

The Tower

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Dr. Kathleen Foster steps in as Interim Superintendent



Foster smiles for a photo.

Aritra Ray, Andrew Kuo, and Emily Kim
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

On October 22, the PHS community received an email from the Board of Education stating that Dr. Carol Kelley would be resigning from her role as PPS Superintendent following a nine-month leave of absence. In a later email to parents and guardians, Kelley offered her own words of explanation.

"This week, after much consideration, I made the difficult decision to resign as Superintendent of Princeton Public Schools. For personal and professional reasons, I must take some time to reset and recenter myself so I can later return to public education and continue to positively impact students," Kelley wrote in an email.

Following Kelley's announcement, Rebecca Gold stepped in to serve as Acting Superintendent and Dr. Kathleen Foster was appointed as Interim Superintendent ten days later.

Gold and Foster are both long-time administrators, in Princeton and elsewhere. Gold served for more than 25 years in Lawrence Township, serving in various leadership positions, such as the Director of Personnel. She currently serves as the Interim Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources in PPS. The temporary role of Acting Superintendent added to her current responsibilities.

When asked to describe the role of Gold and the Interim Superintendent, Dafna Kendal, President of the Board of Education, said that it was important to have someone to "sign the checks," or in other words, act as a formal authority in the district decisions made by the administrative team.

"The board wants someone in charge; even though we have a really strong administrative team, we just want that one person," Kendal said.

Deeply familiar with Princeton's educational landscape, Foster most recently served as the Interim Principal for Princeton High School following the dismissal of Frank Chmiel. Prior to that, she held a long-standing administrative position in Robbinsville before joining the PPS district in December 2021 as the Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. On November 13, the board approved her appointment as Interim Superintendent, which is expected to last for the rest of Kelley's contractual term.

According to Foster's contract, the Board wants to "enhance administrative stability, financial security, and continuity within the schools while the Superintendent is on a leave of absence."

Rashone Johnson, the assistant principal at PHS, believes that PHS is used to these types of changes and can adapt well to them.

"[The] high school administration is still going to do everything in our power to make sure that things still run smoothly for all of our students and staff," Johnson said.

As PPS changes administrators, students and staff have found ways to continue to achieve the goals of the district, namely quality education. Kendal agreed that students and staff are at the core of the district.

"I think what makes our district great is our teaching staff. And, I know there have been a lot of administrative changes ... [but] our teachers just continue doing their jobs and focus on teaching and learning. So while I think it's important who we have as a leader of the district, I think we're led by ... [what is happening] in our buildings," Kendal said. ■

Families gather for annual ELL Parent Community Night

Claire Tang, STAFF WRITER

On November 16, Princeton Public Schools' English Language Learner and Title 1 families gathered in Princeton Middle School for the third annual Parent Community Night. The Night included interactive workshops on family financial planning, technology assistance, and K-12 academic support that hoped to provide a way for attendees to connect and learn about available resources.

"[Trinidad] Rodriguez and I decided to create this event after noticing many of our ESL families requesting outreach to help understand and know of all the offerings within the school system in the United States," said Vanessa Bernal, a co-organizer of PPS Parent Community Night along with Rodriguez. "Both of us [grew] up with families who immigrated from other countries, [so we] felt this was so important and necessary to do."

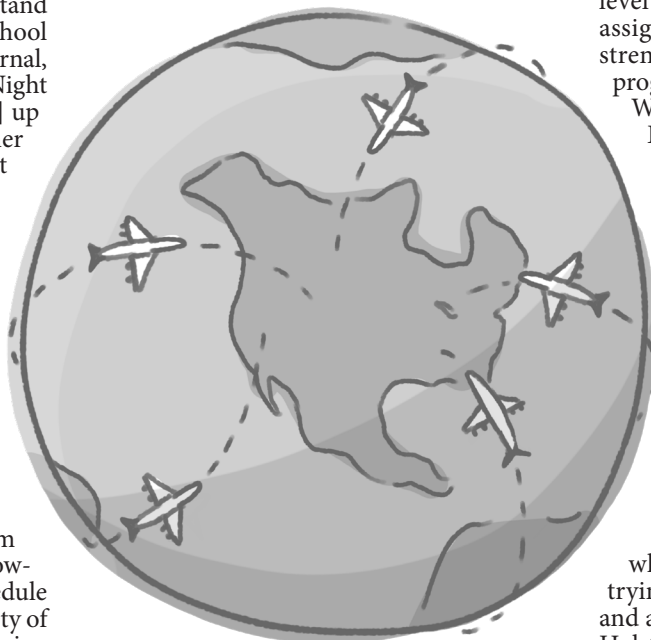
At the event, student volunteer translators from PHS were available to assist non-English speaking parents in registering their children for school athletics, the Dual Language Immersion program, and specific school counseling. Several local Princeton organizations — including the Princeton Public Library, Community House, YMCA, the Princeton Health Department, HiTOPS, and Corner House — were also invited to share out-of-school resources with attendees. From providing free academic tutoring for low-income students to helping attendees schedule flu and COVID-19 vaccinations, the variety of community offerings all work towards ensuring that families can have their needs addressed.

As an effort to build a sense of community among families, a free shared dinner was hosted at the event with the help of a \$1000 Princeton Regional Educational Support Staff Association grant. Following the meal, attendees listened to a keynote speaker, Levi Guerrero, share tips on how to support their children's education, as well as his experience in K-12 and higher education as an immigrant student.

"I [want] to be a voice for people that don't have a voice," said Guerrero. "I feel like if [people] see someone that looks like them,

speaks their language, and comes from the same background, [then] they can relate to them. It's great to have families engaged in [their] kids' educational future."

Growing up speaking English as a second language in PPS, Guerrero understands the importance of creating a school environment that fosters cultural inclusion and enrichment. As a multicultural school district, PPS English Language Learners Program plays an integral role in bridging connections between students who are learning English and their peers.



graphic: Wenya Huan

Having at least one ESL teacher in each school, the growing program develops student English proficiency in four fundamental skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

"[School] districts are required to provide programs taught by ESL certificated teachers if there are ten or more [ESL] students," said Priscilla Russel, the District Supervisor of World Languages, ESL/Bilingual, and Dual Immersion Programs. "Our ESL students contribute to the demographic and cultural diversity that characterizes our schools."

Individualized classes for ESL students are based on their English screening performances, a language proficiency assessment required for non-native English speakers upon registration in the school district. At PHS, students with limited English proficiency can enroll in Welcome Center I, II, or III, ESL English, History, Science, or Math, where they develop English vocabulary through specialized instruction.

With the goal of eventually integrating ESL students into mainstream classes, students are taught and expected to complete grade-level history, science, literature, and math assignments in English, allowing them to strengthen their English proficiency while progressing alongside the school curriculum.

While classes are primarily taught in English, ESL instructors put emphasis on creating an environment that promotes bilingualism and respects linguistic diversity.

"We always emphasize the importance of home languages," said Ted Holsten, an ESL teacher at Littlebrook Elementary School. "All studies show that students who continue speaking and learning in their home languages have an easier time learning English."

At PPS elementary schools, ESL lessons combine grade school activities with formal English instruction, with students playing games, singing songs, and writing Halloween stories.

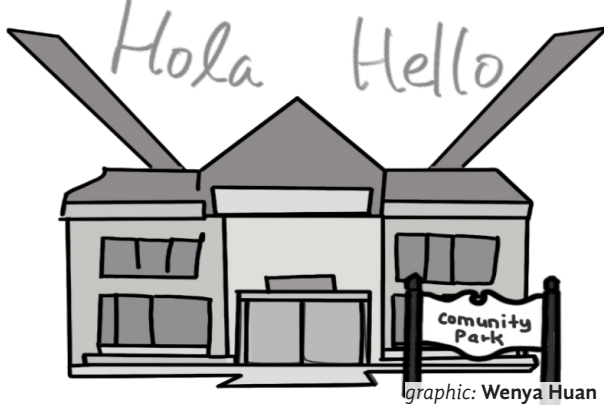
"I like to let students shape their learning when possible. Some beginners want to start trying to speak right away; some are quieter and are not comfortable trying to speak," said Holsten. "I try to be sensitive to each student's personality and interests. I enjoy seeing the way that students are motivated by wanting to communicate and help each other."

Opportunities for enrolling in adult ESL classes, or English Conversation Groups, at Princeton Public Library were also offered at the Parent Community Night.

"What helps the families the most this evening is just being able to connect, to see themselves in the speaker and the teachers, and to see their children be in the school building connecting with other students," said Bernal. "That sense of community is really important." ■

Eight years on, PPS's DLI program continues to bridge language gaps

Daniel Guo, NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITOR
Matias Da Costa and Leila Guitton, STAFF WRITERS
Elif Cam, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



graphic: Wenya Huan

This fall, Princeton High School welcomed the first cohort of students who took part in the Community Park Elementary School's Dual Language Immersion program. Having been recognized as a model program for Spanish Dual Language Immersion by the New Jersey Department of Education, CP's full DLI program engages students in Spanish culture and language from a young age with half of the core instruction taught in English and the other half taught in Spanish. While this program has gained much praise since its inception in 2015, it has also been met with some criticism, as it brings up the longstanding issue of possible overcrowding in the other elementary schools in the school district.

With over 1,000 new housing units projected to be completed in Princeton by 2026 resulting in consistent growth in enrollment, expansion has always been a discussed topic in the community. In recent years, concerns have been raised by many parents, especially those whose children choose to be rerouted around the unfilled CP elementary school that is currently exclusively for students in the DLI program.

"DLI has become an issue [as] ... it's not popular enough to consistently fill a whole school. If you don't want to do DLI, you have to go to another school. So we're busing kids all over the place. Kids that would walk to CP, we're busing them to Johnson Park," said PPS Business Administrator Matthew Bouldin.

However, both Bouldin and the District Supervisor of World Languages Priscilla Russel believe that while CP is indeed experiencing a lack of students in the DLI program, the district's other elementary schools are not overcrowded, but full.

"We need to be careful — [the other schools] are full, but they're not overcrowded," said Russel. "[CP] does have some empty classrooms ... but our goal had always been to create a dual language immersion school, which we were doing pretty well until the pandemic hit and changed just a whole lot of things."

CP Principal Dineen Gruchacz further describes the hindering factors brought by the pandemic, detailing how they have contributed to a lower-than-expected number of students in the DLI program.

"[During the pandemic], lots of people shied away from anything different than a very basic education program," said Gruchacz. "The recovery time to build back the numbers in the [classrooms] ... is definitely something that needs to be addressed."

A DLI program at CP was first proposed in 2013 with the hopes of strengthening bilingual and multicultural learning in the district by taking advantage of Princeton's extensive diversity. Rather than supplementing English classes with a single world language class, the DLI's program primary aim was to create a more holistic approach to language and culture, immersing students by teaching half of their subjects in Spanish instead of English.

DLI programs have become increasingly popular across the country due to the cognitive benefits associated with learning more than one language from a younger age and in response to the undervaluation of foreign languages

in English-speaking countries. In fact, according to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the universality of English is one of the main reasons why English is the most commonly taught language worldwide by a factor of 20, a discrepancy that DLI programs hope to address.

"Princeton is not a huge town, but it's a town [made up] of really diverse community members and perspectives," said Kimberley Tew, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. "We want to make sure that we're honoring that being bilingual and biliterate is a superpower ... in an increasingly globalized world. [That] is the goal of the program; not just to develop [linguistic] skills, but to develop cultural competency."

Along with welcoming DLI program alumni to PHS for the first time, the district has extended the DLI program past the elementary and middle school levels by introducing a new horticulture class tailored to teach basic biology principles in Spanish, taught by science and research teacher Mark Eastburn. Eastburn, who is fluent in both Spanish and English, reflects on the tremendous positive impacts that learning a new language can have on a child's cognitive abilities and consequently believes that many more people should be signing up for the program.

"I remember, many years ago, the evidence being overwhelmingly strong that dual language immersion programs are a way of supercharging children's brains," said Eastburn. "The evidence has only gotten better over time, and why we can't get more people to sign up in a community which truly cares about education is baffling to me."

While the district does offer Spanish classes in the traditional route in all the other elementary schools, many parents believe that language education in the traditional method of language learning is not sufficient for students to gain fluency, leading them to choose DLI. Nicole Pezold, a current CP parent, believes that foreign language education is not prioritized in the traditional curriculum.

"I think it's kind of an American approach to learning foreign languages to just not prioritize them at all. And I think that our schools in Princeton are trying to prioritize it way more than schools elsewhere in the nation, but we still are approaching it from an old perspective of language learning. I think immersion is the future, or one potential road for the future of language learning for people who really think that that's an important part of a rounded education," Pezold said.

Some parents who compare the immersive education of their children to their own experiences with the traditional method point out the effectiveness of DLI over the traditional method. Georgette Stern, who currently has three kids enrolled in the DLI program, shares her satisfaction with her kids' improvement in the language.

"My husband and I both took Spanish throughout middle and high school, but you don't get the same level. I often speak to [my kids] in broken Spanish and ... it's great to see the level of comprehension," said Stern. "It's an amazing opportunity to be able to have your kids hear another language for half of their day, and also get core instruction in those languages."

In addition to offering enhanced opportunities for students who may not speak a second language at home to become bilingual, the DLI program intends to aid the large Spanish-speaking population in Princeton by helping them strengthen their bilingual skills and learn about their heritage more deeply.

"One of the original goals of the program was to close the opportunity gap," said Tew. "A lot of times when students move to the school district or move to America, they lose

some of the foundational skills and pieces in their heritage languages ... so we [are] targeting our [Spanish-speaking] multilingual learners so that they can strengthen their knowledge base in both languages."

Olu Ogunyankin, a CP parent and a native of Guatemala, shared that the main reason her family chose to move to Princeton from South Brunswick was for the DLI program.

"[Before starting at CP], even though we speak Spanish at home, [my son] would reply in English because he was in a Pre-K where they just spoke English. And [although] it's been two months since the classes started in kindergarten, I see a huge difference in the amount of Spanish that he uses at home. He's giving me sentences in Spanish, he's replying in Spanish, and soon he's gonna write in that language too," Ogunyankin said.

The program is intended to help both native Spanish speakers and the already multicultural and multilingual families in Princeton who may not speak Spanish but want their children to continue learning in different languages.

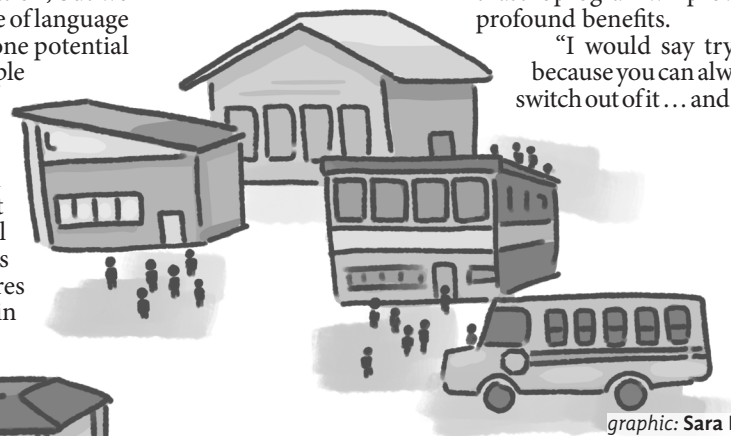
"We're targeting any family or child who believes in multiculturalism, biliteracy, and bilingualism. We have a lot of families who don't speak Spanish at home, but they might already be a trilingual or bilingual family, and they want their child to have that experience in school as well," Tew said.

PHS freshmen who took part in the first cohort of the DLI program highly recommend it for incoming elementary students at CP, finding that in addition to learning a new language from a younger age, the cultural immersion provided by the program has given them a different perspective of the world around them.

"I feel like you're connected to a different culture. You're more immersed [and] you have a better ability to understand things around the world because you get to know people who were specifically part of that culture," said Charles Baglio '27, a member of the first DLI cohort. "[CP] did it really well ... and it's an experience that you'll take with you for the rest of your life."

For the parents who aren't considering the DLI program, Milania Kapoor '27, another freshman who participated in the DLI program, recommends that parents try the program for their children before they make a decision, expressing that the program will provide profound benefits.

"I would say try it, because you can always switch out of it ... and ask



graphic: Sara Hu

to go to a different school," said Kapoor. "In my opinion, it was an incredible experience for me. Not only are you learning a language, but it's just a different experience ... because you learn math in Spanish, you learn science in Spanish, ... and you [become] so smart as a young kid."

With a growing Spanish-speaking population in the United States and an increasingly globalized world, learning a second language will become an important skill for future generations. How Princeton schools will balance an immersion program and potential overcrowding issues, however, may require compromise.

"It's a matter of everyone getting along and understanding each other better, and then building those bridges to actually move everyone forward as a society, which Princeton has the opportunity to do," said Eastburn. "We really need to hammer that home to the public, because [an immersion program is] such a unique and important thing that we can offer as a district." ■

Flash Feature: Instant Decisions Day

Emily Kim and Aritra Ray, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Throughout late October and early November, many PHS seniors took advantage of higher education opportunities through Instant Decisions Day. First held at PHS last year, it allows high schoolers to immediately learn whether they receive admission and secure chances for higher education. Additionally, instant decisions aren't necessarily commitments, so students can also apply to other schools through the normal channels.

The process of IDD began sometime in early October, when interested students attended a meeting that helped them navigate through the requirements for the event — minimum GPA, letters of recommendation, household information, etc. Once approved, all students had left was to prepare for a 15-minute interview with the respective admission officers.

During the week of Halloween, Emma Maffei '24, an IDD participant, emphasized a relatively low level of stress during the event. At the event, she was accepted to Farleigh Dickinson University, Montclair State University, and Rider University.

"Everyone was really young and really nice," said Maffei. "They're from the actual college; they're students, [so] it's more like you're having a conversation than an interview."

For Maffei, it was a relief to know she has choices for the future.

"It was a great opportunity to get everything in pretty early," said Maffei. "It's kind of nice knowing that I'm accepted into at least one [college]. Just getting some of that stress off was really good for me."

Despite some changes this year, such as a stricter deadline for required materials for participating colleges, the fair ended up having an 96% average acceptance rate and double the number of accepted students compared to last year, mainly because students were more prepared to meet with admissions officers. Despite the value it already provides for PHS students, the PHS college department has big ambitions for future IDs.

"I hope to expand to some colleges, maybe outside New Jersey, [and] attract a more diverse list of colleges; for example,



photo credit: Nick Niforatos

Fredy Donis '24, Ross Leroy '24, Daniel Amfo-Ayeh '24, and CJ Foreman '24 pose with the flags of the universities they were accepted to during IDD.

historically black colleges and universities. I'd love to have more HBCUs participate," said Nipurna Shah, PHS College and Career Counselor.

The HBCU college fair is another opportunity for students looking for a different type of college experience. While primarily geared towards the education of students of color, anyone can, and is encouraged to, attend.

"They [HBCUs] all have quite a varied range of majors and programs," said Shah. "It's a more specialized type of community."

This year, around 20 students attended the fair, including PHS senior Rossini Leroy. He later received acceptances to Claflin University and Virginia State University.

"There were tables set up everywhere with college reps standing behind them," said Leroy. "We would go to whichever college interested us and we would talk to the representative about the college."

Regardless of where PHS seniors end up, the option and opportunity to achieve a higher education is what allows IDD to thrive in popularity at PHS. ■

PHS Profile: Elizabeth Taylor

Mattias Blix, Matias Da Costa, and Claire Tang
STAFF WRITERS

First dreaming about becoming a history teacher when she was only in the first grade, this fall will mark Social Studies Teacher Elizabeth Taylor's 13th year teaching at PHS. Growing up in Wichita, Kansas, Taylor debated between journalism and teaching history in high school, but the difficulty of attending a journalism college and the lack of a newspaper at her high school compelled her to choose education as a more secure option.

After receiving her bachelor's and master's degrees from Boston University, Taylor taught United States and World History at Westford Academy in Massachusetts for nine years before she and her husband moved to South Jersey, where it was closer to family. Budget cuts caused by the 2008 Recession led to fewer available teaching positions, with the only one being PHS at the time. She took the offer to work at PHS knowing the challenge and reputation of the district.

"I chose education over journalism [because] I thought that I had a more secure job as a teacher. I shadowed a reporter at a local newspaper for a day during my senior year and remember them telling me that to get a job as a reporter, ... you had to have worked on your high school newspaper. My school didn't even have a newspaper, so I figured I didn't really have a chance," said Taylor. "I liked history; I was good at it, and I had several great history teachers. My mom was also a teacher, as was an aunt and a cousin, so I could easily picture myself as a teacher."

Taylor strives to create a learning environment that is both intellectually engaging and inspires students to consider different perspectives. In order to keep students engaged, as well as make each year different for herself, Taylor adjusts her curriculum each year to incorporate current events and new resources that fit the needs of the new class.

"Current events definitely help to make each year unique; this has especially been true over the last several years. Also, getting a new group of students, with their own interests and personalities; realizing that students in one period aren't as engaged by a topic as students in an earlier period were, and moving on more quickly," Taylor said.

In addition to social studies, Taylor also teaches Sociology Accelerated at PHS. Because of her limited knowledge on sociology and the time she had to allocate to her baby at home, Taylor was initially reluctant to adopt the new course. However, after five weeks of teaching the subject, Taylor fell in love with the creativity it allowed as well its applicability to students' lives.

"Professionally, it is the best thing that has happened to me. ... I love that it's a rigorous course without the pressure of an AP exam," Taylor said.

Having been regarded as a tough but fair teacher by previous and current students, Taylor finds that both of her



Taylor returns graded annotations to her Sociology Accelerated class.

courses teach students study skills and time management habits, which they can continue to apply in high school and throughout college.

"Tough but fair" sounds about right. I hope to create an environment that is intellectually engaging and where students feel supported as they try new things and perspectives," Taylor said.

Through her teaching, Taylor hopes to develop students' desires to keep up with current events and become active members of society. Emma Liu '26, a student in Taylor's AP U.S. History class, appreciates her commitment to helping her students.

"She provides a lot of support for her students and really tries to help them succeed whether [that's] in the classroom or for the AP Exam," Liu said.

Outside of the classroom, Taylor strives to find a balance between work obligations and spending time with family.

"The demands on teachers are simply too great, and it definitely got much harder once I had kids," said Taylor. "The best I have done is to ignore anything PHS-related during the summer, and to instead focus on the rest of my life as much as possible, ... but during the school year, teaching takes up the majority of my time and attention."

In her limited free time, Taylor enjoys gardening, dancing, and reading. Having been a dancer her whole life, she finds that her weekly tap dance classes give her the opportunity to unwind from the stresses of teaching.

"I take an adult tap class now that is probably the best hour of the week for me, because I'm just focusing on

something that I need and not what my students need, or my kids need, or my husband needs" Taylor said.

As her two children grow up, Taylor notes how she's been able to relate much more to her students and their ambitious high school classes and extracurriculars as she learns to deal with her own children's ambitions.

"I see high school students who are just trying to do it all. ... They want to take five AP classes, be president of this club, etc. ... and as a teacher, there's just not enough hours in the day to do all of this, right?" Taylor said. "Now as a parent, I'm struggling to make those same types of decisions because it's not like we're pushing them into these things ... and it's really hard as a parent to say no when it's something that they're passionate about, because you want to encourage their passions, but you also don't want them to burn out. ... So, I definitely have more sympathy for my students as I watch my children navigate this themselves."

For incoming and current APUSH students, Taylor hopes that they recognize that the class is much more than just learning history. She stresses how all of the challenges that come with taking APUSH are what makes a student's journey in her class so special.

"A lot of it is about the journey that they go through over the course of the year. APUSH is a really hard class, but at the end of the year, students overwhelmingly tell me how worth it it was and how they learned so much more than just US history, and even more than just how to be a historian," said Taylor. "I like seeing the journey from how they first approach the class, and what they think their goals are, what they think they're going to get out of it, and then seeing at the end of the year, how much that has evolved." ■

"I hope to create an environment that is intellectually engaging and where students feel supported as they try new things and perspectives,

Journalists Abroad: a PHS student's experience as an exchange student

Meiya Xiong, STAFF WRITER
Asya Morozov, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Bonjour! We are Asya and Meiya, and along with around 40 other PHS students, we recently took part in the exchange between the two high schools PHS and Lycée Bartholdi in Colmar, France. During this exchange, we were each paired with a student from Bartholdi, and we took turns hosting each other in our homes to share our cultures and daily lives. In October, PHS students hosted the Bartholdi students while they visited the U.S., but from November 3 to 14, it was our turn to travel to France.

Participating in the exchange allowed us the opportunity to improve our French, as we were immersed in a French-speaking environment every day. We had to practice our French in order to interact and communicate with the people in all of the places we visited, such as landmarks, tours, restaurants, and especially our host families. Although French people are notorious for policing grammar and pronunciation, they remained respectful when people showed genuine admiration for their language and culture. Making an effort to engage with people in their language helped us connect more with the people we encountered. There were many instances on the trip where French people, knowing that we were Americans, decided to speak to us in English. In these situations, it was easy to chicken out and choose to speak English. At one point, during our visit to the Linge Memorial and surrounding German trenches, we were given the option to split into two groups: one with a French-speaking tour guide and one with an English-speaking one. So many kids chose to go in the French-speaking group that some had to be held back for the English one. When given the option to challenge ourselves, many of us took it, demonstrating that we were willing to make the effort to speak and understand French, despite not being perfect at it.

Our visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg was another experience that reaffirmed the importance of learning languages for us. On our guided tour of the building, we got to go into the giant domed chamber where plenary sessions of the Parliament are held, and we were able to watch an event consisting of a conversation between a young Swedish delegate and a Georgian film director, along

with some of the Parliament representatives. As with all Parliament events, there were live translation services to enable all of the representatives to listen and communicate in their own languages, and we were able to listen to the live translation from English to French on headsets. This really left an impression on the role of languages to facilitate communication and understanding.

Despite the fact that we are English speakers and many speakers of other languages learn English, it is still very valuable to learn other languages since it allows us to communicate with others in their own language and let them express themselves more authentically rather than forcing English as a standard. If we can understand their language, we can also better understand them as people.

Apart from providing an opportunity for improving our language skills, the trip also broadened our horizons culturally and our knowledge historically.

By staying with our correspondents and their families, we were able to experience much more of what life is like for French families and students. For them, school starts at around 8:00 a.m. depending on a student's schedule, and ends at 6:00 p.m. This means that families wake up early to get ready for the day and go to sleep early, exhausted after so much school. However, our correspondents seemed to have much less homework than we do and have plenty of time for fun with friends. They were also not constrained by school sports or significant afterschool activities. Our entire host families would also go to sleep much earlier than what is normal for us. It was slightly strange to be the only one awake after 10:00 p.m., which we were quite surprised by and certainly envious of. For us, being able to see how their way of life differed from ours was a really interesting aspect of the trip. We were also introduced to many other customs and practices, as well as French cuisine.

A big part of our daily program was visits to historical sites and museums, which were really enriching learning opportunities. These included visits to the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Opéra Garnier, the Strasbourg Cathedral, etc. While in Colmar, a major part of visits focused on the history of the Alsace region in relation to its location on

the French-German border, especially its involvements in WWI and WWII. These visits were much more solemn, namely those to the Alsace-Moselle memorial and Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp. The Alsace-Moselle memorial is dedicated to the lives lost in that region during the numerous times it was passed between French and German hands. As a frontier province, Alsace-Moselle saw the Franco-Prussian War, the Great War, and World War II, and its identity was very much influenced by the repeated changing between German and French rule. The Natzweiler-Struthof camp is France's only concentration camp, as most are located in Poland. Visiting this site was emotionally difficult for everyone in our group, with many finding it hard to finally confront the reality of what we've read about in history books and English class. There were many actual photos of the horrors of the camp, photos not represented in more sanitized school history books. This was a difficult but absolutely necessary experience.

The immersive experience of participating in the Princeton-Colmar exchange not only allowed us to significantly improve our language and communication skills, but also helped us to better understand and appreciate another culture and way of life, expanding our cultural awareness and global perspective. If given the chance to participate in an exchange in the future, we recommend that all students should try to take advantage of the opportunity. ■

What did you like most about France?

Strasbourg Cathedral!

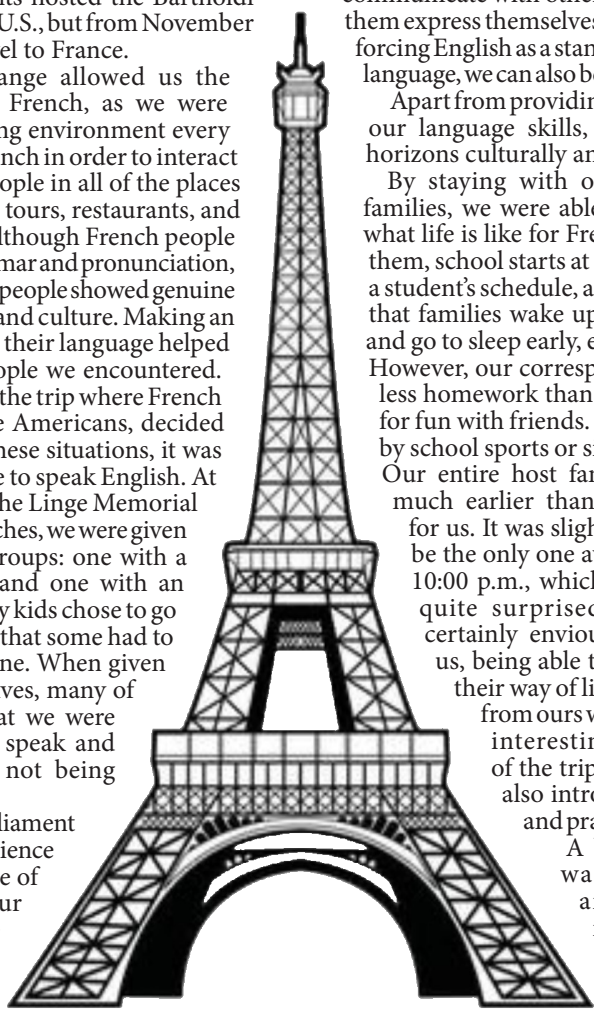
- Asya Morozov '25

Public transportation!

-Meiya Xiong '25



photo courtesy: Meiya Xiong



graphic: Wenya Huan



OPINIONS

Stop relying on celebrity activism

Claire Tang and Chloe Zhao, STAFF WRITERS



graphic: Katherine Chen

In the past, celebrities were shining stars: singers, dancers and politicians only seen by fans on the black screens of television. Now, in the age of unrestrained usage of social media, the distance between celebrities and fans is stripped. From convincing fans to purchase a product they endorse to imposing their views on important world events and issues, celebrities and public figures now hold the power to

influence an impressionable audience with the click of a button.

After the senseless killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement saw a massive influx of attention on various media. From trending Twitter “blacklivesmatter” hashtags to the 28 million Instagram users who participated in “Blackout Tuesday,” publicly proclaiming

support on social media for BLM was deemed the right thing to do, and keeping silent was perceived as immoral and almost racist. Brands and celebrities rode on this social media wave, blacking out their social media profile pictures and professing their support to the movement in posts. While these popular gestures were intended to show solidarity with the movement, it set a larger precedent that activism simply meant announcing one’s alignment with a cause without the intention of further support.

Mass distribution of misguided statements is the central cause for the spread of misinformation, an all too common consequence of celebrity “activism.” A study conducted by researchers at Reuters Institution in 2022 found that 20 percent of posts containing misinformation about COVID-19 were created by influencer profiles. Even more damaging, because of their large monopoly on social media, celebrity posts on important issues often overshadow expert opinions and helpful resources posted by lesser known accounts,

devaluing the function of professional journalism. The often performative nature of celebrity activism becomes clear in nuanced situations such as the Israeli-Palestinian war, which saw much less celebrity engagement. Given the extreme complexity of the conflict, there was no longer a clear-cut, “politically-correct” side to side with or to jump on the bandwagon for. Many fans blasted their idols upon observing their “silence,” questioning why they weren’t using their platform to weigh in on the situation. However, celebrities shouldn’t be pressured to “speak up” on political issues that they have no background in when expert opinions hold more importance in informing the public.

The influence celebrities have on impressionable fans regarding social issues often unfolds on an emotional level rather than from factual evidence, resulting in unacceptable behaviors by hot-tempered fans that attack individuals who speak out against the misguided ideologies spread by biased public figures. For example, in April 2020, the actor Woody Harrelson shared

his claim regarding the 5G network being the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic to his two million followers on Instagram. The time frame of his claims correlated with at least 20 cell tower polls being burned to the ground in the UK. Telecom employees were also harassed on the streets while attempting to set up 5G fiber optic cables. Kanye West, also known for his anti-vaccination stance, told Forbes that he believed COVID-19 vaccinations would “put chips inside of us” during the pandemic. This proven-false conspiracy theory snowballed and soon became a popular statement spread by anti-vaccine groups. Furthermore, the misinformed statements of celebrities are often regurgitated in popular media in order to generate more clicks, consequently exacerbating the spread of their falsified claims.

As teenagers, the demographic most susceptible to celebrity influence, PHS students should be mindful of and avoid valuing their favorite celebrities’ opinions over expert opinions in order to make informed decisions. In a time where rampant false information is spread online, it’s important to realize that the power of reliable research to uncover truths is longstanding and undeniable. ■

“Celebrities and public figures now hold the power to influence an impressionable audience with the click of a button.”

Embracing empathy amidst the conflict in Israel and Palestine

Tamar Assayag, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR and Harry Dweck, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On October 7, 2023, Hamas, the Muslim authority of the Gaza Strip, invaded the state of Israel. In response, the Israeli cabinet vowed “to wipe... Hamas off the face of the Earth.” In the following weeks, the world watched the attack become the bloodiest war in Israel’s history. According to the New York Times, as of November 7, there have been over 1,400 Israeli and 10,000 Palestinian civilian and militant casualties, as well as 422 Israeli hostages and 1.5 million internally displaced Gazans.

The war has also come with inflammatory speech and calls for violent protest. The Anti-Defamation League has recorded a 388 percent rise in antisemitic incidents in the U.S. between October 7 and October 25, compared to the same period last year. Similarly, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, reports of Islamophobia were up 182 percent in the U.S. between October 7 and October 24, compared to the average 16-day period last year. Educational institutions have been particularly rife with confrontation. For instance, at

the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a student was recently arrested for assaulting a fellow Jewish student at a vigil. Stanford has also been investigating possible hate crimes committed against a Muslim student. And at Harvard, Palestine solidarity groups received widespread condemnation after releasing a joint statement saying they “hold the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence.”

Other, less extreme responses have also contributed to the deafening noise. One such reaction is performative activism on social media and the rush to

take sides; this is often caused by the widespread lack of empathy for others and a general lack of understanding of the nuanced situation. You have probably seen it online; a binary stance, or lack thereof, becomes a part of one’s character. This pressures people to hop on social media to share a quick something about the war and get it over with. A global conflict becomes a box they can check off, a guilty feeling they think they can dispose of with a simple click. This leads to a common sentiment: When people lack compassion, time, and space for reflection, the results are horrendous. In October 2022, AP News conducted a poll that found that around 75 percent of adults in the U.S. agree that

misinformation leads to violent views and behaviors.

Incorrect, radical, and often conflicting messaging related to the Israel-Hamas war can make it difficult to discern the truth and process our reaction to it. However, instead of trying to easily address the situation with a simplistic perspective or opinion, the most effective solution is to take time to develop a complete understanding and keep empathy at the center of thought.

While not all responses to the war have been peaceful, we are fortunate that at PHS, we have had thoughtful and constructive

opportunities for reflection. On October 17, PHS invited Rabbi Merow from The Jewish Center to help students process their reactions. On October 20, PHS hosted a Gathering for Peace and Hope, in which the Muslim Student Union, the Jewish Club, and the Middle Eastern Students Association came together to recite Amanda Gorman’s poem “The Hill We Climb.”

Rather than making rash and violent decisions or participating in performative acts without a true understanding of the issue at hand, we should continue to encourage each other and ourselves to take time in making decisions and keep an open mind. It’s not an easy topic. That’s

not to say that one may not have an opinion on the subject; individual opinions are encouraged and valued, but it is essential to maintain an anti-violent and open-minded approach when developing them. This war and our reactions to it are anything but a justification for hatred. If we want true unity, true resolution, and true peace, the best reaction is a thoughtful and empathetic one. ■



graphic: Caroline Gu

PREX

PRINCETON RECORD EXCHANGE

Teachers and transference: does Freud matter in high schools?

Alexander Margulis, OPINIONS CONTRIBUTING WRITER

“It almost looks,” wrote Sigmund Freud in “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” his dark, sobering final paper, “as if analysis were the third of those impossible professions in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government.” It’s a strange claim for the man credited with founding psychoanalysis — a field which defines what Freud called “neuroses” as results of unchecked unconscious desires — to make: imagine a teacher ending the school year with a lecture about how their class had been predestined to disappoint. And yet the impossibility of fully satisfying the psychoanalytic patient was at the center of Freud’s theories. To understand why — and to understand whether Freud’s ideas, and the discipline that arose from them, matter at PHS — we have to talk about transference.

Don’t let its academic aura fool you: the theory of transference is, quite simply, a theory of love. In his “Observations on a Transference-Love,” Freud proposed that the “layman’s” conceptualization of love as a pure, quasi-spiritual force was shortsighted. This conclusion, characteristically, comes from a deep personal failure: in the early days of his practice, Freud pushed away a string of patients (most notably the pseudonymous Dora) who had become inexplicably attracted to him. His attempt to understand the roots of the pattern, despite being tainted by sexist misconceptions and unscientific assumptions, ended up producing the seminal idea of transference: Freud posited that we bring the emotional expectations and desires of our childhood with us wherever

we go — including, of course, to the analyst’s couch.

Today, analysts agree almost unanimously (a rare thing, in the fraught world of psychoanalytic institutes) that doctors can allow nothing to arise from a patient’s love. But this is not because the patient’s love isn’t real — it has the same transference roots as any other of their romantic attractions. The rule exists simply because an analyst’s office is an inappropriate and manipulative context for genuine romantic intimacy.

Perhaps I’ve failed to explain how lonely and terrifying Freud’s theory is. Janet Malcolm, in “The Impossible Profession,” does it more justice: “even... romantic love is fundamentally solitary, and has at its core a profound impersonality. The concept of transference... destroys faith in personal

relations.” Or, more succinctly: “we cannot know each other.” And yet the idea is vital to the psychoanalytic encounter, in which the analyst is often tasked with “knowing” their patient. As it turns out, only by recognizing and “harnessing” countertransference — feelings from the doctor towards the patient which arise from what Malcolm calls “early blueprints” — can an analyst ensure that their patient’s unconscious urges (and the analyst’s own) don’t destroy the possibility for a productive and genuinely helpful process. Some psychoanalysts would object to my language here. Thankfully, I’m not a psychoanalyst, and I have no institutional reputation to uphold. What I am is a high schooler — one who thinks that the classroom, too, should be productive and genuinely helpful, and that student-

teacher relationships form (of course) an inappropriate context for romance.

Don’t get me wrong: focusing on the erotics of a high school classroom is unhelpful and weird. And Freud — sexist, self-centered, pseudoscientific Freud — hardly seems like a figure you’d want helping teachers at PHS to relate with their students. But a general understanding of transference, as I see it, should help rectify (or at least explain) some of the expectations we form (consciously or otherwise) of the classroom.

As the analyst Leo Stone explained in 1967, rather than casting teachers as lovers, we recognize in them the “caretaking functions of the original parents.” Deadlines at school and curfews at home are subject to the same set of tangled emotional push-backs. But at

the same time, students crave the teacher’s parental love: we want to be cared for. Of course, openly addressing transference in the classroom would be, as Merve Emre puts it in “Are you my Mother?,” “its own variety of pedagogical failure.” Classes have neither the time nor the moral obligation to become therapy sessions. Still, students would do well to remember that a teacher is not obligated to love them — or even care about them on an individual level — in the same way a parent might. Often, instead of wanting to be taught, we yearn for the teacher to seek out our own knowledge: in a class with 30 other students, though, an educator failing to do so is a practical choice rather than a personal slight.

I’ve also come to believe (with significantly less authority, never having been a teacher myself) that PHS teachers can learn from the way an analyst deals with the urge to reciprocate their patient’s “transference-love.” Caring for students is, of course, important, but replacing constructive rigor and challenge with either a doting, carefree environment or one where the teacher feels as though they must make the class wildly, unhelpfully difficult in order to reaffirm their own authority, is harmful for everybody involved. It’s hard, as someone who finds a perhaps embarrassing amount of joy in the classes I take here at PHS, to agree with Freud that education is an impossible profession. But it seems that students who want to please or defy their educators at all costs and teachers who seek to become surrogate parents or all-knowing kings each fall prey to the same misguided assumption: that the high school classroom could ever be truly satisfying. ■



graphics: Caroline Gu

TomFOOLery	Tower STORY posts
	AQUAphor
Staying HYDRATED	
	NORTHERN ATTITUDE by Noah Kahan feat. Hozier
SHARP pencils	YOUNG President Snow
Uncreative PSYCHES	
	PHS TISSUES
Xmas music in NOVEMBER	
	Dried out CLAY in room 82
SLOW walkers	
	Improper usage of OXFORD COMMAS

75 CHARACTERS

CHEERS & JEERS

STUFF WE LIKE

STUFF WE DON'T

PHS

The Tower

PHS, you get 75 characters: Tell us your favorite unpopular Thanksgiving food.

Lilly Schwalb, '25
Thanksgiving is my excuse to eat French fries with mayo once a year.

Finn Neuneier, '24
Idk if this is unpopular, but my family always eats braised red cabbage.

Erin Kim, '24
Beef Wellington because I aspire to become British.

Sayanti Dhatta, '24
Gravy, because it was my introduction to cooking western foods.

Kaelen Patel, '27
Turduckenn, because it tastes yummy.



College apps or kind hearts: the truth behind community service

Editorial

Community service is no foreign concept for many students around the nation. Many school districts, including Princeton High School, require their students to fulfill a certain number of community service hours during their time in high school, ticking off the graduation requirement prior to leaving their senior years. While this requirement can be extremely beneficial and helpful for communities and students alike, it also raises many questions pertaining to the ethical aspect of mandating community service hours: Does requiring community service in schools undermine the intrinsic nature of what community service is? Does it instead build a strong foundation for the students while opening new pathways for students to explore their interests? While there is no definite answer, mandating community service for students infringes upon the intrinsic nature of what community service is supposed to be, despite still posing as a pathway for students to explore their interest and give back to their communities.

Community service at its core has been defined and recognized as an act of voluntary help for one's community. The essence of community service is based on the foundation of volunteering, rather than a mandated requirement. By setting requirements for students to accomplish for the sole purpose of graduating, schools directly infringe upon the very nature of what volunteer work is, thus damaging and reducing the noble act of giving back to your community from the selflessness of your heart, to yet another "assignment" that needs to be completed before the end of high school.

Reduction of such sorts can also prove to be harmful to not only students, but communities alike. By mandating community service, students may start to draw parallels by comparing it to schoolwork for classes, assigned homework, or class credits that need to be fulfilled in order

to graduate. Such activities that usually carry negative connotations, due to their mundane and stressful natures, may in turn inflict a similar message upon community service. By requiring community service for graduation, students may start to shy away from taking part in any form of community service after they fulfill their hours or even after high school due to the weak first impressions they experienced as it being a requirement. As such, mandating community service may end up damaging the future of community service, rather than fostering one.

However, despite the concerns raised pertaining to ethics of mandated community service, the system can actually be beneficial for some students. The required hours for community service have created many opportunities, both in the school and within the community. Students are exposed to various forms of community service around their towns, and can pursue different passions or interests that they might have, while at the same time fulfilling their hours for graduation. With more than 20 community service clubs in the school and many more outside in the community, students are given a plethora of options to choose from when deciding how they want to complete their hours, and as part of that process, students may find a passion for a service project. They might continue pursuing that passion for the rest of high school, and maybe even carry that passion beyond, building a strong foundation for students to carry with them into the real world.

While the premise of mandated community service infringes upon the intrinsic nature of what community service is meant to be, its positive impacts can be seen reflected upon the school and community. Students can find boxes of canned goods filled to the brim, elementary children refining their musicality after school, and empowering posters to spread awareness on issues in the PHS hallways. These actions of the student body come as a result of a simple graduation requirement, and while the main intention is to tick that box, the process of reaching that point often leaves a positive mark on our school community, expanding our worldview and making new connections. ■

Hands down — quiet people, speak up

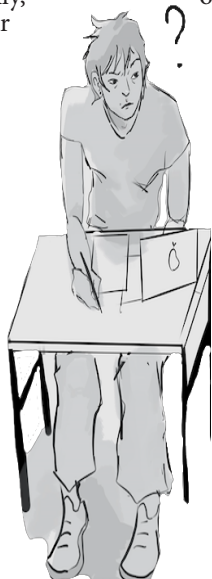
Joy Chen and Iniya Karimanal,
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

The teacher has just asked a question, and the answer that was so clear in your mind is now clouded by questions: What if it's wrong? What if everyone laughs at me? What if I trip up my words and embarrass myself? The hand that you were about to raise goes back to your lap. To a teacher, this lowered hand could automatically lead to a lower grade, an assumption that you didn't do the assignment, or an overall sour feeling about you. Very quickly, those questions about your participation become questions about your grade, leading to a new anxious spiral from a want to participate to the fear holding you back.

Quiet people are often perceived as uninterested, unopinionated, or even disrespectful as they tend not to engage in large groups. Although we have this assumption in schools that quieter students can be coaxed out of their shells, the participation grade incentive that schools use to get students to open up does not work. This incentive leads to greater anxiety as the desire to raise this grade is overshadowed by the anxiety that

comes along with raising it. In general, participation grades are an inaccurate representation of students' academic performances that ought to be replaced with a more inclusive analysis of students' understanding of the material.

The desire to remain quiet comes from natural parts



of people's personalities, such as shyness or introversion. While both traits can coexist, it is critical to make the distinction between the two. Shyness is fear of social judgment. Everyone has shyness to some extent, and that is how the initial fear of raising your hand appears in the first place. Introversion concerns how individuals respond to stimuli. Extroverts typically need more stimuli, while introverts thrive best in low-key environments.

Our society tends to idealize extroverts as outspoken people who are often those with the greatest power or influence.

“The desire to bring up [participation] grades is overshadowed by the anxiety that comes along with it.”

PHS is guilty of this idealization as well. This is reflected in our participation grades, who we elect to student government, and even the people that we view as the smartest in our grades. We wouldn't be placing our more extroverted peers on a pedestal if they didn't make us believe that they deserved to be there through their outspoken tendencies. However, this idealization of more talkative students completely minimizes the work that quieter students do to maintain their grades, their positions in extracurricular activities, and their efforts to create a social presence at PHS.

Having established the difference between shyness and introversion, we can dive into why shyness is impacting students' participation tendencies in the first place. In 2018, researchers at Northwestern University theorized that “kids face a social stigma for publicly making an effort to excel”. This stems from a school's overall academic based culture. We would like to assume that given the pressure to take AP courses, apply to top colleges, and fill our plates full of extracurriculars, PHS would fall into the “cool-to-be-smart” category of schools; however, this is not the case. It is always

incredibly awkward to be the student who breaks the silence in class when it seems that no one knows the answer. In that situation, it is far easier to keep your hand lowered than draw attention to yourself for being the know-it-all—or the dumb one if you get the answer wrong. Although the chances of that actually happening are incredibly low, a student's inherent shyness creates that narrative within our minds, which makes it easier for us to follow the masses. Rather than penalizing people for their inherent shyness, shouldn't our teachers be understanding of that fear and encourage participation rather than enforce it?

Modern-day teaching needs to embrace all types of learning,

listening, and communication styles. In an inclusive learning community like PHS, we should encourage introverts and quiet students to reach their academic potential using a multitude of ways to demonstrate mastery of learning material. A more equitable participation grading technique could help to make it easier for quieter students to demonstrate what they know. The Canvas discussion boards can be an effective way for students to interact virtually with a way to edit what they say to feel the most confident about their responses while also maintaining conversations with other students. This would eliminate the overwhelming stimuli of in-class discussions that can be daunting for many students. Regardless of the volume of their voice, every student has one, and it's time we learn to listen. ■



The Tower

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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.

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Vanguard Presents

Skincare

The **break-out** of acne stigma

Claire Tang, CONTRIBUTING WRITER, and Zoe Nuland, STAFF WRITER

In the past few decades, people with soft, poreless skin have become the poster children of the beauty industry. While scrolling on social media, it's difficult not to admire the radiant skin of wealthy celebrities as they carry out luxurious lifestyles. These seemingly flawless influencers, along with the clear-skinned protagonists of popular TV shows, serve as juxtapositions to a classic Hollywood trope: the school "loser" and "nerd" with extensive acne and facial scarring who always ends up getting bullied. The negative association of acne in the media leads those with the skin condition to feel unattractive, undesirable, and unconfident; a 2020 survey conducted by OnePoll revealed that over 68 percent of Americans are not comfortable in their skin due to skin or acne issues.

Despite 95 percent of people aged 11 to 30 living with some form of acne according to a 2018 study by National Health Service, a majority of models represented in makeup and fashion ads are glass-skinned, with some even admitting to having their spots photoshopped out. Photoshop culture promotes the concealment of acne through filters and makeup products, rather than focusing on the central causes of it: skincare, genetics, and the environmental conditions. A 2021 study by City University of London reported that 90 percent of women have edited their bodies before posting a picture to social media in order to seem more beautiful. Though filters can make users more satisfied with their post, people scrolling through social media might have a different reaction: feeling inadequate and insecure. This common mindset is extremely detrimental, especially to impressionable children and adolescents.

Teenagers today are now more prone to self-esteem or confidence issues than ever before due to increased exposure to social media during the COVID-19 era. During a time in which kids were not able to interact in person, platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok posed as social lifelines. Even though social media can be a powerful tool to bring together people from different backgrounds, it can also be demoralizing. In fact, a whopping four in ten teenagers have reported that social media has negatively impacted their views on their bodies according to a 2019 survey conducted by Mental Health Foundation. Furthermore, a 2022 study by the University of Michigan shows that 73 percent of teenage girls and 69 percent of teenage boys report being self-conscious of their appearances.

Although social media continues to be a source of self-comparison and judgment for teenagers, conversations surrounding body positivity have grown in popularity on these platforms in recent years. From the #freethepimple campaign to the popularity of wearing pimple stickers, acne destigmatization has taken steps in the right direction. Many beauty brands such as Glossier and Milk Makeup have used their platform to emphasize the importance of skincare and using makeup to enhance rather than cover facial features. Ultimately, while learning how to feel comfortable in one's skin, it's important to realize that millions of teens go through the pimply reality of adolescence as well. You're not alone.

graphics: Sara Hu

Greening up your skincare routine

Bengu Bulbul, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When it comes to skincare, we often select the best products off the shelf without regard to their broader effects. But it's time we turn the spotlight on the not-so-glamorous side of our skincare routines — how do our favorite skincare products affect Mother Nature?

Many brands' products are derived from unsustainable and environmentally harmful chemicals, impacting ecosystems and endangered species. For example, the cultivation of palm oil — the primary ingredient found in many cosmetics products such as shampoos, and conditioners— is responsible for considerable deforestation and habitat destruction. Furthermore, oxybenzone — found in almost every chemical sunscreen — is responsible for coral reef bleaching by stressing the coral symbiote, zooxanthellae. Fortunately, there are alternatives like mineral-based sunscreen with ingredients such as zinc oxide that are considered safe for marine life.

The beauty industry's waste isn't limited to toxic ingredients. Skincare products produce more than 120 billion units of packaging annually, most of which are not truly recyclable. Thankfully, the cosmetics industry is slowly recognizing the need for change, and many brands are stepping up to reduce their environmental footprint. Ulta Beauty has committed to a sustainable packaging initiative by 2025. Meanwhile, M.A.C. Cosmetics has implemented a program encouraging customers to return empty packages for recycling.

So, yes, companies need to take bigger steps for change towards sustainability. But how? That answer lies in our hands: as consumers, we are the driving force for change. Embracing sustainability is not just a trend; it's an effective call to action that leads us forward towards a healthier planet. Accordingly, let's make greener choices, to not just achieve radiant skin, but also to contribute to the beauty of Earth.

Debunking skincare myths

Chloe Zhao, STAFF WRITER

Pore Strips

Pore strips were an extremely popular product in skin care during the 2010s, mainly due to the satisfaction of pulling dots of sebum (an oily substance created by skin glands) out of pores. However, in 2023, Ochsner Health found that using pore strips pulls up parts of your epidermal layer — which protects your skin — leading to risks of skin infections, irritations, and dryness. Unfortunately, many still fall victim to using pore strips when more effective and gentler methods for unclogging pores exist like using an oil cleanser, chemical exfoliant, or prescribed retinoid.

Double Cleansing

Recently, a new method of face washing has risen in popularity: double cleansing. This method involves first washing one's face with an oil-based cleanser to remove oils and impurities, and then following it up with a water-based cleanser to rinse the cleanser off. However, they may cause more harm than good. Dr. Mittal Gupta reported to Vogue India in 2023 that double cleansing “can strip away essential oils needed to keep your skin balanced,” resulting in “duller, drier, [and] flakier skin.”

Natural Skincare

Oftentimes, natural skincare products are advertised to consumers for their lack of unfamiliar chemicals. However, in 2023, a study by Cleveland Clinic found that many skincare products labeled as “natural” and “clean” are unregulated and can cause severe allergic reactions. Compared to many “natural” products, tested chemicals often solve skin concerns more effectively because of their careful regulation. If students are worried about irritation from these products, they should opt for hypoallergenic products instead.

Three types of acne and how to treat them

Ruhee Hedge, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Comedonal Acne

Comedones are non-inflammatory acne lesions. The two main types to look out for are open comedones (blackheads) and closed comedones (whiteheads) either due to clogged hair follicles or material trapped beneath the skin's surface, respectively. To treat these, use mild cleansers, wash your face twice daily, and avoid rubbing, picking, or squeezing your pimples.

Papules

Papules are small, red bumps on the skin. Like comedones, these lesions are similarly caused by excess oil in your skin, bacteria, medications, or hormones. Unlike whiteheads, papules have no visible center and are not wide in appearance. As they are tender to the touch, avoid excess touching of the face and use warm water when washing the affected area. Avoid using cosmetics that contain harsh preservatives; this may only worsen the condition if left on for long periods of time.

Cystic Acne

Cysts are deep, pus-filled lesions that are often a result of strong hormonal changes in your body. These symptoms involve painful breakouts that are hard to treat overnight, so many aim to curate and consistently perform a skincare routine. Continue using gentle facial cleansers to hydrate your skin and remove makeup before going to bed. In addition, consider adding benzoyl peroxide, which targets acne-causing bacteria, or salicylic acid, which unclogs pores and exfoliates skin. As always, consulting a dermatologist to target specific needs is highly recommended.

Squeaks and squawks for safety in skincare

Artitra Ray, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

You apply a lotion onto your face and feel the cool, soothing sensation flow over you. Now, consider this: how would you like it if you broke out into hives instead? This would be catastrophic for both you and the credibility of the company that you bought the lotion from. But, how do these companies make sure that millions of possible buyers don't break out in an allergic reaction in the first place? The answer is simple yet harrowing: animal testing.

More than 500,000 animals are tested on every year. For skincare products specifically, guinea pigs, mice, or rabbits have their fur shaved off. Afterwards, the experimental product is applied onto their exposed skin. For each animal, experimenters test for skin irritation or corrosion. Once their “use” has been fulfilled, the animals are put to death, either by asphyxiation, neck-breaking, or decapitation.

But the answer to ensuring product safety doesn't have to be animal testing. Not only is it unsafe to test these products on animals, but also the results are not reliable for humans. Guinea pig skin tests are becoming increasingly inaccurate compared to other alternatives, being able to predict human allergic reactions a mere 72 percent of the time. Meanwhile, new technologies, such as human cells grown in-vitro, are shown to be much more reliable. Advanced computer simulations have also been able to detect the effects of chemicals on human skin, with even greater precision.

We no longer require animal testing to ensure product safety. Alternatives are cheaper, quicker, and more effective. Now, it is up to consumers to condemn animal abuse. So, the next time you go skincare shopping, check for the cruelty-free bunny logo. Together, customers all around the world can put an end to this cruel practice that should never have started.

graphics: Sara Hu

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

“1989 (Taylor’s Version)” review: rebirthing Swift’s life in New York City

“Welcome to New York” and “Slut!”

Gabby Kaputa, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Swift’s first song in “1989 (Taylor’s Version)” shows a change in her standard music genre and style as she moves away from her Nashville country sound to New York pop. The song discusses the pursuit of dreams and embracing individuality and sexuality through the new possibilities and opportunities of New York City, as “everybody here wanted something more” and are “searching for a sound no one’s heard before.” New York holds a special place in Swift’s heart, as she describes it as a place of inspiration and electricity, explaining she wanted to start her album with the song because of how important New York has been in her personal identity and growth as a person. While the song has great meaning and shows Swift’s change in genre, its repetitive and generic beat tends to make me skip the song entirely, as it falls short in comparison to the rest of her songs in the album.

The seventeenth album track “Slut!” was largely predicted to be a loud and aggressive song, but turns out to be a heartfelt love song written as Swift realizes she doesn’t care what narratives and names she will be called by the industry. As she states, “If they call me a slut, it would be worth it for once.” The song shows Swift falling in love, becoming “lovestruck” and it going “straight to (her) head,” but soon realizing that relationships have their risks, stating “I’ll pay the price you won’t,” which puts a spotlight on the double standards for women versus men in the media. However, she moves forward with the relationship and dismisses its possible consequences, stating, “It might be worth it for once.” While I would have preferred a more aggressive song, the slower song still is one of my favorite songs on the album with a good beat and an interesting overlap of voices and sounds. ■



“New Romantics”

Phineas McCulloch, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

“New Romantics” is the sixteenth track on the album. The song has a synth and new wave pop sound and was written by Max Martin and Shellback along with Swift. This song is sentimental to me because I have been listening to the song with my friends and family since its release in 2014, and I’ve always enjoyed how the upbeat track resonates with my feelings. The song is about being young and living in a big city, and it also references the New Romanticism movement in the 1980s. This song was played as the surprise song on the last leg of the American Eras Tour in Los Angeles and helped announce the re-recording of the original album “1989” on August 9, 2023. ■



“Is It Over Now?”

Tessa Silver, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In “Is It Over Now?,” Swift sings about a relationship that lingers in both her and her ex-boyfriend’s life, despite ending a long time ago. Neither of them are able to let it go even though the relationship ended poorly, and Taylor can’t be sure whether their relationship is truly over or not. Vault tracks are the most anticipated parts of Swift’s re-recordings, and in combination with the other excellent vault tracks that did not make it onto the original album, “Is It Over Now?” lives up to all expectations of “1989 (TV)” and enhances an already much-loved album. Taylor combines sharp lyrics and melodies to give “Is It Over Now?” an incredibly addicting sound, and it is a song that is more than worthy of closing out a very memorable album. ■

“Blank Space” and “Bad Blood”

Jane Hu, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



“Blank Space” was originally written after Taylor Swift was given the name “psycho serial dater girl” by the media. As such, she took this image and wrote lyrics to portray a coquettish woman with multiple romantic relationships. Swift’s voice in the newly recorded track is much clearer than in the original audio with her matured voice, but it seems as if the song has become less emotional given how she is enunciating her words. Even so, the pronunciation of “But I’ve got a blank space, baby” leading up to the final line gives listeners a much more satisfying ending. Overall, despite the lack of emotion, I feel like this song is much better suited for her current mature voice, as the lyrics aren’t fit for Swift’s voice back in 2014.

“Bad Blood” was written about an unidentified female musician, which many rumored to be Katy Perry after it was revealed by Taylor in a 2014 interview that the two had a platonic breakup after the musician had attempted to sabotage one of Swift’s tours. The beginning of “Bad Blood” seems to sound muffled compared to her original recording. Swift’s voice sounds much more mature, which impacts the song both positively and negatively. Her matured voice also helps enhance both of the verses, especially the second one. It also allows her to put more emotion into the bridge, creating a more fulfilling ending. However, her deeper voice makes her chorus seem less energetic. The original song gave me the impression of a young woman upset with another singer, creating a more intriguing story plot. But overall, the newer version lacked the feeling of hatred that was once present. ■

Student takes: What’s your favorite Thanksgiving side?

Aarna Vachhrajani and Samantha Henderson, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

“I like corn on the cob because we always season it well, so it’s the best thing on the table.” - Maxime DeVico '27

“I’d have to go with stuffing. [It’s a] good mixture of texture [and] taste. It goes with everything.” - Sawyer Quallen '24

“My favorite Thanksgiving dish is my aunt’s mashed potatoes and gravy. [They’re] really good, and [they] go well with the other Thanksgiving dishes.” -David Brophy '25

photos: Aarna Vachhrajani

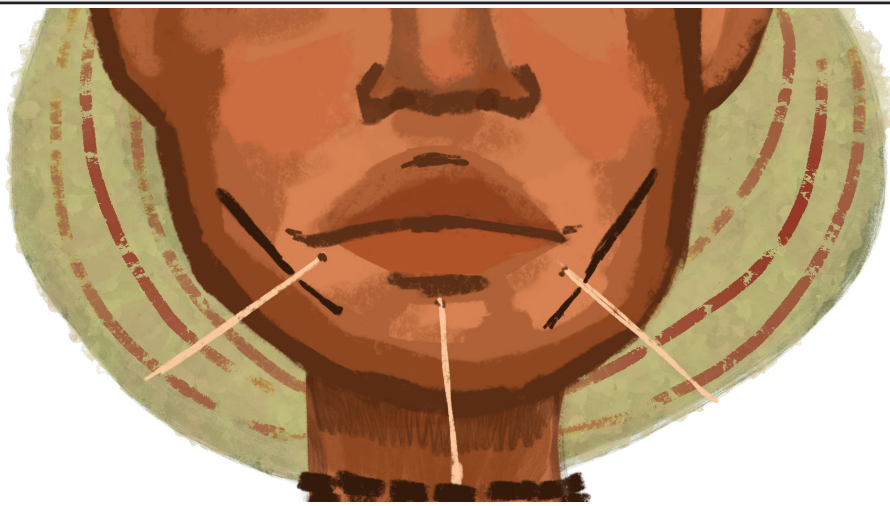
photo: Samantha Henderson

graphics: Mia Gatzke

Seventy-six minutes was the time given to the Yanomami community to provide a narrative of their own. In “The Last Forest,” filmmaker Luiz Bolognesi unapologetically depicts the story of South America’s indigenous tribe in the rainforest of the Brazilian-Venezuelan border.

Out of all the documentaries I’ve watched, this to me has felt the most profound by far. Other than a couple lines in the beginning of the documentary that provide the viewers context of the Yanomami tribe, the first few minutes of the film contain no dialogue. Instead, it simply depicts the Yanomami tribe’s way of living — using arrows to hunt, skinning an alligator, and walking around the lake with their families — none of which is narrated, changed, or interpreted. Everything felt very natural and was enough to experience the solidarity of the Yanomami culture.

There was little to no involvement from anyone else other than the people of Yanomami throughout the film. Most scenes contained little to no editing, background music, or anything else artificial of the sort. Even the camera work felt very integrated — there was no direct eye contact or even dialogue between the cameraman and the Yanomami community. Because there was no interaction between the “outsider” and the tribe, as a viewer, the lack of tension between them made the film feel more



“The Last Forest”: revisiting our roots

Sky Jo, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

accurate and unbiased, almost as if I was just watching them through my window, and not through the lens of a white man.

“White people don’t know us. Their eyes have never seen us. Their ears don’t understand our speech,” said a tribe member of the Yanomami. As if the directors wanted to back that statement up, the film contained no voice-over or narration. Instead, the film simply recorded the native language of the people of Yanomami, and it was up to the viewers to use subtitles if they wanted to understand what was being said. This voluntary act of not erasing the voice of the tribe for the convenience of American viewers felt very refreshing and almost liberating in a way. It was almost as if the directors were saying that it is now our responsibility to listen and understand their narrative, not theirs.

In contrast to this first-hand depiction of the peaceful Yanomami tribe when they first began living on the land 1,000 years ago, what came to affect them was nothing they could control — recently, gold prospectors have invaded their land. Much of their land has been deforested and destroyed for the illegal extraction of gold, the few sources of water they cherished becoming polluted, all of which later caused the explosion of various infectious diseases, such as malaria, in the Yanomami community.

Even worse, many illegal miners came and gave food in exchange for sex with Yanomami teens.

The damage caused by the mining companies was insufferable to watch, but the lack of protection and care by the local Brazilian government felt even worse. This film highlighted how the hyperfocus on materialism that feeds off the exploitation of nature affected the environment and the home of the Yanomami tribe. I could not imagine how tiring it must have been for the people of the Yanomami trying to convince people that they, too, deserve a life of their own, one that doesn’t exist solely for our own benefit. How hypocritical is it that we Americans, people who value personal space so highly, fail to acknowledge one of the largest civilizations in the world? Although the miners are responsible for the physical act of destruction, it’s crucial to remember that our own product-driven lifestyles are also part of the fire that fuel mining companies’ actions. I recommend this film to anyone who wishes to get an insight into the past and current stories of a prominent indigenous group living in America today. The film is an amazing, thought-provoking story showing audiences that America had a complex history before the arrival of Christopher Columbus, and this is a reminder that we should keep in mind as we celebrate the holidays and incoming New Year. ■



graphics: Mia Gatzke

Spectacle Theatre’s “The Great Gatsby” brings the Jazz Age to life

Avery McDowell, STAFF WRITER

Yunsheng Xu, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

have rehearsal every single day that there is rehearsal. As we get closer to the show it starts going to 6:00 p.m., then to 6:30 p.m., then to 7:00 p.m., and so on,” Waldman said.

Aside from the time constraints, actors had the most difficulty in doing the table work of the show, which is the character and script analysis part.

“One difficult part is the character development and making connections between what is in Fitzgerald’s book versus what’s in our play, as well as being able to feel confident in what we’re putting up on stage. I think that’s something different from ‘The Play That Goes Wrong’; it’s just that it was a little bit more advanced,” Krawiecki said.

Despite the difficulties, one aspect that made the show truly unique was the complexity of its characters. There was a certain sense of depth to each part that required a deep understanding in order to create an accurate yet nuanced performance. While this challenged actors to portray their roles to the audience, it ultimately became fun for each actor to interpret and learn about.

“I guess in some ways, [Daisy Buchanan is] written as someone who’s going along with the narration of the book [and] what her husband says; I don’t wanna say a ditz, but in some ways [she is] a ditz,” said Zacks, who played the lead role of Daisy.

Acting in these roles also provides the students with the opportunity to challenge any assumptions about the characters in the play that audience members may have. For Niforatos, his role as Nick Carraway has allowed him to amplify the importance of a character that is usually seen as a “fly on the wall.” As he is the narrator of the story, all scenes are told through his point of view, which allows for the events to be colored by his personality.

“[Nick is] a very realistic character put into a very crazy situation. He’s almost a regular dude, who gets wrapped up into this crazy love triangle, but I feel like that’s not even putting it far enough. It’s a whole web of things and he’s brought into this. Gatsby uses him at the beginning, and then he keeps witnessing all this stuff and you can see him change his mind in all of this because he’s the narrator of the book,” Niforatos said.



(From left to right) Tom (Ryan Litvinsky '27), Nick (Peter Niforatos '25), Daisy (Noa Zacks '25), Jordan (Luke Gitterman '25), and Gatsby (Sebastian Bongiovi '25), have a discussion.

For the annual fall play, the PHS Drama department performed an adaptation of “The Great Gatsby” from November 16 to 19, featuring two alternating casts. The production featured Peter Niforatos '25, Sebastian Bongiovi '25, and Noa Zacks '25 as lead roles in the blue cast, as well as Sylvén Waldman '25, William Ponder '25, and Serafina Joseph '26 in the red cast.

“The Great Gatsby” was originally published as a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925, and was adapted as a play by playwright Gary Peterson. The novel is set in New York during the Roaring Twenties, when economic growth and recovery from World War I sparked an influx of modern materialism and glamor. The novel is narrated by Nick Carraway, a businessman, as he follows the story of the wealthy and enchanting Jay Gatsby, who is in pursuit of his past lover, Daisy Buchanan. After Nick arranges a meeting between the two, an affair ensues, leading to a tumultuous rollercoaster of events.

Julianna Krawiecki, the PHS Drama teacher and director of the fall play, stated that “The Great Gatsby” was completely different from the plays they had performed in past years, such as “The Play That Goes Wrong” and “Bethel Park Falls.”

“Last year, we did ‘The Play That Goes Wrong,’ which was a farce with lots of physical comedy and slapstick humor ... and the costumes were a little bit crazy,” said Krawiecki. “[This year], I wanted something that was completely different from this farce style of comedy. And so, I thought, ‘What if we did a show that was based on classic literature and the books that are read in high school?’”

One challenge during the production process was time management, a typical struggle in play productions. According to Waldman, actors struggled to manage the play alongside other commitments because the play required hours of rehearsal time every week, both inside and outside of school.

“You start off with rehearsals from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and since I’m a lead, I’m in every single scene, so I



Gatsby (William Ponder '25) tells his life story to Nick (Sylvén Walden '25) as they go for a ride in Gatsby’s fancy new yellow car.

Ponder, who plays the titular Jay Gatsby in the red cast, also expressed sentiments about the difficulty performing him.

“Gatsby is very lovestruck. ... All of his decisions are based on that. And I’ve never really been in a position like that, so it has absolutely no relevance to my life. So to play a character like that is hard because I have never experienced anything like that,” Ponder said.

Aside from the cast, another key player in the play’s production was the PHS Tech Crew, who by hand created each set piece and regulated the logistics of every moving part during the show. For “The Great Gatsby” specifically, the goal was to create an extravagant atmosphere that captured the essence of the Roaring Twenties.

“We tried to figure out ways to add that sparkle into the set. ... We included glitter in the paint for a very subtle shine, we made the lighting brighter, [we] had very vibrant hedges and boxwood, and [we had] brightly painted columns and art deco panels. We even created our own chandelier, just to add that glitz,” said PHS Tech Director Jeff Van Velsor.

To ensure “The Great Gatsby” is a success, all the set pieces and sounds must be perfectly timed. Lillian Raphael '24, the student stage manager, played the important role of finding temporary set pieces and taking attendance of all the actors. At the end of every rehearsal, Raphael would submit this report to the director.

“I think what I do, cueing everything and making sure that it’s on time, is one of the most difficult tasks of the show. I keep track of any sort of sound effect that plays or any moving set pieces on the stage,” Raphael said.

Students devoted themselves to the production of “The Great Gatsby” through their passion for theater and dedication to their part. They formed close bonds with each other while also working to thoroughly learn their part in order to create a show that truly amazed the audience.

“I’m really proud of everybody because everyone put a lot of effort into it,” said Niforatos. “It’s so iconic, and it was so fun.” ■

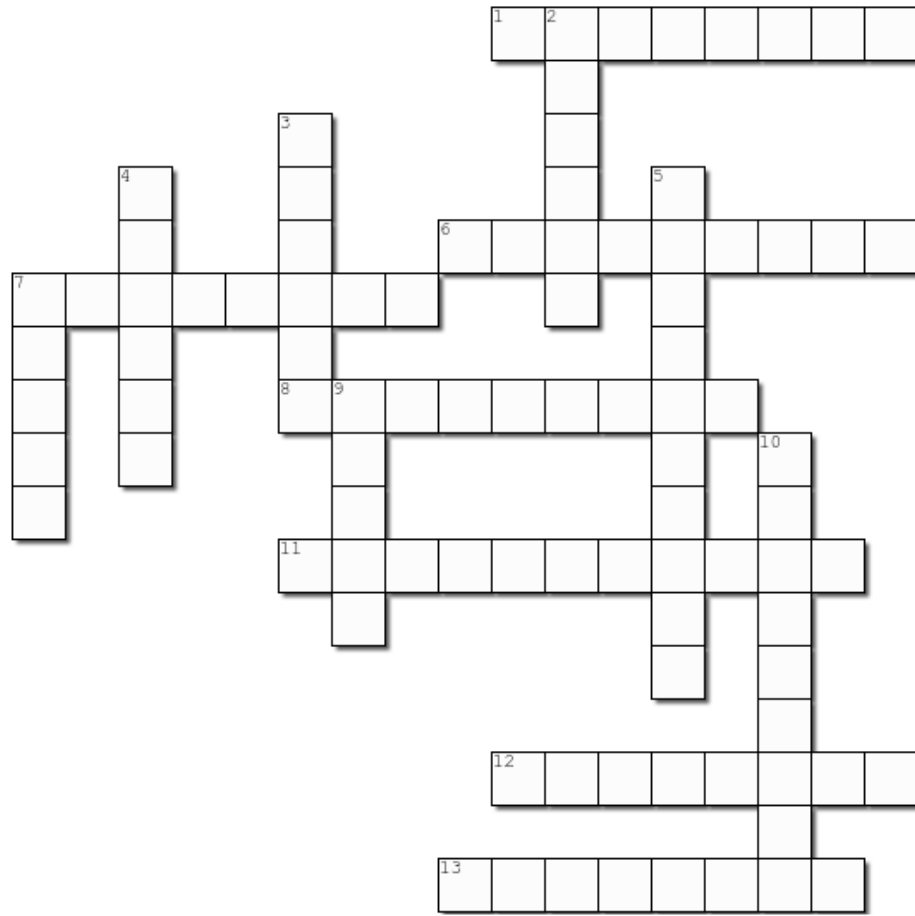


The cast of “The Great Gatsby” gather around for the aftermath of Myrtle’s (Elena Barreto '27) shocking murder.

photos: Azlyn Haley

Harvest hunt: the November crossword

Raya Kondakindi, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Across

- 1. Transition out of _____ Savings Time
- 6. Native American tribe that first celebrated Thanksgiving
- 7. Fun activity to get lost in at farms and fests in fall
- 8. Native American guide on the Lewis & Clark Expedition
- 11. Day known for huge shopping deals
- 12. The Mayflower's initial destination in the New World
- 13. Native American Heritage Month

Down

- 2. The season of change
- 3. Many colorful _____ are made to showcase at the Annual Macy's Day parade
- 4. Main dish at Thanksgiving dinner
- 5. Process of gathering crops
- 7. Warm drink enjoyed in the fall
- 9. Terhune Orchard's _____ cider donuts are the best fall treat!
- 10. Act of showing appreciation

graphics: Léopold Renaudin

Student artist of the month Blake Jung '24: living in style

Paige Menapace, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Clothes, accessories, and color all play a crucial part in the passion Blake Jung '24 has for fashion and style. In this day and age where online influence and inspiration is rampant, Jung is the creator of a successful fashion blog, "By Blake." Launched in 2021, "By Blake" showcases Jung's innovation and fusion of styles, creating an original platform for others to draw their own expression as she explores topics such as trends, wishlist items, and fashion suggestions. After two years, her blog has reached thousands of views as she continues to collect inspiration and dissect the fashion world.

What exactly made you get into fashion?

There wasn't one specific moment, but my mom sewed a lot when I was little, so I grew up in that environment. And my mom's also very into fashion, so I think that was a big part of it. But, I think it was just something that I always liked doing since I was little.

What were some of your inspirations for starting your blog?

I was just looking for ways that I could get more experience in the industry, because when I started it, I was in Utah, so there's not a lot of exposure to fashion there. So that's why I started, to gain my own experience through that.

What are some of your long term goals and aspirations for your blog?

For my blog, I definitely want to grow it throughout college and probably even after college. I don't know how much I'll work on it after college because I have bigger dreams than my blog, but I'll probably try to at least continue it and grow it so that I can get revenue off of it.

What's your process when it comes to writing your blogs?

I look at other magazines, so I get some inspiration of what to write about from there, or I just look back at what I've written in the past years, because sometimes I just forget some prompts that I could write about.

What are your thoughts on fast fashion?

It's definitely something that is hard to avoid, because even as someone who loves thrifting and stuff, it's kind of hard to completely avoid fast fashion. But I think there can definitely be efforts made by everybody, because you can still thrift and purchase from other brands.

Do you upcycle clothes or create your own clothes?

Yeah, I knit some. I like to cut a lot of them, like, either the neckline or the length or the sleeves. And then I do sew a little. I'm working on my portfolio so I do have to sew.

How has PHS influenced your journey?

I love all the art teachers at our school. They've been really supportive and helpful in college portfolios and stuff. And I think [that] my club, Eco Fashion Club, ... we do a lot of projects, and I think it's really fun to share that with other people.

What advice would you give to other aspiring fashion bloggers or people who want to work in the fashion industry?

I would just say just start whatever idea you have. Just definitely jump into it because once you jump in, you'll figure it out from there. This is so cliché, but don't be afraid to start anything new, because eventually you'll get the hang of it. ■



Blake Jung '24 drafts her weekly blog post.

photos: Chloe Zhao

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LEFT: Renée Cox, *March*, from the series *Queen Nanny of the Maroons*, 2004. Courtesy KODA, New York. © Renée Cox RIGHT: MiKyoung Lee, *Reflected Memory 2* (detail), 2022. Collection of the artist. © MiKyoung Lee. Photo: Joseph Hu

SPORTS

Princeton boys soccer team dominates the turf with a state title

Dester Selby-Salazar, SPORTS CO-EDITOR
Kaelan Patel, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



photo: Caroline Gu
The boys soccer team celebrates a goal in the final.

After a two-month long season, the PHS boys soccer team won its first solitary state title since 2009, defeating Kearny High School 3-2 in the final game on November 11, 2023. Goals from Harvey Smith '27, Pasquale Carusone '24, and Archie Smith '25 lifted the Little Tigers to the state championship.

During the tournament, the boys soccer team showed character to get through tricky games, none more so than in the final where they conceded twice after an early goal in the first half, but came roaring back in the second half to secure the win. Head Coach Ryan Walsh recalled the challenge of the final and recognized a key factor that helped propel the team to success.

"I think the biggest difference this year is a combination of their talent, but also their desire to win," said Walsh. "And it's hard to find a team that is really talented, and is willing to do all the dirty work that it takes to win a championship."

One of the team's biggest factors to success was their defense. Throughout the whole season, the Little Tigers accumulated 18 clean sheets in 24 games and conceded ten goals all season. For Assistant Coach Patrick Remboski, that's down to the maturity levels and the hard

work from players like Nick Matese '24 and Matthew Kim '24.

"Getting kicked out of the tournament early last year stuck hard with the guys in the offseason," said Remboski. "Nick Homeland came back with a new mindset to tie the school record in shut-outs, and Matt Kim played a huge role in relieving pressure from our back four."

In terms of grit and perseverance, the championship was won long before the final, as the boys soccer team gained lots of momentum as the season went on. In previous years, the boys soccer team had issues which prevented them from going deep into the state tournament. Last year, the biggest issue was injuries with the team, resulting in missing key players in the knockout phases when it really mattered. In the years before that, the team had more unfortunate scenarios.

"Our senior class their freshman year, ... they didn't have a team because it was COVID," said Walsh. "And [in] sophomore year, they lost in the first round at a tournament on penalty kicks. We were the higher seed, they were the lower seed."

Thankfully this year, the roster remained healthy all throughout the regular season and into the state tournament. One critical player who was fit all season long was Carusone, who led the forward line for the PHS boys soccer team this season. Helped by a healthy roster, Carusone was able to score a team high of 28 goals for Princeton.

"Every game, everyone asks me how many goals I'm gonna score because that's what I'm supposed to do," said Carusone.

"I set a goal for at least one goal a game, and push to break that every other game, get two, maybe three."

On the days where Carusone wasn't on the scoresheet, other players stepped into the goalscoring role to push the team onwards. For Carusone, a sense of responsibility was present amongst all of the players.

"Everyone is trying to keep everyone [else] up," said Carusone. "Just because you don't have the captain band on doesn't mean you can't act like a captain."

This being the first year of Walsh's tenure as head coach following the retirement of former Head Coach Wayne Sutcliffe proves that Walsh has already made a significant impact on the team. For Carusone, the new coaching staff is good for the future of the team.

"It's a young coaching group, so we can relate to them a lot," said Carusone. "This coaching group is going to get more involved when we play in [practices], playing with us. ... It's definitely more enjoyable."

For Remboski and the rest of the boys soccer team, they were content with being labeled the underdogs, if this meant they could play with freedom and without the burden of expectations.

"I think we enjoyed being labeled the underdogs this year, which is uncommon... usually we're the targets," said Remboski. "This year, NJ.com came out with some standings [for high school rankings] and Princeton wasn't mentioned at all, so that sparked something from the guys early on."

Along with the low-pressure environment, the boys soccer players

benefitted from its traveling Tiger cage. The fan section was boisterous in every game, rallying the players and giving them that added kick of motivation. When the final whistle rang at the boys NJSIAA State Tournament final, Matese and the rest of the team ran up to the crowded Tiger Cage to celebrate. For Carusone and the rest of the team, this support meant a lot.

"I enjoy [playing in front of fans] way more than club teams," said Carusone. "Knowing you have your parents and your friends watching you is so much better than having nobody on the side."

One thing that all great teams do is that once they get to the top, they stay there for a while. For Thomsen Lord '25, he believes that this team has what it takes to get back to the top once again next year.

"We have a lot of truly elite players. I think we can go right back up there with the very best," said Lord. "Again, I don't think there's going to be as much expectations for us even though we just won [the State Championship] because Pasquale [and other senior players] are not going to be there [next season], but I think we can do it. Next man up is the mentality that we've had."



photo: Caroline Gu
Felipe Grandi '24 lifts the state trophy.

The sports photography process through the lens of Nicholas Niforatos '24

Katie Qin, STAFF WRITER

When embarking on a journey to Maine in June of 2021, Nicholas Niforatos '24 first took notice of its scenery, inspiring him to capture the moment. Since then, Niforatos has explored the world of photography equipment, experimenting with brands ranging from Fujifilm to Sony. Not only has his passion for photography grown, but videography has also become one of his main points of interests, as seen on his Instagram platform's reels, under the username *nicholas_niforatos*. The majority of his work is sports coverage, along with family event photographs and posters of matches or recruited athletes on the side. For Niforatos, photography and videography has become more than a passion, allowing him to explore a new side of Princeton High School, where athletics have become an integral part of the school community. As he approaches the end of his senior year, his dedication to learning photography will persist in his college years, as he leaves behind a legacy for aspiring photographers to pick off where he began.

Do you use editing software for your digital photographs?

I used Lightroom for photos, and Photoshop for posters. I use Davinci Resolve and Premiere Pro for video editing.

Do you think you have had any challenges that came before and may come in the future?

I have to admit, I suffer from ADHD and previous experiences which makes it difficult to handle my emotions when situations arise. After making a few mistakes while holding the camera, I decided to take my mental health seriously. Being that I go to almost every single game, I'm prone to feeling burnt out and stressed. So, I decided that if I'm going to continue this passion, I'd have to control my emotions. For example, I feel anxious when the [home] team is losing or when my friends/teammates are being heckled by immature adults. That anxiousness ultimately turns into anger, but it's all about how I control it.

What is the photo or video you have taken that you are most proud of?

My favorite video that I ever shot was when the PHS soccer team scored the game winning goal against Notre Dame High school this year.



photo: Charolette Woods
Niforatos takes a photo at the Boys Soccer State Final.

What inspired you to start taking on photography as a hobby? Is there any particular event or particular photo that gravitated you towards photography?

I always loved to watch the NFL. So me being me, I joined the football team sophomore year. Sadly, I suffered a concussion in the fourth quarter, which led to me missing multiple games. So, finding a way to cope with the injury, I picked up my dad's camera, a Nikon D5000. Using a kit lens with it, I realized my shots were good, but not great. So, for the first time, I spent my own money to buy a \$200 50-200mm Nikon lens from a local store in Princeton. The money that I spent basically told me that there was no going back.



photo courtesy: Nicholas Niforatos
Nicholas experimenting with blurred photography at a lacrosse match.

Do you prefer photography or videography?

I started doing photography because I didn't have the option to record. But as time went on and I upgraded my camera gear, I realized the students and athletes liked watching videos of the games more than photos. I transitioned more into videography. I still remember the PHS v. Hopewell ice hockey finals, where Ethan Garlock '23 scored the game winning goal to win the MCT Finals. I made the decision to take photos of that game rather than record. So I did, and I ultimately ended up feeling disappointed with the photos, and people were saying, "Yo Nick, did you record the goal?" My heart sank and I felt guilty that I couldn't capture the goal for the team. The only thing that made me feel better was the support from people like Leo George '23 who [have been] great friends. They lifted me up and gave me advice on life and how we all make mistakes, and ever since then I made sure that I recorded every big play.

How do you improve and develop your photography skills?

I watch YouTube videos on "how to improve the basics." Although I'd like to call myself a professional, I spend the time to humble myself and realize what I haven't accomplished yet. I also look at photos or videos from other creators that are higher up in the business, and find inspiration from those creators and use that to help improve my own skills.

How do you think your work has inspired other students? Do you want to expand this interest group to attract more students to get into photography?

It has been such an honor to have inspired [others] to take the risk and invest into a whole new passion which is very expensive and time-consuming. It's now their turn to continue the legacy that I and many other photographers have created from the ground up, and to help the younger generations of aspiring photographers to make a name for themselves too.

What is it about photography that you think others should also follow and get into it?

I feel like it's a great way to gain opportunities and to go farther into the business side of life. You'll understand what I mean [if you take photography].

Athletes of the Month

Larry He '24: fencing

Jaiden Jain-Edwards, SPORTS STAFF

The whistle blows, signaling the start of the third period. Larry He '24 lunges toward his opponent and jabs him with his épée. One more point and he wins the fencing bout; one more jab and he reaches the coveted 15 points. He blocks out the noise of the crowd and directs his attention to the opponent. With one smooth motion, he thrusts his épée towards the opponent's chest. The light turns green and the crowd erupts in a cheer; he wins!



photo: Chloe Zhao

He has been an integral part of the PHS fencing team since he started fencing his freshman year. However, his journey as an athlete certainly hasn't been a straight line, as He went through multiple sports before deciding that fencing was the one for him.

"I started fencing in fifth grade. Before that I [had] played a lot of sports; soccer was my main sport," He said.

He eventually decided that he wanted to take fencing more seriously, a change he attributes to the people that introduced him to the sport: his parents.

"I got into fencing because my parents recommended it to me," said He. "One summer, I went to [a] fencing camp, and after that summer, I decided I want[ed] to focus on it."

Like many other successful athletes, He watches and learns from professionals in his sport. His favorite fencer is Park Sang-young, a Korean épée fencer. Sang-young won gold during the Summer Olympics in 2016.

"He won gold after being down 14 [points] to 10 [points]," said He. "He's my biggest inspiration."

He's aspirations to become a better fencer can be seen not only in his individual performances, but in a team setting as well. Last season, He was named captain of the boys fencing squad, a position that entails the responsibility of helping and leading the team. He, equipped with experience and leadership, guided the team through the season, helping his teammates develop better footwork, technique, and habits.

"Usually I'd be leading warmups, leading stretches, leading footwork," said He. "I will usually take some freshmen or sophomores on the side and give them one-on-one lessons."

Although He's fencing career has had a lot of highs, such as placing first for individual states during his sophomore year and second his junior year, he's had a few obstacles as well. One of the biggest challenges he faced was the amount of time he needed to commit to fencing in order to reach the collegiate level.

"I was going five to six times a week to practice, and then I had tournaments almost every weekend, and every year there are seven or so national tournaments as well," said He. "Flying [and] staying

[at] the hotel [not only required] a lot of money, but also a lot of time."

Beyond his expertise in fencing, He's composure plays a big part in his success. His ability to stay calm and level-headed despite unfamiliar and sometimes challenging situations has allowed him to come out on top during fencing bouts.

"He led the épée team to a great result in the state championship," said teammate Max Mazo '25. "Larry always has a cool head. ...[He] won against opponents when he was several points down."

He's coach, Sam Blanchard, has been coaching him since his freshman year at PHS. Blanchard sees He as an integral part of the team, and is proud of the great accomplishments he's achieved.

"Larry is a great person and a great fencer. I wouldn't have him as captain otherwise," said Blanchard. "He was champion in his second year. ...I strongly believe he can be champion this year."

As He finishes out his final high school fencing season, he looks to continue competing in college. Finding a good balance between challenging courses and maintaining his passion for fencing is a top priority for him. Fencing, which he spends a lot of time practicing, is a major part of his life, and he wants to keep it that way after high school.

"I had an offer from a top ten school, but it's a D3 program and I was looking to walk on to a D1 program," said He. "I'm looking to fence somewhere with a good program and education." ■

Kyleigh Tangen '24: swimming

Matthew Chen, SPORTS CO-EDITOR
Chloe Lam, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As Kyleigh Tangen '24 plunges under the water, she makes every move count, racing closer to the end and finally touching the wall. She picks up her submerged head, eager to see her placement. Written next to her name: first place.

Tangen has been a swimmer for as long as she can remember, beginning her journey at the young age of four. She eventually transitioned into a competitive team at the age of eight, and has been competing ever since. However, Tangen's passion for swimming comes from no one else but her, as she's the only person in her immediate family that swims.

"[The] only family members [I have] that are swimmers are my third cousins," says Tangen. "I found the passion on my own. I just enjoyed being in the water."

Tangen currently sits as one of the top sprinters not only on the PHS girls team, but in the state of New Jersey as well, an achievement that many can only hope to reach. The countless hours and days of training that she's put into the sport have helped her reach her current status as an elite swimmer, and are a representation of the dedication and passion that she shares for the sport.

"[During the] winter swim season I swim six [times a week] and summer swim season I swim eight times per week, six days, and twice a day on two days," Tangen said.

While Tangen's outstanding results are a testament to her hard work, her work ethic can also be seen through praise from her coaches and teammates as well. Her determination has rubbed off on teammates; as a senior member of the team, she has inspired many younger swimmers.

"[Her teammates] see the amount of work that she puts into swimming, both in and out of the pool, whether it's her cross country training, her lifting, [or] the work that goes in the pool," said girls varsity swim Coach Carly Misiewicz. "She's one of the hardest workers, and she's so good at balancing everything with school training, and just focusing on downtime [for herself] as well."

While Tangen's hard-working nature is exemplified through her swimming, she's also a runner for the girls varsity cross country team, a unique combination that offers unique benefits that go hand in hand.

"Swimming, and especially being a sprinter, requires a lot of breath control, which makes me able to control my heart rate and breathing while I run," said Tangen. "Running brings endurance in ... and it makes me more cardiovascularly fit. Doing two very different sports helps balance out the extremes of each, which keeps me healthy all around and makes sure I'm working the muscles that need to be worked in order to not get injured."

With four years of experience under her belt, Tangen has built up many relationships with fellow swimmers, coaches, and fans. For her, these relationships that she has made have been integral to her coming out and performing at her very best.

"I enjoy the people that I've met. It's a really good bonding experience with your teammates," said Tangen. "I've built relationships and become a louder person, and [in] doing so I hope to make younger swimmers feel welcome as I've been made to feel welcome by past captains."

Part of the relationship building process for Tangen came in last year's state tournament, where the girls varsity swim team clinched the first state title in over 30 years for the Little Tigers. However, while the tournament was a good opportunity for team bonding, one of Tangen's most memorable experiences was shared with someone from her own family: her grandpa.

"Last year, my grandfather was in town, which was super special cause he lives in Montana and the last time I'd seen him I think I was nine," says Tangen. "Being able to have a super special and successful experience while he was there to see it made it even more special, and it made the team and the sport feel even more like family and home."

Coaches have been quick to point out Tangen's extremely hard-working and determined work ethic that not only sets her apart, but inspires others as well.

"[She's] passionate," said Misiewicz. "She will always get in and race her hardest, no matter what ... [and] that[s] just who she is as a person and [as] an athlete." ■



photo courtesy: Ashleigh Tangen

TOWER MULTIMEDIA



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photo: Sophie Zhang

HEAD TO HEAD: The football team arranges into a formation against their Cherry Hill East High opponents.

FOOTBALL 5-4

"I will miss the pre-practices that we had. Whether it was catching up with my friends before we ran, or throwing the ball with underclassmen, I had a lot of fun." - Remmick Granozio '24

"I'll miss the feeling of a team, ... the feeling of hard work together, and most of all, playing with the team." - Elisio Moncada '25



photo: Sophie Zhang

SPIRIT RUNS DEEP: (left to right) Lily Sowienski '26, Sophia Micala '24, Miley Copeland '24, and Jiva Justice '26 perform their cheer routine in front of the crowd.

CHEER

"What I'll miss most about cheer is hanging out with my best friends everyday after school." - Miley Copeland '24

"I will miss the people I had on my team the most, because they taught me how to work with others." - Mlyu Kawagoe '26



photo: Sophie Zhang

ALL FUN AND GAMES: (left to right) Robyn Wachtel '25, Charlotte Colarusso '25, Julia Zalदारriaga '25, and Emily Walden '26 gather for a pep talk.

GIRLS SOCCER 10-9-1

"We spent so much time together... because [of] soccer, [but now,] we don't see each other as much. ... During the season, we created strong bonds." - Manu Boarato '25

"I will miss... the girls, the atmosphere, and the shared desire to succeed. [They] were all so important to me for four years, and that's difficult to part with." - Alysse Kisewetter '24



photo: Sophie Zhang

READY TO ROLL: The boys' soccer team huddles up at the start of a match against Howell.

BOYS SOCCER 22-0

"What I'll miss the most about playing is the friendships that I've been able to make both on and off the field. ... I'll also miss scoring goals and winning games." - Brandon Urias '24

"I think I'll miss the team aspect about soccer and how tight of a group we are. I've played soccer with a lot of the guys on the team since middle school." - Matthew Chao '25

fall sports recap

by Sophie Zhang,
SPORTS CO-EDITOR



photo courtesy: Sophie Zhang

CLAPS ALL AROUND: (left to right) Kaelin Bobetich '26, Carmen Barbosa '27, Pearl Agel '25, Adele Slaymaker '25, Zoe Nuland '25, and Athena Huan '24 line up to high five their Princeton Day competitors.

VOLLEYBALL 30-1

"I'll definitely miss being able to regularly hang out with all my friends from volleyball and all the interesting stuff that goes on during practices, games, and bus rides." - Vivian Lee '26

"I'll definitely miss the energy that the team brought to every game and the chemistry between [the] players, both on and off the court!" - Heather Li '24



photo: Sophie Zhang

SPEEDY DOES IT: The cross country team runs in their Meet of Champions at Holmdel Park.

CROSS COUNTRY

"I'll miss the warm fall vibe because it just adds a lot of character to the sport; winter is just too cold and dull sometimes." - Seraina Wickart '26

"Running with a group, since my teammates are the ones who push me and allow me to reach my full potential." - Edward Cao '24



photo courtesy: Sophie Zhang

ALL SMILES: Katie Qin '26, Phoebe Decker '27, Scarlett Cai '24, Lada Labas '25, Coach Sarah Hibbert, Ashna Bushan '26, Sophia Brunn '27, and Lauren Kaswan '26 gather for a group photo.

TENNIS 13-4

"I'll definitely miss the bonds I have made with the team, and our collective effort to contribute to and support each other. Everyone's so sweet and it's such an amazing group to be around." - Scarlett Cai '24

"Hanging out with the people because everyone [has] become good friends [with each other] during the season." - Lauren Kaswan '26



photo courtesy: Sophie Zhang

BRING ON YOUR "A" GAME: The field hockey team walks down the turf for a match against West Winsdor-Plainsboro.

FIELD HOCKEY 17-3

"I'm going to miss the energy the team had this year... We were all really close and it showed when we played, and that kind of team dynamic is really hard to find." - Ren Gono '25

"I'm going to miss spending time with everybody on the team because we have such a strong bond and we are all so close." - Mia Ramirez '25