



BROWN & GOLD

Haverhill High School

March 2023



Croft's Corner

Members of the **Boys HHS Swim Team** competed in the Sectionals competition on Feb. 2nd. These members included Casey Connors, Jorell Dube, Liam Jordan, Sam Mistretta, Braedon Smith, Brian Story, James Zbitoff, and Colby McLaughlin.

The **Haverhill High School Model United Nations** team (Hillie-MUN) went to New York City from March 15th-18th for the International Model UN conference, the largest MUN conference in the world. Our Hillies are representing Myanmar.

The **Class of 2024 Lip Sync Battle** that was scheduled for Thursday Feb. 16th was postponed.

Important deadline: **The Haverhill High Scholarship portal** closes on March 24th!

The **Drama Club** is back for the spring musical on March 31st and April 1st. They also attended the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild's Drama Fest on March 4th, where they performed the winter one-acts.

Senior Week Schedule:

Future Educator Signing Day: May 4th at 1:30pm

John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Breakfast: May 5th at 8:30am

Early College Graduation: May 11th at 5pm

Senior Class Trip: TBD

Last Day of Classes/ express Senior Sign Out: May 24th

CTE Celebration: May 24th at 6pm

Chapel Practice/ Senior Sign Out/ Night of the Stars: May 25th at 10am, 12:30pm, and 6pm respectively

Senior Chapel: May 26th at 10:45am

Prom: May 31st, 7pm at Atkinson Country Club

Graduation Practice: June 1st at 10:30am

Senior Farewell: June 1st at 7pm

Graduation: June 2nd at 6pm, Haverhill/Trinity Stadium

Steady leadership prime desire in new principal

Stakeholders cite presence, safety, and community investment as qualities most in demand

Interviews conducted by Kai'ri Bohanan and Grace Grauwiler

HAVERHILL— Mr. Downs, let us introduce ourselves!

Before the district offered the Haverhill High School principal job to Michael Downs, principal of the Andrews Middle School in Medford as well as a former administrator in Methuen and North Reading, Brown and Gold asked residents, administrators, School Committee members, students and teachers about what they want to see in a new principal.

A common theme included wanting someone

who is committed to the school for the long term, especially in light of the revolving door of principals since Glenn Burns left two years ago.

Since Burns' departure in 2021, the school had a year of Principal Jason Meland before he returned to work for Boston Schools and a year of Kevin Soraghan and Roland Boucher, who have both served as interim principals this year.

"[We want] someone who's willing to stay and try to help our school so that we don't crumble and

we don't have a bad reputation," said Will Lee, a senior at Haverhill High School. "We want some consistency."

Many also cited that they wanted someone who can work cooperatively with students, families, teachers and other stakeholders instead of initiating wholesale changes before learning about the community.

Some were very pragmatic with their wish lists, hoping the new principal is able to address attendance issues, communicate more

clearly with students and staff, and address disciplinary issues at the school in a way that isn't overbearing.

As summed up succinctly by Haverhill's own Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Margaret Marotta-Smith:

"We are looking for someone that shows a desire to make a long-term commitment to Haverhill and the high school... We need an experienced leader, who can bring people together. A leader with the skills and personality to bring about change while

keeping in place the many great things that exist at the school. Haverhill High School is large and complex, the principal will need to be highly visible in the school and at events, interacting with staff, students and families on a regular basis. The principal will need to be level headed, able to think on their feet, and work well with others."

See more responses on page 2

Attending to attendance



Students in August line up to check in after the first bell. While much better now, class attendance is still a major concern.

Admin. considering various strategies to stem chronic absenteeism

By Allisondra Phipps

HAVERHILL— While the problem of low class attendance is easy to identify, the solutions are harder to find.

Over the last few months, Brown & Gold, along with other local papers, has drawn attention to attendance woes at Haverhill High School. As we reported last month, on average, about 25 percent of students are absent or tardy every day.

The administration, acknowledging the persistence of this alarming trend, has begun brainstorming more effective

and innovative ways to fix this issue. Some solutions being discussed are updating and increasing enforcement of the attendance policy, connecting with students and guardians to identify individual hurdles that keep students out of the classroom, and continuing the new policy of suspension for students who cut class.

However, the problem is more complex than can be addressed by any one solution.

Michael McLeod, the freshman assistant principal, told Brown & Gold

about the extensive problem of absenteeism. He explained that around half of the students at Haverhill High School are classified as chronically absent.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education's guidelines, students are classified as chronically absent when they miss at least 10 percent of days enrolled, or 18 days over the course of a school year.

McLeod describes several factors that contribute to the high school's alarming attendance trends, such as impair-

ments of social skills due to Covid-19, increased technology usage, peer conflict, and most prominently, a lack of accountability by families, students, and the school itself.

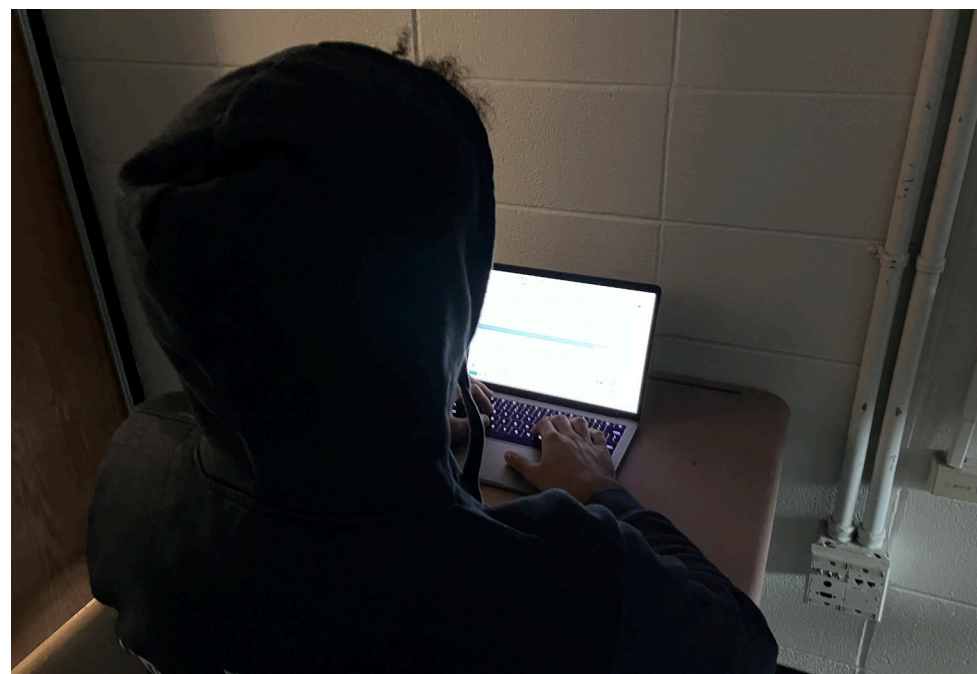
"I think we've let it get here by not holding students accountable," McLeod said. "We also have not been following through on holding up a standard that should be much higher."

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'Eyeballs' on ChatGPT and artificial intelligence

HHS student, 'Eyeballs,' provides Brown & Gold how-to for students' newest tool

By Joysmer Minaya Heredia



HAVERHILL—Maybe the world of Terminator isn't being ushered in with a kick through the door by a robot looking like Arnold Schwarzenegger. Perhaps, it's sneaking in through the back door through ChatGPT, at least that's what teachers feel.

ChatGPT, at its most basic, is a website that allows users to chat with an artificial intelligence (AI) program. While simply chatting sounds boring, the capabilities of the bot are rapidly improving. By now most people know that students from high school to college are beginning to use the bot to write essays and complete assignments, inspiring major pushback from teachers. But for the uninitiated, there are questions about how students even accomplish this and what is the extent of ChatGPT's capabilities.

ChatGPT is tru-

ly revolutionary for students. Simply creating an account on openai.com allows anyone to chat with the AI and ask it virtually any question, particularly questions they often need to answer for homework. For example, assigned questions for homework pertaining to the New Deal, students can ask "How did the New Deal affect New England?" and get the following response:

The New Deal had a major impact on New England. The New Deal's relief programs, such as the Works Progress Administration provided much-needed employment for many New-Englanders during the Great Depression. The New Deal also provided funding for infrastructure in the Northeast and helped launch

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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.

ATTENDANCE:*Continued from page 1*

He hopes that his personal efforts to bring awareness of students' attendance issues to their guardians will help this crisis.

"At some point there has to be some accountability on the parents and guardians and students to say, 'this isn't working,'" he said. "But still, you want to come across as caring and invested in the students. I don't want to be a nag and email the parents every day, but at the same time, you're here to get an education, you're not here to wander the halls."

Instead of sending students to the office for discipline, which keeps them out of class longer, McLeod uses a more empathetic approach that he hopes will be longer lasting.

"When there's obviously a problem going on, I try to identify the problem of why [a particular student is] not going to class," he said. "Does it have to do with staff? Does it have to do with your schedule? Does it have to do with something going on outside of school? We have some fantastic counselors we can set people up with, we have some fantastic programs."

According to Mr. McLeod, getting students connected to resources that will help them tackle the root of their attendance issues will not only vastly improve Haverhill High School's poor absenteeism rate, but it will also contribute to the lowering of failure rates.

Absences and tardiness are proven to contribute to failure rates, and there is a strong correlation between grade point average and number of absences which make the attendance issue that much more complex.

"So we have two different problems, the failure rates and the absenteeism, which go hand in hand," McLeod said. "If you start to fail multiple classes and you get held back as a freshman again, you may start to either work more or wonder, 'why am I even coming here, I'm not passing.'"

One of the solutions being proposed is a strongly enforced attendance policy. These kinds of policies are seen in schools around Haverhill High like North Andover High School and Lawrence High School.

McLeod discussed the strong attendance policy at the school he previously worked at as an administrator. He said the way the attendance policy worked in his previous district was that each quarter, if a student was absent five times or more, they failed.

"So even if you passed the class, you didn't get the credit," McLeod said.

McLeod will not be pushing to implement this at Haverhill High as it would increase other struggles.

"Our attendance issues [may decrease], but our failures will go up," he said. "I don't necessarily know if that's the best solution...Ultimately we have to attack the failure

rate before we attack absenteeism because what the attendance policy will do, is it will create more failures."

McLeod went on to add: "In the freshman class, I have roughly 611 students, there were over 100 students that were attained to be freshman again since they didn't have enough credits to get to sophomore year."

A solution that McLeod does back and believes will do the school some good is individualized help and connection between HHS staff and students and their guardians.

"We first want to make contact and build a rapport with the community of parents and guardians to see what is preventing students from getting to school," he said. "We then want to see what we can do to get them back in school."

McLeod added that Haverhill has "a lot of support and great programs." "I just think we need to make sure we're utilizing those programs correctly," he said. "We are moving forward, things are going in the right direction, we are identifying some teams and identifying some problems and trying to put some solutions together. Everything is still in early stages."

The administration plans to have dedicated staff members to reach out to students and develop solutions that will get them back to learning in the classroom.

"I think we've started off good, as we have an attendance meeting every Tuesday for each grade level," McLeod said. "We're trying to identify the students who are chronically absent."

McLeod said the administration has students tiered in green, yellow or red (low, medium or high) level needs of support. Based on that information, the school will identify a point person who will reach out to students and reach out to home to just check in to see what's going on that is keeping the student from getting to school.

"That point person will be in charge of getting them back to school and then eventually getting that student here on time," he said.

Despite the hefty absenteeism and failure rates, McLeod remains hopeful that the measures being planned now will be effective when they are implemented at the start of the school year next fall.

"It's the middle of the year, which makes things tough to implement," he said. "I think it's on a good track for the beginning of next year, especially with the new principal search going on. It will be great to get the principal involved and have a say. I'm sure whoever comes in will be well versed and probably have some good ideas that they can contribute as well."

PRINCIPAL:*Continued from page 1***Mr. Toromoreno, HHS Librarian**

"As a teacher of 20 years, what I hope for is, when they're first coming in, is they understand who their staff is, and the population that their students are, and that they get to know the people that they're working for, because a principal is here to lead us, and I hope that they get to know us before they just sort of take off on their own direction, because obviously we're already here."

Trish Grauwiler, Parent

"I hope that the new principal will get the community together, I'm hoping that they will work on the attendance problem at the school right now and get the kids back to going to school, to work with the families on how to do that, and I hope for them to help with some of the problems going on at the school, like the fights and things like that, maybe have more resources for kids to talk to people instead of fighting."

Attorney Richard J. Rosa, School Committee

"Haverhill High School is a large, diverse school with some challenges but so many more opportunities for students. I hope our next high school principal can bring students, parents, educators, and staff together and create a vibrant, engaged, and enthusiastic school community and learning environment that supports and encourages all students."

Trinity McCormick, Gr. 10

"Someone who is able to assert authority to an acceptable extent so it's not like we're in a prison but so we aren't attending a zoo and one that actually sticks around for more than a year and does stuff for the school and advocates for both the students and teachers"

Abigail Kihono, Gr. 10

"I want a principal who is going to care about student safety not just like making the school look good and creating this fake image but internally affecting change that will stick and stay. We need someone reliable who won't just flake because they realize 'Haverhill is a hard community and hard

district.' It has its problems but we have good students and I think that someone who cares can see that they just need to experience our school first."

Mary Rastauskas, CTE teacher

"Longevity, I think, is the most important thing, and commitment. I think it's important for a principal to live locally, you're going to have a lot more dedication if you're part of the community. I think it's really hard for principals to live far away and commute and really be committed to a community and be committed to a school, so I think it's important to be invested in the community and part of that is living here, living in the area."

Kleisa Prifti, Gr. 10

"Well for one, I hope he makes himself well known around the school because from what I know the majority of the school has no idea who our principal is, along with being able to handle HHS and be able to bring it up because where it is right now is not that good, and I hope he just cares about the school enough to make changes and not just say he's principal and carry around the title."

Molly Jordan, Gr. 9

"I think that it's important to interact with students more. I've never seen a principal with students or actually involved in many things."

Gail Sullivan, School Committee

"I hope that the new principal will take the time to really get to know the students and what their hopes and concerns are. I hope that he does the same with the staff. I hope that he can inspire the staff to want to do their best and to work with him to make Haverhill High a place where students and staff feel safe, happy and committed to learning."

Ava Vasquez, Grade 11

"I hope that he or she cares for the students, looks out for our best interest and makes the school a better place for all types of students"

It's time to clean up your app

Tips for polishing your online presence

By Rowan Kelly

HAVERTHILL— As seniors get closer and closer to their major move into the world of college and careers, it's important to reevaluate your digital footprint.

Whether you realize it or not, jobs and college admissions teams are constantly running background checks on prospective students or employees.

According to the University of Southern Florida's admissions blog, "Some colleges have confirmed they do take your social media presence into consideration during the college application process. However, others state that it is more likely they will take the extra step to look into a social media profile if an individual is being considered for scholarships, financial aid, and/or athletic sponsorships at the college."

That being said, it's time to professionalize your social media and make a good impression on future employers and college admission offices. Inappropriate photos, photos, dicey comments, photos indicating any sort of substance use, unprofessional screen names, and inappropriate posts from your dream job or school. With the growing number of various social media accounts, it's hard to keep track of what is posted where, but it's important to take the time to clean it up before it's too late. Here's how:

Delete the unnecessary!

Take a dive into your social media accounts and delete anything that might be a red flag to a company or college or is just blatantly unnecessary. This can mean deactivating old accounts, taking down pictures indicating underage drinking or other illegal behavior, changing the username @minecraftlover123 you made in third grade to a more professional one, such as just simply your name. Basically, though you may want to always look the way you did last summer, it's prob-

ably time for you to take down that picture of you wearing only a grass skirt and a coconut bra at your friend's Hawaiian-themed end-of-summer party. Different colleges and companies have their own ideas of what a red flag may be. For some, even a red solo cup can be enough to kick your resume to the curb.

Turn your social media into your own highlight reel!

Social media is a perfect place to showcase your talents and all you do. College admissions and employers want to see what you're posting. Colleges and employers will appreciate seeing that you are active, have a strong social life, and are appreciative of your life. Posting about your soccer game, dinner with your friends, that award you won last year, your daily walks with your dog, and some of your favorite memories will give them that good impression.

Think Before You Speak!

Posting comes in many forms, some that we often overlook. Comments and retweets are attached to your account. It might be time to delete your Andrew Tate quoted captions and the comment your conspiratorial uncle made on your post from that protest last month, nagging you for being "snowflakes." Take a second to think before posting, commenting or reposting anything yourself as well. Don't forget anyone can screenshot anything; nothing is ever truly deleted.

Keep it clean or keep it private!

Can't resist keeping the pictures from last weekend's party to yourself? Just keep it private. Take a minute to review your accounts privacy settings and make sure only your allowed followers can view your posts. Don't forget screenshots still exist and comments are usually still visible!

CHATGPT:*Continued from page 1*

the careers of New England Politicians such as John F. Kennedy.

But it's not only simple informational questions that ChatGPT provides accurate answers to; it is also capable of producing complete essays of whatever quality the user determines.

The method to get ChatGPT to write essays is actually not that difficult, especially for today's tech-savvy youth. Luckily, Brown & Gold was able to track down a student who regularly makes undetected use of ChatGPT for school assignments, emails to colleges, and much more. Understandably, this student, who will be referred to as "Eyeballs," agreed to show us how he uses ChatGPT if granted anonymity.

Eyeballs, as with other talented plagiarizers, has actually moved beyond ChatGPT and onto OpenAI Playground found at the url openai.com/playground. This website, unlike the original OpenAI chat bot, allows a user to control several key features of composition. On Playground users can dictate the exact length of the essay, the frequency with which it repeats words or phrases, phrases it repeats, starting text, and the number of sources it cites. Playground also allows users to use selected presets that dictate how ChatGPT gives a user a response. For example, Playground can summarize climate change for a

ChatGPT**Examples**

"Explain quantum computing in simple terms" →

"Got any creative ideas for a 10 year old's birthday?" →

"How do I make an HTTP request in Javascript?" →

Screenshot of ChatGPT welcome page.

2nd grader:

Climate change is when the planet gets warmer and causes changes in weather. It happens when human activities cause more heat to stay in the atmosphere and the Earth gets hotter. This can lead to more extreme weather like bigger storms, more flooding, and more droughts. It can also cause sea levels to rise, which can make it harder for people to live near the ocean.

Alternatively a user can ask ChatGPT to write a college level essay:

Climate change is a global issue resulting from increased levels of carbon dioxide, methane, and other pollutants in the atmosphere. It is causing temperatures to rise, extreme weather events to become more

of the three components of the psyche - the id, ego, and superego - can be seen.

He did it again and another, completely different and unique essay was produced. He did it again and yet another unique essay was produced.

Students can even get more specific and give the AI guidelines such as the AP Literature rubric. Once again all a user has to do is type in a prompt followed by "using the AP Literature rubric." Combine this with the ability to control things like word count and sources and you have an ultimate essay writer.

Teachers, not wanting to be left out, are also finding ways to use AI technology to their advantage. The creators of ChatGPT, OpenAI, are releasing technology to help teachers detect AI written essays. The problem with this is that changing sentences completely invalidates this technology. According to our anonymous source "You just change a word here and there and the computer doesn't pick it up." In fact this student has used ChatGPT for most of their daily tasks.

"I do everything with it, I've sent college emails using it [ChatGPT]."

Given the capabilities of the technology, the question now is how teachers, students and others will move forward now that the future is here.

*Get to class!
Brown & Gold*

Upon further review....

When picking a college, check twice before picking one

By Avery Becker

I would have rejected Harvard.

Admittedly, I did not apply, and had a negligible chance of getting in, but even if I had been accepted I would not have committed. Nor did I apply to other prestigious schools such as Boston University, Boston College, or Northeastern, all of which would have likely been within my grasp.

I would have been honored to receive an acceptance letter from any of these schools; however, I firmly believe that just because a person has the capacity to do something does not mean that they always should.

At first, Emerson College, with its artsy atmosphere, publishing programs, and Boston's streets as its campus, was my dream school: a school that accepted me into their Honors Program and gave me scholarships, but also a school that would put me \$200,000 in debt.

With my dream simply too expensive, my search for a school brought me to February 3, one of the coldest days of the entire year, with wind chill temperatures of -15 degrees, so that I could tour UMass Boston, Lesley, and Emmanuel. Tour guides ushered me and my parents between buildings, whipping their heads back to make sure the wind hadn't blown us off the path, scarves pressed against our mouths and noses.

I didn't know much about Lesley, but I was ec-

static to tour Emmanuel. Not only is it an amazing school with a writing and publishing program (just what I wanted!), but its beautiful campus is nestled right in the heart of Boston.

However, all my layers couldn't distract me from the fact that Lesley and Emmanuel scared me. Their locations made me feel claustrophobic instead of close to the action, with looming buildings that seemed to press in on me. Emmanuel, with what I thought would feel like an intimate campus, made me feel trapped and anxious, like a hamster running on a wheel while longing for a wide open space.

I know that Lesley and Emmanuel are the perfect schools for someone, but for me, they felt stifling because of their smaller size and location, making me feel lost. My perception of the schools in my mind was superimposed with my experience while touring, and I just couldn't reconcile the glaring differences.

Enter UMass Boston, a school that I included on the tour but thought would ultimately be overshadowed by Emmanuel. Public universities often get a bad reputation, especially for a lack of resources and funding. But when I stepped on UMass Boston's campus, I fell in love immediately.

While still just a short train ride from the center of Boston, UMass's place on the water

and abundance of glass buildings gave me a sense of freedom and space, complete with open green quads that would be added in the fall of my freshman year. And for my choice of study, creative writing, they had a concentration for an English major, and certainly a greater abundance of writing professors a school like Lesley or Emmanuel would be able to provide me.

I felt giddy; I still feel giddy. I feel like an actual college student with freedom, a plan, and a place, all because I gave a school that normally a high achieving student would turn their back on another look.

While I'm sure you already have certain perceptions of schools in your head, don't let those inner fantasies manipulate your decision. A second look, whether it's scrolling on a website for a school you never would have dreamed you would like, or touring college campuses that are out of your comfort zone, there are schools that deserve a second, closer look.

No matter what school you decide to commit to on May 1, just know that you don't have to live up to idealistic academic expectations by choosing the school that others deem the best. Open your mind, try something new, and tour every college that you can. You just might find that what feels like home surprises you.

O Brother, where art thou?

Concerns with coasting before college

by Maya Bennett

As the 2022-23 school year comes to a close, my twin brother and I are starting to decide what the next four years will look like. We've prepared for this our entire lives, taking Honors and AP classes, participating and excelling in extracurriculars, and being active participants in our community. But when the summer of 2022 ended, we started to go down different paths.

He has, at least statistically, been doing worse this year simply due to the fact that school and college have somehow become far less of a priority for him. His grades have significantly dropped from making High Honor Roll with mostly A's and some B's to now having mostly C's with some D's. As college decision day approaches, my parents and I grow increasingly worried about him. At this point, with his grades, colleges may not even want him anymore. And, if they do, how are his newfound habits going to hold up in a more demanding environment? Will he just flip a switch and return to his former scholarly self? Or will he continue to just show up and glide by with 60s and 70s?

There are, of course, many students just like my brother. Students who are academically capable but who have come to do no homework and engage minimally with anything academic, and yet, sadly, continually find them-

selves passing due to lenient academic policies, which, unfortunately, lead students to pursuing college without actually being prepared to do so, setting them up not only for failure but life-changing economic consequences.

According to the Education Data Initiative website, dating back to 2015-2016, the freshman dropout rate was almost 20 percent, meaning 1-in-5 full time college freshmen drop out by the end of the first year. This, of course, was further exacerbated during the COVID years. The fall semesters of 2019 and 2020 combined have shown that 24.1 percent of all full-time freshmen have dropped out of college. For students enrolled in four-year institutions that number decreases slightly, to 18.4 percent of full-time freshmen, but that's still nearly 1-in-5. This past year, however, has proven that the trend is not entirely a result of COVID. In 2021, the record shows that a full 40 percent of undergraduate students in the U.S. dropped out of college before receiving a degree. And let's remember, college isn't a "try-before-you-buy" product from Amazon. These failed experiments are costly.

According to Prosperity For America, the average cost of college in the United States is now \$35,551 per student per year. The average private nonprofit college student

spends \$54,501 per academic year with \$37,641 of it being on tuition and fees. With this much money being spent on one year of college alone, students need to be prepared to go to their classes and succeed academically or else this money being spent will go to waste. If you do finally decide to drop out of school after your first year because you couldn't handle it, you're talking about coming back home with nearly \$30,000 to pay off because you thought your charisma and natural intelligence would do the trick. In fact, Prosperity for America claims that students who attend and drop out of public colleges owe an average of \$28,160, while those who go the private route owe an average of \$40,750. So, basically, you're out of college with no degree, no aspirations but a whole lot of debt.

All this horrendous news about dropout rates and student loans is already troublesome for parents. So when your suddenly C-average brother isn't doing too hot in his last semester of high school, you know your parents can't help but worry. And as you watch your parents and twin brother have nasty arguments at the dinner table over grades, the only thing you can do, as the twin sister, is stand by and watch it all happen from the sidelines. Little does anyone know, you worry most of all.

OPINION: Curiosity kills more than cats

Rather than get offended, answer the tough questions

By Shey Rodriguez

Last spring, I was friends with a group of "activists," students who pride themselves on their political beliefs. I genuinely admire their work and dedication to their respective causes, but I thought that their routine began to feel repetitive, as every protest and project was about the same topic: race. I found this a bit odd, especially because these activists were well-versed in many different topics. So one day I asked the simple question: "Do you ever get tired of constantly talking about race?"

The mood immediately shifted and the girls got very uncomfortable. I made it very clear that my intention was to pose a genuine question, not to criticize. Nonetheless, after that day, those girls never spoke to me again.

Over a year later, I found out that my question was the reason why. The activists found the question offensive. To be honest, I didn't feel that bad because it was a genuine question. But this experience led me to reflect on all the other times I've been labeled "abrasive," simply for asking a question, rare as such questions may be.

I'm not the only person that has experienced this social isolation as a punishment for questioning a belief. Today, this has essentially become the norm. If you question the trending political stance or movement, you're automatically labeled as an "enemy to the cause," or worse, simply for having a different perspective. For instance, if you question if the United States should be sending financial aid to Ukraine rather than using those funds to address domestic issues, you're labeled as anti-Ukrainian, or even pro-Russian, despite the fact that your opinion isn't anti-Ukrainian, and especially not pro-Russian. In all reality, such an opinion isn't necessarily about this particular war itself. It could be the mere voicing of one's belief that American tax dollars should go to fixing America's domestic problems,

not to wars half the world away that don't directly affect most American lives.

Or recall the recent "fat phobic" hysteria. In the wake of the new "body positivity" movement, anything that cautioned against unhealthy weight gain or advocated for losing weight was labeled as "fat phobic," despite the fact that, just like a perverse obsession with being skinny, obesity comes with major health complications, physical, psychological, and emotional. The bottom line is that suggesting that there is a correlation between one's body and their health does not mean anyone "hates" people because of their body type.

Back to my former activist friend. Despite finding her reaction fairly unreasonable and immature, I don't necessarily begrudge her her reaction. I understand what precipitated it. Today people aren't used to being questioned due to highly advanced algorithms. All the media they receive corresponds to their values and ideological leaning. We often forget that everything we interact with on the internet is cultivated for us. The news, media, and people we see and interact with don't randomly appear, they are deliberately brought before us simply because we looked at similar things in the past. This essentially creates a social bubble, or an echo chamber, a space where "everyone" agrees with us and thinks like us. As a result, people are shielded from criticism and view questions or pieces of information that they don't agree with as a direct assault on who they are; thus, the post they see criticizing Black Lives Matter isn't a critique of the movement but a personal attack, their political beliefs are who they are.

This problem of refusing to entertain alternative perspectives is further compounded by modern and pervasive internet addiction and the way we take in information from the internet, which is not exactly analytic. The

modern internet, particularly social media, is designed to obliterate deep thought. Think of the time you spend on TikTok and Twitter and how little information you receive in return. Every once in a while you might stumble upon a well-articulated argument or useful information but the majority of the time you see arguments that don't hold any nuance, are far-fetched, and oftentimes completely false. However, if these "arguments" happen to align with your own, facts be damned.

In the past decade "social rewards that people would get in person" have begun to be "substituted by online ones and recently have overtaken them," argues Jia Tolentino in her essay "The I in the Internet." This is why on Twitter people are constantly making "righteous political statements" and posting political infographics on their Instagram story, even if they don't know anything about the topic itself. It is a way of fulfilling their personal desires for "political integrity" and to appear intellectually superior to their political counterparts.

People's arguments may not have any real logical foundation or support but there is certainly a social incentive to defend a particular point, regardless of its practicality or absurdity. This is why most people struggle to defend their "moral" beliefs and the policies they support, because they don't actually know why they hold those beliefs, they only know who holds them.

This is why questions such as the ones I posed to my former "friends" are so intimidating, they put people in a vulnerable position. Most people refuse to question their own beliefs because realizing they didn't form these opinions on their own makes them feel less intelligent and insecure. But evaluating your ideas and the way you think is crucial today, even if it makes you uncomfortable.

OPINION: A case for bringing back recess

Loud, barbaric howling. Hangry chaos. Where all hope goes to die.

By Sheeba Nabiryo



When I asked my friends to detail the Haverhill High School cafeteria in one phrase, the phrases above are what they offered. While there are culprits in every grade level, most of this mess can be attributed to the freshman class. In previous years, these cherubs would have been relegated to their own separate lunch period. However, due to an overwhelmingly large incoming class this year, freshmen have been sprinkled into every lunch period rather than having their own, leaving upperclassmen like myself to deal with their complete lack of lunchroom etiquette.

I don't say all this to degrade this subsection of my younger peers, however. In fact, I deeply empathize with their strife. For the freshman class (most of whom were born in 2008, the Year of the Rat, and Obama), the transition to high school can be extremely challenging. A large source of this difficulty is the abrupt shift from 14 comfortable years of being a child with zero responsibility, to suddenly being a "young adult" with an increased workload, new friend groups, and a school layout almost as unfamiliar as your own changing body.

All of this, coupled with the ramifications of the 2020 lockdown, makes it no surprise that our incoming Hillies seem to be getting more and more emotionally stunted as the years go on. For the Class of 2026, the last school year they had before the interruption of Covid-19 was 6th grade. For reference, this is the year they turned 12 years old, learned how to divide

fractions, and were one year away from being able to use most social media platforms without breaking the Terms of Service. These poor rat babies had all of those important milestones ripped away from their grubby little hands (paws?), leaving them with gaps in their knowledge of both long division and basic social cues.

Being deprived of the vital socialization that occurs during those formative middle school years is bound to leave some with pent-up energy that needs to be released. I completely understand why these little rodent-angels feel the need to spread their wings and fly. And scream. And pour milk all over tables. I'm just tired of having to bear witness to it while I'm eating.

That is why I have a proposal that will resolve not only the chaos in the café, but also the behavioral issues that permeate throughout the school. In order to right the ship this semester, we'll have to go back to the days of elementary and middle school. We need to bust out the jump ropes, the hula hoops, and the foam balls with mysterious chunks bitten out of them. We need to bring back recess.

Haverhill High needs this for one main reason: recess gives students the opportunity to develop conflict-resolution skills. We all know that the cafeteria is a prime location for fights to break out, but giving students the freedom to play would fix this by allowing students to work together as a team to get the ball in the hoop, or learn that TikTok dance, or whatever it is kids

do nowadays.

The demand is there among the freshman class. Sophia DeFrank, a freshman who I actually sit with during lunch due to her exemplary conduct, stated, "I miss recess because it was the time we used to walk around and we get to see everyone we don't always see. I think it's hard for some people to sit down and behave because, for us, lunch and recess have always been the same thing."

Lincoln Bohanan, another freshman I sit with (stop laughing), seconded DeFrank's statement. "We can't say hurray without time to play!" I don't even know what that means but it feels right.

All jokes aside, I'm sure we all can agree that back in the day, recess provided a necessary break from the stress of the regular school day that lunch alone didn't always provide. As a graduating senior, I've found myself reminiscing more often on my earlier years of schooling. Many of my core memories from that time occurred on the concrete of Hunking School, running around with my friends. Maybe bringing recess or an alternative form of recreational time to Haverhill High isn't realistic, but it's easy to feel as though you're being forced to grow up faster than you're ready for. While I do feel more ready to take on this "young adult" (or in my 18-year-old case, actual adult) thing now in my final year of high school than I did when I first arrived, I personally wouldn't mind playing a game of freeze tag, just one last time.

HHS English Dept. College Essay Contest Winner: “Turret Rising” by Avery Becker

The following essay was selected by the HHS English Department as the winner of the first College Essay Contest.

Honorable Mentions:

Sheeba Nabiryo
“Laughing With/At Me”

Safa Walid
“Scarf”

I was not here to mourn. I was here for inspiration. On evenings such as this, when summer was tipping into autumn, the air felt like the ringing of crystal, clear and smooth. Twilight ensconced the graveyard, bathing every tombstone a cool blue as my shadow fell upon the names of the dead. Alpheus Hazen. In my eyes he became a wizened crone that frequented the cobblestoned streets of London on rainy afternoons. Or a mysterious professor with a penchant for crime. Or the young boy with the brown eyes who had changed his mother's life forever. The distant shush of tires climbing the graveyard's hill pried me from my reverie and reminded

me of my place knelt before Alpheus's grave, the dimples that made up his name crusted with lichen and grit. The stiff edge of a lined piece of paper was cradled in one of my hands, names scrawled across in streaks of faint graphite, all of them precious. From a humble Hetty to a blistery Myron, these names could stave off gusts from even the stormiest writer's block. While some might find it more time consuming than a simple Google search of “Top 20 Unique Names,” the feeling of taking control with your own hands and seizing your own muse is an inspiration in itself. Visiting a graveyard is my way of striking creative gold, not any fascination with ma-

cabre, though the presence of epitaphs brings to mind the importance of what can be achieved in life. Whether or not Alpheus Hazen, 1836 to 1917, felt satisfied in his earthly accomplishments is beyond my understanding. However, my own heart's desire is within my grasp. Ellis, one of my first gravestone treasures, inspired me to write a full length novel in November of my sophomore year. A bursting 92,000 words detailing adventures, mysteries, and alliances born and broken, named Turret Rising. I'm not here to brag about that novel, which is full of more grammatical errors and plot holes than were able to fit within the color-coded binder I created for the

project. But those eighteen chapters did serve a profound purpose. After that month of frantic plotting and typing, where I drafted the entire book by the semi-fluorescent glow of fake candles in the hours before and after school, I came to an ultimatum: I could not live the rest of my life with the certainty that I was meant to be an author and not act on it. While I have always known that I am a creative soul, blissfully scrapbooking elementary picture books and five notebook page “chapters,” Turret Rising was an epiphany in the form of young adult fantasy. A drawn out “noooooo” before I threw myself over the cliff of die-

hard architect or scientist for the next seven years. Those professions are worthy, but they would not satiate my creative desire to write. Even if I make an impact on one person, by encouraging them or by making them feel a single emotion through black ink on a page I wrote, I will have achieved my dream. *I will be a writer.* The path will be rocky, full of sacrifice and heart, but if I can't measure up to the characters I write about, how can I be an inspiration to anyone? With every graveyard name I collect, and every story I write with it, I am one step closer to my goal. My determination will not run dry, for this is what I was born to do.

Teacher Tales: Mrs. Capra, tell us about luck... ‘It’s one of the luckiest things that has happened in my life.’

Interview by Jaylene Viera

Viera: Ok! So my word for you is—Kucker told me I should do haggis or something and I said absolutely not—so today your word is gonna be “luck.”
Capra: Wow!
Viera: It’s a pretty broad word.
Capra: I like that...so what do you want me to do?
Viera: Just tell me a story based on the word, any story.
Capra: Hmm, well I think of a lot of things. First of all, one of the things I teach comes out of a book—
Viera: Oooh (laughter), we’re pulling the props out!
Capra: Oh yeah! (laughter) The Psychology of Money. We talk about it in Money Matters because when people are very successful, they very rarely contribute it to luck. They take all the credit for it. But when people are unsuccessful, they contribute it to bad luck. They won't take ownership y'know what I mean?
Viera: Yeah it's like, “Oh it's not my fault, it's God!”
Capra: But if they're

successful it's because of what the individual did to make themselves successful.
Viera: Yeah, it reminds me of those people that post inspirational posts on Instagram and they're like: “I'm an alpha, I wake up every day and I'm my own boss,” stuff like that.
Capra: Yes, because I think that at least half of your success is attributed to luck. Everyone's born with a talent, right? Talent is universal but opportunity is not. It depends on if you were born at the right time, at the right place, to the right family. So that whole thing is luck.
Viera: Very true.
Capra: I think it was Thomas Jefferson who said, “The harder you work, the luckier you get.”
Viera: (sarcastic) Love him!
Capra: (laughter) Yeah.
Viera: He was super lucky. He was born a white, straight, male in like the 18th century. You're good man, you're already like three steps ahead.
Capra: (laughter) Right, but y'know what? You do have to work hard, even

if people will look at you and just say you're lucky. Like do you know if that person worked hard? Most of the time the answer is gonna be yes, right?
Viera: Yeah, I think it's interesting how you immediately drew the word to your own teachings. There's no guidelines to these little stories, but I was surprised when you began the interview talking about the love for what you teach.
Capra: Yeah!
Viera: Because I know people are gonna see this and say, “Oh my God, she taught me that, we're reading that!”
Capra: True, True.
Viera: I've never taken a class like this before.
Capra: I also teach Accounting, y'know we talk about budgeting, investing and careers.
Viera: Yeah, I mean I'm sure there's statistical evidence for who makes what and what demographic is the richest, but at the end of the day a lot of it is about luck.
Capra: Yeah, luck. Luck is huge. We have a lot of students in this school who



are super smart, super capable, but had the bad luck of unfortunate circumstances. Like an example is maybe someone in their family got sick, a lot of their life is now based on caring for others. It's hard to support yourself, while also supporting others, while also having no support of your own!
Viera: Yeah, it's a lot.
Capra: It's also a lot about the support you get, that makes you successful. Are you lucky enough to run into the right people?
Viera: Yes! I know friendship is a big thing too, I've had good friends my

whole life but definitely this year I've had a lot of good connections. I think you're lucky to meet the right people, but you're also lucky to meet the wrong people. Or to find out that they're the wrong people. Luck isn't necessarily just good things happening, it's bad things as well.
Capra: Yep, but they're good in the long run, right? I guess that's my only thing about luck, I mean I've been very lucky. I've just been very lucky to have gotten this job, I mean I've been

teaching here for twenty-three years. It's one of the luckiest things that has happened in my life. People will look at it as an ordinary job, just a teacher, but think about the people that I've met. And the lives that I've been lucky enough to influence.
Viera: And you definitely work with some of the biggest and most colorful personalities in this school.
Capra: Right! I was lucky. I really like teaching!
Viera: (laughter) I'm glad!
Capra: Well, thank you.
Viera: You're very welcome.

For The Ones Who Came Before Us

The following essay is the fourth installment in a series paying tribute to the legacy of influential family members.

“Everyone Deserves a Mom like Mine”

My mom, Kerri Marshall, is a book-loving, coffee-drinking, third grade teacher from Revere, Massachusetts. She has been a Haverhill Public School teacher for 30 years and counting. For part of her career, she was on the negotiating team for the HEA fighting for her students' rights. With only three years left to go until she can retire, my mom has some big plans. She plans to sell our house that she raised our family in and move down to the Carolinas, ideally in a retirement community where you don't have to worry about mowing your lawn or raking the leaves. She has never been the

type of person to sit on her tush all day, so she has some ideas about what she would like to do with her free time. My mother dreams of being a librarian in a small book store in a town that people look at and wish they lived there. She would tell all her customers what books were her “rubbers,” which means the books she loves the most and wish she could read again for the first time to experience it all over again. She got her bachelor's in education at Bridgewater State University and then went on to get her master's at Salem State University. Growing up in Revere gave her a tough but caring personality. She didn't have the happiest or easiest childhood growing



up, but she is always giving people second or even third chances. My mother worked for everything she ever had or wanted. Whether it was clothing, body wash, her

first car, or even lunch, she was the one paying for it. Since the time she was 14, she was working 30+ hour weeks all while maintaining stellar grades. That did not stop

when she got married and began a family. No summer was taken off, even though she was a teacher until she had me, her third child. She was either working multiple waitressing jobs or working as a summer school teacher so my sisters and I could have everything we needed and more. For most of my life, she was a single mother raising our family of four, plus our dogs. This was no easy task, but she always seemed to have done it with ease and love. To this day she still wakes me up in the morning by singing, “Rise and shine and give God to glory, glory...” She also still packs my lunch even though I am almost 18 years old (not to mention the lunch is never complete without a handwritten note, signed

off with “Love, Mommy” and three Hershey kisses). She has filled my life with experiences from cruises to Christmas plays, she has handmade every single one of my Halloween costumes, not because we couldn't afford it but because it was more special if we made it together, and the list of fond memories could go on. My mother has filled our house with love and laughter and everything in between. As said in Gilmore Girls, “My mother never gave me any idea that I couldn't do whatever I wanted to do or be whomever I wanted to be. As she guided me through these incredible eighteen years, I don't know if she ever realized that the person I most wanted to be was her.”

—Abby Brown

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