surround themselves with students who share the same interests."

There are five CTE Programs offered at Haverhill High School.

Information Technology provides students with the fundamentals of computer hardware and IT essentials, 3D printing, networking, programming and cybersecurity.

Healthcare Occupations teaches students the fundamentals of direct patient care through academic learning, practical skills labs and clinical experience.

Programming and Web Development provides students with the fundamentals of programming and coding and its many applications through team work to develop websites, apps

and software. The Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Biomedical Science Program uses professional lab equipment to explore parts of the human body and medical mysteries.

Lastly, students in the PLTW Engineering/Manufacturing Program use the engineering design process to solve real-world problems through an exploration of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and manufacturing concepts.

Victoria Kelley, Supervisor of Career Technical Education 5-12, Kevin Higginbottom, Curriculum Supervisor of Science & Technology K-12 and the CTE staff worked closely with MassHire and community leaders to create these vital in-demand STEM programs.

"We developed these programs to provide options and opportunities for all students," Kelley said. "We're looking for students who are passionate about a specific industry and our goal is to be able to give them an opportunity to gain skills and explore that industry."

Pick your path: AP or EC?

HHS has many options for getting ahead

By Samantha Danos and Alexa Gaiero

HAVERTHILL— Hillies looking to earn college credit face a unique fork in the road: take Advanced Placement courses or go the Early College route?

Both academic pathways can lead to college credits, significantly reducing the cost of college.

These programs also pride themselves on rigor and high expectations to ensure that students are as prepared as possible for college-level work upon graduation.

In past years there has been a good deal of debate pertaining to which of the trajectories is best for students. Both programs have their pros and cons, but it really comes down to the needs and objectives of each student.

Early College

The Early College program at HHS was launched in the fall of 2012 and provides students the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school.

Scholars enrolled in this program will take five college classes per year: two each semester and one during the summer. Courses students can enroll in include Criminal Justice, Education, Healthcare, and introductory liberal arts and STEM courses. All courses completed with a C or better count towards an associate's degree and are accepted at all state universities through the Mass Transfer Block to be applied toward a bachelor's.

The Early College program is unique in that it provides students with a preview of an authentic college experience. Students enrolled in the Early College program follow the college semester schedule and take classes at Northern Essex Community College in actual college lecture halls, with actual college professors.

In order to enter this program, students must take the Early College First Year Seminar Course in the spring of their sophomore year. Scholars then test into the program through the tenth-grade English Midterm. The real courses begin in their junior year.

Senior Sydeny Keyes is currently in her second year of the Early College program and describes it as "very beneficial." She said, "It will better prepare me for college than a regular high school schedule would."

Advanced Placement

If Early College does not seem fitting to your learning style, another great program for preparing for the future is taking Advanced Placement classes. Like Early College, AP programs give you the chance to earn college credits while still being in high school.

Advanced Placement courses give students the chance to earn college credit, stand out in the admission process, and build the skills needed in the college years. The rigorous curriculum helps students prepare for the academic expectations of college by having them take part in intense discussions, solve problems as a group and individually, and strengthen their time management and study skills.

HHS currently offers 17 AP courses. Each student is required to take a non-optional AP exam at the conclusion of their course. The score of that exam will determine whether or not that student will receive the credits that will later transfer over to their future college. Acquiring AP credits will save students money on tuition and provide them the opportunity to take fewer or more interesting classes, or even double major.

When asked about how her experience as an AP student, junior Morgan Croft, who currently takes AP Literature and Composition, as well as AP U.S. History said she has enjoyed the path she decided to take.

"They are going well, and I love the challenge AP courses give me," she said. Croft is planning on continuing to take AP classes next year.

Everyone has a different needs and these two programs give students more flexibility, whichever way they choose to get a jump on their college careers.

Hillie girls basketball losing talent to private schools in area

A starting-five's worth of Haverhill-grown talent is shining at private schools throughout region

By Sydney Keyes

HAVERTHILL— Haverhill High School athletics, particularly boys varsity hockey and girls basketball, are struggling to recruit and retain an impressive array of young talent. The pull of club programs and private schools has become so strong that it is becoming increasingly common for Haverhill-bred athletes to enroll in premier private schools rather than attend the high school.

The choice to attend a private or prep school for athletics has many benefits. The teams are competitive and have elite, talent-filled rosters. However, as Melissa Tarpay, head coach of the HHS girls basketball team noted, there is something special about playing for one's school and city.

"There's something to be said for the pride of wearing the H in your hometown where you grew up," she said. "It's too bad they don't get to experience it all the way through."

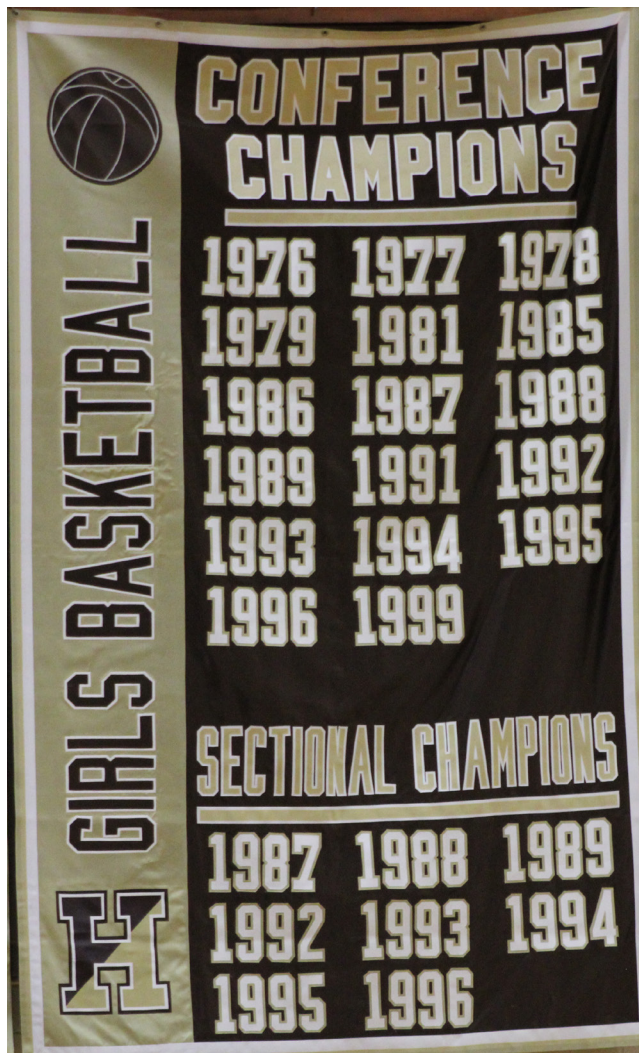
Despite the pull of playing for one's hometown, for many, the opportunity to play for programs where they feel they will receive more exposure is too big to pass up.

Ashley Dinges, a 6'1" sophomore excelling in Division I girls basketball at Central Catholic, was named to *The Boston Globe's* most recent "A Player to Watch" list going into her sophomore year and also received the honor of being named to the *Eagle Tribune's* "Super Team." She also made the MVC All-Conference team after only her freshman season. Dinges attended Nettle Middle School before going private upon entering high school.

Kendall Eddy, another vaunted girls basketball prospect, was recently ranked #11 on Prep Girls Hoops' top 150 class of 2023. Only in her junior year, Eddy has already received a number of Division I offers from schools such as Lafayette College, Merrimack College, and Monmouth University. Eddy is also a Haverhill resident, having attended Hunking Middle School and Haverhill High School for a year, before transferring to Brooks Academy and repeating her freshman year.

The list continues: Claire Finney and Sam Guertin are also Haverhill natives excelling at Central Catholic, and Colleen Phiri is competing for the surprising powerhouse that Bradford Christian Academy has recently become. Despite these girls' levels of success, they all have one thing in common: they reside in Haverhill and chose to pursue sports at high schools other than HHS.

Despite this exodus of talented prospects, Haverhill girls basketball has fared relatively well the past few seasons, the only outlier being the debacle that was the second Covid year, 2020-2021. In 2017-2018, the team went 9-6 and then 10-10 in 2018-2019, making the state tournament both



Hillies girls basketball dominated the MVC and state for a generation
Photo by Francis Dow



Coach Tarpay going over x's and o's with the team against Lowell
Photo by Francis Dow



Brooks basketball star and Haverhill native Kendall Eddy

years. However, the question can't be avoided: what would Haverhill's girls basketball program look like had the aforementioned recruits stayed in the system?

Coach Melissa Tarpay, who was a member of the Haverhill High basketball squad who won states in '92 and '94, has coached the varsity team since 2012. Speaking to the evolution of the program during her tenure, Tarpay noted the progress the program has made overall since she took over 10 years ago.

"We were a lot worse when we first started," she said, noting the accomplishments of the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 squads. "We made it to the tournament, and we made it to the second round of the tournament, which was the best [finish] in like 17 years."

Assistant Coach Adam Scott, who also started with Tarpay in 2012, added, "With losing kids, we've never had a set team. For our first year we had a set team, other than that we get kids, they leave."

When Tarpay was asked about this phenomenon of local athletes seeking success elsewhere, she spoke to the misunderstanding that motivates many of these athletes to pursue private schools.

"Plenty of kids from Haverhill High go Division I or Division II or higher-level schools, you don't have to leave your hometown to get recognized," she said. "If you're playing these high level AAU programs, you'll get seen in the spring, the fall, anywhere around the tournaments that you go to."

Haverhill also has a great middle school program for young basketball players looking to develop their skills. Haverhill Travel Basketball takes players from grades 4-8. The girls program fell through for some years, but Coaches Tarpay and Scott worked hard to rejuvenate the program and build it back up to develop a feeder system for the HHS squad. Tarpay says the young teams do very well, winning their leagues and state championships.

"They do very well, so our youth programs are not hurting by any means," she said. "They're all playing together growing up, so imagine if we had every girl stay at Haverhill High, nobody would touch us."

Both Tarpay and Scott find this increasingly common trend to be disheartening and detrimental to the school and its athletics.

The players grow up playing together, in elementary school, middle school, and travel. Then all of a sudden one of them leaves, and that changes the roles for others. Tarpay and Scott both agree that it's frustrating not only for them as coaches, but the team as well. Tarpay says their team is a family.

"They do stuff together and when one of the pieces leaves it kind of creates a hole that takes a little bit to fill," she said.

COMMENTARY: Samuel White's Food for Thought, or Chew on This:

Students Cold on Hot Lunch

Many Hillies prefer to brown-bag it rather than eat school lunch, even if it's free. (So there is such a thing as a free lunch!)

According to a recent survey conducted by *Brown & Gold*, nearly 50 percent of students believe the school food to be "sub-par or terrible."

Fortunately the survey also included a space for student commentary, wherein one student was kind enough to provide a more balanced assessment: "The food isn't good, and it isn't terrible. Eating it fills my stomach, but I'm not sure it does much more than that."

The survey also found that approximately 60 percent of students claim to eat lunch no more than two days a week. In addition, just over half of the respondents reported not eating school lunch at all.

The survey was distributed to nearly a dozen

English classes and polled 164 students with nearly equal representation across all grades, 9-12.

One aspect of the survey's findings that may be worth pondering is that nearly 60 of the 164 students polled claimed that school lunch and breakfast were their primary food sources during the week. This means that for many students, the food provided at school may be the only food they have access to on some days, undermining the recent initiative to provide free lunch to all public school students in an effort to combat food insecurity.

School meals have been provided for free for all Haverhill Public Schools' (HPS) students since the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. According to the HPS website, the Community Eligibility Provision, a govern-

ment-funded grant, funds universal meals for HPS students due to the large percentage of Haverhill students that qualify for Free and Reduced Price Meals. Superintendent Margaret Marotta also pointed out in the announcement from 2019, "Studies have shown that children who are not hungry perform better in school. By providing lunch to all children at no charge, we are hoping to create a better learning environment for our students. The school breakfasts and lunches that we serve follow U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for healthy school meals."

Inspiring as this is, one is compelled to wonder if free lunch comes at a cost—in taste!

In May of 2019, the district signed a new food contract with Whitsons New England Inc. The school committee describ-

ed the proposition as "attractive," and Haverhill has continued to use their products ever since. Whitsons, like many other mass food distributors, has vowed to provide healthier food items in schools. According to Whitsons' "Wholesome Nutrition" statement, they are committed to the use of organic all-natural non-GMO products. The statement pledges the company's commitment to create "Meals that are free of MSG, partially hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup, artificially added trans fats, artificial colors, flavors and/or preservatives."

It's great that there's a lot of healthy, free food in the cafeteria, and in the stairwells, and the walkways, and the trash barrels, and piling up in Mr. T's "Don't Waste Food" boxes in the library.

Eat Your Vegetables

MELAND

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Haverhill High School Principal Jason Meland

Meland attended the University of Wisconsin with hopes to move on to law school afterwards, yet when the time came to apply to law school, he did not feel entirely ready, so he took a step back and returned to his roots in education.

Meland started his first job as a high school teacher at Arlington Community High School in Indianapolis. However, not long after, he left to join a project where he helped build the Gambold Preparatory Magnet High School. It was here that Meland not only met his wife, but where he met the person who influenced him to become a principal. "It was really the experience of building Gambold Preparatory in Indianapolis and working for the principal who started that school, who became a really close mentor of mine," Meland said. "He convinced me that education and educational leadership was a path that I wanted to follow."

"He is still a really close mentor of mine, who I really think helped me see what kind of impact it's possible to have in school leadership," Meland added.

So far in this school year, Meland has contributed to creating some of what he feels are positive changes to the school environment. A new addition to the Haverhill High community is the Student Forum sessions hosted by Principal Meland. According to Meland, the Student Forums have so far shown great success and have contributed to creating beneficial changes to the school.

"I love those [Student Forums] because it allows me to speak directly to students about whatever topic it is they want to share or whatever concern they have about the community," he said.

One positive change Meland pointed out was the addition of more adjustment counselors. Meland pointed out that adjustment counselors working at HHS work primarily with students on an IEP. Although it is absolutely necessary that students on an IEP have this accommodation, it leaves students who don't have an IEP struggling to get access to an adjustment counselor about problems they may have.

"There is a need for that [adjustment counselors] for those who don't have IEPs and they need to know they have access to them," Meland said.

Another outcome from the Student Forums, which Meland notes as a positive for creating a more inclusive school environment, was the creation of the BIPOC Union.

"There were concerns raised about how the school feels for students of color," Meland said.

"There had been a proposal made to start a new club, BIPOC Union. We have been able to move that proposal forward and actually get it approved and get a stipend for the club's advisors so we can get that moving. Now, there is a venue for those conversations to happen and for us to think about how we are ensuring that our school is safe and welcoming for kids of all identities."

Despite the accomplishments made so far this year, Meland points out that there are many struggles as well, including an escalation in fights and vandalism.

Meland acknowledged the role the pandemic had on young students.

"I think we sometimes hear that as an excuse, but I do think it [Covid] plays a major role," he said.

Meland has described his approach of handling these situations as heavily focused on communication. His approach includes: "Ensuring that everybody and everything is safe and taking [appropriate] steps. So, we will remove people from one another and put them in safe spaces."

A major factor Meland describes in handling these situations is getting the students to talk to someone such as an adjustment counselor. Meland proposes open communication is key to finding solutions to these issues.

Meland hopes all students feel included when they walk through the doors of HHS.

"I think this is a great school, and I think we have work to do to make sure it's a great school for any kid who walks through the door," Meland said. "Regardless of what neighborhood they live in, languages they speak at home, the color of their skin, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, regardless of any of those factors, you can walk through these doors and you are seen, heard, loved, pushed, challenged, and you get the education you deserve."

Meet the teach..virtually

Family conferences go remote, take place after progress reports

By Cristopher Villaman

HAVERHILL—Many changes and new norms have characterized the 2021-2022 school year, including the high school's modification of family conferences, formerly known as parent-teacher conferences.

Prior to this school year, family conferences were held after report cards went home, and parents/guardians came to the building to meet with their child's teachers. Now, family conferences occur following progress reports, and all appointments are conducted via Google Meet.

Upon receiving an invitation from teachers, parents sign up for seven-minute appointments to speak with the teachers about their child's progress. Appointments are reserved on a first-come first-served basis, and each teacher has 12-13 time slots, five fewer than the traditional in-person method, though each appointment is a couple minutes longer.

Motivated by Covid protocols, the shift to fully remote family conferences was made to give more convenience to parents and allow some flexibility to those who may be unable to attend in-person meetings. The change to being held after progress reports was done to give parents and teachers a chance to help students halfway through the term instead of after their grades are finalized.

Cheryl Luongo, who has taught mathematics at the



Haverhill High School English teacher Victoria Hernandez-Bailey sits at her computer for a conference with a parent.

high school since 2013, believes that the change to remote conferences has been great in all aspects.

"Given the current status of everything going on, I believe virtual makes sense and is also, at least for some families, more beneficial." Regarding the change to progress reports, Luongo believes the modified timing is a welcome change. "Having the conversation midterm allows parents and teachers to work together

to help the students do better if they are struggling and to keep them on track if they are doing well."

English teacher Michael Laverie, who has worked at Haverhill High School for 15 years, also believes that virtual meetings are far more efficient for every one participating. "While I think it is better to talk to people in person, it is more convenient for parents who are working to be able to come virtually. If a parent is meeting teachers

all over the school, it could be almost impossible for them to get enough time with everyone."

Although acknowledging the many benefits of remote conferences, science teacher Sujan Niraula wonders if a hybrid option is possible, allowing parents who wish to come in to meet in person.

Amy Jones, another fan of the idea of remote conferences, also raised issues concerning parents' technological abilities. Jones, who has taught history and child development at Haverhill High School since 2004, has had a surprisingly low turnout with this new system. "I believe I only had two parents meet me during the first quarter. I think the majority of parents may not know how to log into a Google Meet."

From both a parent and teacher perspective, Kate Keyes, a parent of a Haverhill High School student and a teacher at Greater Lawrence Technical School, believes that the conferences were rushed. Keyes expresses that an urban district like Haverhill can do better after experiencing the disadvantages in terms of ease and accessibility. "There were a limited number of appointments available for each instructor, causing overlap of appointments. Multiple links on the calendar could be confusing to identify, and it was time consuming to go from one teacher to another."

The next conferences are on Thursday, March 3.

Haverhill High School's YMCA Educators of the Year

By Morgan Croft

Heather Weston, ELA

How long have you been teaching?

This is my fifth year teaching overall, but my third year in Haverhill. Before Haverhill, I taught as an ESL teacher in Shephard Hill, in the Dudley Charlton Regional school district.

What subject(s) do you teach ?

I teach English II.

What grade level do you teach ?

Sophomores.

What motivated you to become a teacher?

A lot of different life experiences eventually led me down the path of teaching. When I was in high school, I wanted to be a criminal psychologist! Eventually, between different mentors, college jobs, and classes, I found my passion was really with the written word, and I wanted to be able to share that with others. Teaching made the most sense, but I wasn't initially sure I wanted to get into the field. It was only when I met the dean of education at my college, and took one of her courses as a trial-run, then I knew I would really enjoy the career. Sure enough, I have!

What excites you most about your job?

There are lots of things that really excite me about being a teacher. I love when kids who say they hate reading tell me a book I'm teaching is really interesting. Or when a kid misses a day or two of class and the rest of the class is excited to fill them in on what happened in a novel; it tells me I'm doing a good job immersing new readers into the joys of reading. I also love the relationships you get to build with teaching and knowing you're one small part of some amazing person's journey in life. The kids I teach today will be doctors, lawyers, artists, police, nurses, singers, writers, and so much more than I could ever imagine. To be able to have a small role in such an amazing future is humbling but amazing. I love knowing I can make even a small difference in so many lives.

How does it feel to be recognized as Educator of the Year?

It's been a huge honor. I cannot thank the YMCA enough for putting on such an amazing event and acknowledging all of the hard work of so many amazing educators. These past two years have been difficult and so many people have done such amazing work. They've had to re-learn careers, technology, and create new strategies to engage with students. While I'm touched to have been recognized as Educator of the Year this year, I know so many teachers have really stepped up to the bat to try to help as many students as possible. It really does take a whole community to help mold the future leaders of our world. I'm so glad to be one of them!



Joanna Dix, Special Education

How long have you been teaching?

I have been teaching Special Education since 2007.

What subject(s) do you teach ?

I have been doing primarily HS Special Education English classes for the last 10 years.

What grade level do you teach ?

I am currently teaching grade 10, but I have taught grades 2-11 in my career.

What motivated you to become a teacher?

I have wanted to be a teacher since I was young. I was a very shy student that benefited from the support of some great Haverhill teachers. I knew that I wanted to support students the way they supported me.

What excites you most about your job?

The most exciting part of my job is when I am able to create a lesson or strategy for struggling students, and it is successful. Seeing my students succeed, even when it's small victories, feels great.

How does it feel to be recognized as Educator of the Year?

Being recognized as Teacher of the Year was an honor. It felt great to have my work acknowledged. I do want to add that I know how hard all teachers have worked this year and can not think of anyone that doesn't equally deserve the honor.

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MURAL

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“It is my understanding that the mural was viewed as being counter-productive, and possibly serving as a lightning rod for further radical, political imagery,” a position she disputes.

Another club member, Ambriel Mayhew, also commented on the impact of the controversy. “The mural was at risk of being taken down in order to cater to the white population and those who felt triggered by it,” Mayhew said.

When club members found out that their plans for the project had to change, they met with their former advisor, Shaun Ashworth, and discussed solutions to address the complaints. However, they were reluctant to modify their original idea. Namulinda said, “The group was not prepared for that discussion with the administration without specific information about the people with the problem with the mural.”

Although members are still actively advocating for the murals, the club has been deactivated since the club’s advisor, Ashworth, became the new interim Assistant Principal at the high school and could no longer be its advisor.

Principal Meland has since been meeting with the students weekly in order to further the project.

“I believe it’s crucial that the student artists who are taking on this project feel that their voices are being heard, and that we affirm without any reservation that Black lives matter at HHS,” said Meland via email, “which is why I’ve spent so much time with them discussing the project, helping think through next steps (including an alternative location for the mural they’ve designed), and talking through the issues they are identifying in our community and their ideas to advocate for change, above and beyond the mural project. I plan to continue doing so.”

According to club members, they currently feel as though they are in a good place in terms of furthering the project.

After meeting with Principal Meland, Mayhew said the mural is being “reimagined,” but still has her reservations.

“It felt as though we had to limit our Blackness for the sake of white comfort,” she said. “They feel we are in an okay place and compromising, but we are compromising a lot of the key factors of the mural in order to keep it up.”

The reimagining of the mural will include redesigning the three Black women and taking down the names of the female



The diversity mural painted by students in the high school mall.

victims of police brutality. It will still be about Black female victims at the hands of police brutality, but it will also be moved outside and shown not just as a mural, but as a memorial. In addition, QR codes of a website

the club plans to create will be put at every mural to list the historical context and the historical evidence of the people represented in the image for any HHS student, faculty member, or member of the community to use when coming to the

school. Club members are hopeful the mural will begin its redesign in the near future.

As of right now, 15 individuals are working on the project, including Namulinda, Mayhew, Gertrude Boakye,

Jaylene Viera, and many others. The goal of the club is to start conversations about diversity, raise awareness, and increase representation.

Overall, the club members represent different walks of life from marginalized communities.

OPINION: Cultural expectations lead to low academic success

By Shey Rodriguez

Student Experiences

Despite schools across the country pledging to close the academic performance gap between white students and students of color, disparities persist. Schools commit themselves to initiating equitable practices and other diversity-driven supports, but, speaking from personal experience, what schools seem to miss is that there are major factors outside of their control.

To soothe my worries about being unprepared for college, I decided to take AP classes my junior year. In my classes, I have noticed that the most successful students tend to be those who receive some form of academic help at home, whether from tutors, online resources, or even just parents who had gone to college themselves; they are also predominantly white. I wasn’t necessarily struggling with my classes, but it was more difficult for me, someone with little to no educational support at home, than it was for those students who had parents or other family members with college degrees.

This made me wonder if the key to success was simply academic support in the form of having parents that were knowledgeable about higher education, so I decided to seek out other Black and Latino students at Haverhill High to see if they received support at home and, if not, how they were able to compensate in their AP

classes, which are an extremely valuable asset in our pursuits of competitive universities.

Joysmer Minaya Heredia, a 16-year-old junior at Haverhill High School, said that he had to find all the information on his own when he needed help. “I use any resource I can find on the internet,” he said.

When asked if he receives any help at home, Minaya Heredia laughed. “Nope, I do everything by myself, everything,” he said.

Tobechi Onwuka, a 17-year-old senior currently taking three AP courses, shared a similar experience.

“I would try to use the internet as much as I could,” she said.

Onwuka also received help from teachers and used AP prep books like AMSCO. However, when asked if she could ask her parents, she expressed that her parents wouldn’t be able to help because they were taught different things in their home country.

Disparities in AP Scores

Racial inequities in academic preparedness and opportunities have been well-documented for years, if not decades, but little progress appears to have been made, at least concerning student performance on standardized tests, which still play a significant role in college admissions.

AP exams are scored

on a scale of 1 to 5. If students score a 3 or above, most colleges grant them credits, meaning students will be able to skip the equivalent entry-level course once they’re in college. According to College Board data from 2019, 65 percent of white students passed AP exams with a score of 3 or higher and a mean score of 3.34. On the other hand, less than 32 percent of Black students achieved a 3 and, as a whole, only achieved a mean score of 2.09.

While more than 40 percent of Latino students achieved a 3, their mean score also came in almost a whole point lower than white students. Considering these findings: if AP students are learning the same curriculum, then is it fair to ask why Black and Latino students are more likely to score below a 3?

Learning the System

Some people have attributed these discrepancies to culturally flawed reading materials, teaching practices, and racial bias in the test themselves, but I tend to believe the primary issue is much closer to home than any classroom: cultural practices and a lack of familiarity with the whole apparatus of higher education. Black and Latino parents understand the importance of education, especially higher education. Unfortunately, some parents don’t know how to properly establish the stepping stones for college. They

are often unaware of the importance of visiting schools, bolstering one’s resume with extracurricular activities, and taking the SATs—multiple times.

Their lack of knowledge causes them to assume the process is no different than moving up from one grade to the next and that all their child needs is good grades and a spotless disciplinary record. In the minds of many parents of color, being a good kid, doing your school work, and staying away from drugs and gangs seems to be enough to ensure your children’s success.

Cultural Considerations

Minority parents, Latino parents in particular, also seem more likely to force their children to work. Parents don’t think they’re doing anything wrong by pushing work instead of education, they just want their children to be financially secure and stay close to the family. But what they’re unknowingly doing is making their college-bound children’s lives more difficult by taking away time that is crucial for success in advanced courses.

These communities also place a heavy emphasis on family. They think families should stay in close proximity and should provide money and help if needed. The idea of a child moving away, even for a good reason like college, is often frowned upon because it is perceived as if the child doesn’t want to



Sheilyn Rodriguez catching up on AP homework in the breakroom during a shift at Marshalls.

be in the family anymore. This fear of losing a child and breaking cultural norms makes Black and Latino parents less likely to push higher education and, instead, prioritize work. The negative effects of these beliefs are reflected in AP exams scores. The score is often a reflection not of a lack of love or care at home but a lot of love and care just motivated by a different set of objectives.

Moving Forward

Black and Latino parents often don’t have the knowledge to support their child’s educational ambitions. To support these families academic college readiness programs such as Trio and Gear Up should be offered at Haverhill High School. These programs provide a variety of academic, counseling, and college preparatory services.

If these programs are not

available then schools should make an easily accessible higher education resource page on their web site. Resources like Khan Academy, College Vine, and Bold.com, just to name a few, are great resources for students and parents who need more information on higher education. These resources can make the process much easier and higher education more accessible.

Black and Latino parents also need to understand the importance of good study habits, time management, and researching colleges before their children go to high school so the transition is easier. Parents don’t need to understand their child’s work to help. Little things such as less chores, college visits, and supporting their child’s academic aspirations instead of pushing what they want can better ensure their child is set up for academic success.

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