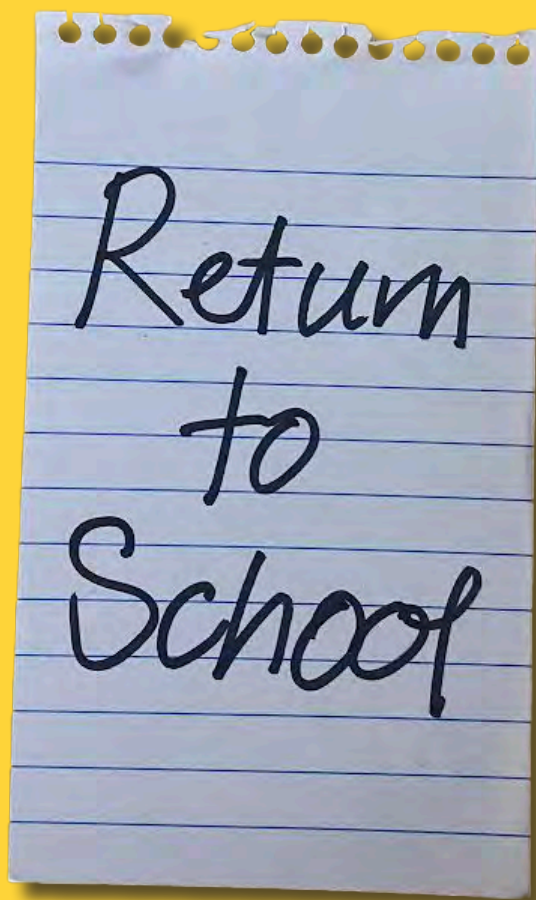


THE COMMUNICATOR MAGAZINE



Seven students share their experience coming back to in-person school after being virtual since March 2020.





About the Cover

BY MIA GOLDSTEIN

The front cover of this year's edition features a piece of paper ripped out from a reporter's notebook that says "Return to School." The cover not only highlights our cover story, but is representative of the manner in which we were torn out of our lives almost two years ago and are just now returning to a sense of normalcy. The spotlight color of our first edition is symbolic of school: yellow for pencils, school buses and rulers. The inside cover serves as a visual token of the essentials we bring with us to school each day and the chaos in returning back to in-person learning.

THE COMMUNICATOR MAGAZINE

Volume 48, Edition 1 | November, 2021

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are finally back in school writing from Room 300! Although there remains caution and risk because of Covid-19, we have officially started our first semester back in school full-time. There's a buzz in the air — the hallways are bustling with chat-chat, Kerrytown is back to its usual business and everyone seems to be carrying a Sweetwater's coffee and Chromebook in hand. This edition feels special; we created it in the classroom, with pizza deliveries and cinnamon bread from Hello Faz and Tracy's chocolate chip cookies to keep us going.

We have started this year by deviating from the past two years' norm. This edition does not have an overarching theme or topic. Instead, we have pulled together a magazine full of stories from the hearts of CHS, giving our staff the freedom to find the stories that mean the most to them, to meet new faces and explore new areas. Our magazine consists of stories about quarantine, the return to school, the effects of isolation and our coming together as one again.

This seems fitting, as we have been welcomed back into a school that is, at times, difficult to capture. With floors shut down for construction, new teachers replacing old and students wearing masks and social distancing, CHS does not feel like the school we left behind in March of 2020. Being back in person is overjoyous for many of us, but it brings challenges as well. We are not used to constant socialization or the rigor of regular classes. Covid-19 is still an imminent danger, and it feels like we are constantly waiting for it to show its face yet again.

But, despite ourselves and these difficulties, we are together. We have the ability to create art, to take photos in a professional setting, to interview those around us on a whim. This is not something that we take for granted.

Our hope for the first "new normal" edition of The Communicator Magazine is that it speaks to all of those struggling to return to life as scheduled. We recognize the heightened anxiety and stress that this year has already brought, and we want these stories to be a way to feel heard and realize that these feelings are not uncommon. We wish that The Communicator can remain a constant, even when everything feels temporary.

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For our complete Guidelines & Policy, please go to www.chscommunicator.com



PHOTO BY ABBI BACHMAN

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School News Coverage | Humans of Community | Movie & Book Reviews
Fashion | Podcasts | Artists Profiles | & More

Diving into Directing

How is Emily Wilson-Tobin adjusting to her new role as CET director? Working through nerves and excitement, she is ready to start the show.

BY MCKENNA DUMAN

The Community Ensemble Theatre (CET) has been busy in the Craft Theatre preparing for their fall show, “She Kills Monsters,” which is a play about a young woman, Agnes, who lost her sister, Tilly, to a horrible accident. Agnes realizes that she didn’t understand who her sister was when she discovers Tilly’s Dungeons and Dragons notebook in her sister’s old locker. It shows a whole different side to Tilly that Agnes had never seen before. After discovering it, Agnes sets out to complete the quest and hopefully learn more about her sister. “She Kills Monsters” deals with some heavy topics, such as grief and family relationships; though these can be hard topics, the play goes about them in a comedic way.

Emily Wilson-Tobin, CET’s new director, had a difficult time choosing the fall show.

“I wanted to find something that was a little lighter [and] had some comedy in it,” Wilson-Tobin said. “[I wanted] a good number of roles, particularly for people who identify as female, and I felt it might reso-



▲ **Photo By Hannah Rubenstein**

CET rehearses a fight scene for their upcoming play. The cast spent two hours working on it. “I wanted to find something that was a little lighter,” Wilson-Tobin said.

nate with the group of students I was hoping to work with.”

Because Wilson-Tobin was not aware she was going to be leading CET until midway through the summer, she went through a different process for picking a show.

“I really wanted to know a little bit about the people I’d be working with before I made a choice,” Wil-

son-Tobin said.

She hopes to truly connect with the students through this show. They will perform it from Nov. 19–21. Until then, students will be working hard in the Craft Theatre, which hasn’t had the lights go up for an opening night in nearly two years.

Classroom Life

The newest class offered at CHS: History of the 1960s.

BY CHARLIE BEESON

Ryan Silvester’s 1960s class is a new course offered at Community High School (CHS) that covers a vibrant era of U.S. and world history.

“[We talk about] the U.S. involvement in different governments around the world trying to instill democracy, while also thinking

about what the U.S. was like domestically, and how the Cold War shaped American culture,” Silvester said.

The class covers all kinds of topics ranging from suburbia to the Civil Rights movement. Silvester adapted most of the course to act like a discussion rather than a lecture to keep kids engaged and actively willing to learn.

“I want students to get a better understanding of where we are now in context for the present, but also how it helps our decision making in the future,” Silvester said.



The Corner

As CHS moves back to in-person learning, counselors Amy McLoughlin and Brian Williams share some advice for students, parents and teachers.

BY NATALIE MYCEK-CARD

Tucked away in the second-floor stairwell sits the counselor’s office; home to the Community High School (CHS) counselors, Amy McLoughlin and Brian Williams, who share some helpful advice.

During the return to school, McLoughlin and Williams noticed small, meaningful changes in students.

“I see lots of students being grateful to be back,” McLoughlin said.

In addition to the anxiety and excitement to be back in person, Williams believes that some good came from online learning.

“I do think that we learned some things through flipping the education system upside down,” Williams said. “For example, utilizing Zoom meetings is much safer than having students cram into a theater and for parent-teacher-conferences, it’s great because those can be from home. It can help with

families that have a hard time getting into buildings. We can hold on to some of the benefits. We can get back with the in-person experience and enhance it.”

McLoughlin states that students should reassess their academic and recreational commitments and their priorities as a student, family member, friend and person.

“Don’t do what we did before — embrace being well,” McLoughlin said. “We need to question what’s important to us as a family, being kind, having time and space to be people, not just being someone who works on homework late at night.”

Williams stresses to take care of one’s mental health and remember, “we are still in a pandemic” and to find balance within yourself.

“Engage with your teachers, in forums and at home with your family,” Williams said.

▲ **Photo By Mia Goldstein**

Counselors Amy McLoughlin and Brian Williams converse in the counseling office. They were excited to be back in the building and interacting with students. “I do think that we learned some things through flipping the education system upside down,” Williams said.



Forum Council

FoCo co-President Avani Hoeffner-Shah talks goals for this year.

BY AVANI HOFFNER-SHAH

As we begin our plans for the 2021-2022 school year, co-President Noah Bernstein and I are excited to implement ideas that will better our school.

We are kicking off this year in Forum Council (FoCo) by planning spirit week. As we rebound from two years away from an in-person school experience, we want to ensure that spirit week is an exciting event for two classes of students who have not yet experienced one.

We are also hopeful that Community High School (CHS) will embrace some of the positive changes that made school less stressful the past two years.

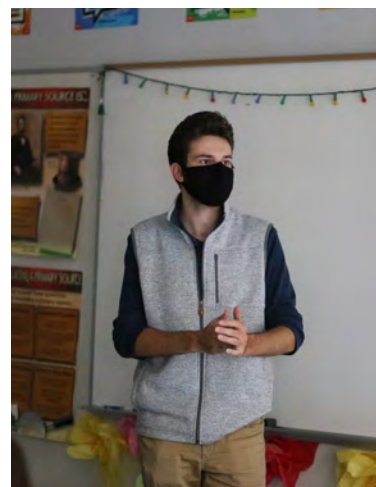
When I took a class at Huron High School last year, they offered occasional homework-free weekends. These short reprieves provided a necessary break during tough times. This FoCo will make it a priority to create homework breaks; we understand that school can be overwhelming.

At CHS, FoCo successfully lobbied for work-free Wednesdays last year. We noticed the impact on student life with minimal impact on classes. We appreciated that administrators were willing to work with the FoCo on this last year, and we are hopeful that they will be willing to work with us again this year.

In coming weeks, we will continue to expand our efforts in addressing the CHS community. We will advocate for improvements to student life, transparency and diversity throughout our administration. We look forward to hearing your input and sharing our plans.

► **Photo By Ella Rosewarne**

Ryan Silvester stands in front of the white board during his History of the 1960s class lecture. He is excited to offer a new elective to CHS students.



Pioneer Men's Tennis: Road to State Title

Captain Isaac Herrenkohl discusses his aspirations of winning a state championship as a senior.

BY MIA GOLDSTEIN

This fall season, the Pioneer High School Men's varsity tennis team is gunning for their next state championship. Led by six captains, their impressive team record this season showcases a total of 20 wins, two losses and one tie. As their season is rapidly approaching its end, their biggest upcoming matches

are Thursday, Oct. 7 at Regionals, the qualifying rounds for the state tournament and an integral part in determining seeding.

For captain Isaac Herrenkohl, it is all about bringing home the trophy.

"We know we are a capable team with the talent to [win a state

championship], it's just a matter of being able to produce our best tennis consistently," Herrenkohl said.

Their fiercest rival is Bloomfield Hills High School, according to Herrenkohl. The Pioneer's have twice fallen to Bloomfield thus far with Bloomfield racking up an undefeated record so far.

"They have very strong singles and doubles lineups, meaning none of our eight flights get an easy match," Herrenkohl said.

After Regionals, the team's focus turns to States, held in Kalamazoo. Herrenkohl is confident that with high intensity and positive energy in every match, regardless of opposition and conditions, they have a chance at the title. He is ensuring that the team continues to have intentional practices while targeting areas of their games that need to be improved.

"Though we know it won't be easy, we are excited for the challenge and look forward to working together to make this a reality in Kalamazoo next week," Herrenkohl said.



Photo By Mia Goldstein

Isaac Herrenkohl lunges for a slice backhand during Pioneer's rival match against Skyline. Herrenkohl had high hopes for the season as the state tournament nears. "We know we are a capable team with the talent to [win a state championship]," Herrenkohl said.

Photo By Ella Rosewarne

President of Chess Club, Ryan Bentley plays a virtual game of chess. He has made many new friends starting this club and encourages everyone regardless of skill level to join.

Chess Club

Meet CHS's newest club started by Ryan Bentley.

BY OLIVER LETE-STRAKA

Chess was originally played in northern India in the 8th century and has grown and evolved much since then. This year, the Chess Club and its president, Ryan Bentley, has brought together a group of students who last played together over the internet.

"Because of the new chess phase that we were in, I decided to start a chess club with my friend Jonas," Bentley said. "Because of Covid-19 and online school, not many people

were in the club, but since school is in person, we have a bunch of new members and it's a great way to meet new people. I didn't know half of the people before starting the club this year, and now I've gotten to know some great people."

Restarting in-person clubs is just one way Community High School (CHS) has been transitioning back into the real world and for Bentley, Chess Club and others like it have been therapeutic.



Returning to the Marsh

After leaving school due to Covid-19, field trips are back. Courtney Kiley, a CHS science teacher, takes on the new protocols in her trip to the Crosswinds Marsh.

BY GRACE WANG

1,050 acres of marshes, wetlands and forests have been calling for Courtney Kiley, Community High School's (CHS) only Ecology teacher, since 2019. Crosswinds Marsh, a man-made replacement for the wetland destroyed by Detroit Metropolitan Airport's expansion, will be Ann Arbor Public Schools' first field trip outside of the city since the pandemic started.

When Kiley first suggested scheduling this trip, the deans realized there was not yet protocol adjusted to the reality of Covid-19. They had to create new rules to keep students safe. To attend a field trip that uses a bus for transportation, students must show proof of vaccination or a negative Covid-19 test within 48 hours before departure. A charter bus will provide transportation due to the pandemic induced

shortage of school-bus drivers and the length of the trip. Kiley appreciates the new guidelines because it means she can get back to doing what she loves.

"It's just so exciting to be back out and doing things that we normally did pre-pandemic," Kiley said. "This is why I went into teaching, and it's just good to have that feeling back again."

Students on the trip will do bench sampling — an homage to their freshman year in FOS I — to determine water health, learn about different forest regions and identify tree species.

"Being outside, especially during this hard pandemic time has been so important, and [this field trip] just reminds people [to] go outside and learn about nature and feel really healthy," Kiley said.



Cruz Burger

Dominique DaCruz dives into the competitive world of startup businesses.

BY CHARLIE BEESON, SAM CAO AND MIA GOLDSTEIN

During the pandemic, Dominique DaCruz made a life changing transition; he went from having a six figure corporate job, to being a homeschool teacher, to having a baby all while trying to get his new business up and running. With the pandemic becoming a pivotal point in his life and health, he started to rethink his eating habits and the legacy of his family name.

He decided to convert to a plant-based diet and with this change, DaCruz came up with an innovative recipe that sparked the beginning of his business.

What was born: Cruz Burger, a new vendor at the Kerrytown Farmers' Market that sells an innovative, tasty model of a mushroom based burger.

"[My family] was trying to eat better, especially with the pandemic looming and it becoming a part of our everyday life," Cruz said.

Cruz looks to implement his love for mushrooms into the plant based burger market. His patties are composed of all pronounceable ingredients including mushrooms, pea protein, onion, barbecue and various spices.

As DaCruz looks to the future, he hopes to continue expanding his startup into other farmers markets and grocery stores.

Photo By Sam Cao

Dominique DaCruz poses in Kerrytown market. He is a new, start-up vendor in plant-based burgers.

Photo By Grace Wang

Ecology students stand in front of a bee hotel at Crosswinds Marsh. They learned about human influence on organisms and the health of the marsh's ecosystem. "My favorite part of today has been learning about the little bee hotels that they built here for the native bees," Sylva Das, a senior in Ecology, said.

Fabrication of a Team

CHS's Zebrotics team from its inception, through a pandemic and to the present.

BY SERENA O'BRIEN



A robotics team was an impossibility for Christia West when she was in high school. She's quick to point out that it was a very different time, and robots simply weren't widely accessible to the public, let alone to high school students.

West has always had an interest in robots, and building them is one of her most beloved hobbies. During her first years of teaching, she encountered the possibility of a robotics team at Community High School (CHS). While West was splitting her time between teaching science at Community and Skyline, a close colleague at Skyline spoke frequently about how much he enjoyed coaching the Skyline robotics team. At the same time, a grant became available at Community to kickstart a Robotics team at the school. West leapt on the opportunity, and Zebrotics was born.

"That first year was pretty crazy but we actually did get a team together, and were able to go to competition," West said. A parent of a student on the original team had some coaching experience, and he was essential in helping West learn the ropes of competitive robotics. His early contributions as a leader and mentor set a precedent for the team, and West continues to work with mentors from a variety of fields to help her team reach its fullest potential.

"I talk to everybody about the fact that I coach a robotics team, because you never know when you might make a connection," West said.

She finds her mentors everywhere: from student par-

ents to contacts from her previous work in the automotive industry. A few years ago she even went to a local Ann Arbor company, MakerWorks, for possible mentors.

"I went to this group that meets there. It's basically a group of people who kind get together and show off what they're working on for their little nerdy projects," said West, grinning. "And I just went and said, 'Hey, do you want to come and spend time with these wonderful students, we're building robots,' and one of the guys came over because he really wanted to be involved. He's been a great mentor."

Although West has always had a love for science and technology, she has no formal engineering background. It is no obstacle though, as the mentors she finds make up any gaps in her extensive skill set. Her current co-lead mentor is a student parent who works as an engineer and is able to lend considerable knowledge and experience to the team. Leadership efforts are supported by the two Zebrotics team captains, John Umbriac and Gaelen VanderElzen.

The team itself is broken down into various subunits, from fabrication to programming. Each of these subunits are headed by one or more individuals and made up of additional students focusing on that function area. The positions that students occupy are always changing.

"They have to learn all that's happening, and maybe they've just joined the team, there's a lot of turnover,"

▲
**Photo By
Serena O'Brien**

The Zebrotics team participates in a team building activity at the first official meeting of the 2021-22 season. Christia West and the two team captains led the group. "They have to learn all that's happening, and maybe they've just joined the team, there's a lot of turnover," Umbriac said.

Umbriac said. Mentors help ease the transition between roles, providing a reliable source of knowledge and guidance.

Though the team meets for most of the year, much of the time is made up of preparatory exercises, establishing the team skill set necessary for competition season in the late winter and early spring. The main robotics competition is structured similarly to other sports teams. Various regional robotics teams compete in two different local competitions. For these competitions, teams receive the task their robot must perform in early January, only six weeks before the actual competition.

"We have to be ready to go," West said.

At this point the team's months of training comes into play, and construction of the robot begins. Organization of the team is important, and each player's role is crucial: From members of the drive team, who operate the robot, to the art and creative department members, who are currently creating a safety video, a prerequisite for the upcoming 2022 competition.

"The size of the team is great for having enough people to do all the things, but what really matters is that everybody who's there wants to be there and contributes fully," Umbriac said.

Performance at these competitions dictates which teams move on to the state competition, and from there to the national competition. It is essential that every gear turns smoothly, but not everything can always go off without a hitch. However, these setbacks can prove to be the most valuable and rewarding aspects of robotics.

"One of my favorite things is fixing the robot at competitions after it breaks, because it's like we're competing in a match and it's just like, 'that did not go well,' and then we'd have to take it into our pit, and fix it as well as we can. I think that's fun," VanderElzen said.

Zebrotics lost this competition opportunity in 2020. Coming off a big win at Washtenaw Area Pick-Up Robotics (WAPUR), a smaller local event, the team was excited for competition season.

"[WAPUR] was really good. It was very, very useful," VanderElzen said. The win came during his second year on the team.

Shortly after WAPUR, the team received their robot's task for the 2020 season, and were soon hard at work creating and programming a robot for competition. However, just days before the first competition, the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown began, causing it to be cancelled. Despite the hours of work put into their robot, the team overcame any disappointment.

"It always seems to me like the goal for robotics is you're going in there and you're learning how to build

“

What really matters is that everybody who's there wants to be there and contributes fully.”

the robot and that's the main goal. And then the point of having this competition is that it just gives you a goal along the way to reach the goal of learning. We did that. We built this whole functioning robot," Umbriac said.

The robot has since been on display in West's classroom, and was exhibited at CHS' 2021 Club Fair, although some of its more destructive capabilities like speed and ball-chucking capacity — were limited.

The following year, the robotics team could not meet in person, so a physical manifestation of robotics was not feasible. Instead, the team concentrated their efforts on designing a game board, which could, theoretically, be played by robots. Although the game design process had some similarities to assembling a robot, there were major differences.

"We had to do a lot of restructuring to [ensure] that everybody had stuff to do, and that we were able to get this task done," Umbriac said.

Despite the unusual circumstances, the year was ultimately a success.

This year, the team has gotten an early start on preparation for the 2022 competition season, and already includes around 25 students. Recruitment has come to a close, but Zebrotics is more than willing to accept new team members until early January of 2022. The team offers countless opportunities to expand prior knowledge, develop understanding and acquire new skills. Umbriac has gained invaluable experience from his years of participation.

"[The most valuable aspect has been] just learning all the things, like knowing all the subsystems and really just having it revealed, how this very complex thing works, but then also just having very practical applications of these concepts. They teach you something and then you use it," Umbriac said.



Back to Benthics

How sophomore FOS students make up what they missed due to Covid-19.

BY CLAIRE STEIGELMAN

Kids chattered as they walked over the Broadway Bridge during the first week of school. They stopped to look at the river below, swiftly bubbling over rapids, rounding the bend and flowing just out of sight. They continued on their way down the street, off the bridge and down to a plot of grass and trees mostly forgotten to those speeding by in their cars. Hidden by the trees was a creek, and the students stopped there along its banks and watched the water below.

“For FOS I, one of the cool things about doing that [the field trip to Traver Creek] is the fact that you’re actually out there doing real science

out in the field,” Christia West, a Foundations of Science (FOS) II teacher at Community High School (CHS), said. “We wanted to have that be a real, authentic experience for students.”

The visit to Traver Creek is an annual science field trip for freshman students studying ecology. The goal in a normal year is to assess the health of Traver Creek by counting benthics, the small creatures that live along the creek bottom. Current sophomores and FOS II students missed that experience last year due to the pandemic.

Courtney Kiley, a FOS teacher at CHS, explained that the FOS I

▲
Photo By
Sebastian Oliva

A student wades through Traver Creek for the annual FOS I benthic unit. Current sophomores missed out on this trip last year. “For FOS I, one of the cool things about doing [the field trip to Traver Creek] is the fact that you’re actually out there doing real science out in the field,” West said.

teachers went to the creek while school was online to take pictures and videos. They wanted to put the creek in context for the students who were at home at the time.

West explained that identifying a benthic out in its natural habitat is different from identifying it from a high definition photograph.

“Rather than just memorizing facts about [benthics], learning more about where they actually live [and] what they actually look like would have helped learn about it,” David Guikema, a current FOS II student said. “Even if Courtney went down to the creek with a Go-Pro and filmed everything that she

saw, I don’t think that would be the same experience. Having the autonomy and being able to explore by yourself and see it with your own eyes, that’s really important.”

Just because the students got to go to the creek themselves this year does not mean everyone used the opportunity to have that experience, though.

“I just wanted to give [the students] a chance to see it, [and] I think they were sad that they didn’t get to do the whole thing with waders and nets.” Kiley said. “I jumped in the water, I picked up a rock, and on the bottom of it found a water penny, which is a very rare, super

pollution intolerant bug and I was really excited because I’d never found one before, and the kids are like, ‘what...’ like, [were not] showing my enthusiasm in general, some kids were, but there was a lot of standing around on their cell phones just underwhelmed.”

In addition, West found that some students didn’t express much interest in the creek.

“I think they’re just not interested and that’s okay. Not everybody is going to be super passionate about [finding benthics], because we all have different passions,” West said.

However, she thinks those students still got something out of the trip.

“Anytime you look at how things happen in the world, [it] expands your worldview,” West said. “Those experiences are good whether or not it’s your thing.”

“It’s been a while, so I don’t remember much about what we did last year,” Eve Sarnecki said.

She is a current FOS II student at CHS. She does not think she lost much by not going to Traver Creek last year and she thinks she may have preferred learning about benthics online as compared to going out in the field.

Not everybody has the same learning preferences. Some may thrive in an online environment, but others may prefer learning in person.

“I think I could learn [the benthics] because I have a really good memory naturally so memorizing facts and retaining them for long enough to take a test is easy for me,” Guikema said. “But I would imagine that [going to the creek] would definitely have helped [other students] learn and remember because it’s much more meaningful.”

At the end of the class period, the students said goodbye to the creek, walked back over the bridge and up the street to CHS to resume their classes as sophomores. Their FOS I experience was as complete as it could be.

“It was really fun to be back there and I really missed it,” Kiley said. “[The FOS II classes] found some amazing things this year.”

Fresh Start

Matt Petersen moved to Ann Arbor over the summer and is now teaching physical education at Slauson Middle School and Community High School.

BY ELLIOT BRAMSON AND HENRY CONNOR

Matt Petersen, Community High School's (CHS) newest gym teacher, moved to Ann Arbor from Quincy, Ill., where he had been teaching physical education.

"Anytime we've talked to people about Ann Arbor, [they] rave about how beautiful it is and how nice of a place it is, so I thought it'd be a great fit for [my girlfriend and I]," Petersen said.

The school district Petersen had taught in previously is a similar educational setting to Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS). CHS Dean Marci Tuzinski and the staff at Slauson Middle School (SMS) were able to work together to create a position that was full-time, in which Petersen splits his time between SMS and CHS.

"I know that Community is a different environment than other schools," Petersen said. "However, I'm a person who's diverse in my mindset and my thinking, and I enjoy dealing with students in an educational setting where everyone's diverse in their mindset."

Petersen taught sixth, seventh and eighth grade in Illinois; this is the 28-year-old's first experience teaching at a high school level, but he has coached students from kindergarten to high school.

"I really enjoy the challenge of pushing students to continue to stay engaged in their personal fitness and take an interest in their overall health," Petersen said. "Helping all the students in my classes realize that their overall

fitness is important, and that what they're going to learn here and what we do can [stay] with them for the rest of their life is important."

When it comes to physical education, Petersen's ultimate goal for his students is to give them the tools they need to reach their full physical potential. He encourages his students to pay more attention to their overall health and fitness.

"If you were to walk into a gym and you took my class, I want you to feel very comfortable, and be able to create your own fitness plan," Petersen said.

Petersen was inspired to go into teaching and coaching by his family and childhood coaches. His mother, uncle and grandmother were all teachers. He played base-

▼
Photo By Ella Rosewarne
Matt Petersen encourages a student performing a bicep curl. He has been adapting to his first year at CHS. "I know that Community is a different environment than other schools," Petersen said.



"What they are going to learn (in my class) and what we do can (stay) with them for the rest of their life."

ball and football growing up and his high school football coach, in particular, was a great mentor and inspired Petersen to be a coach. When he presented the idea of becoming a teacher to his family, they were very supportive.

Petersen has had many coaching opportunities alongside his career as a P.E. teacher. Petersen wants to go back to school eventually to get his Master's in educational leadership and have a role in administration as an assistant principal or an athletics and activities director.

Moving from Quincy to Ann Arbor was not a jarring shift for Petersen. He went to college in Normal, Illinois, a town with a similar population and college town feel. Outdoor activity opportunities are one of the main aspects of Ann Ar-

bor Petersen appreciates.

"When you drive around, it's very pedestrian and eco-friendly," Petersen said. You have people out and about biking all the time."

Nature has been an important part of Petersen's life since he got a job maintaining a private park near his house in the summer after his junior year of high school. He would mulch trails, whack weeds and mow grass.

"[That park is] my favorite place to go nature wise, you develop a love for nature and just being outside every day," Petersen said. "Fresh air and a peaceful environment [draws me to nature.] Everything's very calming. The woods and outdoors are a great place to go to clear your head and be one with your thoughts."

▲
Photo By Ella Rosewarne
Matt Petersen demonstrates an exercise for a student. He has always loved coaching. "If you were to walk into a gym and you took my class, I want you to feel very comfortable, and be able to create your own fitness plan," Petersen said.



A Thing with Feathers

Luciana Qu tells a story of struggle, triumph and how she became CHS' newest math teacher.

BY NATALIE MYCEK-CARD

As a student at Huron High School, Luciana Qu struggled in math. Now, she teaches math at Community High School (CHS) in Room 322.

"I had a 3.3 GPA, which compared to my other Asian friends, was basically a death sentence," Qu said. "There was a lot of stigma associated with being friends with me. People just thought that I was dumb."

Qu was born in London, England, and, six years later, moved with her family to Ann Arbor; she has lived here ever since. Qu explains that being Asian in Ann Arbor is "a whole different story."

Qu grew up with parents that instilled values of Confucianism, which favors those who are academically elite. As such, she went on to college following the traditional mindset of becoming a doctor or surgeon: a path that she quickly learned was not for her.

"I did awful in college," she said. "I ended up having a 2.7 GPA for the first three or four years because I was pursuing something I had to try so hard to even go to class for."

It took Qu seven years, from 2011 to 2018, to graduate from Michigan State University. However, when she graduated, she had a degree in a subject she was good at, interested in and passionate about.

"Throughout these seven years, I took two semesters off. After the second semester, I realized I was really good at tutoring," Qu said. "[Michigan State University] has a lot of international students. The majority of them are from China."

Qu explained that, because of Ann Arbor Chinese school, she utilized being bilingual and tutored

the international students.

"I really enjoyed tutoring and I realized that Michigan State University has the best School of Education [elementary and secondary] in the country, so why not try for that," Qu said. "I applied, got in and I did really well. I pretty much 4.0'd the classes there."

With that degree, Qu went on to become an elementary teacher and taught for several years in Detroit, loving every minute of it. Yet, Qu felt like she could teach and support students in academic areas at a higher level than elementary school.

"My love was in math," she said. "The reason for that is because I struggled a lot with math growing up. I got B's and C's in math."

Qu explains that the struggle that she had as a student, without much support in high school, now helps her understand and relate to her students.

"I think that not being good at math makes me an even better teacher because I understand what it feels like," Qu said. "Making people realize that they can be good at math, when they've had a history of not being good at math is where the magic happens."

Qu explains that after observing that sense of realization in her kindergarteners, she wanted to realize a similar trend at a more advanced level.

"I wanted to see that in older kids and with more difficult math," Qu said. "These are students who have experience being taught by drill-driven math teachers and parents who are like, 'Why can't you get your grade up?'"

Qu decided to pursue a masters

"Not being good at math makes me an even better teacher because I understand what it feels like," Qu said. "Making people realize that they can be good at math, when they've had a history of not being good at math is where the magic happens."

degree in secondary education, specifically in math, at the University of Michigan last year and was placed first at Clague Middle School and then at CHS.

At CHS, Qu bonded with a fellow math teacher and forum leader to which Qu was assigned: Maneesha Mankad.

"[Her Zoom meetings] were completely eye-opening, especially with how energetic Maneesha was," Qu said. "She's so charismatic, and I think that she's one of those sparks, like a mentor for life."

Qu continues to explain what life was like as a student teacher on Zoom and explained that of all the students that she saw, the ones that she remembered the most were the ones who had their camera on.

"I think that, in a sense, Zoom was a window into how students



felt," Qu said.

Qu wants to be there as a support for students like she wanted during her time as a student.

"Being bad at math, and being a math teacher, helps me connect with the students and make sure that I'm counteracting the myth that Asians can't be bad at school," Qu says.

Through all of the obstacles, Qu persisted. A powerful poem, writ-

ten by Emily Dickinson, has resonated with her as often as it has withstood time.

"'Hope is a Thing with Feathers' is one of my favorite poems," Qu said. "It encapsulates what hope is — and the definition resonates within me."

The poem reminds Qu of her roots and she explains that it is not there as a tenet for herself, but rather, "as a core part of why I do

what I do."

Qu believes that the poem is not just a part of her but also encapsulates many teachers' reasons for continuing to teach and educate many generations of students.

"Teaching is an idealistic profession. It perpetually tests the very core of every educator's devotion to their teaching philosophy," Qu said. "And without hope, I believe the essence of teaching is lost."

▲ Photo By Staff

Luciana Qu tutors a student after school. In the past, she has also struggled with math. "I think that not being good at math makes me an even better teacher because I understand what it feels like," Qu said.

Circling The Drain

Michael Vial has found a balance between his music career and his passion for teaching

BY ELLIOT BRAMSON AND HENRY CONNOR

Michael Vial, now an English teacher at Commnity High School (CHS), stepped into the street carrying only his guitar and his CDs when he got hit.

Next thing he knew he was on the ground, surrounded by shattered glass. He didn't realize he had been hit by a car until he saw the wheel a few feet from his head. It was 2016, and Vial had been on his way to play a gig at the Ark, a music venue in Ann Arbor.

"When you get hit by a car you feel a major rush of adrenaline," Vial said. "You feel like you're the Black Panther or Superman. I thought, 'I'm gonna go play that gig anyways.' And then I tried to walk."

Vial has been writing songs since he was 17 years old. While in college at Western Michigan University (WMU), he took voice lessons and guitar lessons.

"You start writing songs [because] you're dating somebody, and then you break up," Vial said. "You don't know how to feel about it and you need something that explains how you feel. Once that stupid experience happens, there's no going back for some of us. We just have to be artists."

In sixth grade, Vial's mother encouraged him to take piano lessons. He didn't practice much, and his mom let him quit after a couple years.

"I remember being in sixth grade, like, 'I don't want to play this giant box that looks like an elephant,'" Vial said. "But I felt like something was missing in my life."

While in eighth grade, Vial was visiting family in Canada when he met up with a distant cousin who had a Fender Stratocaster: a sleek, brown electric guitar. Vial was getting into grunge music like Pearl Jam and Nirvana at the time. He decided to get up early one morning and while no one was looking, he took his cousin's guitar out of its

box.

"I strummed it, and I was like, 'I've got to figure out how to work this,'" Vial said.

When Vial got home from that trip, his dad gave him his first guitar. By the time he was at WMU, Vial was already a great guitar player, but he got into teaching by chance. He loved music, but he did not realize that his love for songwriting translated to a love of literature.

During college, Vial was asked to be in an Honors English program. He hadn't considered himself particularly interested in the subject, but one experience at the end of his senior year made him change his mind. Vial's British Literature class was preparing for final exams and there were two groups competing for extra credit points. The groups each had to pick a group leader and Vial's whole group picked him. The experience struck him.

"I guess that was the start of the seed," Vial said. "I didn't see myself as a reader. I was a guitar with a kid attached to it all day."

Vial had figured out ways to take music classes senior year and not take a math class. He would sit in a closet and play guitar for an hour-and-a-half every day and leave the door open to try to impress girls. He was walking by the teaching college holding two rejection sheets from schools of music when he put the pieces together.

Vial was inspired by teachers that were role models to him, including his cross-country coach. Vial got his first teaching job when he was 22 years old at Holly High School in Holly, Michigan. He worked there for eight years but he struggled with anxiety. On his way to the job interview, he had to stop at a shoe store because he forgot his shoes at college.

"I stopped at the nearest Payless in Dearborn Heights, ran my credit

"I guess that was the start of the seed," Vial said. "Before, I didn't see myself as a reader. I was a guitar with a kid attached to it all day."

card, grabbed the first shoes off the rack and put them on in the car—Then I got the job," Vial said.

He knew he had the energy and the relationship-building aspect of teaching down, but found it difficult to stay on top of grading and lesson planning. When Vial knew he was behind on work he would not be able to start his work. He could not deal with the feeling of being behind, so he would procrastinate more to stay away from that feeling.

A lot of Vial's 20s were rough for this reason. He felt like he couldn't keep up and would blame his job for giving him too much work.

It was his music career that taught him how to be organized. Organizing his performance schedule and paying the bills helped him get over his anxiety, but his path was not a straight line.

"It's a process of checking in and getting a little better, [and] screwing up again—it really does come down to knowing oneself," Vial said.

After Vial quit his first teaching job, he became a full-time musician. He released his own records

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**Photo By
Ella Rosewame**

Michael Vial strums his guitar in his classroom. He's been playing guitar since eighth grade. "I strummed it, and I was like, 'I've got to figure out how to work this,'" Vial said.

of James Taylor-inspired music and he would travel around the country to play gigs. He often played live shows in bars; he would be the background singer in the corner once a month for seven or eight years. No one would be paying much attention, but he did not have the luxury of only doing the gigs he wanted. These shows would typically last between three or

four hours. He eventually had 600 songs memorized.

"I'm like a pickpocket," Vial said. "This person wants to hear country [music] and I hate it, but I know enough. I'm gonna get them talking like, 'Oh do you like Keith Urban?' You're trying to get their money out of their pocket into your tip jar."

Vial loved writing music and re-



leasing his own records, but eventually he had enough. He realized that he was playing the same venues over and over again without making progress. This is something that even the most successful musicians experience.

"You're circling the drain," Vial said. "There was a point where I was like, 'I love playing the Ark, but I'm gonna play the Ark again, I'm gonna play it again and again.' I didn't want to play at bars anymore. I didn't want to be the background singer in the corner. Teaching isn't like that. I was starting to miss the energy of a room."

Vial eventually returned to teaching. He realized that his perspective on teaching in his 30s was very different. He knew that if he were going to return to teaching, he had to be all in. This time he wanted to be a voice for change within education. Specifically, he wanted to encourage more diversity in teaching since teaching can be inaccessible to people who have student debt. He supports non profit organizations that help pay off student loans for people who want to become teachers, but come from lower income families.

"It is really hard to walk away with student loan debt and then start [teaching] when you could do something else," Vial said.

Vial also wants to encourage more reading in classrooms.

"The pandemic has revealed to us the importance of critical thinking, working together and compromising, but not compromising on everything," Vial said. "Reading is a part of that story for us as humans. If I can make [reading] a part of the classroom more, and more people are walking away from [a book] discussion feeling like they have the maturity to engage, even if they're not an avid reader, they're still feeling more proficient in seeing the themes and that makes me so excited, like playing the right chord at the right time."

Vial still plays gigs at the Ark and other venues in Ann Arbor, but he doesn't have to rely on music for his income. He's ended up at CHS and he feels like he has the best of both worlds.

"Every day when I leave, I just can't believe I'm here," Vial said.

To Submit or Not to Submit?

Standardized testing brings anxiety, stress and increased disadvantages to high school students. What would happen without it?

BY RIA LOWENSCHUSS

In 1969, Bowdoin College became the first college in the U.S. to not require SAT scores in their application. This change led to an increase in diversity including social and physical identities and geographical location.

Insider Higher Education reports that 56% of test-optional colleges saw a significant increase in underrepresented minority applicants after imposing a test-optional policy. According to Bowdoin's Dean of Admissions, to this day, 25-30% of Bowdoin's applicants do not submit standardized tests.

In the past two years, the number of test-optional colleges has increased exponentially due to the lack of testing during Covid-19. For the 2021-2022 application cycle, 65% of American colleges are test-optional. Not requiring standardized testing scores has significantly increased the number of applications, as well as interest from historically underrepresented students.

Despite the increased ability to not submit standardized test scores, high school students remain stressed and preoccupied by them. Jada Hikary, a senior at Community High School (CHS), has been negatively affected by standardized testing. Hikary has taken the SAT two times because her first score was not what she was aiming for.

"[The SAT] has made me feel really stressed out and made me second guess myself," Hikary said. "I

have a good score but it could always be better."

Cate Weiser has also had negative experiences with standardized testing. She feels as if she wasted time studying that she could have spent working on college applications or schoolwork. Weiser prepared for the ACT for over a year, spending up to five days a week taking practice tests and learning new strategies.

en but without the score she hoped for, should she submit her scores to her schools?

Although the majority of the schools she is applying to are test-optional, Weiser is worried that not submitting scores could hurt her chances of being accepted. Weiser has friends that were not accepted into schools like the University of Michigan, and she believes it is because they did not

“It’s hard knowing that this number and how you performed on one day is going to make such an impact on how admissions officers see you, and determine if you’re going to go to their school or not,” Hikary said.

"[The ACT] was the worst thing I have probably ever had to do," Weiser said.

Weiser has taken the ACT five times and she remains unhappy with her final score. It has created a stressful dilemma for her: With all the time invested and tests tak-

submit test scores.

"I think that most schools that say they are test-optional are not actually test-optional," Weiser said. "I just do not trust the schools that started their test-optional policy during Covid-19."

Allowing students to decide

whether or not to submit their test scores creates space for a holistic application process that views the whole student, instead of just their scores.

"It's hard knowing that this number and how you performed on one day is going to make such an impact on how admissions officers see you, and determine if you're going to go to their school or not," Hikary said.

According to the National Education Association, standardized tests are based on eugenics and give students with a higher socioeconomic status an advantage. Well-financed high schools that adequately prepare students for standardized testing disproportionately serve white students. Students living in a low-income household, who are frequently students of color, often cannot afford test preparation classes, which are proven to significantly raise test scores.

"The cultural biases of testing and the over-emphasis on how good of a test taker you are does not define what kind of college student you are," Amy McLoughlin, a counselor at CHS, said.

Students are entitled to be viewed as more than a test score. Test-optional schools give opportunities for underrepresented students to avoid an unfair disadvantage.

Furthermore, according to Insider Higher Education, students that are accepted without scores often graduate with a grade point average higher than or equal to those that submitted scores.

Allowing students to decide whether to submit their test scores helps deal with racial and other social biases, as well as lower the advantage of students with a higher socioeconomic status. Sustaining optional testing has the opportunity to create a more equal playing field in education, and life in general.

In 1969

Bowdin College became the first college or university to implement a test-optional policy.

65%

Of all U.S. higher education institutions offer a similar test-optional policy in the 2021-22 admissions cycle.

56%

Of colleges reported that the number of underrepresented minority applicants significantly increased after imposing a test-optional policy.

Figuring it Out

How are CHS sophomores adapting to starting five-day a week in-person high school for the first time?

BY ANJALI KAKARLA

The night before Marisa Andoni-Savas went back to in-person school — for the first time in 14 months — she sorted through her masks, deciding which one to wear.

A sophomore at Community High School (CHS), Andoni-Savas's high school experience has been far from what she expected.

"I didn't think I'd be wearing a mask and worrying that different [Covid-19] variants were going to put us back in virtual school," Andoni-Savas said.

Adoni Savas's last full year of in-person school was her seventh grade year. She spent half of eighth and most of ninth grade attending school via her computer at home. After spending so much time virtual, Andoni-Savas is having to re-learn parts of in-person school.

"When we took tests and quizzes online, we always had [access to our] notes," Andoni Savas said.

"In-person, we don't have open-note tests and that has really made me crack down and study and be able to know the information without having the notebook sitting right next to me."

Although Andoni-Savas has found it hard to get used to some aspects of in-person learning such as wearing masks and social distancing, overall she is very thankful to be back. Andoni-Savas feels she has a different perspective on life after having to do school online.

"I wouldn't be as grateful for what I have right now if I hadn't had it all taken away," Andoni-Savas said.

One part of online school Andoni-Savas enjoyed was being able to get to know a lot of people.

"It was surprising how open people were if you just reached out to them," Andoni-Savas said. "I think everybody was yearning for friendship and everybody was open to

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Photo By
Ella Rosewarne

Marisa Andoni-Savas spends time in Kerrytown. She has enjoyed meeting teachers in-person. "On Zoom, I was afraid to say what I wanted, but now I feel like I can say what I feel," Andoni-Savas said.

the aspect of just making a friend because we were all losing that connection, face to face."

Leah Eddins, another member of the Class of 2024, found it difficult to meet her CHS classmates over online school. Eddins feels there wasn't very much social interaction last year and it made it hard for her to connect with peers. She has found classmates are much more approachable in-person. Although Eddins found it much easier to connect with peers in-person, she is still trying to figure out where she fits in at CHS.

"I'm trying to get back into the social aspect [of school]," Eddins said. "Everyone has their groups and I'm just trying to find my little group."

Stephanie Hadley, another CHS sophomore, had trouble connecting with her teachers last year through Zoom and email. It just wasn't the same as being with them in-person for Hadley. She is much more comfortable with her teachers now. Being able to meet them in-person has made a big difference. She is finding it a lot easier to reach out to her teachers for advice, help or anything she needs. Andoni-Savas feels this way, too.

"I think I've been able to create more of a bond with my teachers in-person," Andoni-Savas said. "On Zoom, I was afraid to say what I wanted to say, but now I can just say what I feel like."

Being on Zoom changed the way sophomores interacted with peers. For Andoni-Savas, communicating virtually was very difficult.

"I was so scared to ask a question and speak up and be myself that I lost touch with a part of myself," Andoni-Savas said. "Covid-19 hurt



who I really am in [that] way. I lost this connection with myself when I was on Zoom. I wouldn't talk a lot and I would turn my camera off because that was the easiest way for me to stay away and not have to put myself out there."

Being in-person has helped Andoni-Savas rebuild that part of herself. She is beginning to speak up for herself again.

"I'm working on not being so scared, and just putting myself out there in a way that will help me further my education," Andoni-Savas said. "I'm reconnecting with that part of me, bit by bit."

One part of being in-person Andoni-Savas has enjoyed is CHS' open campus. She feels the open campus has made her more responsible. It has helped Andoni-Savas learn how to self regulate, which is something she believes will help her to become more independent. Hadley also appreciates the open campus, but for a different reason.

"I think the open campus is a really important part of Community," Hadley said. "It gives us the extra chance to socialize outside of the school building. Being able to have that freedom and build relationships with our community outside of school, within Ann Arbor, is really important."

Andoni-Savas hopes that what she is experiencing now will help her going forward.

"I'm grateful that I have had this experience because I really think by the end of my high school career, it's going to pay off," Andoni-Savas said. "I'm going to have these experiences and I'm going to have memories, good and bad, and they're going to really shape who I am. I don't want them to vanish. I want to keep them forever and keep them alive, so that when I'm older, I can look back on them and have these experiences to teach me and make my actions smarter."

Starting high school in a pandemic has given Andoni-Savas a

different perspective on life.

"Covid-19 kind of came out of nowhere and knowing that anything could happen at any moment in our lives and everything could change in an instant is kind of scary," Andoni-Savas said. "But it also makes me want to seize the day and not be scared because you never know when everything is going to be taken away from you."

Andoni-Savas, Eddins, and Hadley are all looking forward to experiencing their first full year of in-person education.

"I feel like we're creating history right now," Andon-Savas said. "We're the Class of 2024. We can do anything."

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Photo By
Ella Rosewarne

Stephanie Hadley spends time outside. Hadley has enjoyed CHS's open campus. "Being able to have freedom and build relationships is really important," Hadley said.

▼
Photo By
Cate Weiser

Leah Eddins walks to Kerrytown. Eddins has been excited to connect with her peers again. "I'm trying to get back into the social aspect [of school]," Eddins said.





THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

Eve Kaplan

Eve Kaplan finds the balance between her school workload and bringing in a few extra dollars.

BY AILISH KILBRIDE

Finding purpose outside of constant productivity is something that Eve Kaplan strives for. Between balancing the workload of a new school year and trying to bring in a few extra dollars, Kaplan is finding her way.

Last summer, Kaplan got a job at York Food & Wine, a local restaurant, with hopes of becoming financially stable and finally being able to spend money that she herself earned.

There she learned not only how to interact with customers, but also how to be confident in who she is. Walking into unknown territory full of people who were much older than Kaplan made the adjustment into her first few weeks at the restaurant challenging, but instead of being intimidated by this, she took it as an opportunity to learn how to better interact with people older than her.

Stepping out of the 'work mindset' is something that was hard for Kaplan to grasp at first — the restaurant environment felt too professional to loosen up in. As most of Kaplan's coworkers were in their 20s and 30s, she recognized that they were in such different parts of their lives; whether that meant college or even life beyond

that. She often did not know how to chime into the conversation. Most times, she thought to herself, 'how would I know? I am 16.'

That was until one coworker changed Kaplan's frame of mind.

"The first time we met, she came up to me and said, tell me your life story," Kaplan said.

Kaplan had never been asked this before. She was left speechless. This question helped Kaplan dig deep into herself, and the change she wanted to see in the way that she interacts with others. She learned to adopt the idea that no matter who you talk to, at whatever stage in your life, there is always something to be learned.

"I think something that I learned from [my coworker] was to be more unapologetically myself," Kaplan said.

Having her first job at a restaurant, Kaplan learned that the tone in which she speaks affects not only the people around her, but her own mood as well.

"I feel like sometimes when I work, I have almost a 'customer service voice' and I am not fully present," Kaplan said. "Sometimes I would zone out because I didn't always feel like being [at work] for six hours."

As she started to get the hang of the copious amounts of energy that she needed to bring each and every day to work in order to be successful, she began to create meaningful relationships with not only the people that she worked with but her customers as well.

But as school started to intensify this fall, Kaplan decided that working six hour shifts at a restaurant was not a reasonable way to spend

her time. So, she started looking around for something that would be flexible with her busier schedule

Soon thereafter, one of her mom's friends reached out, and asked Kaplan to work at her jewelry store while she was on maternity leave.

"Sometimes if it's a chill day [at the jewelry store] and we don't have a lot of customers, I can do some work on my phone which is kind of a positive thing about having Schoology now," Kaplan said. "I have to really be on top of [assignments] before and after work so that I can get everything done without having to stay up super late."

The store has reminded Kaplan of the good in the people that roam the streets of Ann Arbor. Whether it be helping a kind customer find something or simply receiving a smile from someone through the window, she enjoys being around people who make work feel easy and fulfilling.

This new job has also taught her how to deal with impolite people. With Covid-19 mask mandates, Kaplan has received an occasional dirty look or two when asking a customer to pull up their mask or even put one on, for example. As Kaplan launches into her junior year she hopes to apply what she learned from both jobs to all other aspects of her life.

Balancing work and school has not been easy for Kaplan but it has taught her to celebrate the amazing relationships and interactions she has been able to make with strangers as well as close friends. Working with people older than Kaplan has helped her dig deep into the person that she wants to become through the confidence that it has given her.

Photo By
Ella Rosewarne

Eve Kaplan sits on the third floor ledge. She talked to friends here while between classes. "Something that I learned from [my coworker] was to be more unapologetically myself," Kaplan said.

Matan Yitzchaki

Matan Yitzchaki, a senior, is busier than ever, but excited for the coming year.

BY RITA IONIDES

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Matan Yitzchaki is just glad to be back at Community High School (CHS). The senior had struggled in school last year, but academics come much easier to him now: being in person has given him newfound motivation to get his work done.

“It was really hard to have any motivation last year,” Yitzchaki said. “It was so easy to just turn off

my computer when I wanted to, or not listen when I wanted to. And in school— in person school— you can’t really do that.”

Though the burden of online school has now been lifted, the road back to full-time, in-person school was not always so smooth for Yitzchaki. Staying connected to his friends over quarantine was a difficult and inconsistent process: texting was impersonal, and it was sometimes hard to do even that. After two years of isolation, coming back to school was a sudden and total immersion in social interaction, every day, for more than seven hours straight. As he puts it, his “social battery shrank during the time in quarantine,” and the process of recharging it was an exhausting one.

“For the first week of school, I got home and I just crashed on the couch, and napped as soon as



Photo By
Ella Rosewarne

Matan Yitzchaki sits on the first floor ledge. Freshman and sophomore year, this ledge was a place Yitzchaki and his friends met and hungout at. “It was really hard to have any motivation last year,” Yitzchaki said.

I got home,” Yitzchaki said. “I was super exhausted. I was still genuinely having fun, but as soon as [school] was done, I was feeling really tired.”

With the first month of school over with, though, constant interaction became easier, along with everything else about this school year’s new normal. Now, the process of waking up early, going to school and completing his work is a habit once again.

As a senior, Yitzchaki feels like his previous in-person year at CHS made it easier and helped him adjust to the return as well. He’s figured out what he wants to do and what he likes by now, and that’s helping him move through a hectic final year. To anybody who’s just starting out in high school, he recommends exploring lots of options. He especially recommends his favorite subject, computer science.

“Everyone should take a coding class, at least one semester,” Yitzchaki said. “Personally, I think that we should require coding class the way we require language or music or art.”

Yitzchaki is optimistic about the coming year, but he’s going through more changes than one: for him, the hardest transition hasn’t been coming off Zoom, but into his last year of school. Even as he socializes with his friends and goes through his classes, college application deadlines loom closer and workloads increase with the pressures of impending post-school life. He feels much busier now than he did in previous years, especially since this year, Yitzchaki also started work at the newly established Main Street candy store, Rocket Fizz.

Working has been a fun and new experience for him— plus, it’s changed how he interacts with the CHS campus as well, since he uses some of his earnings to explore Ann Arbor lunch spots. Having a job in life already full of college preparations and schoolwork isn’t easy, but Yitzchaki feels that learning how to maintain that balance isn’t just key to a successful back-to-school season, but to a successful future life.

“I feel like it’s more of a senior thing [than a Covid-19 thing], having more on my plate,” Yitzchaki said. “We’re getting ready for



Talia Briske

Talia Briske, a CHS senior, is adjusting to in-person school and the energy it takes.

BY ELLA ROSEWARNE

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The return to school didn’t feel real for Community High School (CHS) senior Talia Briske.

Briske left in-person school on March 13, 2020 as a sophomore. Coming back as a senior with only one full year left, she was filled with nerves: if she would learn, if she would feel safe in-person and if school could even reinstate a sense of normalcy.

For Briske, she found comfort in the similarities between pre-pandemic and in-person school. But she has also recognized she cannot

handle the same as before: now an overwhelming exhaustion sweeps over her each day from both the workload and social aspect of school. During school her energy is much higher and she doesn’t notice the tiredness, but as soon as she gets in her car to head home, she is filled with exhaustion and her body crashes.

“It’s a lot easier to learn in person than online, but it’s been really tiring,” Briske said. “I’m so used to being at home all day, and now I’m going to school every day and I’ve got homework and extracurriculars, so I’ve been really exhausted.”

On the first day of school, Briske even thought to herself, “Am I awake right now?” Returning to in-person school was a big adjustment for her and took time to process mentally and physically.

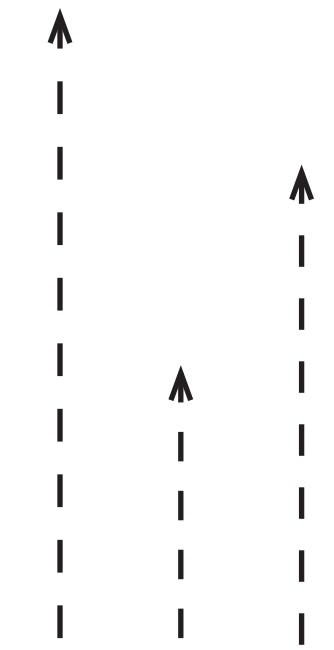
“The first week was really exciting and I was super happy to be back,” Briske said. “The third or fourth week was when it started to set in and we were starting to get into the swing of things.”

Going back to in-person, Briske



Photo By
Ella Rosewarne

Talia Briske studies at the third floor tables. These tables have been a place Briske spends a lot of time studying and with her friends at school. “It’s a lot easier to learn in person than online, but it’s been really tiring,” Briske said.



“...IT’S
BEEN
REALLY
TIRING...”

has wondered how long she will remain in school and if she will get a “normal” senior year: a school year with the Spork Game, forum days, her senior year prom, Multi-culti and Soul Food Wednesday. But for now, Briske focuses on the normal — yet complicated — task of balancing school. She makes time in her days to get away from school and homework to do things she enjoys: gymnastics, watching TV with her cats and reading before bed.

Another helpful asset for Briske this school year has been her friends. She talks to her friends in the hallway when she needs a break from class and school, and she can talk to them about other things. She spends lunches with them as well, often on the third floor picnic tables. Keeping in touch with friends has been easier for Briske in person, during school she can easily see and talk to her friends in-person.

But at the end of the day, Briske gets back into her car and heads home and ready to do it all again the next day.

Parking Lot Wars

Before the sun rises each morning, the CHS parking lot fills with seniors competing for the limited spots.

BY SANA SCHADEN



The first-come, first-serve parking lot at CHS makes scoring a spot extremely competitive. Students prepare nearly everything from their school supplies, to jewelry and make-up the night before just to be able to find a parking spot.

Senior Leah van der Velde arrives at CHS no later than 7:20 a.m. They are usually one of the first students in the parking lot. Van der Velde keeps a pillow and blanket in the back of their car, so they can use the time before class to catch up on sleep. Although this sleep schedule

does make her a little groggy, Van der Velde prioritizes getting a spot in the parking lot over sleeping in.

Stella Valentino, Caroline Andrews, Eva Hannibal and Josie Reed also face struggles with the parking lot. They all grab parking spots next to each other almost every morning: Usually claiming a string of four or five cars in a row. The students catch up while completing nearly every step of their morning routine inside of a 15 square foot parked car.

"I do my makeup. I eat my break-

fast, and I usually put on my jewelry at the parking lot," Andrews said. "There's not a lot I even do at home."

For other students, getting a spot in the parking lot is absolutely essential. Senior TJ Watson leaves his house as early as 6:15 a.m. to get to school around 7 a.m.

"I don't have the money for downtown parking, so I really want to be guaranteed a spot," Watson said. "That means that a lot of mornings I'm rushing out without even getting my breakfast yet because I just

▲
**Photo By
Mia Goldstein**

Two cars attempt to pull into the same spot in the parking lot. Only one of them was able to grab the spot. "There was only one spot left in the lot," Watson said. "I was able to grab it before one other person did."

really need a parking spot."

Prior to this year, Watson took the city bus to school everyday. Once in a while Watson's parents were able to drive him, but getting his brother to school was usually the main priority.

There has been only one day this year that Watson was running late. He pulled into the lot at 7:30 a.m.

"There was only one spot left in the lot," Watson said. "I was able to grab it before one other person did."

Watson has spent time adjusting

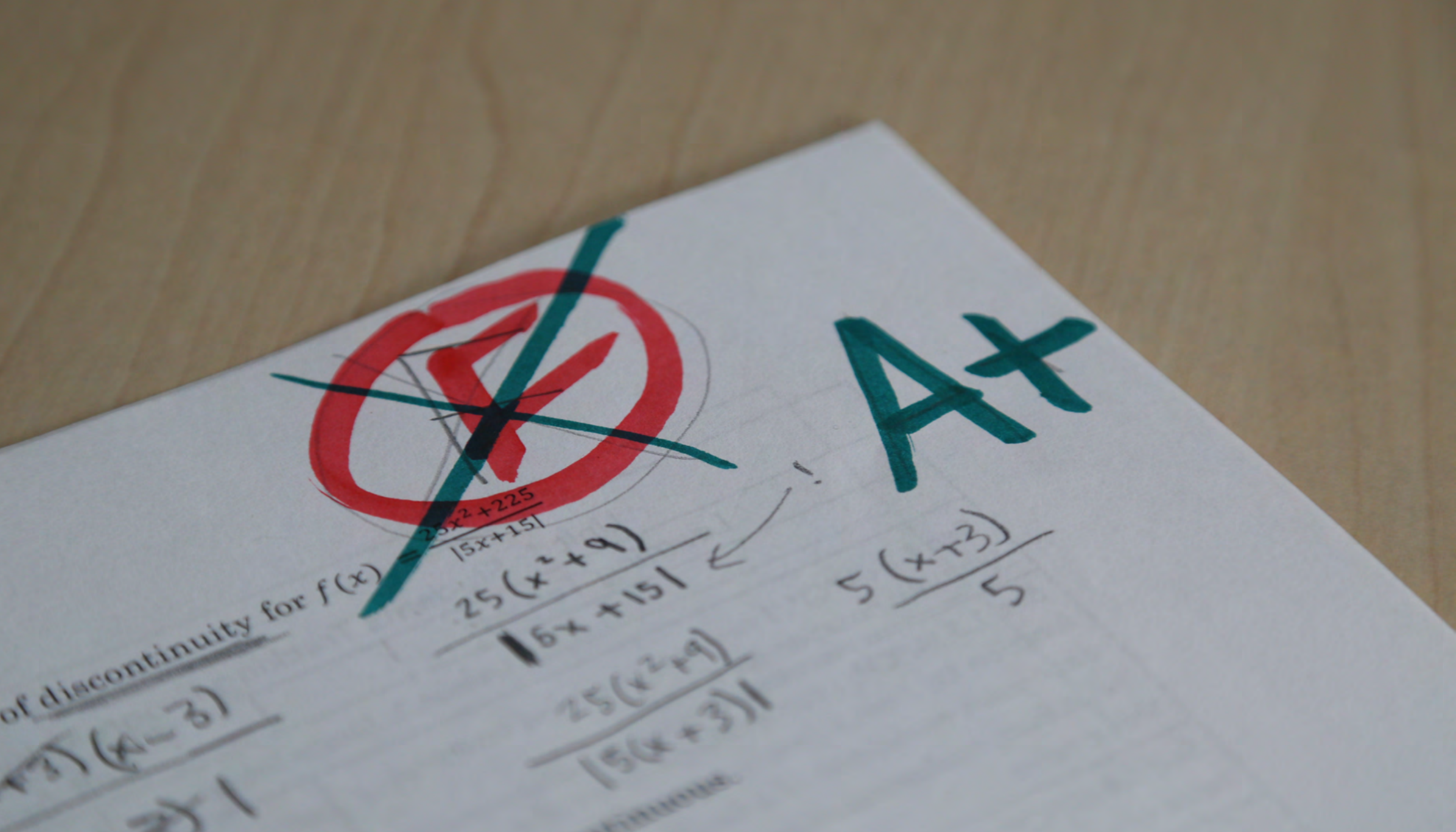
his routine so that occurrences like that are extremely rare and he can always be guaranteed a parking spot.

"I have been working on this routine all of my high school career because I'm very much not a morning person," Watson said. "Being able to get [things ready] in the night really helps me be able to get up in the morning."

While many seniors have settled into their parking routines, this adjustment did not happen immediately. On the first day of school, van

der Velde arrived at 6:30 a.m, followed by Watson at 7:00 a.m. Both seniors were able to observe other students' arrival times throughout the first week of school and adjust accordingly.

"I became one of the first people in the parking lot on the first day of school," Watson said. "[After that] I just watched the average times people got here, and then timed how early I needed to get here [based] on that."



Teaching for Mastery: A Contemporary Look At Educators' New Standard-Based Grading

CHS teachers Joslyn Hunscher-Young and Maneesha Mankad spent the pandemic revolutionizing their grading systems. What do they look like now?

BY SEBASTIAN OLIVA, ELLA ROSEWARE AND SAM CAO

▲
Photo By
Sebastian Oliva

A math test lies on a table marked with one failing and one passing grade. The grade was able to be changed because of the newly implemented grading system. "I feel like kids end up being penalized for something that was just a snapshot of their life, something that freezes them in time," Mankad said.

As the Kerrytown clocktower bells rang, Joslyn Hunscher-Young, a Spanish and History teacher at Community High School (CHS), began her class bright and early on Monday morning. She is one of many teachers to implement an alternative standard-based grading model in her classroom, a system she discovered while teaching at her previous high school: Washtenaw International High School.

While at WIHI, Hunscher-Young was not looking to change her traditional grading system, but made the adjustment to a "Skillset Mastery" paradigm after a co-worker recommended the approach to the school's administrators.

In the new system, students scored zero to eight in six catego-

"I feel like kids end up being penalized for something that was just a snapshot of their life, which freezes them in time."

ries: investigation, critical historical thinking, knowledge building, argument development and communication. Formative work was only 5% of the overall grade because Hunscher-Young believed classwork and homework should only be viewed as a practice and completed for mastery and independent learning.

Hunscher-Young and her colleague first implemented the plan in 2016. Four years later, when Hunscher-Young left WIHI for CHS, she knew she wanted to bring this grading model with her.

In order to successfully transfer this approach, Hunscher-Young created a book club at CHS, which studied the history of the American schooling system, and joined a workshop at WIHI, all in the interest of developing this new model with other educators around Washtenaw County. One of the curious instructors who participated was Maneesha Mankad, a math teacher at CHS.

"I don't think grades should be a reflection of anyone's behavior," Mankad said. "It becomes a gatekeeper to access many different things, whether that be high-level courses, being able to drive, or getting better insurance rates. If I am not conscious of these things, my students are experiencing a lack of opportunities in the outside world as a result."

It was with this philosophy that Mankad and the math department at CHS deemed it necessary to go through their own assessment network training. There, they im-

proved their teaching methods, and by understanding these practices, also realized how much grades impact students' lives.

"It's not just like I've always said, 'grades are just a reflection of what you know at this point in time,'" Mankad said. "I feel like kids end up being penalized for something that was just a snapshot of their life, which freezes them in time."

In fact, Mankad's primary motivation behind coming to CHS' was that the school does not "track" grades; students are not placed in upper or lower-level classes based on academic ability, hence not diminishing student confidence or categorizing them.

"By labeling students, you undermine their confidence in their own ability," Mankad said. "You just need to learn how to learn. It's a process that you're going to go through your whole entire life. I just want my students to believe that they can learn anything."

As this unorthodox system aimed for mastery, not grades, it also mitigated unfair consequences that teachers like Hunscher-Young and Mankad hoped to avoid.

"When a student is at a 40% or 50%, and you know they really know the content, but they just didn't do X, Y and Z at the beginning of the semester, a lot of people realized, well, this doesn't make sense," Hunscher-Young said. "It's a big shift. It requires a lot of time for teachers to really understand their content, and know what developmental skills they really want their students to have and how to



▲
Photo By Sebastian Oliva
Mankad walks around and talks with her students about the problem on the board. Mankad regularly works to remain available for her students; she wants them to ask about and understand everything. “We don’t want to just keep moving ahead without having made sure we are solidifying what we’ve learned,” Mankad said.

teach those skills directly.”

Educators at CHS realized that the pandemic has left learning gaps between students. So, in applying this new grading standard, they hoped to transform students from “dependent learners” to becoming their “own best resource.”

In Hunscher-Young’s classroom, she carved out more time for students to reflect on her feedback, thus letting them truly understand the material learned, and said doing so gave her a concrete understanding of how to support her students’ needs.

“I think that’s what Community’s all about: getting students to be in charge of their own learning and education,” Hunscher-Young said. “I believe it’ll help in post-secondary education and show my students how to manage their time. If you can do well in my class without doing every homework or classwork assignment, that’s okay. What I care about is if you’re learning and understanding the material.”

Mankad also had a similar vision of her students accepting and ad-

ressing their struggles.

“When a student doesn’t score well, I don’t want them to think they can’t do Calculus or Algebra, but accept that it’s just going to take them longer, and that’s OK,” Mankad said.

As a result, Mankad became more mindful about her own teaching. Whether it was better supporting her students’ needs or giving students the chance to show improvement, she sought to design a grading system that does not just take “a snapshot of their life.” So, Mankad implemented a “sliding scale” rubric for her assessments that was dynamic, involved student participation, scaled from one to four, and, as she hoped, addressed students’ needs.

Mankad has also considered not grading homework. She believed that the importance of doing homework is for the practice of mastery, and, by handing down a grade, Mankad realized that doing so only incentivized cheating, not learning.

“When you play an instrument, you aren’t given points for practicing. However, you are judged for

your performance on concert day,” Mankad said.

Mankad settled on making students’ homework ten percent of their grade but hopes to change it soon. She also plans to pilot a more inquiry-based curriculum for her future Calculus classes.

“I like trying to make it more student-centered,” Mankad said. “We’re doing it in Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry, but we don’t yet have access to such a program for Calculus.”

Mankad believes that instilling such a curriculum can effectively develop students’ creative problem-solving and critical and logical thinking. In this next month, Mankad is focusing on also helping build her student’s confidence.”

We don’t want to just keep moving ahead without having made sure we are solidifying what we’ve learned,” Mankad said.

A CHS senior, Ariana Levin, is a student in Mankad’s Calculus class and has taken comfort in the class’s new grading system. For example, stress from heavily-weighted tests is a thing of the past for Levin.



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Photo By Sebastian Oliva

Levin works on her calculus homework. She has begun feeling more inclined and motivated to do her classwork with the new Standard Based Grading model. “I really like how [Mankad has] phrased homework as a practice because I know a lot of teachers make homework the majority of your grade,” Levin said.



▲
Photo By Sebastian Oliva

Alpern corrects her Pre-Calculus assessment. She has found ease in the ability to correct her answers, and have the opportunity to fully grasp the material. “With the ability to correct my answers after the test, I was able to genuinely understand what I was doing,” Alpern said.

“I really like how [Mankad] is letting us have room to learn,” Levin said. “I know [with] a lot of teachers, [tests are] a snapshot of your current knowledge, but that’s not giving room for students to expand on their own learning and take it into their own hands.”

Levin has benefitted not only from the new test-grading system but also from its effects on homework. She feels more motivated to do precisely for the reasons that Mankad hopes: it is good practice for her tests.

“I really like how [Mankad has] phrased homework as a practice because I know a lot of teachers make homework the majority of your grade, and if you copy the homework from another student, you’re not really learning it,” Levin said. “The reason kids copy is because it’s a large part of your grade. But, if it’s kind of insignificant, I think students would be more inclined to actually want to learn it because it’s not enough points to cheat.”

Levin’s support of the new grad-

ing technique goes even further than just her experience in Calculus. She feels better prepared for college and is learning how to hold herself accountable in her own learning.

“In life, you will need to practice to get better,” Hunscher-Young said. “If you’re an athlete, or a dancer, or a musician, you have to practice every day. That same thing should apply to school.”

Due at 11:59

Seniors take on the struggle of college applications and share some valuable advice.

BY CHRISSY KUIPER AND MAGGIE WOLF

A list of assignments, displayed in blue, occupied the right side of Avani Hoeffner-Shah's Schoology screen. "Due at 11:59," they all read. In one tab, the Common Application portal is open for submissions, and in another, the Georgetown University and University of California applications await completion. Each deadline looms, demanding attention and competing for time. For Hoeffner-Shah, balancing her high school life and future college career feels overwhelming.

"There is always more I have to be doing," Hoeffner-Shah said. "Between schoolwork, extracurriculars and college apps, I have little

life after high school.

"Figuring out financial aid for college is probably the biggest [worry] for me right now, just because it's so out of my element," Rosa-Davies said. "I [am] just trying to make room to see friends and stuff like that."

Over the summer, anticipating the stress of this semester, Rosa-Davies planned ahead, making progress on her college applications. Tackling each application gradually has helped her feel less overwhelmed and allowed her to prioritize her schoolwork.

"I'm kind of chipping away at college stuff in between those bigger [school] deadlines," Rosa-Davies

on his mental health.

"I think the stress makes me really tired, like my body is shutting down," Uribe-Botero said. "I remember learning in AP [Psychology] last year that stress can actually lower your immune system. Balancing everything this year has definitely led me to believe this might be true."

In order to manage the stress and establish a better balance between academic responsibilities and mental health, Hoeffner-Shah, Rosa-Davies and Uribe-Botero have each tried different approaches.

"I've been trying to find healthy breaks besides just going on my phone or [watching] TV," Rosa-Da-

“There is always more I have to be doing. Between schoolwork, extracurriculars and college apps, I have little free time, and more importantly no energy.”

free time and more importantly, no energy.”

The heavy workload of senior year, accompanied by lists of personal questions, supplemental essays and difficult decisions can quickly turn into a constant cycle of stress and uncertainty. Factoring extracurricular activities into the equation, time and energy demands grow even larger.

"I feel like I haven't been able to spend as much time on a lot of my extracurriculars and social [activities] as I would like," Hoeffner-Shah said.

Felicity Rosa-Davies, another Community High School (CHS) senior, finds the balance between college applications and school obligations to be a similar source of stress. As with most seniors, Rosa-Davies constantly contemplates

said. "I'm trying to have all my [applications] in by November 1, which is soon but not as soon as a test on Wednesday, or an assignment due Friday."

Like Hoeffner-Shah and Rosa-Davies, Emilio Uribe-Botero has many commitments. However, on top of schoolwork and applications, Uribe-Botero plays soccer for Huron High School's varsity team. With daily practices and multiple games each week, he often feels as if there are simply not enough hours in the day.

"It's stressful because I always feel like practices are at the exact time I want to just sit down and get my work done," Uribe-Botero said.

As the workload piles up and deadlines approach faster, Uribe-Botero has noticed the effects that this constant stress has

vies said. "I've been getting into playing piano a lot more, and I've been going on sunset bike rides, where I'll bike from my house down through West Park and into downtown, which is a great stress reliever for me."

Hoeffner-Shah similarly ensures that she makes time for herself. This helps her distance herself from the stress of senior year. "I really try to set a little bit of time aside every week, usually Saturday, as a no work day," Hoeffner-Shah said. "It helps me reset to take a break away from my work."

As college application deadlines continue to approach, seniors must prioritize their own mental health. Planning for the future inherently brings about stress, but a year from now, what will matter most is whether they are happy.



Caroline Andrews

"You really shouldn't be super worried about (applications) because our 12 years of education set us up for this," Andrews said. "There is no shame in taking a gap year or transferring somewhere else later, just know it'll all work out; it's not a one shot thing."



Mira Schwarz

"Just get started on it and get it done," Schwarz said. "It feels so much better once you've submitted and all you have to do is wait, that's a lot easier than having to think about writing your essay."



Hollis Riggs

"It's not something you need to stress about in the winter of your junior year," Riggs said. "If you feel like getting ahead on it, go and do it. But there is time so it's not something you need to worry about."

Weight Does Not Equate to Worth

Isolation has brought with it many challenges, including a negative impact on teenagers' body image.

BY RIA LOWENSCHUSS

When Chrissy Kuiper had to spend a day in bed, she knew something was wrong. She spent the previous day going on a long run, doing ab and cardio workouts and 45-second sprints, and woke up with a fever and heat exhaustion.

"This was a turning point for me," Kuiper said. "It put into perspective that I couldn't [push my body] that much."

During Covid-19, Kuiper began a toxic relationship; her boyfriend would tell her that she needed to lose weight and that she was too big of a person. These comments made Kuiper want to make her body smaller through whatever means necessary.

"Being isolated at my house and having someone else telling me that [I needed to lose weight wasn't] very good for me," Kuiper said. "It caused me to start to do things to lose weight because I wanted to change my body."

Kuiper is not alone in those being affected by the isolation of Covid-19. Alexandra Crosson, CEO of MY-Body, an eating disorder treatment clinic, reports that there has been a 400% increase in 12 to 18 year olds seeking MYBody's services. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought with it many disruptions to normal life, which can negatively impact teenagers' mental health.

"Social networks have been really challenged," Crosson said. "Being at home in potentially disordered, dysfunctional family systems [leads to] less coping skills or strategies to be had [and] less freedom and flexibility to manage mental health."

Being isolated during Covid-19 limited Kuiper's resources to deal with her unhealthy relationship and kept her trapped inside her own head. She started to strictly count calories and when that didn't work, she stopped eating full meals and began to work out for up to three hours a day. Kuiper stopped working out constantly when she experienced heat exhaustion, but she still wouldn't eat, since she was consistently losing weight.

"I was seeing results, so I wasn't going to stop," Kuiper said.

For Kuiper, social media negatively affected her

mental health and body image. She found herself comparing her body to the unrealistic body standards that social media apps such as Instagram and TikTok constantly portray.

"All these people [on social media] are popular because of the way they look, so I thought I needed to look like them too," Kuiper said.

Kuiper has also experienced a lot of misinformation about food and dieting on social media. She frequently sees disordered eating habits being presented as healthy or aesthetic, such as intermittent fasting. This is a trend in which people do not eat for a specific period of time, which, according to Kuiper, is often portrayed by influencers on social media as a healthy eating habit.

According to Kuiper, social media "influencers" can greatly affect teenagers, especially teenage girls. Often, the content that they are posting does not share the truth of what is going on behind the scenes. Kuiper says that this makes teenagers our age assume that bodies like the ones they see on social media are easily attainable, and that disordered eating is the way to get these bodies.

Allison Mankowski, a registered dietician who works with teenagers that have eating disorders, says that social media has always had an effect on body image. During the pandemic, this effect has become much

"All these people (on social media) are popular because of the way they look," Kuiper said.



Photo By
Mia Goldstein

Chrissy Kuiper pulls on and obscures her face. She modelled how comments from others and social media posts created external pressures that attempted to mold her body. "[Therapy] taught me I don't have to please everyone," Kuiper said

more prominent, as Covid-19 has increased the usage of social media apps. According to Mankowski, isolation has created little opportunity for connection outside of the internet, greatly increasing the exposure and the impact of it.

Despite the factors working against her, Kuiper recognized that she needed help and was able to work through her negative body image. She ended her toxic relationship and opened up about her mental health to her friends. To this day, Kuiper and her best friend, who also struggled with disordered eating, send each other pictures of the food they eat throughout the day in order to support each other in recovery.

"It shows the other person that we're eating and that it's okay to eat, and that you need to feed your body," Kuiper said.

Social media also contains many body-positive communities. In these cases, social media allows people like Kuiper to connect with others in similar situations and to find resources in times of crisis. It also creates a space to emphasize that all bodies have worth.

"It's becoming more accepted to have bodies in all shapes and sizes," Mankowski said. "There's been a lot

of promotion around loving yourself and the importance of mental health over trying to look or fit into a certain size."

There are many resources for eating disorder treatment, such as the National Eating Disorders Association and the body acceptance movement. For Kuiper, therapy helped her identify and deal with her disordered eating, as well as give her perspective on what she truly wants in life and how to put herself over her weight.

"[Therapy] taught me I don't have to please everyone," Kuiper said. "I love doing things for other people, but it taught me to do things for myself too."

Kuiper now feels more confident in her body image and remains hopeful in her recovery. Although returning to school and entering the world's new normal has brought increased anxiety to Kuiper, she is excited for what the future will bring.

—
For getting help, please call or text (800) 931-2237
For additional resources, search:
<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>

The Immigrant Dream

Sylva Das tells her families' story of coming to the U.S. and how it has affected her identity and childhood.

BY IZZIE JACOB

Sylva Das's grandfather was standing under his favorite mango tree when his mother ushered him inside. A bomb threat had just gone off. He and his brothers got through the door just seconds before the tree disintegrated.

"That was his favorite mango tree and he likes to mourn it," said Sylva Das, a senior at CHS.

Das's grandfather, Sunil Das, grew up during World War Two in Malaysia. His family immigrated from India to Malaysia when he was young, looking for work and chasing the booming railroad industry. Sunil Das's father became a railroad engineer, his older brother following in his footsteps.

Sunil Das's parents wanted him to go into the railroad industry, a dependent and steady career that

his family was familiar with. Sunil Das had a pen pal in high school that lived in America. Her name was Joan Nord. Nord was located in Indiana and explained to Sunil that she was going to college. When Sunil found out about the potential opportunities that came with college, he became invested and knew he couldn't live the rest of his life on Malaysian railroads.

"He decided when he was 18 to just come here and see what happened. He got on this random cargo ship that was going to New York City, and then when he got here, he somehow made it to college in Indiana, and he met up with his pen pal. That's how he met her for the first time," Das said.

In 1954, Sunil Das left everyone he knew behind for a shot at be-

coming something more. The hardest part for Sunil was leaving his family. He left behind more than six siblings and his parents. He didn't know the language, the culture or the country. All he had was persistence and a pen pal.

Sunil Das ended up attending the same college as his pen pal, a small, Catholic college in the middle of Indiana called Manchester College (now called Manchester University). Sunil didn't really fit into the college environment right away and often faced subtle and out-right discrimination. Being one of the only people of color at his school, many people were unwilling to make an effort to communicate with him due to ignorance, especially because of his lack of fluency in English and the color of his

▼
Photo Provided By Das Family
Sunil Das stands with his siblings on a trip to Malaysia. He is the fourth from the left.



I don't think America gives you the dream, I think immigrants make their own dreams.

skin. Nonetheless, he was the first of his family to get a college degree. However, not everyone thought he would make it that far, especially the people who taught him.

"A lot of people also didn't think that he was going to be able to do very well, because all the programs were in English, and he didn't really speak English. So they doubted him," Das said.

His rough experiences at college molded his views and distorted his respect towards his own culture and how he passed it on — or didn't — to the next generation.

"I think my grandpa's view as an immigrant was that you just want to acclimate to the American culture, you want to erase everything from your past and from where you came from," Das said. "He thought that speaking languages from his past country was not American. I definitely have resentment of the fact he was made to feel that his culture was not valid. And in order for him to be American, his culture needed to be completely erased."

This issue is felt by many immigrant communities across cultural barriers. When immigrants come to this country they feel as though they are not "American enough"

and they have to abandon their culture in order to assimilate, blend in, keep their head down and survive. Immigrants are made to feel this way by discrimination, ignorance from others and feeling like the odd one out. Immigrants often never feel American enough - even though this land was created and built by immigrants. This issue is often felt by the descendants of immigrants as well.

"It just kind of makes me sad that now I don't speak the language and I don't have as deep a connection to my culture as I could have," Das said.

Being an immigrant is a balancing act of never feeling American enough — nor cultured enough.

Sunil Das ended up going into medicine in order to help others. He earned the title of Dr. Sunil Das and was able to create a steady income, and settle down in Michigan. He was able to send money back to Malaysia to support his parents and other siblings. Today, Dr. Das lives in Michigan near his grandchildren and children.

Das talked about how her grandfather's stories and experiences motivate her in a variety of ways. But most important was how pure

of a heart he was able to maintain through the good and the bad.

"I think that's why he went into medicine, because he loved helping people," Das said. "I mean, he was always able to see the good in people. Even with all these experiences that he had as a child and coming here, he had seen the bad in people but he was always able to take this and hope that people really were looking out for each other and were really there to help each other."

His positive mindset and consistent outpour of love is something that Das carries with her in her heart. She leans on these stories during the rough times.

Though Das knows her grandfather risked everything for a better life in this land with more opportunity she struggles with the idea of the 'American Dream.'

"I don't think America gives you the dream. I think immigrants make their own dreams," Das said.

Das knows she's able to live a more opportunity filled life because of the decisions her grandfather made. A decision she could never repay her grandfather with. Was all the hard work and sacrifice part of the American dream? Or was it just immigrant grit?

▲
Photo Provided By Das Family
Sunil Das and his family are pictured in Malaysia. Sunil Das was a child.

A Different Beginning

Three students share their stories of being conceived from artificial insemination and reflect on their experiences.

BY FELICITY ROSA-DAVIES



Photography by Felicity Rosa-Davies

Leah van der Velde hasn't had an urge to discover who her two donors are. "I haven't figured out how to feel about it, but I don't think I really care about knowing (the donor's) identity," van der Velde said.



"He doesn't carry any emotional weight in my mind because he's not my parent."

Nadya Matish has always known she was born from a sperm donor. Because she has two moms, Matish was born through artificial insemination: the process of conceiving a baby without sexual intercourse. Matish's parents used a donation from a man who chose to remain anonymous. Because of his anonymity, Matish refers to her biological father as simply "the donor."

"My family refers to the donor to explain our unexplainable physical traits," Matish said. "Me and my sister have very short thumbs, and we sometimes joke about how we must have gotten the donor's 'stubby thumb,' because neither of our moms have short thumbs like we do."

In the use of a sperm bank, the donor's identity typically remains

anonymous to the families who use their donations. Some people have eventually unearthed the identities of their donors, but this event has yet to come to fruition for Matish and her sister. Aside from a sheet of his medical history that her parents received upon their purchase of the sperm, Matish knows no personal information about her donor.

"I honestly don't really want to know who he is," Matish said. "He doesn't carry any emotional weight in my mind, because he's not my parent."

An OB-GYN at the University of Michigan, Dr. John Randolph has been the fellowship director in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at the University since 2003. He helps counsel couples who are struggling to have biologi-

cal children and has worked closely with the process of artificial insemination for 37 years.

In addition, Randolph is familiar with the process of in vitro fertilization, or IVF. As opposed to artificial insemination, with IVF the initial growth and development of the embryo takes place in a lab.

"The way I see it is that you take gametes out, put them together, and then put them back in someplace where they can grow," Randolph said.

Leah van der Velde's story begins with IVF. During van der Velde's freshman year at CHS, they learned that their conception differed from what they had always assumed.

"I was writing an essay about my ancestry for U.S. History and I

▲
Photography by
Felicity Rosa-
Davies

Nadya Matish doesn't feel any emotional attachment to her sperm donor. "I don't have any connection to him, he's just some dude I share genetics with," Matish said. "He's not my father."

asked my older sister if I could look at her old paper to take inspiration. In reference to our Dutch ancestry, her paper said that we weren't actually related to anyone Dutch because we were born through IVF," van der Velde said. "No one in my family had ever told me before then."

Van der Velde was stunned by the news, but had no urge to unearth either of their donors' identities, particularly their male donor.

"I don't think I've ever needed a father figure," van der Velde said. "My mom provided for us, and she's been a great parent. I've never wished there was someone else."

However, a possible half-sibling connection intrigued van der Velde. Their sister took a genetics test while writing her ancestry paper and a handful of matches appeared in her results. Van der Velde believes that these matches could be their biological half-siblings related to them through one of their donors.

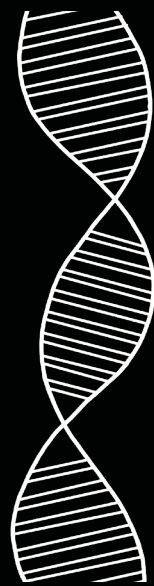
"There has been [some conflict] since I've become more curious about my siblings," van der Velde said. "Everyone in my family is very non-confrontational so when I found out, I didn't talk to my mom about it at all. Over time, I worked it into the conversation, so that she knew that I knew about it."

The prospect of additional people related to someone through their donor is a moving one. It brings comfort in the knowledge that there may be other people to form close relationships with in the future. And despite their subtle approach, van der Velde is excited about the idea of having half-siblings out in the world.

In addition to inseminations conducted in a lab or through a sperm

bank, there's another method that prospective parents use: home insemination.

"If somebody has a donor they want to use outside of a sperm bank, they can," Randolph said. "With home inseminations, [the parent] will find a companion or a friend or somebody, and just get a semen sample which they use instead of a sample from a bank."



Walden Jones-Perpich's parents chose to do a home insemination for their two children. By the time he was 10 years old, Jones-Perpich wondered about his sperm donor constantly.

"I used to bug my parents to tell me who he was," Jones-Perpich said. "It felt like I was playing 20 Questions all the time."

Jones-Perpich's moms had previously told him that his donor was not from a sperm bank, but was someone their family knew personally. Despite his strong desire to know his donor's identity, Jones-Perpich wasn't looking for a missing piece of himself that could

be found through discovering his biological father. He was driven by curiosity—the thought that there was information about himself and his biology that his parents possessed, but that he couldn't access himself.

Eventually, he didn't have to keep wondering. After months of asking questions, Jones-Perpich finally received an answer.

"It was very surprising to figure out who my donor was, because he's somebody that my family and I see semi-regularly," Jones-Perpich said. "When my parents first told me, I was like, 'Oh, huh.'"

Jones-Perpich's donor turned out to be a family friend who he visited in South Carolina every spring break with his older sister Loey Jones-Perpich, and their moms. The donor has two kids of his own, who Jones-Perpich had known long before learning his relation to them. Although the donor's children are his biological half-siblings, Jones-Perpich's relationships with them feel different than the one he has with his full sister.

"When I think of the definition of a sibling, my relationship with them doesn't fit into that," Jones-Perpich said. "They're not somebody who I've grown up with at all, not like Loey."

Randolph believes that these experiences of kids being born through artificial insemination is a beautiful thing and that their stories are important.

"Everything I've seen over my career is the evolution in how we define families, and how creative we can be in helping people have families," Randolph said. "There are so many ways to be together, and to be happy. And [these stories are] just another manifestation of that."

Photo by
Felicity
Rosa-Davies

Walden Jones-Perpich began questioning his donor's identity when he was 10 years old. "Not knowing the donor was just kind of a mystery; I don't think it was a missing part of my identity or anything super crazy, but it was still a big thing," Jones-Perpich said.



The pandemic we face is novel. Vaccine mandates are not. Out of respect for schooling, science and, ultimately, society's safety, a Covid-19 vaccine requirement is the correct way forward in Ann Arbor Public Schools.

STAFF EDITORIAL

As staff and students returned to Community High School (CHS) this August, they stepped into a busy building: one packed with colorful class discussions, a newly oriented floor plan and even an air conditioning system. But one critical thing was, and remains, missing: a Covid-19 vaccine mandate.

A requirement that covers all Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) staff and students who are eligible to receive a fully approved shot must be instated. The science is indisputable; as all legitimate research indicates, there is quite simply no alternative treatment for the virus nearly as effective as a vaccine. Similarly, any political considerations must not usurp the health and safety of the district's 17,000 students, their families and the staff who support them.

Before we dive deeper into why we endorse a mandate, we must first address one critical technicality.

As of right now, AAPS cannot implement a requirement themselves — that power rests at the feet of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

But we believe that in today's extraordinary circumstances, the department should instead establish a minimum list of vaccinations required to attend public schools — much like they have done already — but also allow for local health departments and their respective school districts to choose whether or not to announce their own Covid-19 vaccine mandates, too.

This ad hoc approach lets communities further protect themselves, while still ensuring a coordinated state response to the pandemic. In Washtenaw County, this liberty should manifest in a sweeping mandate.

Though it is unlikely, a shift back to remote schooling would be devastating. Hypothetically, such a transition

would deal a crippling blow to teachers' lesson plans, students' social and academic development and parents' schedules, just like it did in March 2020.

And if this shutdown were a punch in the gut to the general public, it would be a dangerous uppercut to the jaw for the district's many vulnerable community members: the single-parent households, the immunocompromised, the essential workers. As study after study has shown, a vaccine mandate prevents this scenario.

Equally as frustrating, though, would be that this future is avoided with swift action. A policy, similar to the one we propose, is an inexplicable leap toward overcoming the unpredictability which has dominated everyone's livelihood for the past 18 months. Another shutdown is surely avoidable with extensive vaccination, but if there is anything we have learned during the pandemic, it is that certainty is illusory, especially with vaccination numbers as low as they currently stand.

Thus, out of respect for science, out of respect for schooling and, ultimately, out of respect for society, an all-encompassing vaccine mandate is the correct way forward. But we also acknowledge the well-publicized concerns regarding our position, namely in how the policy supposedly infringes on civil liberties. So, out of respect for these essential freedoms, too, they are what we will address next.

Countless private corporations, like Disney and Chevron, instituted a vaccine mandate over the sum-

mer, as did a number of public institutions, like New York City's Department of Education, The Pentagon and even Ann Arbor's own University of Michigan. As expected, these decisions were met with some controversy. But with the benefit of retrospect — and of science — we now know they were also the primary measure which prevented an even more precipitous rise in cases. If organizations of this size and complexity have successfully employed our recommendation, we surely have the ability to do the same.

As these large-scale directives set an honorable social standard, they also reaffirmed a powerful legal precedent when their policies withstood a barrage of lawsuits, which were unfounded in principle and precedent. Beginning in 1905, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the states' right to enforce vaccination, and as a direct result, all 50 states and more than 500 colleges and universities have required immunizations since. In AAPS, this very construct has already manifested itself in the form of 16 other mandatory inoculations to prevent the spread of diseases like polio, measles and mumps. The garrisons of precedent in support of the district adding only two Covid-19 doses to this list is overwhelming, just like the virus is itself.

Doing so would actually advance our essential civil liberties. By protecting our community from Covid-19's most painful symptoms, they offer the promise of restoring our fundamental freedoms and long-lost livelihoods. After all, the pandemic we face is novel. Vaccine mandates are not.

Ranked Choice Voting

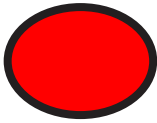
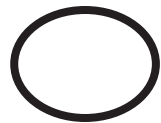
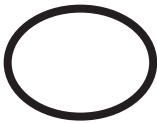
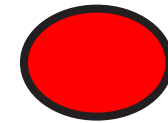
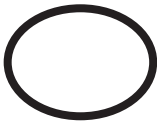
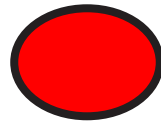
Why it's time to bring this voting system back to Ann Arbor.

BY SCARLETT LONDON

1st

2nd

3rd



Picture this: you are a high school senior, applying to college. There's an ultra-competitive school you have dreamed about attending since you were a little kid. The campus is beautiful, the teachers are brilliant and the cafeteria is a five-star restaurant. There are plenty of other colleges that you would be okay with, but nothing quite like this "dream" school. But of course, getting accepted is a tall order.

Now, picture what we will call your "nightmare school." The tuition is through-the-roof, the classes are notoriously boring, and the dorms are the size of a walk-in closet. What if your guidance counselor told you that you could only apply to one college, and you were not allowed any safety schools? If you didn't get accepted to that school, you would be forced to go to your "nightmare school." Would you apply to your dream school, knowing that it is a long-shot to get in, or would you play it safe with a middle-of-the-road school that you know will take you?

In a conversation with Lisa Disch, a University of Michigan political science professor and Ann Arbor City councilwoman, she described how this metaphor is similar to our current election process.

"That's the position that plurality voting puts us in when we know that by voting for our favorite candidate, we risk throwing the election in favor of the candidate we would never vote for," Disch said.

Among the Ann Arbor City Charter amendments on the ballot this November is a proposed amendment relating to the use of ranked choice voting (RCV) in Ann Arbor. RCV is a system where voters rank candidates in order of preference, instead of choosing just one, even in a race for a single office. When the votes are tallied this way, the candidate who receives the few-

est votes is eliminated, and the votes received by that candidate are redistributed to their voters' second-choice candidates. The process continues until one candidate receives a majority of the votes and is declared the winner. This amendment proposes that the mayor and city council members should be nominated and elected using RCV when it is authorized by State law.

The RCV system gained national attention when New York City used RCV in their municipal elections in the summer of 2021. It is also used in many other cities, such as San Francisco, California and Eastpoint, Michigan. Other countries, such as Australia, have been using RCV for a century. Ann Arbor previously used RCV for a period of time in the 1970s, during which the city elected its first Black mayor, Albert Wheeler. However, RCV was repealed after it came under fire by the press and local Republicans. At the time, its detractors dubbed it as 'too confusing,' and questioned its constitutionality. Still, RCV had diversified the city's candidate pools and prevented vote splitting. It is time to bring RCV back to Ann Arbor.

RCV eliminates the current problem where individuals feel like they'd be wasting their vote if they don't think their preferred politician will win. This system allows voters to truly vote for their favorite candidate — even a third-party candidate — without worrying that doing so will indirectly benefit the major-party candidate they like the least. With RCV, if someone's preferred candidate doesn't win, their vote will be transferred to their second choice.

RCV also promotes the election of consensus candidates. Currently in Ann Arbor, a candidate only needs a plurality of votes to win an election, which means that in elections with multiple candidates, they can win with far less than a majority of the vote. RCV promotes candidates

who have support from a wider variety of different voters, and whose views reflect a stronger consensus among citizens.

Historically, in politics, voters are exposed to lots of negative campaigning and attack ads. In 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign team released one of the most famous attack ads of all time, known for its emotionally terrifying warnings, titled "Daisy." President Trump also led a very negative campaign, often painting an apocalyptic portrait of life in the U.S. under the Biden administration. RCV encourages candidates to campaign based on the issues they are passionate about, and discourages negative campaigning, or mudslinging. If a candidate is trying to court a second-choice selection by voters, they won't succeed by trashing a voter's first-choice candidate. Positive campaigning will engage more citizens in the political process, who may currently be turned off by the constant negativity and name-calling so prevalent in political campaigns today.

Critics of RCV argue that the system is too confusing for most voters and the process of counting the ballots can be grueling. It also assumes that voters have the bandwidth to thoroughly research all of the candidates well enough to put them in order. It could be seen as a turn-off to potential voters who are used to voting a straight-party ticket or who simply feel like it is too much work. But governance of a city is hard work, and it deserves an informed electorate.

Although it is true that this system is fairly new, with proper voter education and available resources, RCV is easy to navigate and understand. And for voters who typically vote for one of the two major political parties, it still gives the option to only vote for a single candidate.

RCV gives us the opportunity to create a more informed and engaged electorate. It allows citizens to look for the candidates who best fit their ideals, rather than feeling pigeon-holed into voting for one of two major political platforms. RCV allows voters to feel heard.

Our methods of solving climate change have broken down. We need to fix how we address the climate or pay the price.

BY CHARLIE BEESON

Climate change. It's become an obelisk of anxiety, looming over us daily. Most people can agree that it's happening, however nobody is willing to solve it — according to the Resources for the Future (RFF) Climate Insights report, the percentage of Americans who believe something is being done to prevent climate change has gone down from 65% in 2010 to 41% in 2020. However, most people believe that we must do more for the climate. At the very least, you could say that we are at an impasse.

For the large part of climate change's publicized life, solutions have ranged from new technology to completely reverting society. What tends to have the most traction in progressive agendas and media is the theory of consumer-oriented change. Advertisements, products and the general consensus all push this idea of reducing your own carbon footprint: consumers must make their own choices to solve the impending climate catastrophe. Turn off your lights, buy eco-friendly products, recycle, etc. This method, in its essence, is a scam. What we need is to enact effective, affordable and accepted climate policies that mitigate or entirely diffuse large producers of carbon dioxide.

So, what does effective, affordable and accepted actually mean? Beginning with effectiveness, there needs to be significant evidence that the fix actually works as intended. For instance, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) explains the benefits of using economic incentives to convince companies to use more sustainable practices rather than creating regulations that ban

the use of unsustainable or environmentally-harming methods. Policies have to actually perform what they are intended to do before we consider other factors.

Affordability is the next tenet of a worthy policy. Policies can't be unrealistic or focus on parts of society that aren't going to realistically disappear. For instance, banning beef would have an impact on our global CO2 emissions, but is simply not going to pass through Congress if corporations that produce meat push back. On the other side of the spectrum, expenses like direct carbon-capture technology that would, in theory, allow us to follow destructive lifestyles, are far too expensive and counterintuitive.

Finally, policies have to be acceptable. We should be focusing our time on policies that make logical sense to the average person, rather than shaming people for not recycling. Making changes to the lifestyles of consumers by telling them to do so is ineffective, as proven by the pandemic: even though we experienced a global shutdown, CO2 emission levels only dipped from 33.4 to 31.5 gigatons according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). We need policies that can make sense to the average consumer, or don't even concern them at all.

So if great solutions must largely rely on being systemic, what — in the end — can you do about climate change? If we want to influence the system, we have to change the minds of people in power. Politicians need to understand that people care about climate change, and then act upon it. If they don't, we need to replace them. Finally, we should use demand to influence the market and incentivize innovation (that aren't scams). If you want companies to make environmentally-friendly products, you can always directly buy those products if you have the comfort to do so, but remember most good policies shouldn't even affect you, the consumer. Other than that, staying aware of climate change and spreading the word is a very effective way of keeping pressure on these pressing issues. It's going to be a tough ride, but if we follow through, we just might have a chance at surviving climate change.

GLOBAL

The Scam In Solving Climate Change

NATIONAL

Gun Control: Controlling the Problem

Twenty-two deaths since the beginning of 2021. School shootings spiraled out of our minds during the virtual year; it was the least of our worries. As school doors open, gun control once again spirals out of hand and into the spotlight.

BY SIMON SHAVIT

On Oct. 6, 2021, a school shooting at Timberview High School in Arlington, Texas left two students and one staff member injured with another student in critical condition. Just three days prior, a former student opened fire on the doors of YES Prep Southwest Secondary in Houston, Texas, injuring the principal. Within the span of a week, school shootings injured six people in just one state alone.

How did these students get these weapons? There is no waiting period for purchasing a gun in Texas. In addition, you do not need a license to own one. Without a waiting period, there is not enough time to ensure a safe purchase and that the gun is going into responsible hands.

To find a practical and effective solution to fixing gun control laws, Texas legislatures should turn to New Jersey. The state has employed a 30-day waiting period, requiring citizens to wait for a firearms purchaser identification card. During this time, law enforcement can apprehend underaged students who are illegally buying guns. In addition, they can run in-depth background checks to verify their age and that they are responsible enough to own a gun. In other words, New Jersey prevents shootings by keeping the would-be-shooter from getting a gun in their hands in the first place.

It is no coincidence that New Jersey also has the lowest frequency of school shootings per capita of any state. Totaling the second highest number of school shootings since 1970, Texas' weak gun control laws prove to be a threatening factor to the safety of all students. Unfortunately, Texas is not alone in this dangerous legislation. Several other states require no waiting period, license or permit to own and carry a firearm,

such as Louisiana, which, unsurprisingly, has the third highest number of school shootings per capita itself.

However, background checks have only extended to unlicensed purchases in 21 states; these audits are also necessary to ensure that the buyer is a responsible adult. According to the Washington Post, since 1999, 80% of school shooters have obtained their guns at home or from relatives. A check, similar to the one New Jersey has implemented, provides security that the adult gun owners are not substance abusers, likely to accidentally leave their guns unlocked and unsupervised or to be convinced to give their child a gun while under the influence.

However, not all school shooters need to rely on their parents slipping up to obtain a gun. Many seniors in high school are of age to legally buy a gun in many states. For example, Virginia allows those 18 years of age and older to legally own a gun. Any 18 year old school shooter could have legally bought a gun without needing a license or waiting period in Virginia. While it is illegal to possess firearms on school grounds, this law won't stop someone from shooting up a school. What is truly necessary is prevention of the ownership of a gun, which will go much further in halting firing on school grounds.

We must draw the line. The school year has just begun, and there have been 22 deaths resulting from school shootings since the start of 2021. Any number of school shootings is both physically and psychologically damaging to the town and country it took place in. Anything and everything should be done to prevent school shootings from ever happening, so let's start at the source of a school shooting, and prevent kids from ever getting their hands on a gun.

Should the CHS Schedule Change?

AGREE

The Friday schedule has got to go.

BY ELIJAH KLEIN

Thank God it's Friday. That's the saying, right?

Well not for Community High School (CHS) students. Here, Fridays are met with gloom. I can recall multiple conversations I've had with my friends or overheard in passing with people saying something along the lines of "Ugh, it's a Friday."

Now, why is this the case? Four days out of the week, CHS uses a block schedule, which has students taking three to four classes a day, depending on if they have a seventh hour. Without one, students get out of class at 1:55 P.M. an hour earlier than the other schools in the city operating on a traditional high school schedule.

Along with getting out earlier, these longer classes allow for teachers to go more in depth with content, and it also leads to less daily homework being assigned than at other schools. Additionally, it allows for more time to do homework before a due date.

But not on Fridays. For some classes on Thursday, assignments will be due on Friday, thus eliminating a grace period that lends

the block schedule its legitimate merits.

CHS has proudly upheld the label of being the alternative school in the district. But on Fridays, we're just like everyone else. I understand that administrator put this in place to make sure classes meet evenly throughout the week, but there are other ways to solve this and make the schedule more ideal.

One change to the schedule that can be made is to only have block schedules, and switch off between a Monday and Tuesday schedule each Friday. People in favor of the current Friday schedule could say that it would get too confusing for students, but there can be actions taken to make it much easier. Throughout the week, teachers can make it known if the students will have that class on Friday, and forum leaders can give reminders to their students. It would take some adjustment, but nothing bad enough that equates to the dreaded Friday schedule.

Another alternative is to continue the schedule used last year. Having two of each block schedule days a week, and one day of asynchronous work on Wednesday. This allows for people to catch up on any work they need to do on Wednesdays, and still gives the grace period of at least a day for people to finish homework.

I believe there should be a change to the current schedule, in particular the Friday schedule. There are many alternatives that are less stressful, simpler and more productive than what is currently in place. CHS should embrace the block schedules, and they are more than capable of adjusting the schedule to do this. If you enjoy getting out of school earlier, having less homework, and having more time to do homework, changing the schedule is the clear choice.

TO

The Friday schedule is our best option.

LAUREL PETERSON

Many people believe that Community High School's (CHS) Friday schedule is problematic, and I agree with them. However, there is no good solution.

One potential solution I have heard is moving the Friday schedule to Monday. Mondays tend to be harder days for me, though; I'm just coming off the weekend so I have to adjust back to the school schedule. Adding an additional two or three classes would make that a lot harder.

While moving the Friday schedule to a Monday would lower the homework load going into the weekend, it would ultimately only be shifting the heavy homework load, not fixing it. Quite frankly, the weekend is the best time for a heavy homework load—having two days without school makes the homework load more manageable. Additionally, starting off the week with that homework from all six

(or seven) classes could put you behind; you might not have enough time to finish it all, and that just pushes back the homework you get throughout the rest of the week.

One of the merits of having the Friday schedule at the end of the week is that students have chances to talk to all their teachers before the weekend. If they have questions, they have the opportunity to ask their teachers without having to go into the weekend unsure about a grade or a missing assignment.

"I think that if we were to have a Friday schedule, it would be better on Friday, just because it's the end of the week so you can review in all of your classes," Ryan Thomas-Palmer, a CHS junior said. "Having it on a Wednesday or something in the middle [of the week] would just be chaotic."

Kate Groves, a CHS freshman, agrees.

"I like it on Friday because then you can get everything situated before the weekend," Groves said

Another suggestion I've heard is bringing back asynchronous

Wednesdays. While those were beneficial in a virtual format, I don't think they're the right thing to do now that we can be in-person. I don't want to spend a day at home when we could be in school, interacting with our friends and teachers. I've seen enough of my house.

It is also important to remember that asynchronous Wednesdays are more suited to some people than to others.

"I really struggled with asynchronous Wednesdays, especially because I have ADHD," Season Rosenfeld, another CHS freshman said. "Not working within a classroom setting with an instructor is very difficult for me."

Additionally, many classes are incompatible with an asynchronous format.

"I take orchestra at Pioneer, so I wouldn't really like that because it gives us one hour less of rehearsal time," said Griffin Siersma, a sophomore.

Admittedly, the Friday schedule isn't the greatest. Among other things, it leaves you with a lot of homework going into the weekend. But there is no good or easy solution to this problem, as moving it to a different day wouldn't really help.

"I don't think there are better alternatives," Siersma said.

DISAGREE

I HAD A NASTY CUT ON MY KNEE I DON'T REMEMBER HOW I GOT IT.

BY SCARLETT LONDON

Maybe I had tripped while we were hiking Masada. Maybe I had been brushed by a sharp piece of coral while we were snorkeling in Eilat. It was a battle scar, and I loved it. Our first few weeks in Israel had been filled with injury-worthy activities, and I was not planning on missing a moment.

Getting to Israel had been tricky. With Covid-19 still a threat and a fresh Israeli-Palestinian conflict still simmering, I wasn't sure I'd be able to go at all. But I'd ached to get there. My camp friends — my people, my comfort — were all going to be there. We worked, we filled out form after form, we took test after test, we quarantined and we prayed. Miraculously, in June, the stars finally aligned and we were allowed to tour together.

Two weeks in, we were in the middle of the Arava Desert, on a small kibbutz where our huts were made of dirt and mud. There were hammocks under every tree and string lights between every building, a paradise.

That night, as we explored, we found a soccer field. Everywhere else on the kibbutz basked in the yellow of the string lights, but this field was pitch black. There was nothing but the moon and our flashlights to guide our steps. It

was the perfect place for star-tipping, an old camp tradition. You focus your gaze on a star and spin around. After about 20 rotations, someone shines a flashlight in your eyes, and you get disoriented and fall to the ground.

Someone put on some music. It was my turn: I stared straight up at a star and spun.

I felt the clock moving backward, and I was 8 years old again, giggling as my short legs tripped over themselves. I spun, and spun, and spun, and before I knew it, the Earth came and met me. I collapsed in a heap. Blood dribbled harmlessly down my leg from my reopened cut. The music drowned out our howls of laughter. But just then, a shooting star flashed by. Suddenly, unexpectedly, no one spoke. One song faded into another.

I've known these people all my life. When we're together, there's never a moment where we are not talking or laughing or crying. We're noisy by nature. Now, the silence was profound and beautiful.

I had so much to say. I wanted to cry about how much I would miss them come September. I wanted to tell them how they meant the world to me, how happy I was that we'd gotten to take this trip after all, how I wished we could stay this way for-

ever.

But I didn't have to tell them. They knew.

I looked over at my friend Eli, to see tears streaming down his face. I should have been struck at how tender my usually hard-headed friend was, but I wasn't. I was crying too. Watching the stars, so stagnant in the sky, was fascinating. The joy was so intense it caught in my throat. Soon, we would say goodbye. We live across the country — across the world — from each other. We wouldn't get to feel this comfort, this deep and extraordinary sense of belonging, until next summer.

But the stars will still be there, watching us go about our days. Watching us go to school and spend hours on homework. Watching us FaceTime and ache for the day we get to see each other again. Eventually, our little speaker died, and the clocks resumed their ticking. Laughing at ourselves, we got up, hugging and crying into each other's shoulders. We could already hear our Israeli counselors yelling at us and telling us to go to sleep. We trudged back from the soccer field and went to our rooms. I spent the next ten minutes in the bathroom, cleaning up the dried blood on my leg, and bandaging my cut.

I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD, AND I WAS WALKING TO MY NEW CABIN WITH KIDS WHO WOULD BECOME MY BEST FRIENDS.

BY ELLIOT BRAMSON

We carried our backpacks and sleeping bags, fresh off the bus and cabin announcements. I walked away from the masses of people, lugging my stuff with me and taking in the sights of North Star Camp. I was eight years old and I had spent the past eight hours on the bus with my 14-year-old cousin and his friends as we drove up from Chicago to Hayward, Wisconsin. They welcomed me to camp, but now I had to make friends with kids my age.

As I walked down the hill and entered my cabin I felt a sense of relief. The past eight hours had been full of excitement and anxiety, but now, as I saw the other kids around me smiling, I knew we were all in the same situation.

I picked a top bunk, 'Top bunks are cool,' I thought. I introduced myself to my cabin mates and unpacked my bursting duffel bags.

As I did, the fact that I would be

here for four weeks set in. Four weeks is a long time. It's long enough to make lifelong memories, and it's long enough to make friendships that keep you coming back. Two of my friends that I made that summer are named Ethan and Jack, and I'm still friends with them today.

Ethan is one of my closest friends, we didn't always get along though. I remember a day during that first year of camp when we were supposed to be cleaning our cabin, but Ethan didn't want to clean. While our counselors were gone he ran around the cabin outside knocking the broom against the walls while I yelled at him to help me clean. I was determined to stay mad at him for the rest of the day but it just wasn't worth the energy.

It's much easier to get along with people when you all have to share a room. One of my first counselors was named Sam and I remem-

ber the stories he used to tell us at night. He would pick the plot of a movie or book and tell it like it was the life story of one of the other counselors in our cabin. Of course we all believed him.

It wasn't just his stories that made him special, though. He built a relationship with me that carried through summers as I got older. Now I'm a counselor at the same camp and this summer was my ninth at North Star. Coming to camp this summer didn't feel that different than it did that first year, just now I know that I am entering a community where I know I belong. It's amazing to look back on the counselors that made an impact on me when I first came as a nervous, but excited little eight year old. I realized that I can make an impact on campers in the same way. The friendships that I made my first year are stronger than ever and will last a lifetime.

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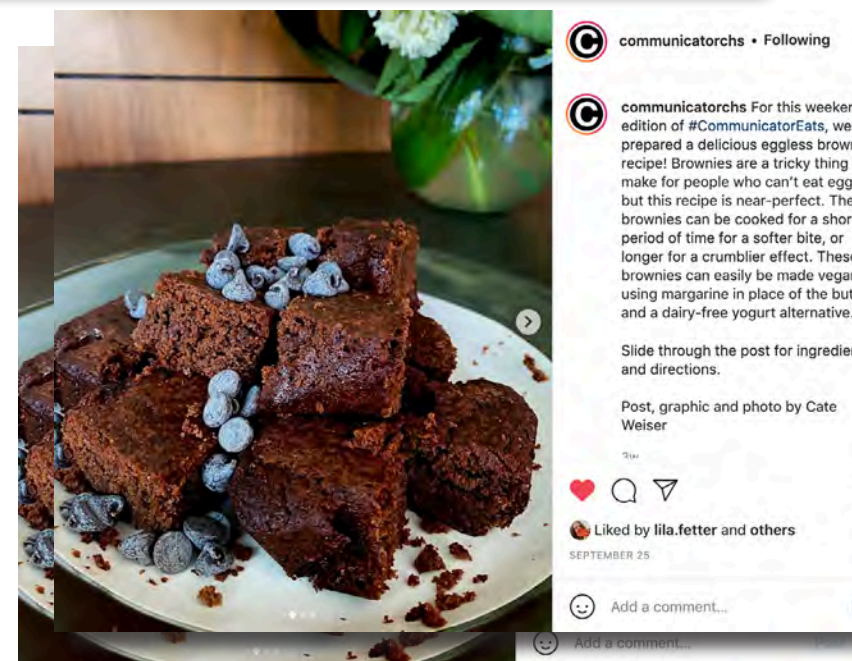
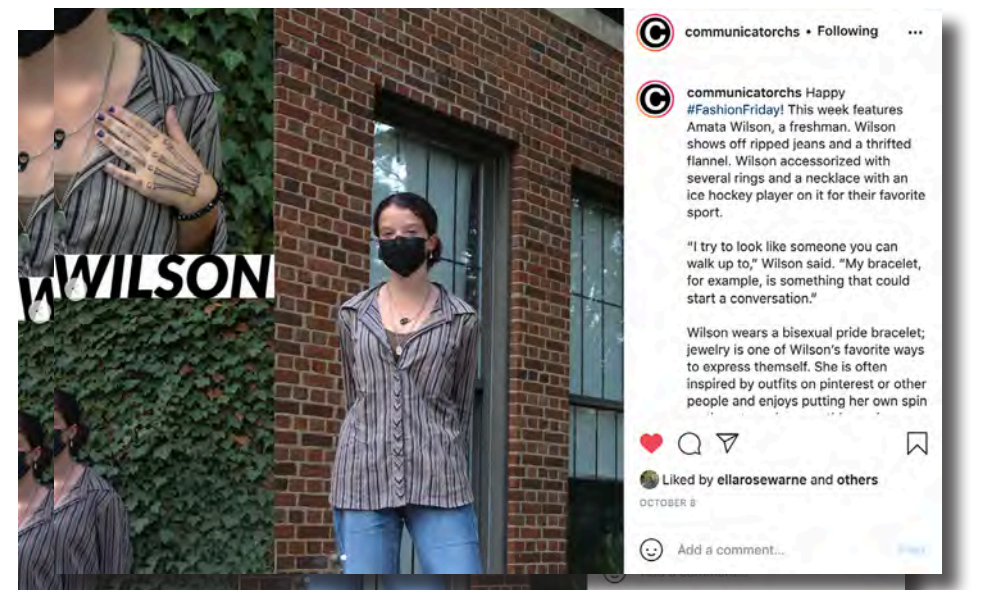
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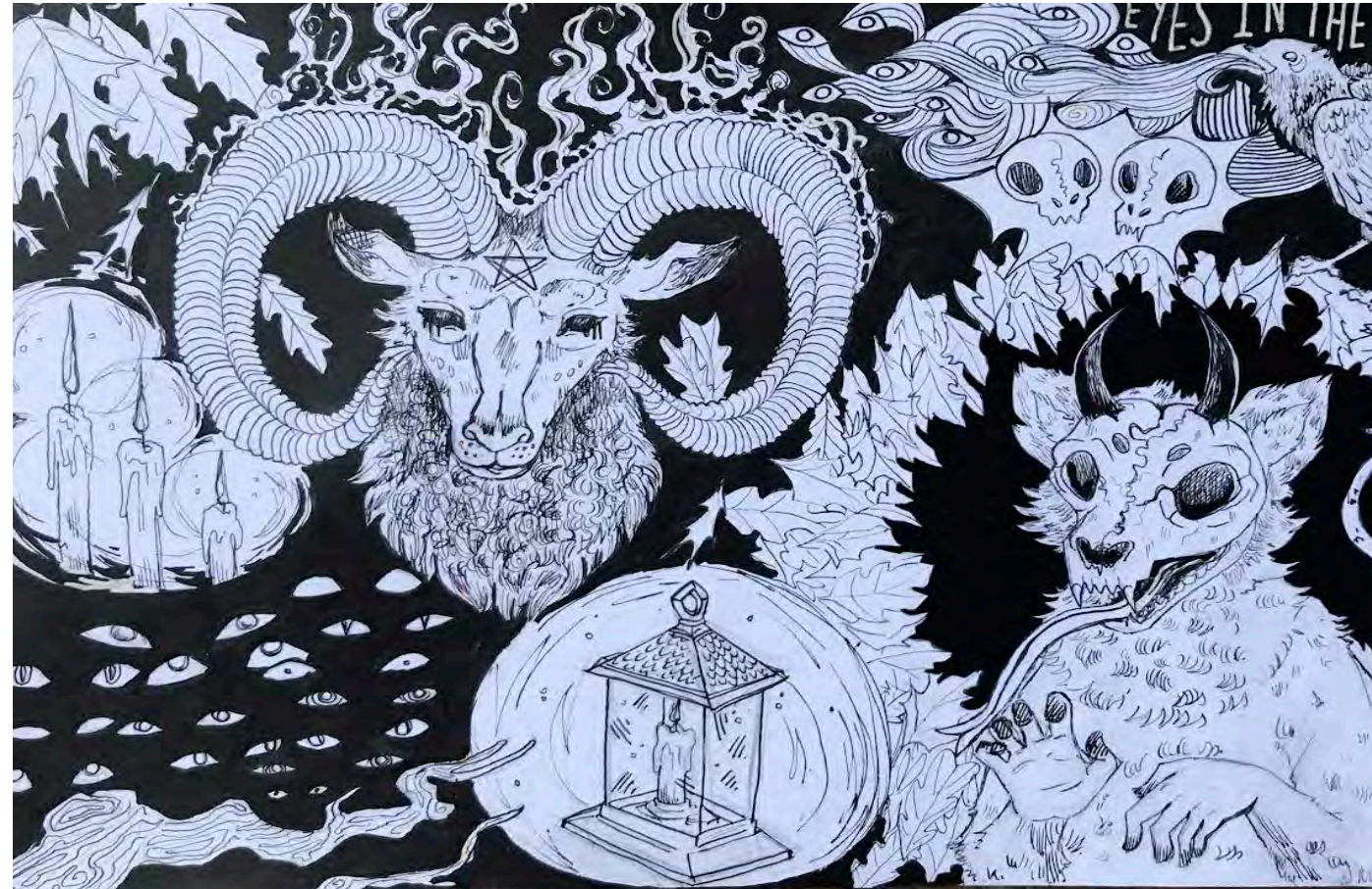
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Art in Quarantine

How did student artists use their time at home during the pandemic and how has that changed now that we are back in person?

BY POPPY MAGEE



Art has always been a way that Community High School (CHS) students have expressed themselves. Before quarantine, they walked past murals every day on their way to class. Since then, spending over a year at home had its pros and cons for most artists.

“I feel like I created art in a different way,” Alma Moga said. “Not being at school gave me the time to sit down and create bigger pieces and work on things I was less comfortable with.”

CHS students said they had more time to focus on their art and spend time by themselves.

“I started doing art that actually means something to me during the pandemic as well,” said Ryan Thomas-Palmer, a CHS junior and winner of the Michigan Art Association Contest.

Quarantine gave Thomas-Palmer the time to complete a charcoal piece that took her six months. Entitled “Dollface 1,” her piece was named after her most hated derogatory term for women.

Students have had more time to work on bigger projects and develop their skills in a way they might not have been able to in a normal school year. Creating art during the pandemic felt impactful for Thomas-Palm-

er, and helped her cope with the stresses of attending high school in 2020.

Nadia Tuzinsky recalls creating art most days—making crafts and putting more energy into filling her bedroom with art. Students needed to make their spaces comfortable because they were spending so much more time at home. Lots of artists benefited from this time at home — not just the students, but also CHS art teachers Steve Coron and Beth Portincasa.

“I talked to a lot of artists when I was at an art fair last weekend, and they all said the same thing: it gave them time to work and they were in their studio, so [quarantine] was good for them,” Coron said.

“I had more time, so I got to actually experiment, do examples for students more, do my own paintings while the kids were painting,” Portincasa said, “It was really nice. I never get that time.”

However, the pandemic didn’t have solely positive effects on artists. Similarly to attitudes about school work, motivation to create was sometimes very low. Coron noticed it was a lot harder for students to create art when they were at home all the time. Students were isolated and not able to benefit from a more structured

▲
**Photo By
Alma Moga**

Artwork that Alma Moga created to celebrate the start of October is featured. She created it shortly after returning to in-person art classes.

▶
**Photo By
Alma Moga**

Artwork that Alma Moga created near the beginning of October. She has enjoyed getting inspiration from other students at CHS.

“

They’re in a really good headspace where they’re excited to be back in the studio around kids, and they’re really getting more inspired by seeing somebody else work next to them.”

studio environment.

Although Moga could appreciate the extra space and time, she missed certain aspects of in-person art.

“I kind of lost that everyday doodling that you get when you’re in class,” Moga said. “There is a lot to be said about the inspiration that a school studio environment can bring.”

With students now moving back into a school environment, they are having to balance in-person school, extracurricular activities and making time to create what they love. Thomas-Palmer recalls being in her studio for up to seven hours a day, but now it’s more difficult to carve out time to create.

CHS has returned to fully in person classes, and students are once again walking by the murals painted by artists past. Portincasa is feeling good about the current art atmosphere at CHS.

“Kids are super creative right now,” Portincasa said. “They’re in a really good headspace where they’re excited to be back in the studio around kids, and they’re really getting more inspired by seeing somebody else work next to them.”

Although student artists benefited from more free time at home, teens and art teachers alike are happy to be back in the studio this year.



SADIE BARBER

CHS sophomore shares her most treasured possession, her favorite names and her motto.

BY ELLA ROSEWARNE

What is your idea of perfect happiness? I don't think perfect happiness exists, but genuine kindness and gratitude in general would help to achieve it. **What is your greatest fear?** Getting kidnapped. **What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?** Being judgemental. **What is the trait you most deplore in others?** Pessimism. **What is your current state of mind?** Feeling calm. **On what occasion do you lie?** If the truth can't be changed and will make someone feel bad, I would lie about it as long as it's for the best. **What do you most dislike about your appearance?** Looking too masculine or feminine in different situations. **Which living person do you most despise?** Honestly I can't think of anyone. **What is the quality you most like in a man?** Humour, positivity and kindness. **What is the quality you most like in a woman?** Being non-judgmental, humour and kindness. **Which words or phrases do you most overuse?** At the moment there's "Yo", "Bro" and "LOL." **What or who is the greatest love of your life?** Music and myself.

When and where were you happiest? At Camp Algonquian. No specific year, but that's definitely where I'm the happiest. **If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?** Either a person, a fish or a tree. **Where would you most like to live?** Somewhere in Europe. **What is your most treasured possession?** Not mine but there is a bronze lion head that hangs in my bathroom, I've always loved it. **What do you most value in your friends?** Genuine care, connection and spontaneity; you know they always will consider you, they do things to make you feel special, and you feel at home with them and can have a good time no matter what you do. **What are your favorite names?** Some of my favs are Adrian, Lennon, Jancy and Magda. **What is it that you most dislike?** French toast. **How would you like to die?** I've thought about this a lot. I want to be at a very old, happy and healthy point in my life where I know I only have so long to live so I do everything I've ever wanted to do. **What is your motto?** Carpe Diem!

►
Photo By
Ella Rosewarne

Sadie Barber spends her lunch on the front lawn. This was her first year in CHS and she is adjusting to high school.



style this:

STELLA VALENTINO

One white tank top, against Stella Valentino's closet. With almost endless possibilities, how does she make it fit her style?

BY GRACE WANG



Photo By Grace Wang

Stella Valentino looks at herself in the mirror. Her outfit, carefully curated from the thrift store, captured her retro-inspired style well. "Controlling my consumption is something that I learned over quarantine," Valentino said. "You can't buy everything that you see in the store because that is not good for the environment and it's not good for your wallet."

Stella Valentino sees a blank slate when she looks at the plain, white, Hanes tank top in front of her. She views basics as opportunities to show off the more eye-catching pieces in her wardrobe. Those eye-catching pieces consist of interesting combinations of textures, patterns and fabrics, all from the thrift store. Since eighth grade, Valentino has been avidly thrifting. She now finds that her best pieces in her closet came from the thrift store.

"I like to think that they've got a history behind them, and they're just more authentic," Valentino said. "You weren't looking for this specific thing, but you happened upon it and now, it's your favorite thing ever."

However, Valentino didn't always love what was on her hangers. When she first started thrifting, she would look for the trendiest items, or the big brand names without considering whether or not she really liked the item. She looked in her closet during quarantine, thought to herself, "this isn't me," and started to get rid of things.

"Sophomore year, my style was very much a plain tank top, jeans, maybe a belt, maybe a necklace," Valentino said. "I would match with my best friend a lot, because we would wear the same thing, and it started to get embarrassing. I was like 'This is really weird. Why are we wearing the same thing all the time?' And I realized it's because we do not have unique styles at all."

As the years have gone by, Valentino has opened her mind to more eccentric items. Quarantine allowed her to experiment and branch out more. Specifically through thrifting, she used a trial and error method: buying things that stuck out to her and then re-donat-



Photo By Grace Wang

Stella Valentino sits on a staircase, staring off into the distance. The green trees shaded her backyard on an October afternoon. "It's not fully fall yet and I think the colors in the shirt are reflective of that," Valentino said.

Photo By Grace Wang

Stella Valentino ties the laces on her shoes. From her few pairs, these are her favorite. "I don't have a lot of shoes, so I like ones that can go with a lot of things," Valentino said.



Photo By Grace Wang

Stella Valentino considers her two shirts. The white tank top is a blank slate for her creative wardrobe. "It's important that you find things that go with your closet," Valentino said. "If you don't, then you won't be able to wear (them) with anything."



ing what didn't work. She has honed in on the retro style she wears today. There is no one way to gauge someone's thrifting abilities, but Valentino considers herself to be pretty good.

"I'm always looking for something that's comfortable, but still makes me feel unique," Valentino said. "Which, I think is a big part of why I love thrifting so much because not everybody will have that thing I'm wearing. My style is not revolutionary by any means, but it's still mine."

Valentino channels her creative energy into her fashion sense. She sees it as a more accessible way to express herself, and has since middle school. Being able to present part of her personality to strangers passing by, and being able to change that perception with different clothing items is what makes her so invested in her style.

On this day, Valentino chose brown low-waisted corduroy pants and a floral patchwork button-up to go with the white tank top. Both items from the thrift store come together to make her summer to fall transition outfit.

"I don't know how I was able to find [this shirt] because it's really amazing," Valentino said. "I love it so much. Even down to the buttons, they're so pretty and beautiful. I think the pieces really mesh well together. It's not fully fall yet and I think the colors in the shirt are reflective of that."

Valentino completes her outfit by accessorizing. Over her three base necklaces that she rarely removes, she adds an adjustable double-chain and human shaped dangle earrings. Both additions are silver, her preferred jewelry color.



Photo By Grace Wang

Stella Valentino holds her hand near her necklaces. She accessorizes to make her outfits feel more personal. "It's an easy and quick way for people to identify who you are and what interests you," Valentino said.



Looking for more? Scan this QR code to see Stella style this tank top on The Communicator Instagram! @communicatorchs

Reviews



Dear Evan Hansen

A musical drama reflecting on how mental health is portrayed in the film industry.

BY MCKENNA DUMAN

“Dear Evan Hansen,” directed by Stephen Chbosky, came into theaters on Sept. 24, 2021, based on the musical written by Val Emmich, Steven Levenson, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul.

“Dear Evan Hansen” is a musical about a troubled high school student, Evan Hansen, who struggles with social anxiety disorder. As an assignment from his therapist, Evan writes a letter to himself every day, starting with “Dear Evan Hansen...” This method is meant to help Evan cope with anxiety and depression. One day, he prints out his letter in the library and another

student, Connor Murphy, takes it. Connor then commits suicide, and the only thing found in his pocket is the letter that Evan wrote to himself.

With only this letter left with him, his parents are convinced that Connor wrote the letter for Evan, since they didn’t know Connor had any friends. Things escalate very quickly and Evan ends up lying and creating a fantasy of a friendship and who Connor was. Evan begins receiving special treatment from Connor’s parents and sister and other members of the community. These lies catch up with him, caus-

ing a lot of pain for him and for his loved ones.

Starring Ben Platt as Evan Hansen, Kaitlyn Dever as Zoe Murphy, and Colton Ryan as Connor Murphy, Dear Evan Hansen is a movie full of heartbreak and emotion. The musical spin-off is supposed to advocate and spread awareness for mental health disorders. Though it does in some ways depict what was intended, the movie has some major flaws. It misses several of the songs performed in the Broadway show, as well as casting Ben Platt: a 28-year-old man who is playing a teenager.

▲ Despite its star-studded cast, “Dear Evan Hansen” opens to mixed reviews. It stars Ben Platt who is a 28-year-old man playing a teenager, which is at times questionable.



The Turn of the Screw

A psychological horror story about a governess in an old English manor.

BY CLAIRE STEIGELMAN

It’s October, and you know what that means: scary movie time!

“The Turn of the Screw” is a psychological horror story set in the 1920s, after World War I. Ann, played by Michelle Dockery, is a young woman just starting out in the world hoping to be a governess. She is employed by a seemingly prominent Londoner to take care of his late brother’s children, whom he wants nothing to do with. His creepy disposition when he interviews Ann is enough to make anyone squirm and shout at the screen “No! Don’t take the job!” but, alas, she is enchanted and goes off to his country home where the children live.

If the uncle’s behavior wasn’t enough foreshadowing of something odd going on behind the scenes, the kids are another matter. They go between proclaiming their love for the new governess and whispering behind her back in an unusually sinister way for children about elementary school age. They play tricks on her in the dark,

lichen-covered manor house and in the gardens glowing against the dreary English sky, setting an ominous overtone for the entire movie.

The servants are quiet as they scurry about performing their duties. They never make eye contact with Ann, except the housekeeper, who is in charge of the house. Despite Ann’s nearly equal position with the housekeeper, she also acts like all is well at the estate, and every odd occurrence is just a trick of the mind.

All seems to be going as well as it can until the apparition of a man begins to appear on the estate where only women are present, with the exception of the nephew. Another figure begins to appear as well. There are whispers in rooms when there’s no one there. The unexpected secrets of the past are revealed as the mysterious figures zero in on the house and the audience. The film will keep those watching on the edge of their couches, hiding under blankets and pillows and questioning Ann’s choices.

▲ Available for streaming on Apple TV, Amazon Prime, Tubi and YouTube TV.

THE MUSTLIST

A series of must-watch movies ranging from family classics to intense drama.

BY OLIVER LETE-STRAKA

Fantastic Mr. Fox



The Princess Bride



Spirited Away



Whiplash



Dickinson

With openly queer love stories and brilliant actors, "Dickinson" is a work of art.

BY RIA LOWENSCHUSS

Emily Dickinson: a poet, a queer icon, one of the most important American literature figures ever. She was all of these things, to be sure. But she was also just a woman, with fears, desires, and wishes like everyone else.

Alena Smith's and Apple TV's "Dickinson," named for the poet, is a gorgeous imagining of the life of a young woman poet growing up in 19th century America. Emily Dickinson is played by Academy Award nominee Hailee Steinfeld, whose

emotional rendition of Dickinson's words and relationships will stop your heart in its chest.

"Dickinson" differs from other period pieces in many ways; it is a truly hilarious comedy, featuring songs by artists like Lizzo and Mitski, and well-known guest stars such as John Mulaney and Wiz Khalifa. But in its essence, the true genius of "Dickinson" is its portrayal of Emily Dickinson's love for Sue Gilbert (played by Ella Hunt).

Not often does one see accurate



queer representation in media, let alone in historical media. But "Dickinson" not only has queer representation, it is based on a true queer love story. Emily Dickinson and Sue Gilbert's romantic relationship has been heavily documented through poems and letters, which truly shines through in Sue and Emily's on-screen relationship.

"Dickinson," at its heart, is a love letter to Emily Dickinson and all of the queer women that have come after her.

▲ *Dickinson is available for streaming on Apple TV.*

▼ *The OA is available for streaming on Netflix.*

All there really is to say is this: if you like weird, you'll love "The OA."

The Netflix Original series centers around Prairie Johnson, a girl from small-town Michigan played by show co-creator Brit Marling. In the first episode, Prairie returns home after escaping from a mysterious seven-year kidnapping, calling herself the titular 'OA'. When she was taken, she was blind: by the time she comes home, she can see.

While any more detail would be a giveaway — this is a show where the less you know, the better— from there, the plot escalates immediately and drastically. The show's creators never underestimate their audience's intelligence, and guessing at the plot is a game of hide-and-seek in the dark: whatever you think you will find, you are wrong. Specifically designed to keep viewers off balance, the show is a delight of red herrings and genre switches, weaving together threads of suspenseful drama, futuristic science and imaginings of

Native American myth as it goes.

The originality of this show, though, lies not just in its content, but in its emotional intensity. Though so much media is slathered in a thick layer of ironic detachment, "The OA" is an unabashedly earnest novelty. It wears its heart on its sleeve, handling serious topics with a completely straight face; in emotionally heavy scenes, the characters gaze straight into the camera, refusing to look away. It's impossible to remain detached from what you are seeing— you can't help but get involved.

On the flip side, because of the intense nature of the show, it's hard to be a casual watcher: if you're in, you're all in, for all the plot twists, six-fold storylines and interdimensional interpretive dance — no, really — that the show has to offer.

Take a wholehearted leap of faith into the weird, the mind-bending and the unknown, and you will be rewarded with what is perhaps the most unique show on television to date.



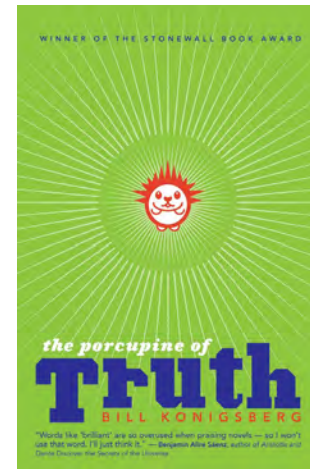
The OA

Cerebral sci-fi mystery "The OA" leaves its audience stunned with countless questions, in the best possible ways.

BY RITA IONIDES

Book Reviews

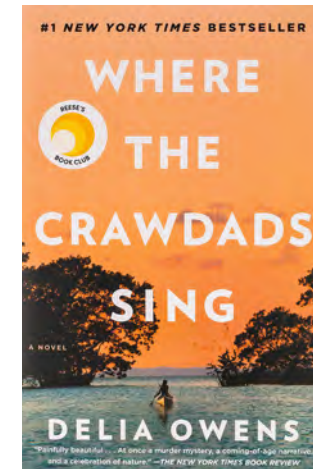
BY RIA LOWENSCHUSS



A Porcupine of Truth

BY BILL KONIGSBERG

An epic road trip that explores the aftermath of the AIDS crisis and how it has affected those generations later.



Where the Crawdads Sing

BY DELIA OWENS

Kya has grown up in the marshes of North Carolina, abandoned by her family. When a man from town is found dead, suspicion immediately falls on her.



The Smell of Other People's Houses

BY BONNIE-SUE HITCHCOCK

The adventures of being a teenager in Alaska are quite different from those in other places.



Clap When You Land

BY ELIZABETH ACEVEDO

This book tells the story of half-sisters Camino and Yahira, brought together by the death of their father.

Abby Frank first read "Walk Two Moons" by Sharon Creech when she was ten years old. It was the end of elementary school and she was struggling with anxiety that she didn't know how to handle. She was homeschooled during this time, and her mother gave her the book as an English assignment. Little did Frank know that it would change her life.

In "Walk Two Moons," the main character goes on a journey to visit her mother's grave before her mother's birthday passes. The book details how the girl is able to process her mother's death; in the story, the reader is not aware her mother is dead until you reach the end, as she herself cannot accept it. Although the book's themes focus on loss and grief, it helped refine Frank's perspective of her own life.

"[The book] helped me realize that there are more important things in life than the little [things]," Frank said. "But it also taught me to cherish small moments and the importance of family, which was something I was struggling with at the time."

Frank's strongest memory of "Walk Two Moons" is of a scene with the main character and her mother. In the scene, the mother eats blackberries, which stain her lips purple, and kisses the bark of her favorite tree. She leaves an imprint of her purple lips on the tree, creating a mark on her small world.

"[The scene] reminds me of our fleeting mark on the world and the beautiful little things in life," Frank said.

This scene has stuck with Frank since she first read the book, inspiring her to write poetry.

When Frank is hit by anxiety or a particularly bad day, she takes time to read "Walk Two Moons" again. It allows her to step back and think about how she views the things around her: school and family, death and life.

"I remind myself that I have a beautiful life and even though things are hard sometimes, I still have all these wonderful little moments to cherish," Frank said. "And that's something I hope I can continue to see in the future because of this book."

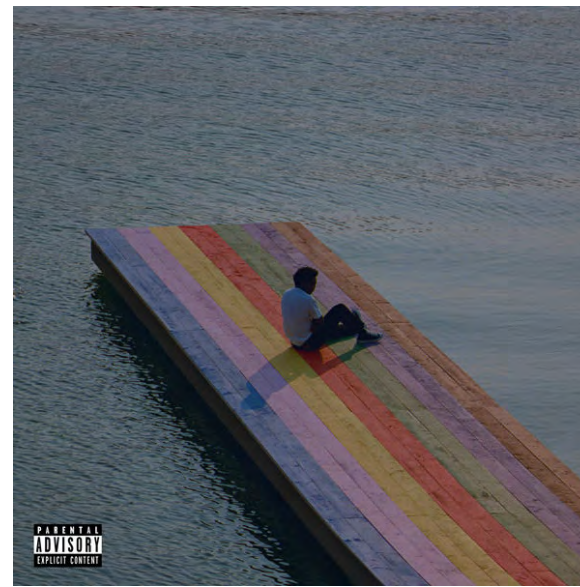


"I remind myself I still have all these little moments to cherish ...something I hope I can continue to see in the future because of this book."

OUT LOUD

Three things to hear now.

BY HENRY MONTE-SANO, LEWIS PERRY AND MIA WOOD



“THE MELODIC BLUE” BABY KEEM

Who is Baby Keem? As I listened to his unique, at-times-shouty voice on his debut studio album, “The Melodic Blue,” it felt like neither of us knew.

This album hit new highs for Keem musically, but fell short of his previous album’s character and consistency.

Baby Keem is not afraid to change things up, which he lets us know early on, executing a seamless beat switch on the first track of the album, “trademark usa.” Keem performs no less than four throughout the album — an impressive feat. This loose style is classic Baby Keem, and these moments are the high points of the album.

Along with beat switches, Keem uses a broad range of instruments to keep the listener interested. On “range brothers,” Keem uses a futuristic synth followed closely by an orchestral arrangement complete with low, sweeping cellos and a fast paced violin loop. His production acumen ensures each song feels unique. While this makes his music engaging, it causes the album to feel more like a compilation than a single work of art.

Consequently, this feels like Baby Keem’s most inconsistent work to date. From song to song he switches from shouting his successes to lamenting a breakup, and it feels incongruous. Some artists use a switch in themes to illustrate a character development. Sadly, Keem does not reach those heights.

Baby Keem is not trying to say anything with his albums, and that’s okay. He is making music for fun and as a result, his songs are energetic, entertaining and youthful. But it’s also what’ll hold him back from superstardom.

If Baby Keem wants to ascend to the next level of artistry, he will have to make more inspired work. Until then, we can dance along as he shouts his way through life.



“DONDA” KANYE WEST

Upon immense anticipation leading up to its release, Kanye West finally dropped his 10th studio album, “Donda,” named after his passed mother. The album contains 27 tracks, with a total running time of just under 110 minutes.

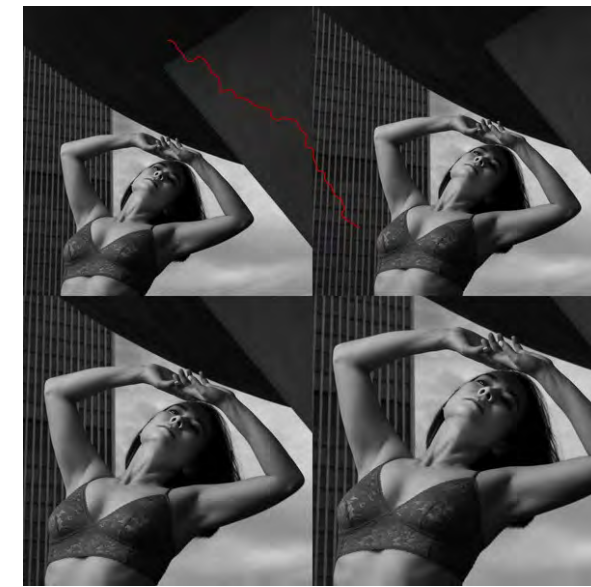
This album provides tones of euphoric lyricism combined with new-age rap. With an array of features throughout, no track sounds the same. This album allows the listener to feel as if they are transcending into outer space in songs like “Moon,” while also incorporating gospel themes in songs like “Come to Life.”

West, along with artists Playboi Carti and Fivio Foreign, teamed up to make an uptempo fourth track, “Off the Grid.” The collaboration with Carti excited many fans as West and Carti have seemed to gain unmatched chemistry following the release of Carti’s album, “Whole Lotta Red,” in late 2020 which West executive-produced.

“Off the Grid” keeps high energy throughout; the three artists keep their flows sparse as the drill-inspired beat progresses with thumping 808s and a sample that gives off a haunting suspicion.

On the fifth track, “Hurricane,” R&B singer The Weeknd creates a blissful chorus that surprisingly compliments rap artist, Lil Baby, on the opening verse. Lines like “thousand miles from shore, I can float on water,” fit perfectly with The Weeknd’s melodic voice and make the track one of a kind.

Donda’s cohesive list of tracks blended with countless different sounds makes this a phenomenal listening experience. This album holds its own in West’s elite discography and lives up to the praise many people were giving it before and after its release.



“WORKING FOR THE KNIFE” MITSKI

On Oct. 5, 2021, Mitski released her first single in two years, “Working for the Knife,” an upbeat and haunting song. This new track highlights the desire that she has to make something beautiful and pure which ends up being overshadowed by the harsh realities of life.

In her single, Mitski sings, “I always knew the world moves on, I just didn’t know it would go without me.” These lyrics allude to her time away from the public eye. In 2019, Mitski announced that she would be taking time off from social media and performing. She needed to give herself time to refuel so she could continue making music that she is passionate about. After years of silence, Mitski returned to social media in Oct. of 2021 to announce that she would be releasing a new single to much excitement and anticipation from fans.

The titular lyrics “working for the knife” are repeated many times throughout the song. It is a metaphor for the oppressive standards and expectations within society. The lyrics in the song also represent the successes and failures of Mitski’s career.

“I cry at the start of every movie, I guess ‘cause I wish I was making things too, but I’m working for the knife.” The knife is stopping her from using her ability to make things that she can be passionate about, but she uses this pain as inspiration for many of her songs.

She ends the song with, “I start the day living and end with the truth, that I’m dying for the knife.” This could be interpreted that Mitski, as an artist, is making things that appeal to the public instead of making something that she can enjoy.

Although “Working for the Knife” is on the sadder side, it is also open, honest and relatable: Mitski’s signature in all of her music.

BEE WHALER

BY LUCY CASSELL-KELLEY



When asked how to describe his art, Bee Whaler, a freshman at Community High, can only think of two words that successfully describe it: unique and extravagant. With each line drawn and paint brushed onto the canvas, Whaler is able to give the viewer a look into himself.

“With every artist I see, I always see them in [their art]. I can just tell it was made by that person,” Whaler said. “And I think when people look at my art— when I look at it— it’s kind of the same way.”

Whaler was introduced to art at a young age. With an aunt in the art field, he has always felt the influence of artists and creativity in his life. By the time he was 10, he already knew he was interested in pursuing a career in visual arts. As he reached middle school, he was exposed to even more artists through social media — people creating in studios and the world of digital art. His dream of being an artist was further cemented.

Creativity and artistry comes

from all directions in Whaler’s life, filling his social media feeds and TV screen with new inspiration. Whaler is able to create several different styles of art, using his work to convey different facets of his personality and emotions.

“For me, I think traditional art is [for] when I want to be more experimental and messy,” Whaler said. “Whereas [with] digital art, I know I’m [going to be] a bit neater and more contained with my art.”

One of Whaler’s favorite pieces is a digital artwork of his character Atlas (pictured above). The cool colors and use of movement within the artwork create a sense of peacefulness. This piece is one of Whaler’s first attempts at digital art. The world of digital art has given Whaler new opportunities as well as new challenges.

“Digital art, for me, is very difficult because it doesn’t feel the same as traditional art. It’s super new. Traditional [art] I’ve been working on all my life because that’s just what I was handed as a

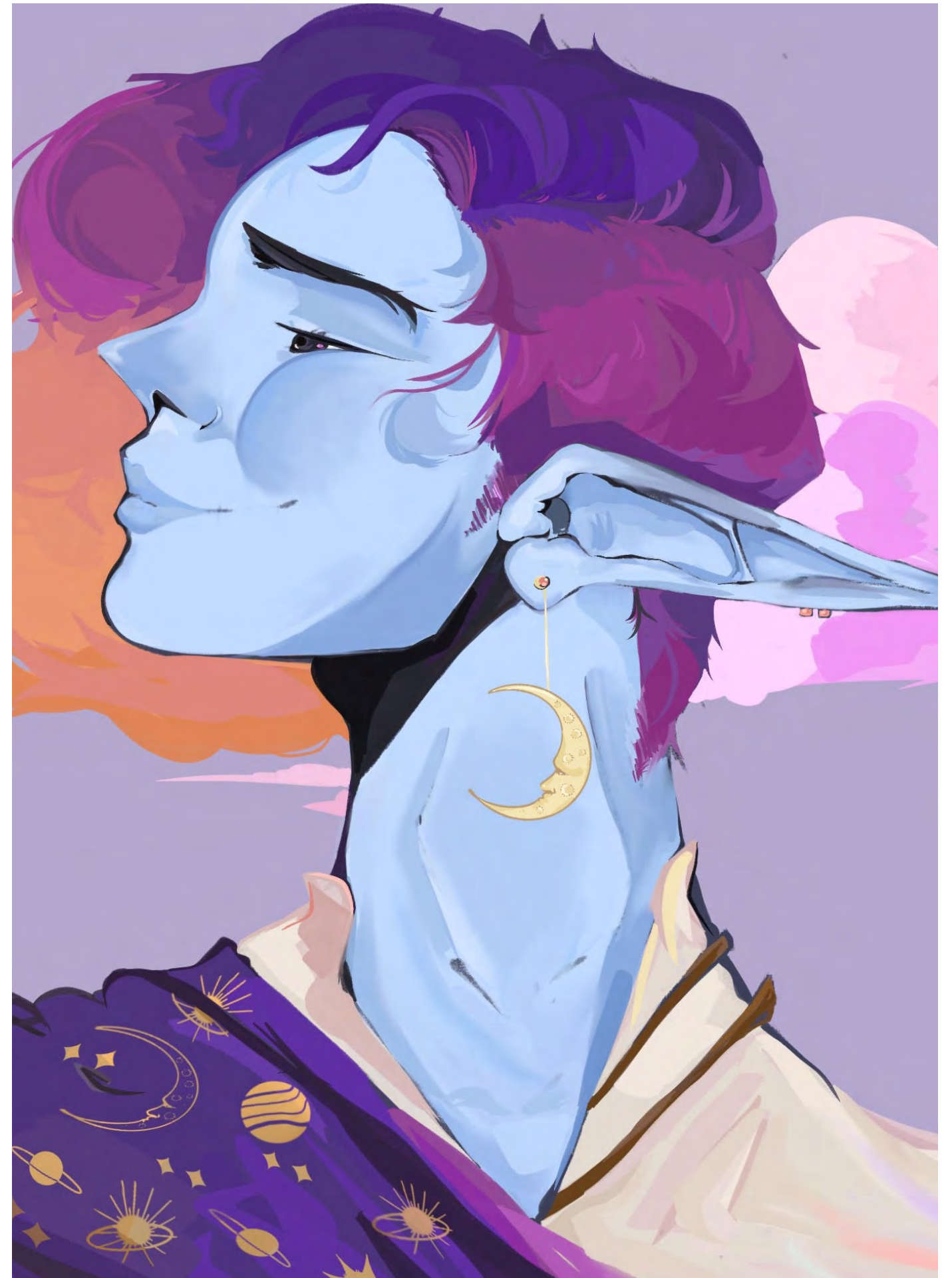
little kid. And so to finally try digital, it’s just such a different experience that I had to relearn the media. So, with that piece, I’m not only proud of how the techniques I used and are shown in that but, I also really wanted to make a piece with my favorite character, Atlas.”

Art has always been a consistency in Whaler’s life — whether stressed or overwhelmed, creating it has been an outlet to express that struggle.

“[Art] provides a space for me to kind of release what’s been in my head for so long. It lets me put down the ideas and share with people what I see,” Whaler said. “It’s just a secure place to go when I’m not feeling that great.”

Art has provided Whaler more than just a safe space: it has given him a vent to share his ideas with the world.

“Part of the whole reason I do art is because I want to share my stories and the way I see the world,” Whaler said. “I just want to show everyone what I see.”



WHAT'S THE LAST THING YOU LEARNED?

Being young is really fun. Now that we're older I feel like we have this expectation to be mature and responsible and so fun kinda flies out the window.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID SOMETHING FUN?

Just now probably. Laughing really hard.

WHAT'S THE LAST THING YOU HEARD IN THE HALLWAY?

Don't grow up too fast.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME SOMEONE GAVE YOU A HUG?

At lunch. It was a big friend group hug.

WHAT'S THE LAST SHOW YOU WATCHED?

I'm watching "Madam Secretary." I watched that last night.

WHAT'S THE LAST THING YOU SAID TO YOUR FAMILY?

I'm coming home I promise.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID SOMETHING FUN WITH FRIENDS?

I went and saw a movie this weekend. We didn't watch it but we sat in the back and we were talking and having fun.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WENT OUTSIDE OF ANN ARBOR?

I went to my grandparent's house last weekend in Bloomfield.

marissa andoni-savas

BY IVY PROCHASKA

one

last thing



1,000 Words

BY CHRISSY KUIPER

"Knowing I'm dealing with [mental illnesses] that not everyone else is dealing with, except a lot of teenagers, make me feel strong," Eva Hannibal said. "It also makes me feel like I'm not alone since this is such a common thing for kids our age. I can be pretty fragile sometimes. I think even my friends have noticed that they need to be gentle with me. It's important people are respectful and treat me like a normal person. I don't want to be

treated like a baby, but I also need people to recognize that sometimes I am more sensitive. When I don't want to talk to anyone, if I'm just not in the mood, I write down things just for me. It's a personal way to reflect. I don't read what I write [most] of the time, and I don't like to look back on it. It's just an in-the-moment thing to get it out. Overall, I think reaching out for help is terrifying. But in the long run it's really important."



LEILA DURRIE

GRADE: Freshman

QUESTION: Who is your inspiration?

"I would say one of my greatest inspirations is my mom. Ever since I was little, she has always been really passionate about social justice. She's an activist, and she does so much work for our community. I really respect her for [the work she does] and I want to be doing that wherever I live when I grow up.

We went to this march for women's reproductive rights last weekend, and she led some of the chants when we were walking. I was just like, 'Wow, she is so cool.'

She's a therapist so she is really good at talking about things and I can go to her if I need advice on drama or anything. She really helps me out a lot and helps me be a better person and a better friend.

Of course, she's my mom, so we definitely have some arguments and difficulties. But in the end I'm just really glad that this is my parent and that I have such a great mom and family."



ALANA EISMAN

GRADE: Sophomore

QUESTION: What are your future goals?

"So my goal is to, in the future, be in the medical field, specifically in pediatrics. For me, just the thought of helping a child or saving a child makes me happy. Because then [helping a child] brings all of the parents and adults joy in their life to see their child healthy.

What I've noticed, especially when it comes to my friends, is that I tend to always want to help out, even when it's not a good idea. I always want to help out when something's wrong. It almost feels like it's like an obligation, so I feel like if I use that to my strengths, and go and help a different family that I don't know, I think that would make me happy.

Medicine and public health in general has always interested me. I think I'm gonna go into public health for [undergrad] and then probably med school. [Med school] does take a lot of years and a lot of tests. But all that hard work is worth it."



LYDIE ROEBUCK

GRADE: Senior

QUESTION: Happiest memory?

"The happiest day of my life was definitely when [my family] got my dog Sully. We drove two and a half hours to get him, and he was one of six Golden Retriever puppies. [On the way home] we had a blanket in the back for him to sit on. I remember sitting in the back with him and just being like 'oh my god this is my new best friend.' When he got home, we were running around our house. It was just pure joy.

[My family] wanted a dog for a long time. Both my parents grew up with dogs since they were kids. I think my family's super big on pets. Growing up with a dog from a young age is something that really shapes you.

[Sully] kept me really happy during some really hard times like quarantine and online schooling just by being a dog. It's nice to be able to talk to someone and not always get feedback. Sometimes just having someone that will just listen and not really give an opinion is nice. [The day we got him is] a day that I won't forget."



SOFI MARANDA

GRADE: Junior

QUESTION: What brings you joy?

"I have been loving reading a lot. Actually, I've always liked it, but recently it's even better. [During] freshman year and the beginning of the pandemic, I didn't read a ton because I was busy with other things, and the books weren't as engaging to me.

Reading has just always been a part of my life. There's always been tons of books on bookshelves in my house. When I was little, I would go hide in the bathroom, and read on the floor. I could see other worlds and experience other lives. I feel like that's still true for me. I always liked seeing people that I can resonate with and I still enjoy seeing entirely different fantasy worlds. It definitely brings me a connection, through exchanging book recommendations with friends, or talking through plots with my parents, or just seeing other experiences and ways of life through the books."

PUMPKIN PIE

BY SANA SCHADEN

My mom's pumpkin pie recipe has been a part of my family for longer than I have. Since I was little, the dish has appeared every year at Thanksgiving. She has spent years tweaking the recipe to achieve the perfect consistency and flavor balance. Pumpkin pie is a staple at nearly every Thanksgiving feast, but growing up it was much more than a dessert. My mom spent hours teaching me to create the dish with great precision. Our shared love of baking became a mother-daughter bonding experience. After years of playing sous chef, I was finally ready to take on the responsibility of making the pie for our family at Thanksgiving every year.

Ingredients

For filling:

15 ounces of canned pumpkin or baked, pie pumpkin

2 eggs at room temperature
12 ounces (1 can) evaporated milk
¼ cup of white granulated sugar
¼ cup of brown sugar
¼ cup of honey
3 TBSP of sour cream
¼ TSP of salt
1 ½ TSP cinnamon
1 TSP ground ginger
½ TSP ground cloves
½ TSP nutmeg
¼ TSP allspice

For crust:

2 pie dough rounds (made from scratch or store bought)

For egg wash:

Egg white only, in a small bowl

Directions

1) Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

2) Combine filling ingredients until blended.

3) Roll out one pie crust into a circle and place in a pie plate. Cut excess crust to the edge of the plate. Use a fork to score the edge of the crust, and roll other pie crust and cut out leaf shapes for pie edges.

4) Pour the filling into the prepared pie plate. Next, brush egg white on scored edges of crust and decorate with leaf pieces. Make sure to brush the egg white between pieces where they touch. Keep three to four leaf cut outs aside for the middle of the pie.

5) The following bake times may vary depending on the oven. Bake for eight mins while preparing the foil cover for pie edges. Take the pie out of the oven carefully so the filling doesn't spill as it will still be runny.

6) Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees. Cover the pie crust edges with prepared foil.

7) Bake for another 14 minutes and remove from the oven to place middle pieces on the pie as desired.

8) Bake for another 18 minutes or until the tester comes out clean in the center of the pie.

9) Allow the pie to cool on the rack. Serve at room temperature with lightly sweetened whipped cream!



CRAVE

Quesadillas and Guac

BY RUTH SHIKANOV

Originating in Mexico, quesadillas are appreciated by many different cultures. There are variations of the quesadilla such as the “pizzadilla”, the dessert quesadilla. The original quesadilla consists of a corn masa and filled with oaxaca cheese, which has a texture similar to string cheese.



Ingredients

Quesadillas:
8 in. Flour tortillas, uncooked
1/4 - 1/2 cup Grated cheese

Guacamole:
3 ripe avocados
1/2 cup of onion
1/2 a lime
A bunch of cilantro, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
2-3 roma tomatoes, diced
As much tabasco you want!

Directions

Quesadillas are a dinner staple in my family and do not take very long to make. My family tends to have a strenuous work schedule, but we vitalize eating together because it's the only time when we can be in each other's company. We use Supremo Queso Chihuahua cheese and uncooked flour tortillas. Along with our quesadillas, we make guacamole. Authentic guacamole calls for avocados, cilantro, onion, jalapeno, lime juice, tomatoes, and salt.

Grab your pan and turn the heat to medium. Place your tortilla and wait for it to cook. After both sides are cooked, place your shredded cheese. Once the cheese is melted, place the tortillas onto a plate, cut them into triangles, and enjoy!

Our Turn

How does it feel to be returning to school in-person?

BY CATE WEISER

“I was back in school for the hybrid program last year, but I only got a few weeks back. At the end of this summer, I was kind of nervous to come back because I was so used to online school that I wasn't sure if I wanted to change. It's been really good, though. There's a lot of things that I missed that I didn't really realize I missed. Being able to joke around with my friends in the hallway, or even being able to just see people. Last year, my friend circle was closed off to whoever was in my classes, but now I get to see new people and form relationships with them even if I don't have classes with them.”

AIDAN HSIA



FELICITY ROSA-DAVIES

“This school year is my first time back in person since March of 2020. One unexpected thing is how normal being in person has become again. I remember feeling like online was the norm, even though it was uncomfortable. I'd always think about what I'd give to be back in person, walking around the halls, doing normal things. I thought, 'When we go back in person, I'm never going to take the little things for granted. I'm going to soak up each day and really enjoy being there.' I can already feel myself starting to get used to being back. It's weird to think about how we're already starting to take something for granted that we were hoping would happen for so long.”



RUTH SHIKANOV

“I felt like a freshman on the first day. I felt like I had to know things, but I felt clueless instead. I'm trying to get into the flow of Community and start to feel like a part of it. Being productive and feeling like a part of a group is helping. Upperclassmen have been helping start group initiatives, and they make me feel heard. They always ask my opinions. Last year, I was way too shy to talk to any upperclassmen. I've been trying to branch out more and ask questions when I need help. In journalism, my editing family is really helping with that. Other upperclassmen in my other classes have been too.”



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