



# BROWN & GOLD

Haverhill High School

May 2023



## Croft's Corner

The annual **Powder Puff Game** made history this year, as the juniors beat the seniors 18-13 for the first time ever. The juniors were coached by Nicholas Wilson, Max Graham, and Jayden Brito, and the seniors were coached by Colin McAninch, Jack Ivanci, and Fode Bangoura.

The final **Coffee House** of the year will take place May 17 from 7-9 pm in the K-wing courtyard. This is separate from the upcoming Senior Coffee House, which is expected to be held at the end of May.

The Class of 2025 is holding a **Capture the Flag** tournament on May 16th from 4-6 pm on the center track field at HHS. Teams can consist of 4-8 players. It is \$15 per team or \$5 to enter as a single. There will be a free water balloon fight at the end of the tournament. There is no cost to spectate, so everyone is encouraged to come and watch.

Congratulations to all seniors who have decided on post-secondary plans!

**Senior final exams** will be held May 17-23. The schedule is as follows:

Wed. 5/17: K  
Thu. 5/18: GH/HI/IJ  
Fri. 5/19: D/E and EF/FG  
Mon. 5/22: B and C  
Tue. 5/23: A & make-ups

Senior Progress reports came out on May 11.

**Senior report cards** will be issued on May 31. The freshman-junior finals will be held the last week of school.

AP exams are officially over. Scores will be released in mid-late July.

**Summer Credit Recovery** will run from July 10 to August 4. Changes have been made this year: it will be five days a week, from 7:15-12:15. For more information contact the HHS main office.

The **Commonapp Application** opens August 1 for incoming seniors.

The **John and Abigail Adams Scholarship**, based on MCAS scores, were awarded to seniors on May 16 at a school-hosted breakfast. To be considered, the student must have scored in the advanced range for one subject, and either advanced or proficient in all others. Students must also be in the top 25% of MCAS scores for the district.

## HHS renews focus on mastery grading

Admin., faculty dedicate final meetings of year to exploring standards-based grading models

By Grace Grauwiler

HAVERTHILL— What does a good grade in a class represent? Does it mean we've mastered the curriculum or does it mean we just followed the rules of the class?

For better or worse, Haverhill High School is moving towards taking the rule-following out of the grading equation, moving towards making grading at the school based fully on knowledge and skill.

Haverhill High School's most recent monthly curriculum

department meeting was dedicated to mastery grading philosophies, which essentially means students are graded on how well they mastered the material, not whether they followed the rules laid out in each class's syllabus.

"I think that mastery grading is really important," said Associate Principal Victoria Lu, noting the skills students are expected to master are tied to the state's curriculum frameworks. "I think it's important to separate out

students' behaviors from the skills and knowledge that they have."

With mastery grading, typically, homework is not seen as important and students are allowed to take assessments multiple times until they are able to prove mastery of the material. Other markers of classroom behavior are also not factored into the grading or deemphasized, such as attendance, class participation or meeting deadlines.

According to a recent

article in *The Wall Street Journal*, traditional grading policies generally benefit students who have a stable home life and have parents who are hands-on. In contrast, mastery grading policies generally benefit students who have afterschool responsibilities or a learning disability.

HHS began using mastery grading in the 2017-2018 school year. However, the practices of mastery grading have looked different throughout the years.

"They changed our student handbook and our grading policy to say that we are 100 percent a mastery grading school," Lu said. "But over the years, as we've had different administrators and different principals come and go, the practices have looked different, and I truly believe that at this point, every department is kind of doing their own thing."

Continued on page 3

## Fast Learner



### Vigo Catala goes from track-and-field novice to star

By Meg Gardner

HAVERTHILL— While the litany of negative ramifications caused by COVID-19 remain a mystery to no one, the benefits of the pandemic are much harder to find, but then again, they could be right under our noses, or at the local track.

Budding national track star and Haverhill High School junior Natanael Vigo Catala may never have found his stride if it was not for how the pandemic affected sports and other activities.

"So, it was kind of COVID," Vigo Catala stated when asked how he got

into track as a freshman. "I was playing basketball and because of Covid, the basketball season got pushed back. Usually basketball and track had overlapped, so it opened up some space for me to try track," he added.

Vigo Catala has certainly made the most of this strange twist of fate. Although Vigo Catala has only run track for two years, he has gone from pure rookie to a heavily recruited roadrunner. At the New Balance Nationals in March, Vigo Catala, running for his club team

New England Elite, ran his second best 400-meter time and placed 13th overall in the country. A few weeks later, at the Adidas Indoor Track Nationals, he beat his New Balance time and ran his personal record time of 47.6 seconds and placed 12th nationwide.

However, always his toughest critic, Vigo Catala explained the bittersweet endeavor that is elite competition.

"I wasn't happy about how New Balance went. I was happy with the PR, but I wasn't happy with the results," Vigo Catala said.

Although he talks and trains like a seasoned competitor, harnessing and realizing the true extent of his athletic gift is still a new experience for the junior.

"Even at the beginning of sophomore year I was just running," Vigo Catala said. "But everyone in sports has this moment when they decide they're going to start working hard at it. It wasn't until later in sophomore year when I was like 'alright, I'll start working.'"

Continued on page 2

### INSIDE

NEW YEARBOOK CLASS PAGE 2

LOADED: COME ONE, COME ALL PAGE 2

TEACHER TALES: MR. T PAGE 3

LA: IT'S THE PLACE TO BE PAGE 3

PROMPOSALS PAGE 4

HILLIES HEADING TO TOP COLLEGES PAGE 4

## Exclusive: Q&A with former Celtic Chris Herren

Well-known star turned drug abuse recovery spokesman visited Hunking in early May

Interviewed by Rowan Kelly

**B&G:** Fall River is similar to a place like Haverhill in a lot of ways, they're both large cities composed of mostly working class people that were once industrial centers. What about these environments in particular make people susceptible to substance abuse?

**Chris Herren:** You know, what I've learned over the last 12 years doing this is that every town's susceptible. It's history doesn't matter, every town today is susceptible. Obviously places like Fall River and Haverhill, blue collar, working class, you know, there's the size of these

cities, there's more access to drugs, to narcotics. But people used to say to me, they used to blame Fall River for my addiction, and people would tell me, 'you gotta get away from the city.' And the city had to get away from me, you know? But I'm great in Fall River today. Fall River didn't cause my problems. The demographic of it, the hardworking, the blue collar attitude, if anything, allowed me to work hard to get recovery.

**B&G:** Traditionally we have been under the impression that involvement in sports goes a long way in keeping kids

out of trouble and away from substance abuse but it appears that that was not the case for you. Can you talk a little about the complex relationship between sports and drug use?

**Chris Herren:** The complex relationship for me with sports was that it became kind of a business for me at a very young age. In eighth, ninth grade, being recruited by colleges, I immediately knew that it was a stage I had to perform on because I was being critiqued on it.

Continued on page 2



### 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.



## CHRIS HERREN:

*Continued from page 1*

You know, to be 13, 14 years old being recruited by colleges, I just didn't really know how to cope with that. The pressure of performing in front of college coaches at every game was not easy for me. I think sports do a great job at keeping kids active, keeping kids busy, but I also think there's a way to do it, and for me it was the wrong way.

**B&G:** From my research it's clear that you were a high school basketball legend at your school and throughout the state, was this acclaim a burden or rewarding to you, and did it contribute to the beginning of your drug use?

**Chris Herren:** Yeah, it was total pressure. I had a family history. I was following in the footsteps of multiple family members. So the legacy of them, the legacy that they established, was a shadow that I had to kind of come out of, and that's not easy.

**Kelly:** Why do you think it's so important to share your story, particularly with young people? What are you hoping they take from your experiences? And what do you take from traveling around the country and speaking and learning from people in your audience?

**Chris Herren:** You know, I think when it comes to kids, I think we talk about the worst day of drugs and we forget the first day. It's crazy—we want to show what drugs look like in the end rather than in the beginning, what drug use looks like in the beginning. There's a spectrum of addiction in one's life, and the scariest thing about it is nobody knows who's going to suffer from it, but anyone who suffers from it had to start. So we need to show the beginning in order to have an impact to prevent the ending.

**Kelly:** What do you take away from traveling around the country and speaking and learning from people in your audience?

**Chris Herren:** You know, I hope that I've given hope. I hope that I walk in here tonight and my goal is that

there's a person that's going to think about entering recovery, thinking about getting sober. I think my hope is I'm gonna have a family member who's going to be motivated to give someone the care that they need.

**Kelly:** Based on your experiences, what are things you were missing as a young kid that would have helped you?

**Chris Herren:** I think my parents. I had young parents, very young parents, and I think my parents did the best job that they knew how to do. Again, at a very young age, I was put on a stage and I really didn't know how to cope with that. I didn't know how to manage that, the highs, the lows that most kids don't suffer as teenagers. So I wish my parents were more cognizant. I wish they were more aware of my journey and what I was going through.

**Kelly:** You've been sober since 2008, which is an amazing accomplishment and I'm sure a daily struggle, what has contributed to your success and strength?

**Chris Herren:** Community. And I work really hard at recovery. People think it just happens. I put a whole lot of work into recovery, and as a matter of fact, I've brought that same type of energy and work ethic that I used in sports to recovery as well. So, yeah, it's monotonous. Recovery can be extremely boring, but it's also beautiful.

**Kelly:** As a former Celtics player how are you feeling about the Celtics at this point? Do you think they have what it takes? What do you think needs to happen, who needs to do it?

**Chris Herren:** I think they have what it takes. I think Milwaukee going out has helped them. Tough loss [in Game 1 against Philly], very surprising. It didn't look like it the other night, but do I think they have what it takes? Yeah, I think the Celtics will dig deep and find a way through this.

# Loaded: Authentic. Original. Delicious.

B&G caught up with the owners of Haverhill's newest grub spot

By Abby Brown

Haverhill— If you're having a craving for a Korean hot dog coated in ranch dressing, bacon crumbs, and a sprinkle of Dorito dust, Haverhill has you covered!

Tucked beneath the balcony of Hans Garden and with a clear view of the river is Haverhill's newest and maybe most enticing culinary gem: Loaded, a modern hip eatery offering exciting takes on American comfort foods, such as mac n cheese, baked potatoes, french fries, and, most especially, Korean hot dogs.

The owners, Anthony and Katrina Tomacchio, are a husband-and-wife team. They've been married for eight years, but together for 13. These two love birds met at Westfield State University and have worked together in several different settings, most recently at Stack's, another enticing recent addition to Haverhill's Downtown.

To this dynamic duo, it comes down to two things: originality and authenticity, both in the menu and the atmosphere.

"It was important to us that we were just authentically ourselves," Katrina said, "so the style of food and the atmosphere inside the eatery really fits the vibe. We want everything we do to feel fun and fresh, and we always want everyone to feel included and welcome. That's who we are at the core, and the goal really was to just create an eatery that represented those core values. We're an LGBTQIA space, we treat everyone with respect, and we love what we do and the people we do it with."

Anthony and Katrina are always bouncing their ideas back and forth off each other, but the idea of Loaded really stuck with them. Going outside the box, having fun and challenging themselves plays a huge part in their lives.

"I'm the kind of person who likes to push boundaries when it comes to food," Anthony said. "If someone says, 'you can't



Above: Korean dogs; Below: Anthony and Katrina Tomacchio.

do that? I'm always like, 'why the hell not?' We knew we wanted Loaded to be fun, in your face, and full of bold flavors."

The signature food at Loaded is the Korean hot dog, which is served with a twist.

A traditional Korean hot dog is actually a sausage coated in a savory batter and fried until perfectly crisp, but at Loaded, their specialty is anything but traditional. In fact, half the menu is dedicated to innovative and even straight up wild takes on the Korean hot dog. For example, there's

the Nacho Dog, coated in a cilantro-lime sauce drizzle, a special crema, and finished with pickled reds and Dorito Dust. Or the Bacon Ranch Dog, which, as you guessed, coats the old dog in ranch dressing, bacon crumbs, and—oh yes—Cool Ranch Dorito dust.

There are also what come across as dessert dogs. The Cinnamon Dog, for example, is covered in a special Cinnamon Toast Crunch sauce and crushed Cinnamon Toast cereal. There's also the Strawberry Dog for those who want to hit their fruit quota (I

guess...) which comes with a Fruity Pebbles cereal coating and a strawberry cereal-milk drizzle.

Beyond the dogs, Loaded specializes in what can be described as "glory bowls," essentially piling—and I mean piling—a variety of tasty "flavors" on top of one of various bases: fries, mac n cheese, mashed potatoes, or loaded baked potatoes. What they refer to as flavors, or toppings, include such wonders as: Birria Beef, Bulgogi Beef, Thai Taki Chicken, and even twists on classics such as Pepperoni Pizza and Poutine.

"Our most popular item of all time, since opening, is the Bacon Ranch Korean Corn Dog," said Anthony. This is a fan favorite and definitely a great option to pick, but with summer coming, Loaded is also enthusiastic about the new summer menu.

"We are going to be putting out some really fun fusions of flavors that give off major warm-weather vibes, and honestly, I love every single menu item," said Katrina.

Simply put: "There's nothing like Loaded in Downtown Haverhill," Anthony said. "And that's what's so special about us; we're different and we're always going to be different."

"Our goal is never to just do what everyone else is doing," Katrina added. "We're not afraid to do things differently, and we never have been; we do things the Anthony and Katrina Way. We put our own spin on just about everything we do because we never want our products, our vibe or our experience to feel like anywhere else."

Loaded is located at 120 Washington, Haverhill, Mass. It is open daily for lunch, dinner, and nighttime munchies from 10:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. It is, however, closed on Sundays and Tuesdays. Online ordering and delivery are also available.

## HHS to offer yearbook elective

by Jaylene Viera

Haverhill— A class dedicated to putting the yearbook together is looking to be the newly added elective most likely to succeed.

Ms. Anna Sabella sat down to discuss the newly established yearbook elective that will be provided to students in the 2023-24 school year. The elective itself will consist of students decorating, editing, writing in, and organizing the yearbook for that school year.

Ms. Sabella shared a few words discussing the functions of the class and what specific responsibilities students can look forward to.

For the past few years the yearbook committee has been composed of Ms. Sabella, Mrs. Samantha Aiello, and a few creative students looking to help out. And although the work is worth it, it's still a lot of work.

"It's a very time consuming project that is difficult for such a small number of people to accomplish," Sabella said. "And it's hard to get people after school since they're already involved in so much."

That's why Sabella decided that instead of an afterschool program, an elective would be much easier to access and get students involved.

But what kind of students is the yearbook look-

ing for?

"Students in photography, writing, design, we'd love to get creative kids into the program for next year," Sabella said. "They have a really good program for creating the yearbook and there's a lot of opportunities. It's a new chance to get kids to be creative. We're trying to get more students involved for a more accurate representation of the whole student body we have today."

But you don't have to be an art student to take the class. Any students who are looking to help and contribute to the yearbook are welcome to join. The more diversity the better.

The class itself will run half the year and garner half a credit, although the class is not only a great opportunity to express yourself, it's a great way to meet similar artistic minds and branch out of your comfort zone.

"We need more writers," Sabella said. "So far we only have seven and we need about 10 to actually establish the class for next year."

Photographers, writers, artists, and designers are all welcome to join and to create a yearbook influenced by the minds of HHS students.

If interested, see Ms. Sabella in 203.

## VIGO CATALA:

*Continued from page 1*

This boost in motivation and focus was the result of several prominent influences, including the supportive and seasoned coaches of Hillie Track and Field: Michael Maguire, Cam Simes, and Robert Pike.

"Mags, Cam, Coach Pike, they keep me focused and they keep me in line," Catala said, adding, "My NE Elite coaches are also a huge reason I've gotten so good at track."

Vigo Catala is grateful for all he's gained from the people who have supported him, but his own work ethic and strive for perfection cannot be discounted. As with most remarkable athletes, having a taste of victory has only further driven his desire for glory.

"For me, my motivation is winning. I just really love the feeling of winning," Vigo Catala said.

This constant chase to win is what pushed Vigo Catala from running a 50-second 400-meter dash just last year to breaking 47 seconds this past season. However, he's not stopping there.

"I'm hoping to break 46 [seconds in the 400 meter-dash] soon," he said.

According to Maguire, Haverhill's longtime track coach, considering all that Vigo Catala has so quickly accomplished, the lofty aspirations he has set for himself are certainly attainable, and he's looking forward to seeing his young star achieve them. "Nata is a remarkable athlete who has really made himself into one of the top runners in the area," Maguire said. "All of his hard work and talent



Natael Vigo Catala being awarded 1st place as he is apt to do

are really coming to fruition. He broke the school records, held for so long by Andy Alsop in the 300 and 400 and ran the second fastest time ever in New England. I'm looking forward to seeing further progress and to building our program around him."

Maguire went on to speak to the inspiration Vigo Catala should be to other prospective athletes and the community.

"When Nata started he wasn't a star, but he kept working harder and then he got better," Maguire said. "Through him other kids can see the possibilities if you apply yourself. He's a special kid and what he can accomplish is something everyone should be a part of and be with him for it."

In addition to his exceptionalism on the track, Vigo Catala epitomizes what it means to be a student-athlete. Vigo Catala is a Classical Academy student who is currently taking and excelling in several AP classes, including AP Literature and Composition and AP Physics.

School has always been a very important factor in Vigo Catala's life, even though schooling wasn't always traditional for him.

"I was homeschooled up until eighth grade," Vigo Catala revealed.

While this was unconventional, homeschooling may be the reason Vigo Catala is the student that he is today.

"The transition from

homeschool to eighth grade wasn't that difficult because the homeschool curriculum is very challenging," Vigo Catala said. When it came to high school, Vigo Catala's hard-working attitude took over.

"Doing Classical [Academy] was kind of just an obvious decision for me," Vigo Catala said.

In the future, Vigo Catala hopes to continue his talents in track and school. While he's nearing the end of his junior year, Vigo Catala is already thinking about his next chapter.

"I would really love to go [to college] down South," Vigo Catala explained. "Down South is really the place to be for track."

Vigo Catala also shared that he's been approached by many colleges from all over the country about running track in college. While he still has time and doesn't have any definite plans for the future, Vigo Catala reveals one huge lifetime goal.

"I want to run for Puerto Rico, on an international level someday," he said. "That's my main goal."

With spring sports starting up, it's time to see what Vigo Catala will bring this season. The HHS community is ready to see what he will achieve between now and his senior year this fall. Keep your eyes out for him on the track in the next two months.

Track meet dates can be found on the HHS Athletics website.

*Congrats Seniors!  
Brown & Gold*



# Teacher Tales: Mr. T, tell us about Brooklyn in 1985...

## ‘Expectations and angst, uncertainty and everything that makes life wonderful.’

Interviewed by Shey Rodriguez

**Rodriguez:** I’m going to give you a word, or a phrase, or something, and then you’re going to tell me what you think about when you hear it. Ready? Brooklyn 1985.

**Mr. T:** Come on. (*laughter*) That’s like, I feel like you’re setting me up so that they can catch me for a crime that I got away with, like, from Brooklyn. You know what I mean?

**Rodriguez:** How old were you?

**Mr. T:** 19. In 1985 that would be senior year for me. So senior year of high school for me was, I think, a period of great change and expectations and lots of worry. On the one hand, I was a pretty good student and I had a bunch of scholarships lined up.

**Rodriguez:** Where were the scholarships from?

**Mr. T:** Rockefeller Center. So one, my dad was an elevator operator at Rockefeller Center, and one of the things that they had was you could apply for Rockefeller Fellowships, which were scholarships essentially. And I was competing with people that were in the main offices and things like that and everybody else, but a few of us that were from like the porters and the elevator operators got some of those scholarships. So that was a real proud moment for my dad, really.

**Rodriguez:** And you’re what, the oldest?

**Mr. T:** I am the oldest of three, you know. I had also run away from home my senior year. I was sort of couch surfing between friends and family and my girlfriend’s house, and actually sleeping sometimes in Rockefeller Center, in the locker rooms because I knew where the locker rooms were.

**Rodriguez:** Why’d you run away?

**Mr. T:** Well, me and my



dad kind of had some issues. It was mostly about my money. I had saved up a lot of money. I had probably like \$15,000 in the bank at that point, which if you do a calculation, in today’s terms it would be like some 18 year old saving up \$40,000 today. So at the time—and don’t forget, 1985, this is the crack epidemic, it’s also the AIDS epidemic. So, for a dad like my dad, he was concerned that I was getting into crazy stuff, like, how did I come up with so much money? But it was because I had side hustles. I used to work after school as a dishwasher. I used to work after school as a delivery guy. Not, not food delivery, but delivery, parcel deliveries back then and stuff like that, and I was cheap like I am now, so I was saving all my money. Like I said, my life in 1985 was filled with expectation and angst, uncertainty and everything that makes life wonderful, really.

**Rodriguez:** But you made it through.

**Mr. T:** I did. Again, like I said, on the one hand,

I knew that I was going somewhere. I was gonna go to college the next year, so it was a matter of figuring out where, where I was going. And the reason I ended up here in Massachusetts was because I wanted to get the hell away from everybody, as far away as I could, and so Massachusetts it was. I didn’t know anybody up here. I had no friends, no connections, no family, no anybody. I was far, far away. And I just figured I would get away when I could. And so UMass Amherst, to me it seemed like the country (*laughter*). And it was like, ‘oh my God, this is like gonna be such a break from being in Brooklyn,’ you know? And it almost drove me crazy the first couple of years though.

**Rodriguez:** How quiet it was?

**Mr. T:** Well, in 1985, how quiet it was. But don’t forget, in 1986 there was the New York Mets versus the Boston Red Sox, and there was a whole riot that happened there. So that was a crazy coincidence that I happened to be in Massa-

chusetts during that time. It was a great time. Yeah. The mid-eighties were a good time.

**Rodriguez:** And you got into the Ivies back then?

**Mr. T:** I did, yeah. I got into Brown. I was on the waiting list at Princeton and Cornell, but they didn’t offer me any money. I didn’t get any offers of any money or anything like that. And it was way more than I really had. And there was a part of me that was just happy to get in. Just to prove that I could get in. But my heart was set on Columbia. I wanted to go to either Columbia or Harvard.

**Rodriguez:** You’re so me (*laughter*)! But then you eventually went to Columbia?

**Mr. T:** Yeah, for grad school. But I wish I hadn’t. See, I ended up at Columbia. I think it was a pride thing. So I was kind of like, ‘oh, you didn’t accept me the first time around.’ Again, I did get some scholarship money this time around, but it wasn’t hardly enough, really. It was like the scholarship

money that they gave me was like, just to rope me in, you know what I mean? And then once I was there, it was really hard to find sponsorship. Because when you’re in grad school, you really want to have a good counselor, a good coordinator, somebody that’s working with you on your projects. When you’re doing your grad school stuff, you’re really trying to get something like a book published. You’re really trying to get work done. Anyway, yeah, I ended up going back there and actually that’s the student loan I’m still paying off.

**Rodriguez:** You’re a very interesting man. You’ve lived so many lives!

**Mr. T:** Well, I am 55. But I still feel like that’s young, but, yeah, I guess I’ve lived multiple lives. During my early childhood was definitely more of an immigrant experience. Even though I was born in this country, because I was raised by the first generation, everybody that was there was basically fresh immigrants, so they themselves were having the im-

migrant experience. But I was an American born person here. But I feel like my earliest childhood was really an immigrant experience. You know, navigating the language, learning the culture, aspiring to become American, you know what I mean? So my brothers though, they were six and eight years younger than me. And their memories are very different. You know, they have a very different kind of experience. Again, neither one of them spoke Spanish very well, for example. They grew up around a much more bilingual household because the young people in the family all spoke English at home now. So, yeah, it was a very different experience. I’m glad I had the experience I did, it gives me a completely unique perspective on America and American culture, and I can kind of step out of the bubble that is American and then like step back in and still be fully American. And that’s the other thing, too, like the idea of American, we say ‘American’ all the time and it wasn’t until I started speaking to my Latino family and they were like, ‘well, you and everybody that lives here is American.’ Like, you know, Colombians are American because that’s America, that’s South America. So now it’s like, I think of United States Americans, but that’s such a funny way to say it, right? We’re United States Americans. That’s what we are.

**Rodriguez:** So does working with the school with a lot of immigrants, the students you see, do they sometimes remind you of yourself?

**Mr. T:** A lot. Yeah, yeah. You know what, one of the reasons I chose to come to Haverhill was because there is so much of that, immigration, and seeing myself in the kids walking in here.

## MASTERY:

Continued from page 1

HHS uses a number of different mastery grading strategies, including the use of a grading floor, the replacement of formative/scaffolded grades with summative assessments, allowing make-ups until mastery is attained, the use of formative assessments as evidence of progress towards mastery, the use of spiral grading, and the incorporation of non-graded assignments and creating a class culture.

Although Lu stated that she was happy with the current direction the school is heading in with mastery grading, she would like to have a more uniformed policy towards mastery grading.

“I’m hopeful that in the long term we can come up with a more cohesive school wide policy so students aren’t expected to learn seven different grading policies for seven different classes,” Lu said. Eventually, Lu would like to see a standards-based report card, with more specific information on the skills students need to improve. In the meantime, she feels it’s important to reflect on what the assessments currently used really say about student abilities in relation to state standards.

“I think that’s something that we have not really thought about as a school for a little while,” Lu said.

The idea of mastery grading has also received its fair share of criticism from the media and a variety of major news outlets. For example, as pointed out in the same article from *The Wall Street Journal*, mastery grading has been described by some as giving students “a false sense of

reality,” and “poor work habits” by deemphasizing soft skills, like organization, in favor of mastery. Despite these negative connotations, Lu continues to promote mastery grading, bringing up the idea that not only does it give students who struggle with academics the chance to earn a passing grade, but it forces those with higher grades to work harder in order to maintain A’s.

“When I talk to teachers who have really strong mastery grading practices, like Mr. Hayden, and Mr. Eldridge, and Mr. Harvey, what we actually see is we’re pushing more students harder, and there are fewer A’s,” Lu said.

“I think that that’s a huge culture shock for a lot of kids,” she added. “With traditional grading systems in general, if you’re a good kid who turns in your work on time there’s a lot of grade inflation that happens, but if it’s only based on skills and only based on what you actually know and can produce, we see a lot more B’s and C’s and fewer A’s.”

At this point, mastery grading continues to be a work in progress at the high school. However, Lu feels there is support from the faculty to continue down this path, even if there is still a lot to debate.

“I think that at this point we have kind of reached no consensus,” Lu said. “It’s really an exploratory exercise that we’re all kind of doing together as professionals.”

Next month, the teachers will continue to meet to discuss how to move forward with this renewed focus.

# Finding Beauty in the Absurd

## From Erewhon to fruit trees: LA’s still a magical place



The author, Sasha Orr, in LA

How do you find life’s meaning? I found it in a \$20 smoothie.

To any average person, this sounds like an egregious price tag, which it is, but in Los Angeles, it’s the price of an organic, supplement filled Erewhon smoothie. Erewhon is not the grocery store that one expects to find right around the corner, but nestled on the ‘nicest’ streets in the ‘nicest’ boroughs of LA is where you can find an industrial chic building with ‘complimentary’ valet parking. From wall to wall you’ll find assortments of organic health food with softly edited brand designs, and maybe you’ll have the lucky chance of seeing a celebrity waiting for their daily dose of grass-fed bone broth from the tonic bar (which probably costs around \$25).

Yes, you can laugh. The whole existence of such a store seems absurd and many would call it the epitome of all things LA, aka expensive, unnecessary, and meant only for the rich and famous (or those trying to be). But most people view Los Angeles as if it were a doll house: pretty but fake, meant to be played with but not actually lived in. And they don’t try to view it as a place people go to school and their after school practice, where they sleep at

night to wake up the next morning and drive the daily commute to their 9-5.

LA has long been seen as superficial; it’s the center of the film industry, a business built on facades. Celebrities and wannabes wax and pluck and preen themselves to perfection just to run a quick errand. The culture that most think of is impossible standards, the Gwyneth Paltrow’s or the Selling Sunsets. Gentrification and high living costs have made it harder for people who don’t make six figures to live there, but that doesn’t mean they don’t. They’re who you see driving on the 5 or on the street talking with friends. They’ll smoke in the park on a Saturday afternoon or blast music in their beat-up car on an evening drive with the windows rolled all the way down.

Like any place in the world, there are normal people that make society function, even when living down the street from celebrities. They have Little League games and street races and the teenagers are the same annoying teens like anywhere else. Los Angeles may seem fake, and in some ways it is, but it’s also a beautiful place to be. Imagine waking up to a sky the deepest blue that you only see in Massachusetts during mid-July hanging

over mountains that surround you completely, and in the very distance, past the Hollywood sign, you see the snowy peaks of the Sierra Nevada. And that’s just if you decide to look up. On the ground there’s hundreds of vintage shops and cafes, affordable grocery stores that have fresh produce to rival the likes of Erewhon, fruit trees in every other backyard, with hummingbirds flying through the branches to collect spider webs for their nests.

Maybe it’s all a bit too much of a fairytale to be real, and I need to take off the rose-tinted glasses, but I think that’s the whole point of Los Angeles: it’s meant to be a fantasyland. Everywhere you look there is something different or magical or slightly outlandish. Everyone puts obvious effort into their outfits (I have never seen a stronger shoe game than I did standing in line waiting for coffee). There’s a good mix of mean and nice; people greet you when walking by on

the sidewalk but they also honk at you immediately after the light turns green. There’s a reason it’s been a place that ordinary people move to to be ‘their true selves’ or ‘find like-minded groups,’ because you can be a normal person (not rich and famous) and be surrounded by everything that makes life ‘nice’: access, opportunity, variety, and beauty. But despite this odd balance between fakeness and reality, that’s much like the movie sets the town’s industry is based on, is a beautiful place to live.

It’s a land of warm sun and green trees year round, with a plethora of options to choose from for every decision you could possibly make. As a senior in high school, LA seems like a great place to stay for a bit post graduation, whether it’s months or years. It could all be fake, I could be just another victim to the lie that is Los Angeles, but when I looked out the window and saw the golds and purples of the setting sun on the mountains, I understood why people thought it was the promised land.

## CALL FOR ART!

Haverhill High School Student Melanie Palacios is seeking art by local artists that represents their culture for her senior project art exhibition - Mas Fuertes Unidos

**WHO:** Artists living in the Merrimack Valley, must be high school aged or older

**WHAT:** 2D & 3D art celebrating your culture, all cultures are welcome

**WHEN:** Submissions due by 11:59pm May 7th Show - during Haverhill Art Walk June 3rd 1-7pm

**HOW:** Apply - <https://forms.gle/1Mxrbw3S15FihzqC6>

## SUBMIT:



# Pipeline to prestige: Hillies off to top tier schools

Grads from the Class of '23 are off to highly competitive institutions, Amherst, Rice, Tufts, BC, among them

by Allisondra Phipps

Haverhill— In recent years, Haverhill High School has gotten its share of bad press. While this school has had its challenges, it's also heavily contributed to the bright futures of many of its students.

Within the Class of 2023, there have been many acceptances to prestigious colleges, including Amherst, and Hamilton, which are top 25 liberal arts colleges in the nation, and Boston College, Northeastern, Rice, and Tufts, which are all ranked in the top 50 schools in the country.

All of these students have worked diligently to get into these prestigious colleges and partially attribute their success to the faculty and opportunities offered at Haverhill High School.

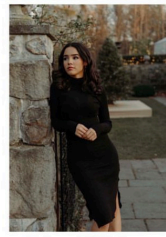
Some of these opportunities include rigorous AP courses, CTE and PLTW programs, Classical Academy, National Honors Society, and other clubs.

Ricardo Gallaway, who has committed to Rice University as a prospective Computer Science major, attributes his preparation for college to his participation in Haverhill High School's partnership with Northern Essex Community College and various programs at the high school.

"At Haverhill High, I was able to take PLTW courses, Project Lead The Way," Gallaway said. "They have the engineering program, which I think helped prepare me very well for some engineering classes and more high level



## FRANCHESKA GENAO GUTIERREZ



Major:  
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY



and take courses that I wouldn't have necessarily taken on my own, and that really helped me build a good course load," Story said.

Justin Tran, attending Tufts University in the fall for its Pre-Medical program, thanks his guidance counselor, Mr. Alsup, for his encouragement throughout the stressful application process.

"I think what helped me the most from Haverhill High School was my guidance counselor, Mr. Alsup," Tran said. "He helped me throughout the college application process and always checked in with me."

Jesse Looney, attending Amherst College in the fall semester, recognizes the disadvantages of attending Haverhill High School, which many perceive as not being academically rigorous. However, Looney confidently states that students have the chance to accept the wonderful opportunities available to them, and if they make the most out of their time, there is no reason why they can not rise to the level of other competitive applicants.

"I think that unfortunately the floor at Haverhill High is a lot lower than at some of the other schools but you can, if you choose to, find the excellent teachers, find the spaces and do your own work making the ceiling of Haverhill High very high indeed," Looney said.

"Haverhill lets you push yourself to be at whatever level you want to be at."

el STEM classes that I'll experience in college."

Class of 2023 Valedictorian Francheska Genao, heading to Northeastern University, is actually thankful for more independent learning experiences that she experienced at Haverhill High School.

"With AP classes and dual enrollment, I'm able to learn what college is going to be like and how different the classes are going to be," Genao said. "It taught me that I needed to be more independent and I'm going to have to self-study outside of the class and I can't just rely on the class itself."

Besides the vast academic programs that Haverhill High offers, the clubs and extracurriculars have also been beneficial

to these high achieving students, going beyond the application process, and preparing them for campus life.

William Lee, Boston College, incoming class of 2027, is thankful for his participation in Drama Club and Chorus as it has prepared him for adjusting to campus and has given him an identity beyond schoolwork.

"Doing drama and chorus have built my social and relationship skills so when I go to college I do have common ground with other people beyond academics, and chorus and drama are still things I'm interested in, so I'm definitely going to keep doing them in college," Lee said.

Many students say it's

not only the programs and clubs at Haverhill High School, but the teachers and staff who facilitate these organizations.

As all college-bound seniors know, a good guidance counselor can make the difference between a stressful or uneventful application process. Valedictorian Francheska Genao said that her guidance counselor, Ms. DiAnne McCarthy, greatly contributed to her smooth and successful application process.

"Ms. McCarthy was very helpful in that she had seminars for helping us write our college essays during our free periods from Early College," Genao said. "She also helped us connect to NECC and their writing services

to help with our essay writing. She just helped throughout the application process and asked us about our future plans, our colleges we wanted to get into and helped us get into our safety schools."

Jackie Story, a senior who will be attending Hamilton College for political science in the fall, agreed with Genao that an attentive guidance counselor makes all the difference. The support from her guidance counselor encouraged Jackie to push herself and take challenging courses throughout high school. She believes these courses enhanced her application and helped her get into a top college.

"My guidance counselor really encouraged me to challenge myself

# Promposal tradition alive and well at HHS

Hillie promposals take many forms, spur excitement for graduation festivities

by Jaylene Viera

Haverhill— Shaking hands, nervous smiles, and a poster board that asks the question of the year: "Prom?"

The art of the promposal is one that has been emulated within film, romantic novels, and social media in the 21st century. It was a tradition that began in the early 2000s and has continued to prosper in recent years throughout high schools in America.

But what is a promposal? Well, besides it's obvious play on the word proposal, it's basically a more eccentric way to ask someone to be your prom date. It usually involves flowers, a decorated poster board, and sometimes even a crowd of friends and peers. The poster itself usually asks the question with a cute metaphor or play on words, but all in all it's a fun new way to show your date you care.

According to Caitlin Dewey of *The Washington Post*, these elaborate promposals hit trend status in the early 2000's, the first newspaper story to use that phrase being the *Dallas Morning News* in 2001.

As we venture deeper into the 2000's, promposals only became bigger alongside the rise of so-



Seniors Jaylene Viera and Mark Ghen.

cial media. This was seen specifically with apps like Twitter, established in 2006, and Tumblr, established in 2007.

This even led to promposals becoming a sort of internet challenge, with the more elaborate and creative promposals getting thousands of views. One search on YouTube and you can find thousands upon thousands of compilations and recordings of promposals across the nation. Speaking of YouTube, the app became

one of the main media outlets for promposal posting. As *The Washington Post* stated, on Youtube alone, "There are more than 40,000 videos tagged 'promposal' and an additional 900,000 tagged 'prom proposal' or 'ask cute.'"

Promposals with full on bands, flash mobs, grand gestures inside and outside schools, the internet became rampant with thousands of new and innovative ways to ask the big question.



Seniors Cordell Spalding and Joella Harrison.

In Ohio, for example, Gavi Gillig was acknowledged by the *New York Post* for promposing to his girlfriend, Gianna Masterlasco, with a medieval themed surprise. Gillig and his friends showed up to Masterlasco's home dressed like horses, kings, and knights, and proceeded to play out a battle which eventually ended in Gillig asking Masterlasco to prom.

But how have promposals manifested within the halls and classrooms

of HHS?

Some of the most exciting promposals this year have happened on HHS grounds.

In Mr. Hayden's C period Latin class, Nick King, during a sight reading, asked his girlfriend Helena Mason to prom by printing it on her test sheet.

Other examples are Jack Baker's promposal to Morgan Flaherty in the Haverhill High parking lot with the words, "I'd be one lucky duck 2 go 2 prom

with you!"

Or how about Marc Ghen's promposal to Jaylene Viera (that would be me!) on the HHS tennis courts after her match with a sign sporting, "I'd love to be your double to prom!" (I lost the match but still ended up winning).

But don't you worry, there's even more promposals happening outside the schools as well! With Cordell Spalding surprising Joella Harrison behind the HHS stadium after the boys' lacrosse win with a sign stating, "Can I score a date with you to prom?"

Even Hillie homes are being promvaded, such as Central student Connor McDougal's promposal to HHS senior Abby Brown at her house with the adorable sign stating, "Will you be my chick at prom?" along with a big bag of Chick-Fil-A!

All in all, promposals at HHS are the best way to show your friend or partner how much you care about them, and have been around much longer than any of us would think. Thank you to our promposers this year for letting new traditions thrive!



**Scratch Ticket**  
**Bingo**  
**Fundraiser**

To register, click or scan the QR code or visit:  
[www.haverhilleducationfoundation.org](http://www.haverhilleducationfoundation.org)

Questions?  
Email: [jarndt@haverhilleducationfoundation.org](mailto:jarndt@haverhilleducationfoundation.org)

Get ready to shout "BINGO!" and double your luck at this 18+ fun-filled fundraiser for Haverhill Education Foundation!

**Friday, May 19, 2023**  
6:00 PM Doors Open, 7:00 PM Bingo

**Amvets Post 147**  
576 Primrose St, Haverhill, MA

**Admission Price: \$30 in advance (\$35 at door)**  
**Includes:**

- One Bingo card to use for all games
- Pizza & Snacks (Cash bar available)
- Multiple rounds of Live Bingo
- Chances to win MA State Lottery scratch ticket prizes!

