

The Tower

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PHS welcomes first foreign exchange students since 2019



photo courtesy: Risa Sakakibara

Students from Izumigaoka and Princeton High School take a photo together in front of the Tower.

Claire Tang, NEWS & FEATURES STAFF
Chloe Zhao, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Throughout the month of October, foreign exchange students from Izumigaoka High School in Japan and Lycee Bartholdi in France arrived on PHS' campus as a part of PHS' foreign exchange program for the first time since 2019. There, they were greeted by PHS Japanese and French language students, who hosted them for a week.

Both groups had the opportunity to observe classes in various subjects at PHS, including Studio Art and U.S. History. Through these foreign exchange programs organized by the PHS language department, PHS and Princeton's sister cities could exchange lifestyles and study at overseas high schools.

"Such initiatives play a crucial role in promoting international cooperation, understanding, and friendship among students from different parts of the world," said PHS Japanese teacher Risa Sakakibara, one of the facilitators of the program. "It's heartening to see efforts being made to deepen the bond between the U.S. and Japan through educational and cultural exchanges."

This year marks the foreign exchange program's 35th anniversary. The program began in 1989 during a PHS Choir trip to Colmar, where former PHS French teacher Bernard Ponsan connected with the French high school Lycée Bartholdi, inviting their French students to visit PHS. This reciprocal interaction eventually developed into an official exchange program between the two schools.

"As much as we try to maintain an immersive environment in class, [the exchange program] makes learning much more immersive because the [students] are with French people and they're in France," said Malachi Wood, a PHS French teacher and principal facilitator of the exchange program for 16 years. "A lot of [students] become more motivated. They're excited to get to know somebody on that one-on-one personal level."

The primary purpose of these programs is to provide a new experience for students in a language-learning environment. Programs where

students interact with their language in a real life challenges students while creating a unique opportunity for them to hone their speaking abilities.

"In my house, we normally speak Japanese. But in order to give the exchange student an authentic American experience, we spoke in English the entire time," said Seigo Iwata '26, a participant in the Japanese exchange program.

While in Princeton, exchange students traveled to popular locations in town with their host students, who provided them housing. Japanese exchange students took walks on Princeton University's campus.

"What they do is shadow an American kid, [seeing] what an American teenager would do. Their hosts can tell them what they're doing that day or prepare something fun for them," said Martha Hayden, a PHS Spanish teacher and facilitator of the exchange program.

During the French exchange students stay at PHS, they shadowed their host student and attended all of their classes, even participating in the host's extracurricular activities. When PHS French exchange program students leave for France in November, they will do the same at Lycee Bartoldi. An exciting itinerary awaits these PHS students, featuring famous French landmarks and museums.

"Every year, I try to do something different," said Wood. "Usually we see the Louvre, [and] the Musée d'Orsay. What I'm excited about is that we're going to see a World War II memorial, where the French and Germans faced off with trench warfare. And, we will [also] visit one of the only concentration camps that was in France."

Education aside, another big aspect of the foreign exchange programs is getting exposure to different lifestyles and cultural customs, developing lifelong connections with host families. French students dressed up to attend their first homecoming dance on October 14 along with the rest of PHS.

"My favorite part is seeing the kids get to know each other. The day that we're leaving, everybody's crying. A lot of students [develop] lifelong friends because they stay in touch [and] visit each other," said Wood. "I hope that their horizons are broadened." ■

A lot of students become motivated. They're excited to get to know somebody on that one-on-one personal level.



(Left) Lycee Bartholdi student Elona Cebey attends French 5A with PHS students (left to right) Aaryana Yenuga '24, Joyce Xu '25, Tessa Silver '26.



(Left to right) Foreign exchange facilitators Laura Francolino, Risa Sakakibara, Martha Hayden, Shwu-Fen Lin and Malachi Wood pose together for a photo.

Meet the Candidates: 2023 Princeton Public Schools Board of Education election

Matias Da Costa, STAFF WRITER
Leila Guitton, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

With the Princeton Public Schools Board of Education election taking place on Tuesday, November 7, five candidates have entered the race to fill three open seats: Beth Behrend, Adam Bierman, Eleanor Hubbard, Rene Obregon Jr., and Michele Tuck-Ponder. Current Board member Jean Durbin has decided not to run for reelection, while incumbents Behrend and Tuck-Ponder are both seeking a third term.



Beth Behrend

Having first joined the Board of Education in 2017 to tackle planning and budget challenges, Beth Behrend is running for re-election with the hope of ensuring that the district continues to offer a diverse set of programs and opportunities to all children, even amidst financial restraints.

“With a budget that’s increasingly difficult [in an inflationary environment], we need to continue to be able to offer excellent curricular and extracurricular opportunities for all students,” said Behrend. “We have over half a million dollars in deficit every year if no prices go up ... so we have to use the staff we have most effectively ... and make sure there’s enough funding [while] teaching what is required and delivering a well-rounded education.”

After six years on the Board, Behrend recognizes the importance of listening to students and parents, as well as honoring feedback and respecting different perspectives, but stresses the importance of continuing to move forward as stewards of the whole district.

“My focus is to meet the needs of the children as they come to us ... to make sure that schools are more integrated [and] that we’re not leaving anyone out ... so that all kids have what they need to reach their potential,” said Behrend. “There’s so much to be done. It’s a really exciting role and I just like to keep doing the work because it’s very meaningful and it makes such an impact on the lives of so many kids.”

“My goal is to meet the needs of the children as they come to us.”

“I want to get rid of distractions. I want to focus on education.”

Adam Bierman

Native Princetonian and PHS alum Adam Bierman ’78 is running for the Board of Education for the third time. After an unsuccessful run in the 2020 election, Bierman participated in the Board’s strategic planning process, in which he hoped to address topics like overcrowding and understaffing in Princeton Public Schools.

“We just talk[ed] about nouns and pronouns and what we wanted a PHS senior to be,” said Bierman. “Discussing metaphors and words is interesting, but how does that translate to something substantial for our vision?”

Not only does Bierman hope to tackle the issues that matter, but as a social studies teacher who’s taught abroad in both Latin America and China and locally in Mercer County, he believes that he has the experience needed to organize and implement programs proposed by the board.

“When you teach students... you have to learn how to deal with people on so many levels: emotional, educational, [and] academic,” said Bierman. “We don’t agree on everything, but we find compromises and are able to move forward.”

Electing Bierman aims to stress the importance of making sure that the district’s funding isn’t wasted in insignificant places, but is used where it matters most: education.

“I want to get rid of distractions; I want to focus on education. Money should be driven back to the classroom ... [because] the teachers, they are the front line,” Bierman said.

Eleanor Hubbard

Eleanor Hubbard, a former Princeton University assistant professor and author, is one of two new faces seeking election on the Board of Education. With the hope of bringing a teacher’s perspective to the board, Hubbard would focus on providing more academic oversight in terms of curriculum and instruction, as well as being a sensible voice for the Princeton community.

“I think we have board members who are really good at thinking about budgets and facilities ... but I don’t think that there is necessarily as much expertise in terms of thinking about curriculum and instruction, and those are issues that are very close to my heart,” said Hubbard. “I’ve taught both [at the] elementary school and college level, and I feel that that hasn’t been the focus of the Board for the past several years, and I think it’s had some unfortunate consequences.”

In addition to revising the social studies and science curriculums in elementary schools, as well as solving the issue of rising enrollments and overcrowding, Hubbard hopes to rebuild trust between parents and board members.

“There’s been a lot of drama over the last couple of years. I’ve been talking to a lot of parents and a lot of people are angry and distrustful,” said Hubbard. “I think it’s really important, if we’re going to move forward in a positive way, for the district to focus on trust rebuilding work so that we can get to a place where we can work together and move forward.”

“I think it’s really important for the district to focus on trust-rebuilding work.”

Rene Obregon

Lifelong New Jersey resident and CEO of the U.S. branch of the investment bank Numis Securities, Rene Obregon is one of the first-time candidates running for the Board of Education.

Having attended public school himself in Northern Jersey and with two sons currently enrolled at PHS, Obregon believes that good public school education is fundamental.

“I don’t think our school system is broken. I just think that there are some things that can be improved, [like for example], communication to the community,” Obregon said.

To do so, he hopes to use his background in collaboration and data analysis. Rather than using non-specific experience-based feedback, Obregon wants to introduce a data-based approach to evaluating school performance by, for instance, tracking school-wide percentages of passing grades or by zeroing in on metrics like chronic absenteeism.

“There’s a lot of flowery language. But I think [that we] need hard key performance indicators so we can measure the progress of the superintendent and of the Board and what we’re trying to do,” Obregon said.

Obregon hopes to restore trust between members of the PPS community and the Board. “There’s been a breakdown of trust, and it comes down to this communication and transparency. I think you can rebuild this trust with the students, the parents, and the taxpayers if you’re just more transparent,” Obregon said.

“I think [that we] need hard key performance indicators.”

“I want to make sure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.”

Michele Tuck-Ponder

Former Princeton Township mayor and current PPS Board member Michele Tuck-Ponder is the second candidate running for reelection this November. Tuck-Ponder first decided to run in 2017 to help provide more opportunities for disadvantaged students who may not progress to college and instead choose a different path.

“For every student, whether you want to go to an Ivy League school or become a chef, we should be thinking about how we can offer an education that is going to give the skills to be successful, no matter what it is they do,” said Tuck-Ponder. “I’m gonna stay on as long as I think I can make a difference in making sure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed, and I don’t think we’re there yet.”

As a former public housing commissioner and affordable housing board member, Tuck-Ponder commends the many new developments in the district, but sees the consequent overcrowding issue in PPS elementary and middle schools as her main priority if she is elected to a third term.

“I know about the need for affordable housing in Princeton, but we have overcrowding in three of our elementary schools [and] in our middle school. We recognize that we can’t put so much of a burden on our taxpayers that they can’t afford to stay, so it’s about being able to reach that balance and accommodate all students ... while continu[ing] to aspire to a high quality education for all,” Tuck-Ponder said.

TOWER MULTIMEDIA



PHS Talks: **Lauren Freedman** on her vision for PHS

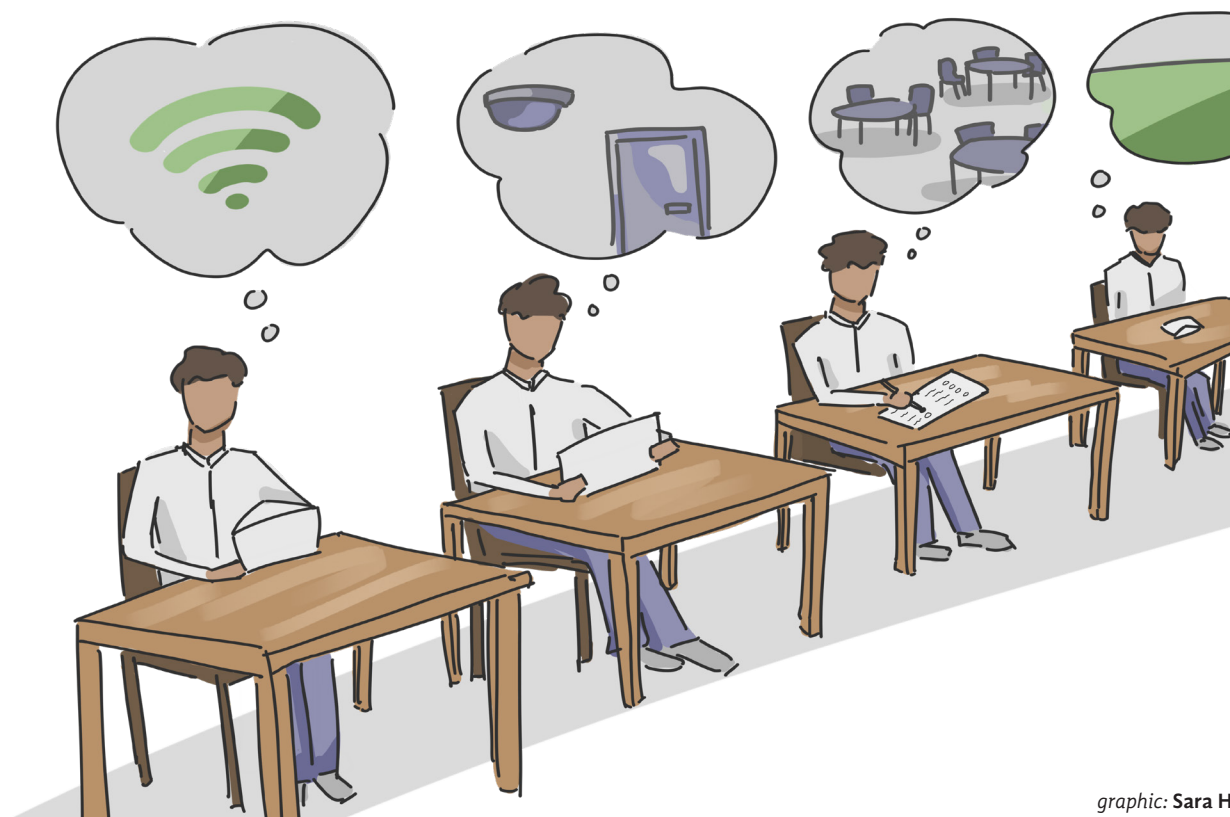
Tower Shorts: **Analyzing Acapella** – a look at the Cat’s Meow

Papercasts: Tower articles, **read aloud**

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Princeton voters to decide on 13 million dollar referendum



Hangyeol Cheong and Daniel Guo,
NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITORS

On November 7, voting will close for Princeton constituents on a 13 million-dollar referendum that will include updates to all six PPS schools and specifically renovations for PHS to accommodate its growing population. These plans include expanding the cafeteria, reapplying turf for the football field, and strengthening the Wi-Fi network, among other things.

According to the recent presentation given during the monthly BoE meeting in October, the largest budget allocation, 31.5 percent, will be toward safety and security, building upon the recently increased vigilance of administrators regarding student IDs and lanyards.

“The United States, unfortunately, seems to be the capital for school shootings. We always feel safe here because it’s a nice community, but we never know,” said PPS Business Administrator and Board Secretary Matthew Bouldin. “We are trying to be as proactive as possible.”

Updates to the school include preventative measures for a potential active shooter situation, such as vestibules

for major entryways and new security cameras all around the school. These will allow building monitors or security guards to vet everyone coming in before they enter the school, similar to the entryway at the Flagpole Entrance right now.

“[The police department] also helped us to design some of the safety features with suggestions for improvements. For example, we’re doing window films on all six schools [and] room numbers have gone up on the outside of the windows [for the police] in case of emergency at PHS,” Bouldin said.

Due to its burden on taxpayers, the proposal for a 130 million dollar referendum in 2018 experienced backlash, and the Princeton Board of Education has instead recently turned to smaller, more frequent referendums. Thus, the other renovations consist primarily of necessary, time-sensitive updates to the schools, but also include solutions for common complaints.

“For maintaining the district ... for example, the turf, they do a GMAX test every year, which measures impact attenuation — basically the sponginess of the field. You really can’t get much more than 12 years out of a turf field.

graphic: Sara Hu

“...resolving [the internet] will be a big win for productivity”

So for stuff like that, you have an idea when it needs to be redone,” said Bouldin. “We try to get feedback from all the constituents ... especially the students and teachers. For example, the students have talked about the network issues for a while along with many of the teachers as well ... it gets bogged down.”

Comprising 18.2 percent of the total budget across all the schools, planned improvements will multiply the maximum internet coverage by more than ten. The speed of the student and guest networks has been a point of frustration for many years and has consistently caused problems with standardized testing. Additionally, during class transition periods, teachers cannot access the network to prepare for their next class due to an influx of students joining the Wi-Fi network from their phones. With an upgrade, students can have more smooth-running classes regarding technology, especially if their classrooms are located at the edges of school or in high-traffic areas.

“I remember in years past how teachers, especially in the science wings, couldn’t use Canvas during class or load PowerPoints to teach. It made class pretty inefficient, but resolving that will be a big win for productivity,” said Henry Xu ’24.

Under the “Major Maintenance” portion of the referendum are plans to resurface all sports fields and renovations to the cafeteria, which will double the functional capacity of the kitchen and seating area.

“Unless you get there early, there are often hundreds of kids crammed into the two lunch lines with two cashiers frantically trying to move the bulging line. It takes forever, so I think that if passed, it will be one of the most visible changes for students,” said Kyle Zhao ’24.

In general, the majority at PHS see referendums as an opportunity to improve the school and are interested in what issues will be addressed.

“As a football player, I definitely want to see how the new turf changes things. All of the additions to the high school in recent years like the New Wing have been really cool and beneficial to students, so I hope this one passes as well,” said Joseph George ’25.

If successfully passed, the district plans on beginning construction in the summer of 2024. However, the timeline still needs to be determined due to some supply barriers. Either way, Bouldin supports the proposal but recognizes the decision is up to the taxpayers.

“Most of the workload will be done next summer. Especially the technology infrastructure upgrades, assuming we can get the network or equipment. There’s still some supply constraints in the marketplace with certain things, and that’s one of the things I’m worried about. There’s still some pretty long wait times,” said Bouldin. “We’re just trying to communicate to the population so they know how important it is. That’s basically what we try to do.” ■

PHS Profile: Kevin Vega navigates his first full year at PHS

Matias Da Costa, STAFF WRITER

On February 1, 2023, PHS office welcomed a new social studies teacher, Kevin Vega, who replaced history teacher Jeffery Lucker, who taught at PHS for over 50 years. Though the transition has been difficult, Vega has quickly become a part of the PHS community as an AP World History and Middle Eastern History teacher. In order to keep students enthusiastic about the subject, Vega tries to make a learning experience which is exciting and engaging through his teaching style.

Growing up in New Jersey, Vega completed middle school and high school in Hillsborough. One invaluable experience in his senior year of high school led him to double-major in history and secondary education at William Paterson University.

“In my senior year of high school, I had a very influential teacher called Mr. Giordano. I did an independent study with him in which I assisted him in teaching his ninth grade world history class. I fell in love with the content and teaching, and that’s what inspired me to become a teacher,” Vega said.

Vega began his career in 2017, working at New Brunswick Middle School, where he taught bilingual social studies in Spanish and English for the seventh and eighth graders. Because of his passion for traveling and experiencing different cultures, he now teaches AP World History and Middle Eastern studies at PHS.

“From Costa Rica [to] Israel, Palestine, [and] China, I’m just so intrigued by different cultures, from ancient to modern. So I’ve always found myself drawn to world history,” Vega said.

In order to avoid making the same mistakes of the past, Vega believes that learning history is fundamental to making positive change in our world, stressing the importance of analyzing the various events which have shaped our world today.

“I’m not a person who believes in the saying ‘History repeats itself.’ I am very much a proponent of history not repeating itself, but rhyming. I think it’s up to us, as people living in 2023, to look at historical aspects and historical events to see what caused things such as the ostracization of people or genocides [for example], so as to become active and engaged citizens who want to see positive change in the world,” Vega said.

Through his classes, Vega hopes that teaching his students historical events develops into important skills that they can use later in life.

“When I can spark some type of interest or further wanting to seek information in my students. I think that’s



photo: Caroline Gu

Vega explains a concept after class to Rachel Guhathakurta ’24, a former student in his AP World History class.

really what teaching is, sparking that curiosity in your students, and instilling skills that they can take not only in their history class, but across all their classes. And allowing them to move forward with critical thinking skills, writing skills, reading skills that they can apply anywhere,” Vega said.

By visiting PHS from January 23 to February 1, Vega had a few days with Lucker before his retirement. They were able to navigate the school together, sharing with each other their different teaching styles and transferring knowledge about the school and the workload.

“Ever since [Lucker] took his well-earned retirement, the students have slowly been getting used to my procedures, my expectations, my organization. And again, I don’t think one or the other is better, every teacher has their own way of doing things. And an adjustment period is always tough. But I hope that my students see that the way that I’m doing things is really for their benefit, not only in terms of the AP test, but in their academic life as well,” Vega said.

Even though Vega was given a limited time to adjust and is now only starting his first full year here, he has been able to successfully cement himself comfortably in the AP World History department.

“The transition was really nice because I was able to adapt to his teaching style really quickly, and he was able to help students on DBQ or LEQ questions depending on their needs, even if they haven’t taken AP U.S. History. He was also really good with emailing us and providing us with resources, and was overall very approachable as

a teacher,” said former AP World History student Lauren Girouard ’24.

Vega strives to keep his students informed about his class and communicates any updates in advance. He mentions that he doesn’t want to surprise his students and wants them to feel comfortable in his class.

“He’s definitely a very organized teacher. His classes are very structured and he shows us exactly what we’re doing before the period starts. I really enjoy that teaching style because...nothing is a surprise in his class. He keeps us aware and sends out reminders,” said AP World History student Cole Rose ’25.

After a few months of teaching, Vega gives his thanks to the staff, parents, and most importantly, his students, for welcoming him so graciously to PHS. Outside of school, however, Vega pursues many interests and hobbies such as theater and spending time with his pets.

“I’m very much enjoying musical theater. I like going to a lot of Broadway shows and McCarter shows in town. I really like cats. My students know that I spend a lot of time with my own cat. I also sometimes go to animal shelters and I volunteer.”

Although transitioning to a new school is difficult, Vega has managed to make students feel comfortable and is currently beginning a new school year with the experience he’s already gathered.

“All the other staff members have been so kind and generous, generous in giving me their time, giving me advice,” said Vega. “I’m very excited starting off with the new school year, like from the beginning.” ■

OPINIONS

Teaching in tune with consistency

Jane Bennett, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR

Whether it be something silly they did in class, or a test they gave within a one day's notice, teachers are a constant conversation topic at PHS. The gossip pool surrounding our teachers is so large mostly because there are so many teachers to talk about. Granted, this leads to smaller class sizes and more one-on-one teacher-student interactions, but because of the vast number of teachers teaching the same courses and subjects, grappling with varied teaching styles from year to year, subject to subject, or teacher to teacher can be jarring. Having more consistency between teachers of the same courses would ensure better communication between students, make teacher collaboration easier, and increase grading equity through a general expectation of student and teacher behavior regardless of who teaches the course.

Collaboration is an integral part of learning. The Chemistry department has consistently encouraged students to help one another on problem sets, tutor each other in his classroom, and race each other on problems. Teaching others helps to solidify the content in the minds of those who teach others. If teachers have a uniform timeline of assignments and expectations as to how students are to complete assignments, students have an easier time collaborating with

one another and teaching each other the content irrespective of who their teacher may be.

A lack of consistency among teachers of the same course can put certain students at a disadvantage in terms of what they learn and how it can apply to their future PHS classes. Very few sophomore and junior English teachers cover

the inductive writing style even though it is the only style that is used in English IV. If learning a concept early on can seriously impact how students understand it later on in other PHS classes, shouldn't that topic be taught by all teachers of that course? We would assume that uniformity in the books that classes with different teachers read would lead to an equal experience in their English classes; however, class experience is mostly dependent on how teachers choose to approach the subject rather than uniform content altogether.

Class uniformity would not only benefit students but teachers as well, as there would be greater collaboration among teachers in the same department. For example, the math department frequently collaborates on the

creation of tests, meaning that Brent Ferguson's AP Calculus BC class receives the exact same tests as Phil Reyes' class. Because both teachers were able to collaborate on creating the tests and the timeline along which they prepare students for assessments, the teaching styles are more consistent for all sections of that class. PHS

could start by requiring monthly meetings among teachers of the same course. Similarly, a shared Google Drive folder among teachers in the same department could make course materials more accessible so that assignments could be more uniform and lectures could remain the same for students across the course.

Obviously, because the school year has already started, it could be difficult to ensure that each teacher is maintaining uniformity among their peers. However, the coordination of teaching styles within the same course would greatly benefit the collaboration, comprehension, and organization of students and teachers alike in the long run. It is high time that teachers of the same course have more coordinated lesson plans in order to fix the inconsistencies in teachers' grading systems, tests, and routines. ■

“If learning a concept early on can seriously impact how students understand it... shouldn't that topic be taught by all teachers of that course?”



Taxation and the bipartisan divide

Edward Cao, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Opening up your first paycheck can be an incredibly special feeling. Although it may not ultimately be going to you to spend in one fell swoop, receiving tangible payments introduces you to the real world. However, that first shift of \$12 an hour inevitably turns into \$10 per hour after taxes. As we transition into the real world, it seems like the taxes just keep piling up, ranging from social security taxes to property taxes and even vehicle taxes. According to a 2022 study done by taxfoundation.org, the average American pays around 24 percent of earned income to taxes, though the percentage is probably higher for the average Princetonian. After all, taxes are the price we pay for a functional society, funding our government and many public services that benefit the entire population. In the U.S., we follow a progressive tax system, where individuals and households with lower incomes pay a smaller tax percentage than those with higher incomes. But wealthy individuals often don't have income in the traditional sense, and our current system of taxation propped up by our two-party system allows them to circumvent taxes.

The American system of taxing earned income disproportionately burdens income-earning working-class Americans whilst letting the wealthiest individuals and corporations who own assets off the hook. For instance, the carried interest loophole still hasn't been addressed or patched

to this day, even after both the Democratic and Republican parties had majorities in the legislative and executive branches. The loophole allows managers of certain investment funds, like private equity and venture capital funds, to pay a reduced tax rate on their income. Other legal tax avoidance technicalities include the ability to borrow against one's asset to avoid capital gains taxes, the 1031 exchange, the avoidance of estate tax using trusts, and the use of side hustles as a way of reducing one's tax liability. The truth is that these issues are so complex that many Americans have turned a blind eye because understanding them would simply take too long. Voters have short attention spans, and tax loopholes are often overlooked by social justice issues, which nowadays take up most of the stage in our current political landscape. In fact, political factors represent the most significant obstacle in implementing tax reforms.

Political parties require loads of money to be elected into power and stay in it. Funding mainly comes from wealthy constituents and mega-donors who contribute

tens of millions of dollars to campaigns. These donors often have their own special interests, mainly involving keeping tax loopholes in place, and politicians cater to their demands to gain more funds. Politicians are no longer serving the American public, but rather a handful of rich constituents.

Sometimes, these donors even hide their identities through dark money groups, preventing the general public from knowing their true intentions. The wealthy are the single greatest influence in politics, as they alone prevent most positive changes from happening due to their desire to preserve the current rules set in place that benefit them the most.

Our two-party system uniquely allows this outsider influence. It only takes corporations influencing a few politicians to create a blockade for the whole system. Our country has become increasingly polarized, and considering how narrow majorities are in Congress, just a couple of defecting senators or congressmen can derail the agenda of a whole party. Why do you think that the most prosperous industrial executives, mainly rooting from oil companies, are bipartisan donors? While they primarily support Republicans, in 2021, a \$2.2 trillion climate and social spending bill garnered increased support from both Democrats and mega-donors alike. Do these wealthy people really support both Democrats

and Republicans, even with both parties being so divided over many issues? The answer is no. They frankly don't care about any social issues or societal changes. All they need are some members from each party to be on their side to achieve their own personal goals.

Oftentimes, we are stuck choosing between the two least corrupt politicians or the politician we disagree with the least. We are reluctant to vote for any third-party candidate despite any closely aligning views, because

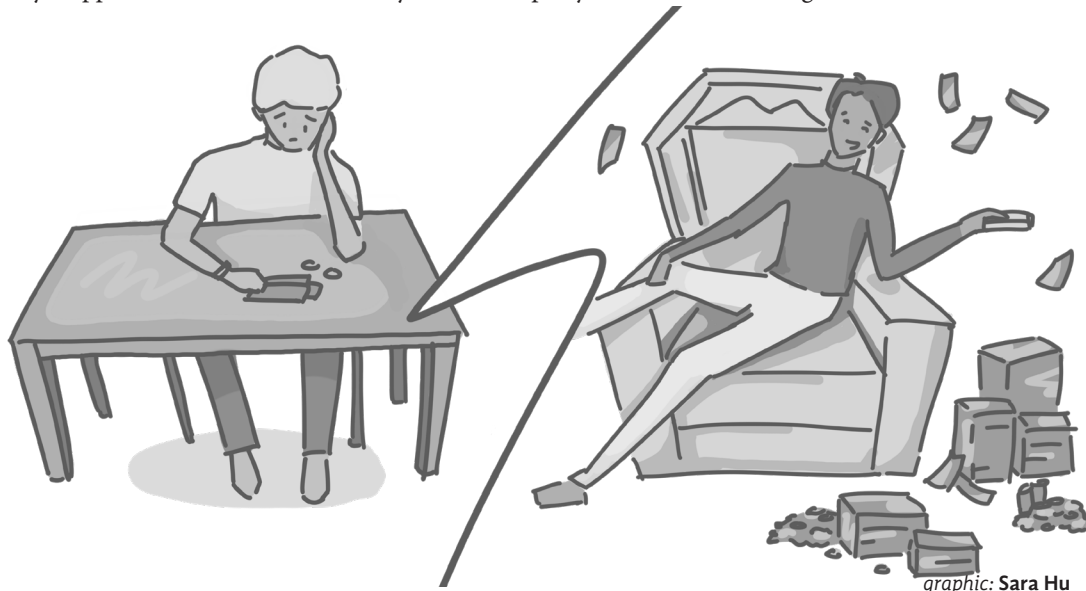
these third-party candidates have very little chances of winning, sometimes even skewing the vote in favor towards the more disliked bipartisan candidate. In a more ideal situation, the U.S. could implement ranked choice voting, forcing voters to rank multiple candidates by preference and revoting multiple times after removing the lowest-performing candidates. This way, all third-party candidates

have a greater representation in votes. However, implementing it would require support from both parties, which is near impossible given the lack of strong support from them both.

Addressing the complex issues surrounding taxation may not rely on directly electing certain politicians, but instead on dismantling our current bipartisan system, allowing for a greater spectrum of views in the political sphere. And, while we high schoolers don't have the means to initiate a change of that scale by ourselves, we can all start by taking small steps, like having conversations with the peers around us and bringing awareness to future political changes. This could be as simple as explaining what ranked choice voting is or identifying how political donors have influenced legislation. This way, when ranked choice voting is one day put as a ballot initiative, we'll all be educated enough to vote for it. ■

MATH OFFICE

graphic: Sara Hu



Book banning: a novel mistake

Tamar Assayag, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR

Contrary to popular belief, censorship is not always an illegal practice in the U.S. Despite censorship appearing to violate the First Amendment, over time, the standard for the legality of this process has changed. One of the most striking examples of this is courts legally banning certain books from being distributed in public schools, a measure initially put in place to prevent schools and educational facilities from promoting pornographic content or general obscenity. However, in recent years, many conservative politicians, parents, and community members have been pushing for book bans on stories with content they deem to be too liberal, leading to a steep increase in the amount of book bans. According to the American Library Association, book bannings in the U.S. have been on the rise since 2022, with a 38 percent increase from 2021. This narrative has become so normalized that we must shed a light on the harmfulness of banning books, especially for young, impressionable youth who deserve the right to learn about all different types of people, places, and ideas.

Banning books has been a legal practice in the U.S. since 1982, when the Supreme Court ruling in Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico stated that in public schools, book bannings can occur when books are deemed “pervasively vulgar.” However, the same court ruling also stated that school districts are forbidden from banning books “simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books,” according to the official court case syllabus on Justia U.S. Supreme Court Center. In the early years of book bannings, books such as “Catcher in the Rye” by J.D. Salinger, “The Grapes of Wrath” by John Steinbeck, and “Lord of the Flies” by William Golding were all banned, mostly for profanity and sexual content. Although these ideologies were conservative and popular in certain regions of the U.S., the book banning process was quite a rare one initially and was, for the most part, exclusive to stories with mature content.

Regardless of how this custom began, in many conservative states and communities, it has since been expanded to include virtually any book with queer themes or characters or themes of race, religion, or diversity. Conservatives have been able to get away with this movement by masking their blatant hatred, homophobia, and racism as concern for children. Last year, more than 45 percent of books challenged contained an LGBTQ+ character or were written by an LGBTQ+ author. Oftentimes, challengers claim that these stories contain sexual content, but that is seldom the case. “Drama” by Raina Telgemeier, a harmless graphic novel about a seventh grade girl who participates in her school’s drama club, has been repeatedly flagged for sexual content simply for its inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters. The book appeared on the American Library Association’s top ten most challenged books of the year five times between 2014 and 2019. Seeing seemingly

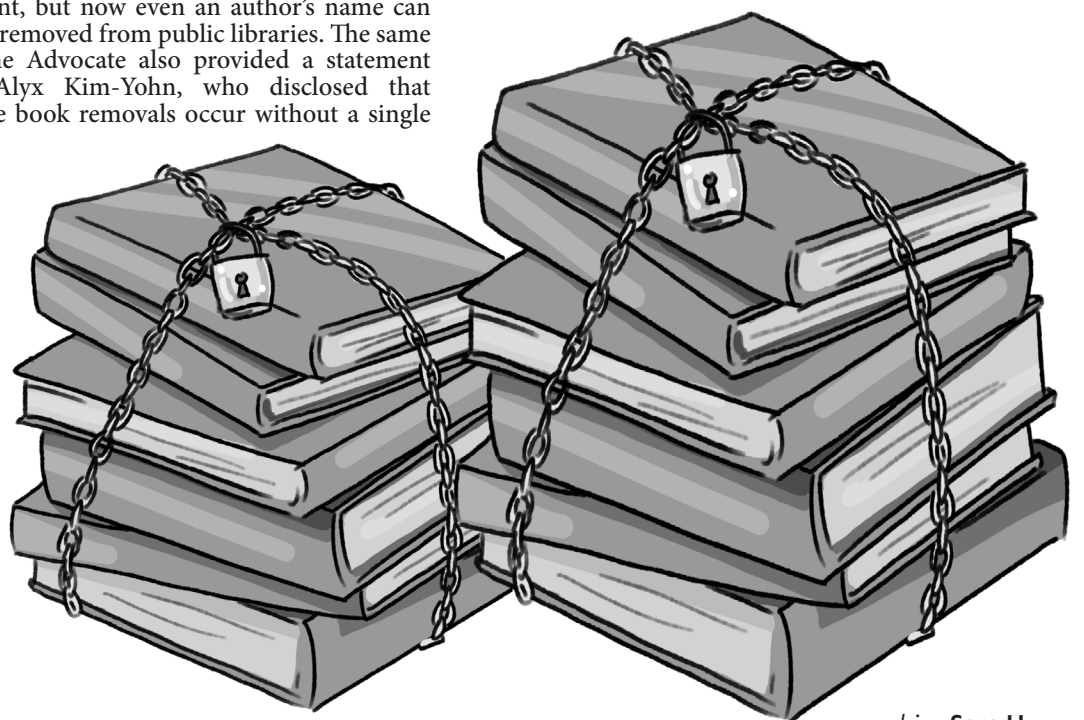
harmless books such as “Drama” being so harshly ripped apart by bigoted people, it isn’t far-fetched to presume that some, if not most of these banned books are being wrongfully judged.

Additionally, book bans disproportionately target stories with themes revolving around race and racism. An organization called PEN America reported that between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022, 40 percent of books banned had a protagonist or secondary character that was a person of color. It’s been made abundantly clear that those behind these harmful restrictions are intent on silencing minority and marginalized voices, and not on providing children with the resources they need to educate themselves and form their own opinions regarding these topics.

However, this tactic is flawed at best, and ridiculous at worst. An October 2023 report by The Advocate uncovered a story in which the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library in Madison, Alabama, added a children’s book titled “Read Me a Story, Stella” to their list of soon-to-be-removed books. The plot of the book follows a brother and sister who read stories together. Given its innocent and harmless storyline, you might be wondering what could have possibly led this book to be flagged as containing sexually explicit material. Turns out, the only reason for the restriction on this book was that the book author’s name was Marie-Louise Gay. Not only are people targeting books with actual LGBTQ+ content, but now even an author’s name can get their stories removed from public libraries. The same report from The Advocate also provided a statement from author Alyx Kim-Yohn, who disclosed that oftentimes these book removals occur without a single

complaint and without a further review of the content.

Fortunately, those pushing tirelessly in favor of book bans are the loud minority. In fact, over 70 percent of voters oppose removing books from public libraries, according to a 2022 poll by the American Library Association. In the past few years, the counteractive “reading banned books” movement has gained just as much attraction as the book banning movement. Popular YouTubers and bloggers have resisted the book bans by purposefully reading banned books, and letting their audience know that they should too. Even famous authors such as Stephen King have stood up against this censorship, encouraging young people to “find out what they don’t want you to read” in a tweet he wrote in January 2023. The voices creating censorship in the U.S. should never be louder than the ones fighting for complete and correct education for children all across the country. We should always speak out against censorship, whether it be through educating ourselves and others on the matter, or even through joining the anti-book banning movements by attending in-person marches and protests. We, the students at PHS, owe it to kids in conservative states spearheading the book banning frenzy to advocate for their right to access informative and resourceful books that will allow them to explore the world with an open mind. ■



graphic: Sara Hu

CHEERS

STUFF WE LIKE

STUFF WE DON'T

JEERS

<p>MINI M&M'S</p> <p>The language EXCHANGE programs</p> <p>Silly goofy PHONE CASES</p> <p>Rewatching old DISNEY CHANNEL shows</p> <p>Big band arrangements of POP SONGS</p> <p>OMAR APOLLO's hip swishes</p>	<p>Halloween falling on a TUESDAY</p> <p>BOOK BANNING</p> <p>Having your NAME BUTCHERED during attendance</p> <p>The stress of COLLEGE APPLICATIONS</p> <p>Being assigned THREE ESSAYS in a week</p> <p>Waiting until December for the new PERCY JACKSON show</p>
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PREX

PRINCETON RECORD EXCHANGE



The digital PSAT: A disappointing experiment in standardized testing

Editorial

get into the test-taking mode and they improve as time goes on? Should they be penalized for this by no longer being eligible to reach a certain score? Of course not. Second, how can a test be standardized if people are no longer taking the same test? To “standardize” means to conform to a standard, or to make something consistent and comparable. How can the College Board compare students that are answering entirely different questions?

Aside from this, a digital SAT creates a damaging change to SAT studying. As we all experienced during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic and Zoom, being on the computer for hours on end is detrimental to our eyesight, attention span, and mental health. Staring at a piece of paper for three hours was bad enough, but at least you could physically bubble, cross things out, and write annotations, which is helpful for hands-on learners. Now, not only do you have to focus on a computer screen for over two hours while taking the test, but you also have to include the hours of studying and practice tests you take beforehand, adding at least two hours a week to your already far-too-high screen time.

Still, despite its many weaknesses, there are definitely some advantages to the DPSAT. The reading questions have become much more straightforward and easy to understand. Instead of trying to decipher a dense and highly interpretive historical or scientific passage, students are now tested on their ability to comprehend the meaning of isolated paragraphs.

Overall, a standardized test is, ultimately, a standardized test, meaning whether students take it now or they wait until January to take the SAT, the tests will be equally comparable. Furthermore, if students still wish to take a standardized test on paper after January 2024, the ACT is still available on paper. And, with many schools going test-optional, the SAT in college decision-making becomes less and less important each year, so keep in mind that standardized tests will not be the final decision-maker; there are plenty of other things in your control to determine your future college. ■

On October 11, 2023, sophomores and juniors at Princeton High School spent their day taking the PSAT, with many juniors hoping to achieve the honor of becoming a National Merit Scholar. But there was one catch: it was digital. While this may not seem so bad at first, a further look into the inner workings of the digital PSAT and digital SAT reveals more than one first imagines.

Previously, the PSAT was made up of a total of 139 questions with two hours and 45 minutes of testing without breaks. On the other hand, the current DPSAT is made up of two 32-minute modules for reading and writing combined and two 35-minute math modules, with one ten-minute break between the reading and math sections. This makes up for a total of 98 questions and two hours and 14 minutes of testing (excluding the break). Both standardized tests are still scored on the same 1520 scale. The difference? The DPSAT is adaptive.

The DPSAT being adaptive means that your score for your first reading module affects the type of questions you get for your second reading module, and the same for your math modules. It is still yet uncertain if your score for your overall reading section affects the type of first math module you get, though. Overall, the difficulty of your modules places students on different tiers to be eligible for certain scores on the PSAT. There are a multitude of problems with this. First, what if a student needs time to

The Tower

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Mission Statement

The Tower serves as a medium of information for the community through reporting and/or analyzing the inner workings of Princeton High School, the school district, and cultural and athletic events that affect the student body; providing a source of general news for parents, teachers, and peers; voicing various opinions from an informed group of writers; and maintaining quality in accurate content and appealing aesthetics, as well as upholding professionalism and journalistic integrity.

Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of the Tower consists of a select group of 14 Tower 2023 staff members. The views of board members are accurately reflected in the editorial, which is co-written each month by the Board with primary authorship changing monthly.

Letter and Submission Policy

All letters and articles are welcome for consideration. Please e-mail all submissions to phtowersenioreditors@gmail.com. The editors reserve the rights to alter letters for length and to edit articles. The Editor-in-Chief takes full responsibility for the content of this paper.

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PHS
SPEAKS OUT

“Lightening
McQueen”
HELLEN ESTRADA '26

“Construction
worker”
WILL BEARDON '27

“Butter”
NIKOLAI MARGULIS '26

“Mustard”
ASHLYNN POTTER '24

“The
Onceler”
GRACE WALDMAN '26

“Ketchup”
ERIN KIM '24

WE'VE GONE DIGITAL! CHECK OUT THIS MONTH'S SPEAK OUT PODCAST USING THE QR CODE TO THE RIGHT, THEN, WHY NOT LOOK AT SOME OTHER TOWER PODCASTS WHILE YOU'RE THERE.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO BE FOR HALLOWEEN THIS YEAR?

Trick-or-Treat the environment better

Claire Tang and Chloe Zhao, STAFF WRITERS

As the air crisps and leaves turn awash in warm hues, Halloween decorations begin to adorn porches and lawns. While twinkling string lights and flashy blow-up characters are visually appealing, the harm they bring to the environment is often overshadowed by their momentary amusement.

Modern-day capitalism has created a culture of rampant consumerism, especially within America. The detrimental effects of overconsumption on the environment are exacerbated during holiday seasons, and Halloween is no exception. A 2020 study by Planet Home found that strings of lights produce enough carbon dioxide to fill 15,500 hot air balloons. Gas emissions aside, these luminous displays also contribute a whopping 50 percent increase in light pollution to areas nearby, which disturbs the habitat and mating patterns of native animals and insects, leading to irregular populations and possible future extinction. On top of this, many households purchase new decorations each year, creating significant amounts of plastic and electronic waste. Jack-o'-lanterns, seemingly innocent decorations,

also prove to be environmentally sinister. Waste Manage reported in a 2019 study that a colossal 18,000 tons of pumpkins are thrown away to landfills each year after fulfilling Halloween demands. When pumpkins are sent to landfill, they decompose and produce methane, a greenhouse gas over 25 times more effective in trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, ultimately contributing to global warming, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Trick-or-treating, dubbed the most exciting aspect of the spooky season by many, is also no treat for the environment. Lisa Morton, an environmental specialist, found in 2021 that the average trick-or-treater produces one pound of trash on Halloween night, alarming given that the holiday boasts more than 40 million trick-or-treaters. This statistic becomes even more disturbing given the fact that most trick-or-treaters also wear a polyester-constructed costume. An environmental organization, Hubbub, conducted a study in 2019 revealing that 83 percent of Halloween costumes are created with unrecyclable, oil-based plastics, destined to

dress a landfill. To put this into context, this staggering quantity of trash is equivalent to two thousand tons of plastic waste, or 83 million plastic bottles. A 2022 report by the UN Environment Programme stated that plastic accounts for 85 percent of total marine waste, the most dangerous type of litter harming our oceans given its inability to decompose. The excess plastic created by Halloween exacerbates marine pollution, masking marine life in a suffocating film of debris and damaging the natural ecosystem.

As residents of the Princeton area, a bulk of the responsibility to preserve our local ecosystem lies on the shoulders of Princeton High School students and their families. While keeping up with spooky traditions is an important part of American culture, Halloween doesn't have to be scary for the environment. For example, jack-o'-lanterns and other decorations should be made with compost in mind, a process that eliminates the formation of methane gas, decreasing the greenhouse gas emissions drastically. Furthermore, decorations can be reused every year to reduce the amount of waste that comes

with changing them. Costumes could also be put together with garments made from organic fabrics like cotton, from pieces of someone's everyday wardrobe, or thrifted clothing. Celebrating

Halloween and remaining environmentally friendly are not mutually exclusive; both can and should coexist in the Princeton community and in society as a whole. ■



photos: Jane Bennett

Teatime with Vanguard

Spilling the tea:
three teas from
Around the World
By Zoe Nuland

Chai

A chai latte is one of the more popular drinks ordered at Starbucks, Dunkin', or any local coffee shops. However, the average "chai" you might purchase at those places is far from its ancestor. "Chai" is the Hindi word for tea, dating back to over 5,000 years ago where it was used mainly for medicinal purposes. It was not until after the British colonizers arrived when locals started to add sugar and milk to their chai; soon after, a chai culture erupted throughout the Indian subcontinent that has outlasted British rule. The sweet, spicy, rich flavor of chai is what makes it so popular today.

Bubble Tea

Ficus, Fruity Yogurt, Junbi, Kung Fu Tea, and MTea: these are just a few of the bubble tea stores Princeton has to offer. But what is bubble tea? Bubble tea was invented in the 1980s by Taiwanese tea house manager Lin Hsui Hui. While bored at a staff meeting, Hui had the revolutionary idea of dumping her tapioca pudding ("fen yuan") into her iced Assam tea. Awestruck by the flavor and delectability of the beverage, Hui added it to the menu of the teahouse. The tea quickly rose to popularity. Soon, adjacent teahouses added it to their menus too while experimenting with fruit teas, tapioca pearls, and other traditional Chinese dessert add-ons. Today bubble tea has become a globally known beverage and a social media sensation.

Matcha

Although it originated in China during the Tang Dynasty, matcha today is considered the quintessential Japanese tea that has taken the world by storm. When Buddhist merchants reached Japan between 6 C.E. and 7 C.E., they established a variety of Buddhist monasteries around the empire which utilized specific rituals, one of them being the drinking and celebration of matcha. This was quickly taken up by samurai-in-training programs in order to help the warriors cultivate their inner strength and develop a calm, clear mindset. Almost instantly, matcha's popularity boomed and matcha became a cultural tradition in Japan. So how is it made? Instead of being steeped, matcha is made by whisking hot water with green tea grounds in order to create a frothy drink. Nowadays, two kinds of matcha are cultivated, ceremonial and culinary, which both act as representations of pleasant virtues such as harmony, tranquility, and purity, originating from their unique history.

graphics: Mia Gatzke

Steepin' it real: how is tea made?

Asya Morosov, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

By the time his fingers grazed the leathery surface of the tea plant, the war had been won. He might've looked at that tall, unassuming bush — the complex of ridges and the white flowers peeking through clusters of fat lanceolate leaves — with a sort of pity. He might've remembered the nations marred and uprooted in its name, the warships crumpled like the furled flag of its apical bud. He might've thought a lot of things, really, but in 1848, Robert Fortune did exactly what the British East India company had paid him to do: With precision and with delicacy, he reached down towards the stem of the tea plant and tore it from the earth.

A mere decade earlier, Fortune's operation would've been unthinkable. China had been cultivating tea for millennia, and by the 1800s, the leaves were steeped not just in hot water but in a rich milieu of spiritual and philosophical traditions, carefully guarded agricultural secrets, and powerful economic incentives. Thanks to their virtual monopoly of the tea plant (a few seeds had escaped to Japan in the ninth century, but their fruits were barely commercialized), China's tea became a vital, lucrative commodity once Dutch and Portuguese traders appeared on the country's shores. This economic dependence was deepened in 1661, when Portugal's tea-loving Queen Catherine of Braganza married Britain's soon-to-be-tea-loving King Charles II, and China's foremost export became the quintessential drink of the European aristocracy. Before long, it was hard to come by tea that was selling for less than ten times the price of coffee.

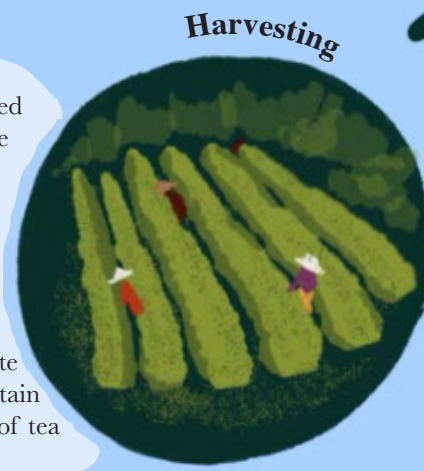
In the face of China's control over the tea, porcelain, and silk markets, Europe found itself without a sought-after good of its own to rectify the growing trade imbalance. For decades, mercantilist leaders fumed as silver poured into the Chinese port cities of Guangzhou and Tianjin, and only teabags floated back in return. In the early 18th century, though, Europe stumbled across an export that Chinese citizens were willing — and eventually, due to the drug's addictiveness, desperate — to pay for: opium.

The Qing dynasty was dismayed. Imagining, rightfully, that importing massive amounts of a narcotic drug would harm Chinese society, they began to resist Europe's opium smugglers. They began to openly question Europe's power-hungry trade tactics. And so, in 1839, British warships began to dot their harbors.

To call the three ensuing "Opium Wars" a series of sudden, unexpected conflicts is to say that Robert Fortune's heist — where he (in perhaps the grandest display of cultural appropriation in history) learned to speak Mandarin; pretended to come from western China; bamboozled the owners of tea plantations across the province of Fujian into letting him observe their cultivation processes; and sent 10,000 stolen seeds and 13,000 young tea plants alongside ovens, woks, rolling tables, and eight hired Chinese experts back to the British East India company in Calcutta — was nothing more than a crime of passion, conceived and performed in the heat of the moment. It is to pretend that in 1839, Britain hadn't already stretched itself across India like a moth-torn canvas, that France hadn't imperialized what is now Southeast Vietnam. Colonialism is no haphazard romp. No, it is precise, and delicate. It is pernicious — an opium, washing across the body like a somnambulatory tide. It is the story of today's tensions, and, yes, of today's tea — once a delicacy, then combined with sugar harvested by the enslaved laborers of Britain's Caribbean colonies and made available to the European citizenry at large, now more popular than any beverage besides water itself. Spread across the earth, but torn from it too.

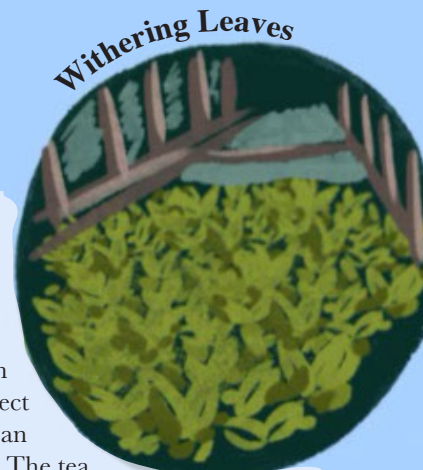
Steepin' it real: how is tea made? Asya Morosov, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

High-quality tea is harvested by hand to prevent damage to the leaves. Tea plants reach maturity after three years of growth, and harvests occur twice a year. Plucked tea leaves are taken to a processing center, where they complete the following steps to a certain extent unique to the type of tea plant.



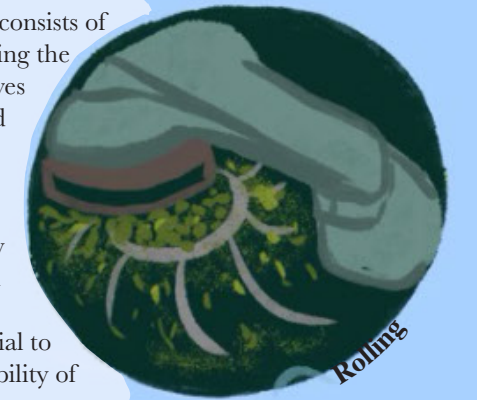
Harvesting

A tea leaf starts to wither the instant it is picked. Many plantations harness this factor by placing leaves on outdoor mats either in direct sun or in the shade for an extended period of time. The tea leaves' stomata (small pores on the epidermis) cannot close because of the sun, and as a result, the abscisic acid released as a sealant for the stomata gives the leaves a unique flavor.



Withering Leaves

The rolling process consists of breaking and damaging the cell walls of tea leaves to release juices and distribute moisture evenly across the leaves. Rolling can be executed either by hand or by a special machine called a rotorvane, and is crucial to determining the durability of the tea.



Rolling

Once tea leaves have reached the desired level of oxidation, they are taken onto trays of tea leaves and dried by being sent through hot air dryers. This reduces their moisture content to around three percent and makes them ready to pack and sell.



Drying

Oxidation is a process by which tea leaves darken after exposure to the sun. The time at which a tea leaf's oxidation is halted determines the color it will take on when brewed and the flavors it will release. The oxidation for black tea leaves is stopped much later, producing brews of dark red and orange and bold, rich flavors.



Oxidation

Pouring positivi-tea: tea's positive impacts on your health Chloe Zhao, STAFF WRITER

PHS' competitive and goal-oriented student culture is undeniable. Rigorous classes and mountain-high piles of homework not only create stress, but also often dig into sleeping hours. As a result, a majority of the student body files into the hallways plagued with foggy brains from sleep deprivation and simply being overworked.

In order to make up for this sleep deprivation and maintain their busy lifestyles, many students choose to turn towards sugar and caffeine. The high school vending machines offer a couple of options, but since the beginning of this year, one predominant candidate has entered itself into the pool — Celsius energy drinks. Containing 200 mg of caffeine (the equivalent of two cups of black coffee), the drink has quickly gained immense popularity amongst students. However, Celsius' focusing abilities come with dangerous side effects. In 2020, the CDC found that drinking highly caffeinated beverages such as Celsius can lead to long-term effects like increased blood pressure and heart complications. Even in the short term, the effects are damaging: research done by WebMD in 2018 found that relying on artificial high dose of caffeine causes numerous negative symptoms to the drinker, including anxiety, irregular heartbeats, and insomnia, highlighting how this temporary fix for fatigue often leads to a more permanent, detrimental problem to long-term health.

Instead of drinking energy drinks, students should consider tea for their pick-me-up beverage of choice. Tea delivers a moderate amount of caffeine that doesn't disrupt the nervous system. Matcha, for one, contains L-theanine, which slows the effect of caffeine, creating a more stable energy boost. While caffeine from coffee or energy drinks take mere minutes to be absorbed into the bloodstream, it takes around three to six hours for the caffeine in matcha to be fully absorbed. This gradual absorption cushions the blow to the nervous system, prolonging the body's energy and preventing sudden crashes and withdrawals from occurring. Furthermore, tea boasts a much higher nutritional value to the body compared to caffeinated drinks, as it's packed with antioxidants and vitamins that help regulate blood sugar, heart health, nervous systems, metabolism, and many other bodily functions.

All of these factors demonstrate tea's nutritional value over caffeinated drinks, being able to regulate students' sleep schedules and stress levels much better compared to less healthy alternatives. The options for tea are vast, providing options for any palate. So next time you feel tired, avoid that Celsius drink and reach for tea instead.

Graphics: Sara Hu

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

How fall fashion can guide our personal styles

Avery McDowell, STAFF WRITER

As fall is beginning, numerous fashion trends are becoming popular. But do these fall fashion labels motivate us to cultivate better taste in style, or do they limit us to only one type of clothing?

Throughout any fashion season, it is easy to get stuck in the downward spiral of not knowing what to wear, or of being bored of one's wardrobe. Specifically for fall, many people feel limited into thinking that their only options are sweaters, jeans, and hoodies. However, a way out of this mental fashion block can be through clothing aesthetics, which provide nuanced outfit ideas that people may not think of on their own. By using social media platforms to their benefit, especially Pinterest, people can discover that there are actually many seasonal styles to choose from. As society has become more technology-oriented, most of the fashion the public views is online. Therefore anyone is able to explore various styles and save the posts for future inspiration.

One of the most popular styles for this fall is the "downtown" aesthetic: dressing like a local New Yorker in Lower Manhattan. It typically follows the outfit of dark wide pants, a tight black top, a heavy fleece or leather jacket, and a scarf. Accessories may include chunky sunglasses, earbuds, or even a cup of coffee to add an "on-the-go" element. It focuses on layers and primarily dark colors, exuding a mysterious and powerful aura. Parts of the look are more rough, such as worn-out jeans. Other parts are more sophisticated or high-end, such as silver heels or loafers, which are sleek slip-on shoes with a low cut that are usually made of leather. These types of shoes were very popular in the 1990s and have circled back into today's taste in fashion, along with many other trends that seem to cycle every 20 years. Two major figures that have influenced the popularity of this style are the characters Rory Gilmore and Elena Gilbert from the classic shows "Gilmore Girls" and "The Vampire Diaries." Both characters embody the core of effortless yet extremely fashionable fall outfits, with their jean-based looks including heavy cable neck sweaters or tight long sleeve button downs. Brands with this aesthetic include Djerf Avenue or Zara.



If the "downtown" style doesn't quite resonate with you, you could consider balletcore, which is much more delicate compared to the city-local aesthetic. It is based on very light or pastel colors, such as baby pinks, whites, yellows, and blues. A typical outfit may follow a skirt, a babydoll top, a cardigan, and Mary Jane heels. Besides Mary Janes, the most common footwear found in this kind of wardrobe are ballet flats, which provide the graceful and dainty touch to any balletcore outfit. In

high fashion, the Miu Miu ballet flats seem to be the most coveted, along with the Repetto collection of ballerina heels. What really matters are the details. There is a traditionally feminine touch added with lace patterns, leg warmers, hearts, babydoll socks, corsets, and an infinite amount of bows (in hair, on sleeves, on shoes, and even on bags). This balletcore style is commonly associated with romantic visuals like Victorian paintings, ballet, and flowers. When shopping for this style, you should look out for brands such as Fenty Fashion and Kitteny.



Another way to dress in cooler weather that is timeless, stylish, and easy is by following the streetwear aesthetic. This fashion label is especially versatile because it encompasses multiple interpretations of clothing inspired by components of urban culture primarily geared to the younger generations, such as skateboarding and hip hop. Moreover, it can be easily personalized to each individual. A more casual streetwear outfit may involve sweatpants, baggy T-shirts, and sneakers. More formal streetwear attire may consist of jeans or khakis, a sweater, a large jacket such as a carpenter or corduroy jacket, and boots. In any of these streetwear outfits, you could accessorize with a baseball cap, rings, or sunglasses. High-quality brands that help cultivate this style include Carhartt and Dickies, which are both workwear

companies that provide the thick and baggy pants or jackets that really make the streetwear look. Emerging largely in the bustling streets of New York and Japan in the 1990s, this style focuses on low effort yet put together ensembles. With mostly loose-fitting clothes, it is also very comfortable.

Finally, the fall fashion season would not be what it is today without the "thriftcore" aesthetic, which is shopping for previously worn clothes at second-hand stores or vintage shops. Outfits following this style are effortlessly cool and unique, featuring clothing that cannot be found anywhere else. There is a certain sense of coolness being able to tell other people you thrifted a clothing item, or knowing that it is not from a mainstream brand. They usually capture the chicness of past decades, like the 1990s or early 2000s. An outfit of this style may consist of washed out jeans, an old band graphic tee, vintage Adidas sneakers, and a varsity jacket from a random high school. While there are many thrift stores located in NJ, such as the Red, White and Blue Thrift Store in Hamilton, New York also has many great ones, such as 2nd Street and my personal favorite, L Train Vintage. At many of these



graphics: Wenya Huan

stores you can even find old items from designer brands such as Saint Laurent, Dior, or Bottega Veneta.

When picking outfit inspiration from trends or aesthetics, you don't have to be tied down to just a specific style. It can be easy to feel limited to specific articles of clothing when you are heavily interested in an aesthetic. While people may want to stick to one specific style, they also have the option of picking out what they like from each style and morphing those elements into a style of their own. For example, individual items from each fall style such as bows, the color cherry red, art prints, and metallic footwear can make the staples of someone's wardrobe and inspire them to cultivate a style that personally speaks to them. In fact, fall style labels may encourage people to step outside of their fashion bubble by giving them inspiration for clothing they wouldn't normally wear. This helps people to discover what defines their personal style even more.

As mentioned in the thriftcore aesthetic, many trends also encourage the use of thrifting. Thrifting is not only eco-friendly and cheaper, but it also allows people to wear clothing that is rarer since they are not in the circulation of fast fashion or highly-demanded brands. People can often find older items that are more unique and involve more vintage-looking trends from that past, since it is likely that no one else has the same item.

The popularization of labeled fashion trends has enabled people to gain new knowledge of tasteful fashion through deciding what styles resonate and building off of them. The list of fashion trends will constantly expand as people discover more elements of fashion that express who they are and make them feel chic. This fall, you should develop and personalize your style through exploring these trending fashion labels.

In my experience, learning about other clothing trends has helped me to decide what I personally like and dislike, encouraging me to try out different styles until I create my own personal aesthetic that makes me feel chic and comfortable. I also believe that fashion does not always stay the same and instead usually comes in phases, just as my style has changed to represent eras of my life. As of now, I consider my personal taste in clothing to be a combination of the downtown and thriftcore aesthetics. I love the chicness of downtown outfits through dark, sleek, and more modern clothing; however, I love the uniqueness of vintage clothing that gives more edge to ensembles. I like how sleek and modern clothing makes me feel like I'm walking the downtown streets of New York City, yet I also like putting together more unexpected and unique vintage outfits that give my style a little more edge. ■



Student Artist of the Month: Elliott Becker Peeler '24 advocates for participation in performing arts at PHS

Sky Jo, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Watching the illuminated stage, young Elliott Becker Peeler '24 stood in the midst of it all, watching the performance of an actor playing Tevye in the musical "Fiddler on the Roof" who inspired him to start his own journey as a musician. Since then, Peeler has engaged in both the choir and theater departments of PHS and is currently the director of the a cappella group Around 8. His passion for the arts extends beyond the depths of the school: Peeler spends a majority of his free time either listening or practicing his music. For Peeler, the musical department at PHS isn't just a place to showcase his skills and grow as an artist, but also a small community he finds comfort in.

What inspired you to start getting involved with the musical department?

It's definitely one of the most open extracurricular departments in school, and the performances are so open to everyone that you can see it and immediately get involved. That's how I really knew I wanted to do choir. I was in Chorale II the first year here, and then I saw what the PHS Choir could do, and the audition process is just you audition and you get in, and all these doors open up to you, and it was the same with the musical. You could just show up to one audition and you're in the door. Obviously you have to know how to sing, but you learn that once you get in.

How has the process of "The Little Prince" Opera been so far?

The opera process is definitely different and a lot more than the musical. You're on your own and you have to be ready to pick up at any measure at any point, because we're running it with the orchestra and they're doing these sections, picking up from measure 255, and you just kind of have to have that in your brain. I mean, at this point in the process, we're still looking at the score to get the time signatures and everything, but it's definitely a lot more. We block it out once and you just kind of have



photo: Caroline Gu

to learn it on your own, and there's so much less time to attend to the little things for every scene. It's not an extracurricular, so we have to do it all in choir class, and in a couple periods missing gym. We have a quarter of the time because it's at the end of the month. We do have night rehearsals, but it'll be at the week of and that'll be with our tech crew.

If you could play one role in any play, what would it be and why?

That's a really tough question. One that comes to mind is Tevye from "Fiddler on the Roof," just because he's a very powerful baritone bass role, and there definitely are those roles, but not so much in modern theater. He [...] has a lot of light hearted comedic moments, but there's also a lot of emotional depth to the character. I was in the production for "Fiddler on the Roof" when I was really young, and I really looked up to the kid who played Tevye and thought, "I want to do that when I grow up."

What do you like the most about a cappella or choir?

With a cappella, I really like the way you get to choose and arrange all the material, and it's like our own little bubble; it really doesn't even feel like choir or musical theater [...] because it's all 100 percent student led. It's a great opportunity to advance our own voices as students and student leaders. And I mean voices; not just singing voices, but leadership voices. Voices in organizing our own gig and everything. And with choir, it's really great to be a part of the whole. When you come together a few moments before the performance and you stand up; I don't get that kind of school spirit elsewhere. And I don't know if it's much of a school spirit, but a feeling of community. I think PHS is such a big school that you have to find a belonging in a smaller community, and choir's one of those communities.

How's it being the music director of Around Eight?

It's a lot of fun. It's really daunting because there's not a lot you can do to prepare for it, because all of a sudden [it's] "Oh, here's 12 people you have to tell what to do" and "Oh, we're performing three weeks into school and you have to have a set of songs." But it's super rewarding to just kind of blaze a trail through unknown territory, and I would wholly recommend a cappella [for those] who want to sing.

What advice would you give to students who are interested in joining theater or choir?

Don't get caught up in the pretense of it; like [the] gossip about the departments or what people think this means; whether the people in the department like or don't like you, or if you do well or not. Just do it if you want to develop your craft, or if you want a social circle of people around you, because the department also offers that community-wise. But, if your goal is to become a better singer, a better actor, [or] a more disciplined performer, then you'll get a lot of that. You get what you put in. ■

PHS Choir and Orchestra collaborate for “The Little Prince” opera

Ruhee Hegde, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On October 27 and 28, the PHS Choir and Orchestra departments debuted an opera adaptation of “The Little Prince.” Reva Doshi ’24 and Syra Bhatt ’25, who played the princes, and Elliott Becker Peeler ’24 and Edward Cao ’24, who played the pilots, worked hard in preparation for their lead roles in the performance, especially as they transitioned into the idea of singing as the opera’s characters.

“The Little Prince,” jointly composed by English dramatists Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright, is based on the 1943 book of the same name written by French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The novel tells the story of a stranded pilot who meets and befriends a young alien prince who visits various planets, including Earth. While the pilot works to fix his plane, he listens to the young boy’s tales of his interstellar travels and gets invested in the wonders of the child’s innate curiosity and sincerity.

“It was definitely an ambitious choice by Ms. Pelletier and Mr. Metallo to have the opera be the first thing we do this year, but the process has been really great and it’s been really fun for everyone to get into the idea of singing as characters rather than as ourselves,” said Noa Zacks ’25, one of the soloists for the opera in PHS Choir.

Robert Loughran, director of PHS orchestra, explained the inspiration behind the decision to choose “The Little Prince” for this year’s show.

“This production, unlike pieces in the past, has proven to only be truly expressed through the heart, and we tend to incorporate this aspect in the ways we transform the piece from paper into the big stage,” Loughran said.



The Cantus Choir, playing the stars, sings their first song introducing themselves to the audience.



After Edward Cao ’24, the narrator and unnamed pilot, crashes his airplane in the Sahara desert, the Cantus Choir sings to the unconscious pilot.

When first preparing, one of the most difficult aspects for the PHS Orchestra was aligning the orchestra part to fit with the dramatic melodies of the choir, especially when the musicians were tasked with learning the entire opera in only a couple of weeks. Figuring out the correct volume and tune to play one’s instrument may be an obvious aspect of any orchestra, but it is one of the most thought-out parts.

“Mr. Loughran often tells us to play a lot quieter so that the vocals can really shine through. The orchestra is more of an emotional backdrop to the powerful singing,” said PHSO violinist Sungjun Jo ’24.

The motto “With practice comes progress” can be used to describe the atmosphere of the orchestra room: with every repetition of each musical number, the pieces get one step closer to perfection.

“I find enjoyment in hearing all the different parts of a piece come together. It truly makes you understand and feel the music. It is always difficult to start learning new pieces for the musical and other combined performances; however, we practice it so often that it practically becomes second nature,” said PHSO cellist Vivian Lee ’26.

The lush music and captivating vocals do not come without training, so students in choir have been exploring their ranges throughout the opera piece, which is a new form of music for most people this year.

“Because I am not familiar with this genre of music, it was a bit hard in the beginning to find enjoyment to be honest. The difficult part of this piece is remembering the

lyrics and reaching the super high notes of Soprano 1,” said PHS Choir member Lisa Jin ’25.

This aspect of community is highlighted across both departments, and despite the difficulty in coordinating the different forms of repertoire, students find that it’s all worth the challenge.

“The Little Prince” has definitely been a bit of a challenge in terms of learning the music, which has some complicated key signatures and a lot of time signature changes,” said PHSO violinist Sanjana Manghnani ’25. “However, it’s all been really enjoyable to hear how it all comes together when we rehearse with the singers from the choirs.”

One common theme throughout choir and orchestra was the high anticipation for performance day, as for many students, this was their first opportunity to display what they’ve been working on in their performing arts classes this year.

“My favorite part of performance day is being able to play for a crowd,” said Lee. “We can bring the piece to life, and I’m able to bounce off of other people’s energy, either from the orchestra or the crowd.”

Loughran hoped that the new experiences gathered from the opera brought joy to anyone watching their loved ones perform.

“I [was] seriously so looking forward to opening night, and I wish to see this event become one for the books, and one that will continue to influence crowds in the years to come,” Loughran said. ■



photos: Sara Hu

The Cantus Choir sings as Elliott Becker Peeler ’24 and Edward Cao, both playing the pilot, gaze up at the stars.



graphic: Léopold Renaudin

Spooky reads to cozy up with by the chimney

“The Silent Patient” by Alex Michaelides

Raya Kondakindi, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The paintbrush brushes the canvas as lightly and familiarly as the hug between two friends reunited. The smell of paint wafts through the air, as your mind, never silent, focuses on the project at hand. The door creaks open, and the sounds of heavy footsteps echo across the old floors. A voice announces, “Honey, I’m home!” but he returns home to an unwelcome surprise.

Alicia Berenson is a woman who seemed to be leading a successful life with her loving husband Gabriel by her side. All seemed well until one night after Gabriel returns home from work, Alicia shoots him five times in his face and then refuses to speak again. Several years later, Alice is the talk of the town, especially among psychiatrists. A criminal psychotherapist, Theo Faber, enraptured by Alicia’s story, seizes the opportunity to work with her. Through therapy sessions, he works to coerce Alicia to speak once more, changing the trajectory of both their lives.

This book is recommended to anyone seeking a brilliant thriller to cozy up by this season, as Michaelides encapsulates the eeriness of autumn through the emotions that come with each flip of the page. Whether you are an avid reader or someone who wants to get into reading, this book is a perfect introduction to thrillers. The fast-moving, constantly thickening plot weaves a web of inquisition that gradually unravels, slowly unveiling Alicia’s past through her suspenseful diary entries.

The greatest takeaway from this captivating novel is Michaelides’s ability to carefully delve into the human mind and psychosis through the recounting traumatic events. The line between sanity and madness is especially blurry during the book’s grand finale. After closing the novel, one can only be left in awe as this unforgettable novel’s plot twists and shocking events linger in their mind, completely challenging their perception of emotions within the human psyche. ■



“We Were Liars” by E. Lockhart

Tessa Silver, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Behind the facade of every picture-perfect family, there lies ruinous secrets. “We Were Liars” by E. Lockhart tells the thrilling story of one such family, the seemingly stereotypically perfect Sinclairs.

For all of protagonist Cadence Sinclair’s life, she and her cousins have tried to continue their family’s legacy, which involves blocking out things that might mar the family’s reputation. This is why the family avoids talking about the tragic accident Cadence had when she was fifteen, and even Cadence, who suffers selective memory loss, does not know the details of it. Every summer, the Sinclairs travel to their private island, where they are joined by Cadence’s aunt, her boyfriend Ed, and his

nephew Gat. Cadence, her two cousins Johnny and Mirren, and Gat are known as the “Liars” for unexplained reasons. During the summer of her accident, the “Liars” had begun to look more closely at the life they had grown used to, setting off a major chain of events. Two years later, Cadence returns to the island where the infamous accident occurred, determined to discover the truth.

“We Were Liars” draws you in by revealing only snippets of Cadence’s story at a time. All throughout, I was eager to discover the missing truths, and the major reveal at the end definitely lived up to my expectations. Lockhart also inserts altered classic fairy tales to describe various events in Cadence’s life, offering insight into her underlying feelings. In addition to being a thriller, the novel analyzes the role that class

and money play in a person’s life. Its topics of loss and responsibility impacted my original perceptions about growing up, teaching me that there are some things you cannot change about yourself. “We Were Liars” delivers both a compelling thriller and an interesting exploration of class, allowing even readers who are not typical fans of thrillers to connect with its message. ■



graphics: Wenya Huan

“The Secret History” by Donna Tartt

Vita Moss-Wang, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Set at the fictional Hampden College in Vermont, “The Secret History” by Donna Tartt is a sinister reverse-murder mystery that is the perfect spooky read for this season. The book transports readers to a small college campus in the fall and follows a group of students — Richard, Henry, Francis, Bunny, and twins Charles and Camilla — who practice pagan rituals. However, one day, after the madness and guidance of their eccentric classics professor, Julian Morrow, consumes them, Bunny, a member of their clique, is killed. The book is narrated by Richard, a naive transfer student who arrives at the school intending to pursue his interest in Greek language and culture. However, after noticing his classmates’

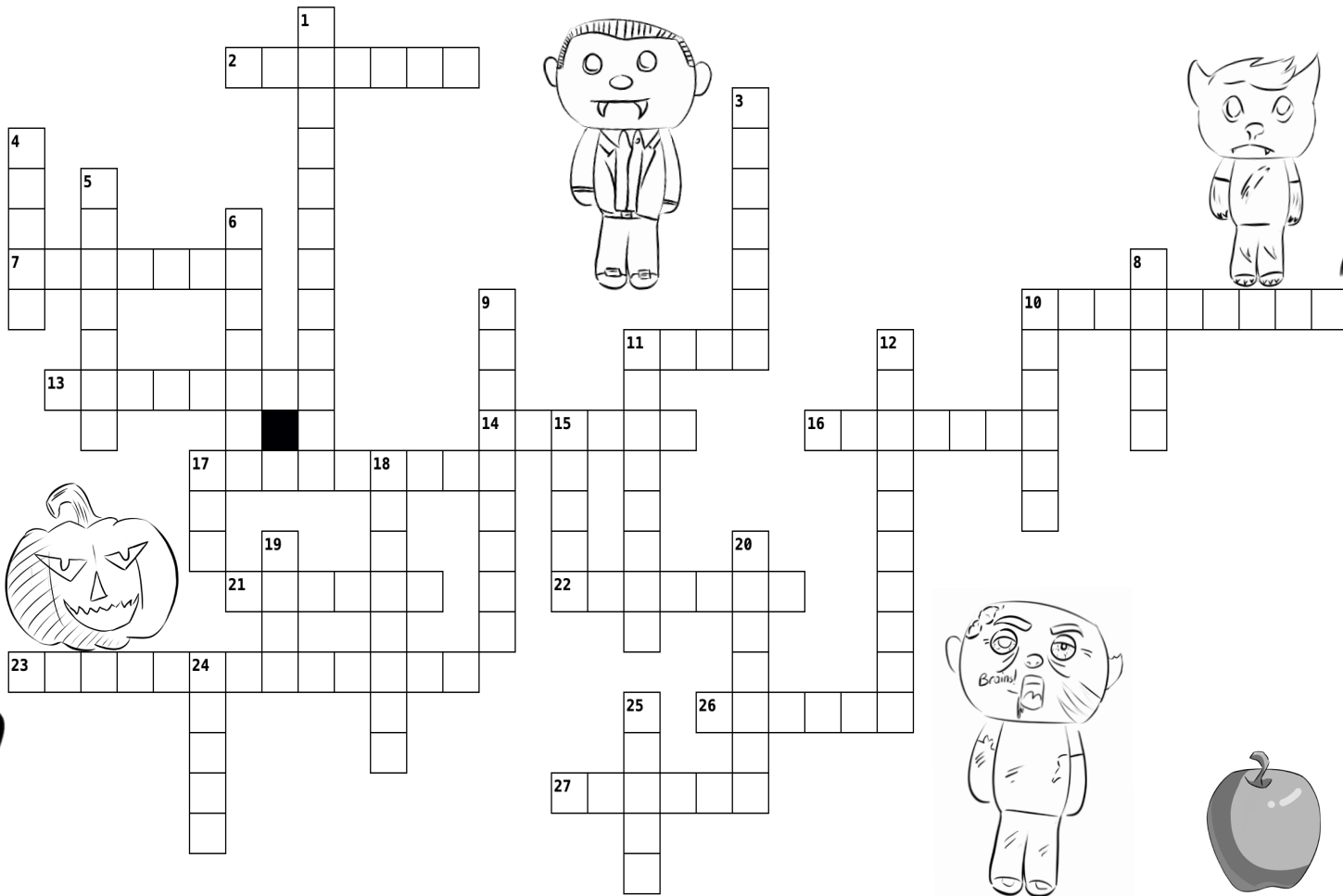
frequent disappearances, he immerses himself in one of the college’s secret societies. By the story’s end, he is forever changed, with dark secrets and a story to tell.

The novel draws readers in with Richard’s narration as he describes characters with great attention to detail and vivid imagery. His meticulously written descriptions can make the reader feel as if they are also familiarizing themselves with the habitual behaviors of the group and the unique culture of Hampden College. The dialogue and interactions between the main characters not only seems authentic but also causes the reader to identify and sympathize with their actions, humanizing the killers as the story progresses. Richard’s descriptions of each individual’s subtle actions convinces the reader of the intimacy and connection of the group by alluding to all that is unsaid.

“The Secret History” is especially appropriate for the fall season considering that Tartt is the pioneer of the dark academia genre. The novel puts relationships into perspective and forces the reader to consider how they affect everyday life, showing how love — whether familial, platonic, or intellectual — can cause people to bend their morals in order to preserve their relationships. ■

Spooky Halloween Crossword

Sara Shahab Diaz, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CO-EDITOR



Across

- 2. A period of gathering crops
- 7. Transylvanian count
- 10. Holiday celebrated on October 31st
- 11. A cereal plant that yields large kernels; often grown in rows
- 13. "Black is traditional."
- 14. Things that fall from the trees during autumn
- 16. A cozy, knitted garment with long sleeves
- 17. The clown in "It"
- 21. _____ the Friendly Ghost
- 22. When day and night are approximately equal; happens twice a year
- 23. Kids follow their grandma home to find out they're witches
- 26. Official name for the third season of the year
- 27. A corpse that eats human brains

Down

- 1. The doctor that created an infamous monster
- 3. Fruit that is commonly carved into a spooky smile
- 4. "Trick-or-treat!"
- 5. An apparition of a dead person
- 6. Edward Cullen
- 8. An extraterrestrial being often associated with the color green
- 9. "Spooky, scary _____ send shivers down your spine."
- 10. A genre meant to scare audiences
- 11. A brown nut that is often roasted
- 12. A tall, thin figure sporting a black suit and a blank face
- 15. Candy _____
- 17. A baked dish of fruit filling with a base of pastry crust
- 18. Jacob Black
- 19. A combination of twists and turns to find the exit; often found on fields or farms
- 20. What people wear on Halloween
- 24. Hocus Pocus
- 25. Egyptian pharaohs post-death

Search "Crossword Answers" on towerphs.com for the answers!

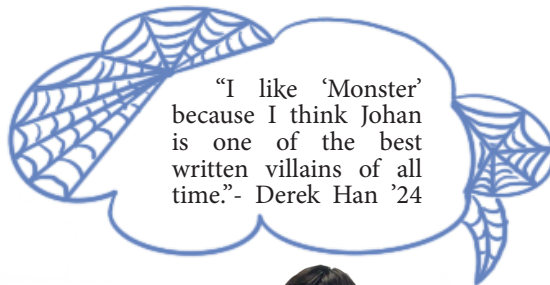
graphics: Léopold Renaudin

Student takes: What's your favorite mystery or thriller TV show?

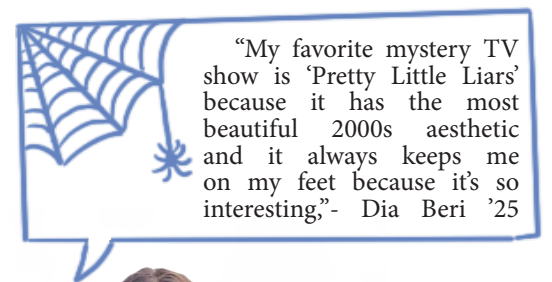
Meghna Myneni, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



"I enjoyed 'The Afterparty.' I appreciated its lighthearted nature and how every episode is a different genre while still having an underlying murder mystery background."- Blythe Valvanis '26



"I like 'Monster' because I think Johan is one of the best written villains of all time."- Derek Han '24



"My favorite mystery TV show is 'Pretty Little Liars' because it has the most beautiful 2000s aesthetic and it always keeps me on my feet because it's so interesting."- Dia Beri '25



photos: Meghna Myneni

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LEFT: Yasumasa Morimura 森村泰昌, *Princess A*, from the series *Daughter of Art History*, 1990. Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York. © Yasumasa Morimura
RIGHT: MiKyoung Lee, *Bubble*, 2016. Collection of the artist. © MiKyoung Lee. Photo: Joseph Hu

SPORTS

Girls volleyball team rises to second in the state

Matthew Chen, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

Princeton High School's volleyball program has been successful in past seasons, claiming the 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 league titles in succession. This season's team is no exception, boasting an unmatched 23-1 record, conceding only five sets across all 25 games played — a feat that hasn't been achieved in over ten years. Now ranked second in the state, the Little Tigers continue their charge as they make their way further into the season, shooting for not only the conference title, but the state championship as well.

Last year's season saw many of the current key varsity players as freshmen, who have since become sophomores and juniors. But despite their younger age, these talented athletes set themselves apart from the rest of their competition.

"Last year, we had mostly freshmen and sophomores starting on a varsity team playing much older squads," said the girls varsity volleyball Assistant Coach Kate Dineen. "They have just come into their own more [this year], feel more comfortable playing together, [and] have grown stronger because they train year-round, so they're just a little more powerful."

While the younger age range of these players may at first seem to be a disadvantage, the reality is that their team chemistry built throughout past years serves as a crucial part to their dominance this season.

"We have such a young team ... and we have so much potential underneath us, especially all the sophomores," said Pearl Agel '25, a starting libero and co-captain



photo: Wenya Huan

Varsity head coach Patty Manhart prepares the team in a huddle before facing off against Lenape for their Senior Night game. Left to right: Zoe Nuland '25, Mackenzie Lyle '24, Kaelin Bobetich '26, Pearl Agel '25, Syra Bhatt '25, Charlotte Woods '26, Adele Slaymaker '25.

of the varsity team. "I feel like it's really helped us, especially from last year, knowing that we have a lot to build off on, and so that's helping us improve each year, so we're hoping to get farther."

While the team has demonstrated their ability to control every game they play, the results don't just happen without hard work. Even during off-season months, many of the athletes go back to their club teams and continue training year-round, preparing themselves for the upcoming season for the PHS team as well as for their own teams outside of school. This preparation that these individuals dedicate themselves to ensures that their skills and coordination are sharpened for the following season.

"We have a lot of players on our varsity squad this year who play year round both indoor and beach," said Dineen. "The beach skills in particular translate really well to indoor because they're able to find spots to put the ball and end rallies at really opportune times ... and they really act together as one cohesive unit."

Beyond just the technical skills gained through off-season training, club teams also give players the chance to bond and build relationships with one another, creating an even stronger link within this already close-knit team.

"A lot of the girls on the team I've played with since I was 12. We used to be on the same club team, so I really have strong relationships with them because I've known them for so long," said Co-Captain Lois Matsukawa '25, starting setter on the varsity team. "[Playing on club teams] is a really big factor in our success this year and last year."

There's no doubt that the team puts in a tremendous amount of work and effort on the court during their games, but what's often overlooked is the effort put in by team members off the court, which can boost the team's performance just as much.

"Pearl [and I] really made it a big deal to do the psyches this year, because it's really fun and we even got JV to do it too. ... I think that people just enjoyed it a lot," said Matsukawa. "I just think it just helps our team bond more and just stay more connected."

On paper, the Little Tigers seem to have little, if any problems at all, beating every opponent they come across. However, it hasn't always been smooth sailing for the team.

"We're learning to trust each other, which is kind of a big issue that we're getting through over this season," said Agel. "There have been some internal struggles [between] teammates and disagreements ... but over



photo: Wenya Huan

The varsity team huddles after a point during a game against Lenape. Left to right: Heather Li '24, Pearl Agel '25, Anya Haerberli '25, Naomi Lygas '26, Lois Matsukawa '25, Athena Huan '24, Mackenzie Lyle '24.

the season, we've kind of worked it out, which has also helped us move stronger."

The team has experienced and overcome certain difficulties that they've come across as a group. However, there are certain pieces to the puzzle that they can't control, one of which being the tight and demanding schedule.

"One of the biggest challenges that we've faced this season has been just the rigor of our schedule," said Charlotte Woods '26, one of the three starting hitters on the varsity roster. "We've been playing a lot of games back to back, which means we don't get a ton of time to practice new things ... [but it] makes us better players in that I feel our stamina has been a lot higher and we get a lot of in-game experience, which helps ... in future games that we play later on."

In spite of these adversities, the results that the team produces speak for themselves. The team has not only topped their group, but climbed to second in the state all within just over a month. With a near-perfect record and an unstoppable group, the team heads further into the season with high hopes and expectations.

"The hope and expectation for us is that we continue to try and win as many games as possible, and hopefully make it to and past the same point that we made it last year," said Woods. "We're hoping just to do as well as we can and bring home some records for the school and for our program that really just reflect all the work that's gone into our season." ■

Latinos Unidos club embraces culture through sports

Katie Qin, STAFF WRITER

Kaden Li, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Latinos Unidos Club continue yet another year of successful Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations, organizing a student and staff-run soccer tournament as a fundraiser, alongside the annual Hispanic Heritage Month assembly. Earlier this month, the Latinos Unidos Club performed in the assembly to exhibit Hispanic culture through literature, music, and dance. To add on to this month's celebration, the club planned to show off another very important cultural aspect: soccer, otherwise known as fútbol in Spanish.

An enjoyable pastime for many, soccer has found popularity all over the world, especially in the Latino community. After bouncing around ideas for a fundraising event for the club, the club's board ultimately decided on a soccer tournament. As both a cultural symbol and an entertaining sport, soccer was the perfect candidate for the Latinos Unidos club to use as a way to spread their culture and unite sport enthusiasts.

The Latinos Unidos Club began organization of the tournament in September. Setting up such an event is no small task, and the club members invested hours into the tournament. Along with the school's staff, they are aiming to provide an exciting experience for the rest of the student body. The Latinos Unidos club has already finished setting up the prizes, with a trophy for first, medal for second, and a surprise gift for third place.

"I'm learning so much by leading and organizing these events," said Ozzy Morales '25, a Latinos Unidos

club leader. "I'm proud and honored that I was given this opportunity to lead and organize these events."

Soccer was first introduced to Latin America at the end of the 19th century. Due to its easy-to-access nature, soccer also became a widespread hit across the whole continent, uniting Latin America by their love for this sport.

Indeed, sharing Latino culture is the predominant goal of the club, but there are other messages the club hopes to spread as well.

"[We want to] let people know that we can be together as a community, [as] it doesn't matter if we have [a] different culture," said Dany Melchor Garza '24, one of the club's leaders.

Aside from athletics, the Latinos Unidos Club has coordinated other events such as the Festival Latino, where families were able to mingle and celebrate Latino culture. Besides the fundraising event, the club is preparing the Numina Gallery for the Day of the Dead, a day where people commemorate passed loved ones. In addition, the club has plans for their next third annual Festival Latino in the spring.

Students involved with setting up the tournament also value the cultural opportunities that come with their role as a member.

"I'm learning to be a better leader, student, friend, and overall a voice in my community," said Morales. "[Using] my platform to inspire and encourage others in the community to celebrate one another is something that I am willing to do over and over again."

People are often afraid to invest time and energy into big projects, and organizing a tournament is no small feat. However, Morales and Garza are capable of bringing together crowds and organizing massive events. The club has simultaneously brought the Latino community closer together, as well as spread the diverse aspects of Latino cultures to students throughout PHS.

"If we can put [in] a little effort, we can make things come true," Garza said. ■



graphic: Wenya Huan

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Athletes of the Month

Jake Angelucci '24: football

Jaiden Jain-Edwards, STAFF WRITER

Tensions are high as the last play of the game begins. The center snaps the ball, and Jake Angelucci '24 springs into action. Lined up against the opposing team's defensive tackle, Angelucci lunges up and mounts a hit that sends him sprawling onto the turf, giving the quarterback just enough time to lob the ball into the end zone. A flawless touchdown, giving the win to the Little Tigers!

At a young age, Angelucci was first introduced to football by his dad and his three older brothers, who were all passionate about the sport.

"[I] looked up to my father playing football," said Angelucci. "As a kid, [football] just always felt natural."

His first time playing football was in middle school, when Angelucci joined the Princeton Junior Football League; then, after gaining football experience in his middle school years, Angelucci joined the PHS football team. While playing, Head Football Coach Charles Gallagher immediately took notice of Angelucci's

skills from the rest of his teammates.

"Jake has done a great job [as a captain]," said Gallagher. "He understands the game... and all the positions, even tailbacks and quarterbacks."

Each year since he started playing, Angelucci has

continued to improve, piling on experiences from the previous seasons. For

Angelucci, his massive strides can be credited in large part to his strength training.

"The way I improved

over the years was starting [out] in the weight room, getting my strength up...

coming in [to highschool] as a

freshman, I wasn't nearly as strong as I

am now. Football is a very physical sport

that you need strength for," Angelucci said.

It hasn't always been an easy path for him though, as the team has dealt with a few struggles in previous years.

"I believe that one of the biggest problems was our practice mindset... we would go into our games, almost [always] expecting to lose," said Angelucci. "[But for] this year, we're going to games expecting [good outcomes] and trying so

[hard] during practice. We're getting good energy

and we're getting the practice [to help] set us up for a win at the end of the week."

In the off-season, the football team hosts practice games to organize the team and build connections. What's most important to the team right now is reaching out to rising ninth graders who will play in the fall.

"It all starts off with the first contact; getting them to come out to practice," said Angelucci. "Once they're there, it's a matter of teaching them and making them feel like a part of the team to get better."

Along with inspiring team talks, Angelucci is a mentor to his teammates. His fellow offensive lineman Leo Sarett '25 has learned a few things from him.

"Over the off-season, he was one of the main reasons I got into the weight room," said Sarett. "He's always inspiring me... and he's always making me work harder. [It's] a nice, positive reinforcement... [that helps me] learn from [mistakes]."

Angelucci stepped into the role of captain rather seamlessly. He has been playing on the varsity level ever since his sophomore year, and he's always been devoted to the team. The impact Angelucci left on his teammates was the reason he was voted co-captain of the team. As an outspoken player who shares encouraging advice with his teammates, Angelucci has greatly helped the team's progress and has been a key reason in their uptick in form.

"Jake has done a great job [and] he's probably one of our more avid guys in the offseason," said Gallagher. "[The team] was just really focused on winning that first game... [and] took that to heart. I think Jake was a big part of that."

With the strong bonds he's forged with the team, Angelucci has strived to become a better team player and captain for all. The Little Tigers have taken last year's progress and added on to it, finishing the season with a record of 5-4.

"Football teaches you a lot about life — [it's] a lot more than people might think," said Angelucci. "It's a thing where you build connections with your friends and [become] a family." ■



photo: Caroline Gu

Ella Bardzilowski '24: cheer

Chloe Zhao, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A roar of excitement rumbles through the New Gym as the annual Princeton High School Pep Rally commences. Under the lead of Ella Bardzilowski '24, the PHS cheer team begins an impressive synchronized routine. Bardzilowski leads the chants, and the routine ends with a difficult pyramid formation, raising all of the flyers high into the air. The crowd cheers and claps in standing ovation.

At five years old, Bardzilowski knew she was destined to cheer from the first time she tried it. While her family encouraged her to try a large variety of sports, cheerleading was the one that truly stood out.

"I knew from the second I tried cheerleading that it would become my thing," said Bardzilowski. "It was such a great hobby to have growing up and I'm so glad it's still a part of my life today."

After three years of being part of the PHS cheer team, all of Bardzilowski's hard work and talent was recognized through her promotion of becoming captain her junior and senior years. Now, the hefty responsibility of leading underclassmen cheerleaders falls onto her shoulders.

"I think she's very good at the job," said Head Coach Veronica Foreman. "The underclassmen look up to her, but they're still friendly, which is an important dynamic. She's very hardworking, and knows when to take things seriously."

Now a senior, Bardzilowski is enjoying and working hard in her last year. Through her years on the team, she has always stood out as a hardworking and dedicated member of the team. Quick to learn and eager to perform, Bardzilowski has grown throughout the years and matured not only as an athlete, but a person too.

"She's always been very dedicated to the team since the start when she joined, which is admirable," said Foreman. "She's very good at what she does, always doing the hardest parts of the routine, and [she's] very good at it. She picks up things quickly."

As Bardzilowski has grown throughout the years, the cheer team has evolved with her, seeing a larger number of participants join the team last year in comparison to past years.

"I am so grateful that we got such a surprise last year with the amount of people who joined the cheer team, so we got to train a lot of people who had never cheered before and got to grow together as a team throughout the season," Bardzilowski said.

Becoming a cheerleader is a commitment—Bardzilowski often finds herself putting cheer before friends, work, and other extracurricular activities. For her, this can become hard to manage, since she has a full schedule loaded with AP and accelerated classes. However, despite outside academic pressure, Bardzilowski's love for the cheer team makes it a part of her schedule she looks forward to.

"It can get challenging to stay on top of homework and studying while having practices every day and while planning for practices, games, and competition outside of normal practice time," said Bardzilowski. "I get to be with all my best friends there doing something I love, so that makes going home and doing work so much easier. It can be tempting to opt out of practice to study or work on college applications, but I remind myself of my commitment to the team and what I get out of this team every day."

From their daily practices and weekend games, the cheerleaders quickly became a family given all the time they had spent together.

"Our team has such a tight bond. Since we barely have time to hang out with anyone else, we are all each other's best friends," said Bardzilowski. "We have certain traditions — like team lunches every Friday and getting together to make banners for game days — that keep us close even outside of practice."

As the team works to form a stronger connection on the sidelines as well, Bardzilowski aims to maintain a strong and healthy team relationship while also communicating during their routines.

"She... is a good captain because she knows cheerleading better than anyone else... [since] she's been doing it for a while," said Kate Mazzoni '26, a PHS cheerleader who has been with the team for two years. "She's also really nice when she is correcting us and isn't bossy at all. I think she definitely does her best to make the team as good as possible."

For aspiring cheerleaders eager to take part in the team's activities and routines, Bardzilowski shares some encouraging advice.

"Be confident! I always tell the team that cheerleading is 50 percent skill and 50 percent confidence," said Bardzilowski. "Unlike other sports, cheerleading is all about putting on a performance, so 'fake it till you make it' is the key ... But of course, discipline and hard work come above all!" ■



photo: Caroline Gu



photo: Caroline Gu

"Definitely Elisio Moncada; He played [well] at linebacker as always and made great plays throughout the game. I love playing next to him and we work really well together; we're always there for each other on and off the field."
- Joseph George '25



photo: Caroline Gu

Football

Which player supported you the most during the game?

"Dante Digiulio; he was always putting the team first. And in the second half [of] his speech, ... he said, 'Coach is right -- if we want to win it's on us,' and that really got me and the rest of the team going."
- Anthony Famiglietti '24



photo: Caroline Gu

"I would say Ben Walden... because he's just there if you make a mistake. He's gonna tell you and make sure you don't do it again."
- Ellinton Foster '26



photo: Caroline Gu

"Our routine this year implements one of the Universal Cheerleaders Association routines [we learned during the summer]... and we were able to do our best in making a more complex stunt routine."
- Ashlynn Potter'24



photo: Caroline Gu

Cheer

How would you describe the cheer routine?

"Our routine is crazy with lots of different stunts and dance parts in it. This year is definitely more difficult... [but it] makes it fun as it pushes all of us!"
- Alex Woodbury '24



photo: Caroline Gu

"I think it showed our team's determination and our spirit for the school... [It] showcased the dedication and talent of our team."
- Valeria Trujillo '26

Homecoming

Sophie Zhang, SPORTS CO-EDITOR



photo: Caroline Gu

PHS Studio Band



"I loved playing 'Are You Gonna Be My Girl' by Jet... The distorted guitar breaks and the moving horn lines make for a super energetic sound."
- Ishaan Banerjee '24



photo: Caroline Gu

"I am wearing white jeans and an old Princeton football shirt. I'm wearing this to join in with the theme of [the] white out and I'm wearing the football shirt to match with the other managers."
- Annesofie Otte '25



photo: Caroline Gu

PHS Studio Band



Band

What is your favorite song the band played?

"Probably 'I Wish' -- it was fun to play on bass and I really like Stevie Wonder, so I was glad that it made the set list."
- Wynne Byard '24



photo: Caroline Gu

PHS Studio Band



"'Eye of the Tiger' because it was... the song the crowd was most excited for."
- Corbin Kasziba '25

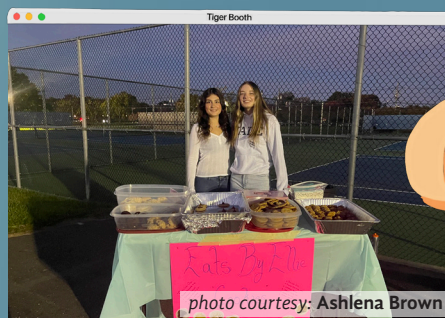


photo courtesy: Ashlena Brown

Crowd

What are you wearing for the white out?

"I'm wearing a white sweater -- white because of the white out, and a sweater because it's cold."
- Finn Neuneier '24

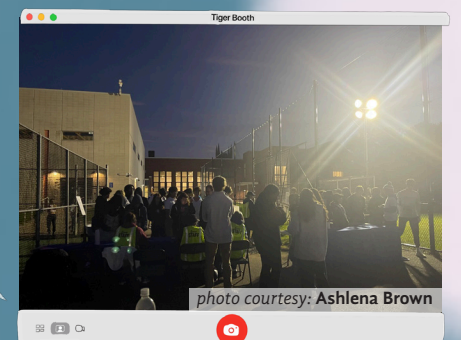


photo courtesy: Ashlena Brown

"I wore [a] white [Latinos Unidos t-shirt] for the white out and because of the weather."
- Glendy Deleon '27