

# The Tower

96th Year: Issue 2

Princeton High School  
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March 22, 2024

## PHS to change bell schedule

MONDAY-A1	TUESDAY-B2	WEDNESDAY-B3	TIGER THURSDAY	FRIDAY-A4
PERIOD 1 8:20-9:04	PERIOD 2 8:20-9:50	PERIOD 3 8:20-9:50	PERIOD 1 8:20-8:56	PERIOD 4 8:20-9:04
PERIOD 2 9:09-9:53			PERIOD 2 9:09-9:37	PERIOD 1 9:09-9:53
PERIOD 3-PLEDGE 9:58-10:44	PERIOD 4-PLEDGE 9:58-11:30	PERIOD 1-PLEDGE 9:58-11:30	PERIOD 3-PLEDGE 9:42-10:20	PERIOD 2-PLEDGE 9:58-10:44
PERIOD 4 10:49-11:33			PERIOD 4 10:25-11:01	PERIOD 3 10:49-11:33
BREAK 11:33-12:05	BREAK 11:30-12:08	BREAK 11:30-12:08	BREAK 11:01-11:32	BREAK 11:33-12:05
PERIOD 5 12:10-12:54	PERIOD 8 12:13-1:43	PERIOD 7 12:13-1:43	PERIOD 5 11:37-12:13	PERIOD 8 12:10-12:54
PERIOD 6 12:59-1:43			PERIOD 6 12:18-12:54	PERIOD 5 12:59-1:43
PERIOD 7 1:48-2:32	PERIOD 6 1:51-3:21	PERIOD 5 1:51-3:21	PERIOD 7 12:59-1:35	PERIOD 6 1:48-2:32
PERIOD 8 2:37-3:21			PERIOD 8 1:40-2:16	PERIOD 6 1:48-2:32
44 MIN (5 PASSING)	90 MIN (8 PASSING)	90 MIN (8 PASSING)	TIGER TIME PEER GROUP 2:21-3:21 36 MIN (5 PASSING)	44 MIN (5 PASSING)

Daniel Guo, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
Matias da Costa and Claire Tang,  
NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITORS

On March 8, Principal Cecilia Birge presented the prospective new schedule for the 2024–2025 school year to the Student Achievement Committee, which will incorporate two days of 90-minute block periods, shorter Thursdays, and minimize the rotation of letter days. To test the efficacy of this schedule, PHS will conduct a pilot run the week of June 3rd.

These schedule changes are part of a district initiative to maximize student learning through increased structure and stability in school instruction.

The rotating letter days schedule that PHS currently follows is unaccommodating to unexpected calendar interruptions, the expansion of school programs and classes, and makes the scheduling of PHS staff meetings and substitute teacher arrangements difficult. Following the current schedule's arrangements, P.E. classes and science classes must be placed

back-to-back on lab days. This scheduling marriage between P.E. and science classes creates an inflexibility for the scheduling of "singleton" classes, or classes that only meet once a day.

"Classes will become more even," said Senior Class President Aidan Linkov '24. "Because of the constraint of the schedule [that is] locked up by science and P.E., when we have someone mentoring an ESL class or some other special needs, then that's almost half of the day they're scheduled, and there's no flexibility."

Class size restrictions and inconsistencies exacerbate the scheduling issue.

"When you couple that with constrained physical space where some classrooms only have 15 kids [and] other classrooms have 35, we're talking about learning loss for students and making it difficult for teachers," said PHS Principal Cecilia Birge.

One of the statistics that guided the administration's decision to reform the schedule was the room utilization rate. According to Birge, at an optimal level, the room usage in a school should be

at about 85 percent, but this year, it has reached upwards of 93 percent.

"After the pandemic, with additional enrollment, as well as the expansion of our current PHS programs, we really maxed out our facilities, especially with classroom space ... [t]he issue is that we need extra classrooms in case of a leak or relocation," Birge said.

In line with maximizing student learning, the addition of 90-minute blocks on B2 and B3 days aims to give teachers more time to further implement project-based learning. Additionally, 45 minutes of gym classes on B2 and B3 days are allotted to learning labs for freshmen, or a free period for upperclassmen and eligible sophomores in their second semester.

"I want [underclassmen] to learn to earn that free ... so if they have too many absences or too many disciplinary issues, they're going to lose that privilege," said Birge. "We give kids a lot of freedom [at PHS], but if you don't know how to manage that freedom, it hurts. So this schedule is intended to build up that self discipline."

The PHS administration made alterations to this schedule with the input of various teachers and staff using a survey. Additionally, the Bell Schedule Committee, established in 2017, revised the schedule before presentation to the Master Schedule Committee and PPS Board of Education. The new schedule's removal of lab days means science teachers lose 28 minutes of instructional time per schedule cycle, so Birge maintained close communication with the science department through the process, which began in early December. Birge also met with student board liaisons and the PHS Student Council to discuss the changes.

"The [new schedule] went through multiple iterations and was a collaboration between everybody in the building," said Birge. "This is important because our bell schedule plays a critical role in structuring our learning environment and has a big impact on teaching and learning, because it affects everything from the pacing of lessons to student and teacher well-being ... it drives the kind of school that we have."

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# PHS to display its cultural diversity at the Day of Dialogue

**Emil Kapur and Avantika Palayekar,**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Established in 2022, the annual PHS Day of Dialogue aims to promote representation, education, and celebration. The next Day of Dialogue will occur on April 5 during students' gym periods. Then, multiple clubs representing different identities and cultures, such as Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA) and Latino Unidos, will realize the values of the Day of Dialogue using mediums of cultural outreach; clubs will set up their tables with culturally relevant artifacts, snacks, and small performances representing their respective communities.

This year, the Day of Dialogue plans to further emphasize cultural education. To achieve this goal, the group dedicated to creating a more DEI (Diversity, Equity, and

Inclusion) space within PHS, the PHS Diversity Council, has planned for each club to perform activities such as fashion shows or dances at a scheduled time during the event. The organizers hope that this grander presentation of different cultures will allow students attending to gain more knowledge of these different heritages.

For the clubs themselves, many plan to utilize this day to educate students about overlooked aspects of their cultures and challenge potential stereotypes.



graphic: Avantika Palayekar

"We are going to make a slideshow [that] presents some stereotypes about India, because I feel like people just think [that once they have] seen the Taj Mahal, [they have] seen India," said Siyona Lathar '25, leader of the Culture & Heritage of Authentic India club. "But there's ... so much more to see and know [about India]."

In order for the clubs to have enough money to get the materials for the event, the council hosted fundraisers through the PTO and partnered with Unified Spectrum, a

nonprofit organization whose mission is to create more career opportunities for neurodiverse individuals.

"We're also going to be selling shirts with [the] Unified Spectrum logo to [support it and] fundraise for Day of Dialogue and [the] diversity council," said Raya Kondakindi '26, a facilitator of the council who manages and aids the clubs in planning for the day.

After acquiring the necessary amount of money, the council plans to physically put together the event by gathering attendance sheets and necessary school materials like tables, as well as advertising for the day.

The Diversity Council hopes that the Day of Dialogue will not only showcase PHS's cultural diversity but also allow for culture clubs to voice how they want their individual communities to be represented by educating the Princeton community beyond societal stereotypes.

## Save the Dates



**Dodge for a Cause** dodgeball tournament (Friday, April 5, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) Entry is \$5 or three canned goods

**Near total solar eclipse** visible in the afternoon for about an hour (Monday, April 8, 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

**Downtown Princeton Gallery Crawl:** Thursday, April 11, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Stroll around town and drop in to view art exhibits at the Arts Council of Princeton and Art on Hulfish, then make a stop at Small World Coffee or the Princeton Public Library to relax and enjoy music, food, and drinks.

**Underclassmen Dance** (Friday, April 12, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) Tickets will be on sale for \$20 each during lunch throughout April, and will be sold online for \$25 each before then.

**Earth Day event at Mountain Lakes:** Saturday, April 20, 9:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m.

Sign up to volunteer at Mountain Lakes Nature Preserve to help protect the forest in a service event organized by Friends of Princeton Open Space. Register for a time slot between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. alone or with friends and family for this free event to celebrate Princeton's green spaces!

**Princeton Porchfest:** Saturday, April 27, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

If you love live music and engaging with your community, then you might enjoy the third annual Princeton Porchfest! On Saturday, April 27, take a walk through Princeton and listen to local musicians perform from porches scattered around town from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**Local Author Fair:** Saturday, April 27, 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Local Author Fair, held at the Princeton Public Library, allows readers to connect to local authors from the area. Find both fiction and nonfiction books from skilled and creative authors in the region, who will be available to sell and sign their books. Come to celebrate and connect with your local authors!

**Third annual Orchestra Spring Concert** (Thursday, May 2, 7:30 p.m.) Admission is free.

**West Windsor Community Farmers' Market** (Saturday, May 4, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

graphic: Emily Kim

# ASIAN FEST

graphics: Charley Hu

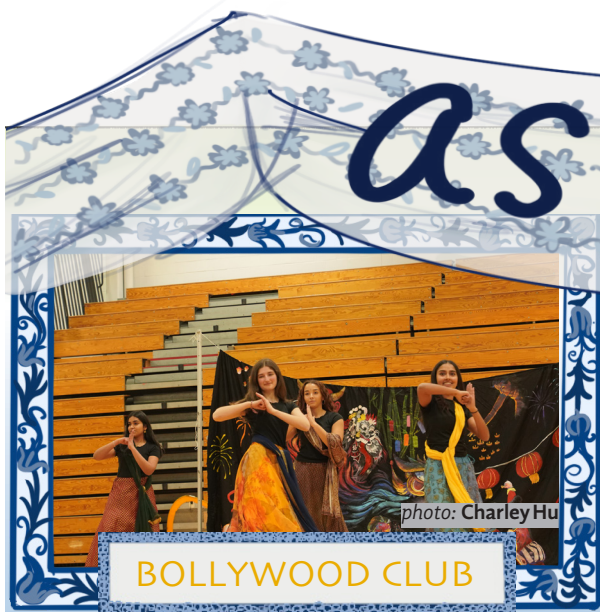


photo: Charley Hu

## BOLLYWOOD CLUB

(from left to right): Shreya Gaekwad '25, Vivian Clayton '24, Logan Hollingsworth '24, and Simran Patel '26 perform at the Asian Fest.

At the Asian Fest, the Bollywood club offered both a cultural station and a Bollywood dance performance.

The station offered participants, like Shoumilli Banerjee '27, the opportunity to receive a traditional Indian plant based tattoo art, known as henna.

"When I'm in India, I'm around my friends and my family, so I feel close to them. But when I'm here, I don't see any of them. So [the henna station] is kind of a way to reconnect with my culture," said Banerjee.

Later, the club performed songs from three Bollywood movies. Kailani Harrison '24 and Anika Hadap '24, the choreographers of the dances, strove to make it both accessible to the general PHS audience while still being representative of the tradition.

"A lot of times people outside of Indian culture don't understand the words that are in the songs. So, [they] choreographed it so that a lot of hand motions line up with what's being said. It's a cool way to learn about the culture and the language, but also be able to express yourself through the dance," said Ishaan Banerjee '24, Bollywood Club co-president.

Prior to the fest, the club hosted weekly dance rehearsals leading up to the performance, often outside of school. However, a usual club meeting is much more relaxed. Members make rangoli (a traditional Indian art), watch movies, listen to Bollywood songs, and share cultural foods.

"We bring samosas and we bring snacks that specifically Indian groceries sell, like chocolate crackers. We usually bring them in bulk so that anyone who comes can take some and eat as we do the activities," said Raima Srivastava '25, a member of the Bollywood club.

While Bollywood club is primarily a place for Indian students to connect over their shared heritage, Mital emphasized that the club is open to everyone, not just people of Indian descent.

"We have students from all different origins who come. It's an opportunity for kids from other cultures to learn about a different culture. That's what I like about the Bollywood club - the diversity of different races that come together in one place."

## Club Feature

**Harry Dweck,** STAFF WRITER  
**Mattias Blix and Patrick Song,** CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

As one of the main fundraisers and organizers of Asian Fest, the Asian American Club brought together various Asian cultures, and helped set up the fashion show, and run the main food station.

"We had a bunch of different cultural clubs come together and we put on a fashion show. It helped showcase what different cultures in Asia wear and [their] traditional clothes," said Ronald Aung '24, president of the Asian American Club. "Our food station served traditional Asian foods such as vegetable lo mein, fried rice, and General Tso's Chicken."

Aung wants the club to be a "chill spot" where kids can learn about different cultures. A typical meeting, during break on Tuesdays, consists of eating snacks from various Asian countries and watching a movie.

"The Asian American club is basically a lunch club," said Aung. "At our last club meeting, for example, we were watching Kung Fu Panda and we had these Japanese mochi bowls with boba inside of them."

The club believes that the festival was important for spreading awareness about the cultural diversity within Asia. One of the key values of the Asian American Club is inclusivity.

"This year, we [had] two new clubs at the fest and a bunch of old ones. It's important for clubs to come here fundraise and showcase what they have done, but [it's] also about being inclusive of other Asian cultures. As an Asian American, I think we all tend to be grouped together under the same term, so I think that this event is just really important to highlight the differences between the individual Asian cultures and [showcase] their traditions," Aung said.



photo courtesy: Charlotte Regnaud

## ASIAN AMERICAN CLUB

Devin Mandan '25, Kona Macalister '26, Aaron Lam '24, and Changyun Liu offer Asian cuisine at the food station.



photo: Charley Hu

## JAPANESE CLUB

Hatsune Ishii '26 teaches spectators how to fold origami.

Having brought a series of its own events to the Asian Fest, the Japanese club showcased and introduced Japanese culture to interested spectators. The events included an origami folding station, which allowed participants to fold paper cranes and other handicrafts, a food station serving handmade Japanese foods, and a performance of a series of traditional Japanese dances.

"I found their dance and the instruments [they used] really interesting; how their dancing [formation] [got] thinner as they dance and how they [held] the instrument," said William Yao '24. "I also enjoyed seeing how they [could] both bring the culture to you and our school and also bring joy and fun."

The food station that the Japanese club hosted served mochi, a Japanese dessert enjoyed during special occasions.

"Mochi is very important in Japanese culture," said Japanese Club president Seigo Iwata '26. "It's a type of rice that [is] smashed together. It's especially important on New Year's and other holidays. It's also just like a part of everyday Japanese snacks."

The Japanese club also organized an origami folding station. Interested students could take a sheet of origami paper and fold it into a crane using steps provided on an instruction sheet.

"Origami is also a very important symbol of Japanese culture as it represents good fortune and longevity. We want people to be able to have hands-on experience with origami and have the same experience as a Japanese student learning to make origami," Iwata said.

Through their performances and involvement in Asian Fest, the club aimed to not only introduce Japanese culture and lifestyle to the PHS community, but also expand upon our understanding and knowledge of Japanese culture.

"I think [Asian Fest] is important, especially because there's such a small number of Japanese people in this school," said Iwata. "I feel that not everyone knows in depth about Japanese culture. It's more just anime, pop music, things like that. They don't really know anything more. This is why we want to spread the culture and celebrate the Japanese community."

# Four years after the pandemic began: how PHS has changed

Claire Tang, NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITOR  
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On March 18, 2020, Princeton Public Schools was mandated to close its doors in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students logged onto virtual classrooms, using a video call platform that seemingly came out of nowhere: Zoom. Although many initially celebrated the “two weeks off school,” the “vacation” transformed into a quagmire of mask restrictions, endless screens, and a lasting health and educational calamity. Four years after the pandemic first began, PHS has returned to relative normalcy while nonetheless retaining significant changes left by the COVID-19 era, including adjustments in teaching methods, approaches to student well-being, and the overall culture of the school.

In order to adapt to the virtual classroom during the pandemic, teachers found and created new online resources to maintain student learning quality. The pandemic-induced embracement of digital learning tools allowed for online data collection during science classes and helped simulate in-person instruction. Many teachers now integrate these digital tools, including Formative, Gizmos, Pear Deck, and PHET Simulation, into the post-COVID-19 classroom.

“I’ve always wanted to bring technology into my classroom. I think that I took the time [from COVID-19] to put a lot of my direct instruction online, and because I had the time to do that, it means that I lecture less in class and I allow for hands-on activities more in class,” said science teacher Janine Giammanco. “I think that the engagement in my class has really gone up because it’s more student driven and it’s more hands-on.”

However, not all teachers openly embraced technology after COVID-19. Although online instruction forced teachers to move their classrooms onto Canvas, after this pandemic-led imperative no longer existed, some teachers moved away from online technology and back to traditional classroom teaching methods.

“There’s some teachers of all disciplines that are just in love with technology. You could gamify the Latin classroom. But I just think Latin lends itself to the way it’s been learned for millennia,” said Latin teacher Nolis Arkoulakis. “There’s also just a desire to make people interact with one another [more]. After COVID, people just wouldn’t even speak to me, let alone to their colleagues [and peers].”

Science teacher Alexander Henderson also finds that while the pandemic-adopted learning tools helped facilitate virtual instruction, the increased reliance on technology and digital communication during and after COVID-19 has made students more reluctant to partake in verbal classroom discussions with other students and teachers.

“I use a program called Formative where all my students submit answers as we’re going through the lesson ... because I’ve noticed that after the pandemic, a lot of students don’t want to talk. They don’t want to actually participate anymore ... so to have it where everyone can submit their answer without even having to talk ... I can assess everyone in general at the same time, which has been a very big benefit,” Henderson said.

In addition to increasing academic disengagement, the lack of structural classroom expectations during COVID-19 decreased the level of self-discipline and self-regulation generally expected of high school students.

“Students basically figured out that there is only so far we can humanly go to hold them accountable, and some have continued to take advantage of that,” said ESL teacher Anna Rose Gable. “There is a certain suspension of disbelief that is required for school to be a functioning institution, and virtual schooling really stretched that to the breaking point.”

After students returned to in-person classrooms, the decrease in self-discipline inherited from virtual schooling extended beyond disengagement in core subjects and into disorganization in extracurricular activities, such as band.

“When we came back from COVID, [I] had to reintroduce practices and routines that were usually part of the fabric of what a band kid would know before they got [to PHS]. Showing up with your instrument and having your music and being ready to play was not standard practice,” said PHS Band Director Joe Bongiovi. “We had to actually teach a lot of basics that we didn’t usually have to teach for band class.”

As a response to the lack of student organization in the classroom, helping students learn and act on the expectations of a functional classroom has been a primary objective of many teachers. Gable aims to rebuild the peer connectedness of the post-pandemic classroom through activities that encourage student-to-student interactions.

“Within my classrooms, I’ve really tried [building] community not just between myself and my students, but also from student to student,” said Gable. “Even with my native-English-speaking students, I’ve found that students need a lot more structure now to meaningfully communicate with one another. I’ve become quite fond of using the ‘bicycle chain’ (also known as ‘speed-dating’) method of rapid one-on-one conversations about a narrow set of questions.”

Many teachers also underlined the heightened importance of understanding and supporting students on a personal level. Giammanco noted the increased need for structure in student interactions

“After COVID, people just wouldn’t even speak to me, let alone their... [peers].”



Gabriel Sigrist '25 finds his homework assignments with Canvas, one of the learning tools embraced during the pandemic.

and highlighted the efforts to be sensitive to students facing challenges.

“I think that students want to know that you have their best interests at heart,” said Giammanco. “I’ve been [trying] to be particularly sensitive to students who may have late assignments or are struggling in class. I always try to contact their guidance counselor, contact home and talk to them personally more than I ever did before COVID, because you just don’t know what students may still be struggling with after the pandemic.”

To more extensively address elevated mental health struggles in students during and after COVID-19, PPS partnered with Effective School Solutions (ESS), a firm in New Jersey that focuses almost exclusively on adolescent mental health, in order to implement mental and behavioral support programs in Princeton Middle School and PHS.

“[This] is a level of service that we’ve never had before [the pandemic]. It’s what’s called tier two services. What’s provided by our counselors is basic tier one services, like check-ins. If you have something that you are feeling uncomfortable about, you can go into their office and they help you to jump over [that] hurdle,” said PHS Principal Cecilia Birge. “Tier two is elevated in that you are not able to regulate emotions for an extended period of time that it’s creating a negative impact on your academics. That’s when we do more focused and more frequent check-ins.”

The administration has also been actively engaged in implementing initiatives to foster a renewed emphasis on in-person learning.

“We don’t allow remote learning anymore and we recognize the value of face to face learning. We are creating a lot more opportunities for students to interact with

each other in person so I think that we have really jumped through quite a lot of barriers and made significant progress,” said Birge. “[For example], 9th graders have learning labs [so that they] are all sitting together and you are not all sitting separately in the hallway with your devices to yourself; it’s not alone time, you are sitting together and are expected to do your work. There are also even PTO meetings that are all in person.”

Birge outlines the school’s proactive steps in instilling structured frameworks across various facets of student life, acknowledging the importance of maintaining a balance between academic freedom and a strong sense of personal responsibility as well as ethical decision-making.

“[Over] the last two years or so, [PHS] began to build more structures around different activities,” said Birge. “One example [of this] is the student handbook; at the beginning of the school year we asked every student to sign the academic integrity pledge. [Additionally], there [are] more building monitors and teachers on duty. [We are] observing so that we as an administrative team can take that feedback and design programs and really enhance students’ leadership skills to [return to the normalcy of years prior].”

Building on the commitment to address mental health challenges, the administration’s efforts also aim to cultivate an environment where students can thrive not just academically but also engage in meaningful social interactions.

“Little by little we hope that students climb up that ladder of appreciating face to face communication, not replaceable by chatting with ChatGPT or some bot on the internet, because we can develop trust and relationships when we have personal interactions among all of us,” Birge said.

“We don’t allow remote learning anymore and we recognize the value of face to face learning.”

## Jennifer Smolyn and Jackie Katz published in The Science Teacher

Meiya Xiong, STAFF WRITER  
Audrey Huang and Maiya Qiu,  
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

In February, PHS science teachers Jacqueline Katz and Jennifer Smolyn published an article in *The Science Teacher*, a prestigious peer-reviewed journal of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). Within the publication, they outline a novel approach to developing scientific literacy and critical thinking skills in the high school setting, specifically describing a lesson utilized within PHS’s Research Program.

“Essentially, we’re trying to get students to think and act like scientists in the field,” said Katz. “We’re trying to build those thought practices in our students and give them chances to employ those skills.”

To achieve this, Katz and Smolyn emphasize the value of challenging students to read full scientific journal articles and engage in peer mentoring, expectations that are not common in typical high school science classes. Additionally, the lesson seeks to improve certain underlying skills: students’ abilities to extract main ideas from primary source literature, support claims

with data, analyze bias, and communicate information clearly.

“These [skills] are everyday practices in the world of science. But sometimes, they get overlooked as a key focus in the science classroom because we’re worrying about learn[ing] content [rather than developing] the skills that were needed to discover that content,” Katz said.

Inspired by their own graduate research experiences, Katz and Smolyn introduced the lesson seeking to emulate the research process of scientists. Thus, the lesson will teach students how to better understand and extract information from research articles so that they can form more insightful and complex questions and conclusions that they can then incorporate into their own research projects.

Although the lesson outlined in the article is only taught within the research program, the science teachers stress that these practices are universally applicable to all students, including those in traditional classes.

“Those are skills that translate no matter what field you go into. You will still need to assess information that you [are] exposed to and make decisions about your health,



Jackie Katz and Jennifer Smolyn discuss methods to help students improve their research skills.

about the climate, or about anything,” said Smolyn. “Even if you’re not a scientist, you can still utilize these skills to help you make decisions for your own life in the future.”

As such, the teachers are integrating some elements of the lesson into regular science classes, namely biology, to ensure students outside of the research program also have exposure to the fundamental skills of scientific literacy.

“With each unit, [instead of] providing students with complete research papers, we take some of the information from journal entries just to give them some initial exposure to how science is communicated when it’s not coming at [them] in a TikTok video or a news blurb,” said Smolyn. “We spend four weeks reading these papers in the research program and in an ideal world, we would love to do it in all our classes.”

# OPINIONS

## Stop contributing to the echo chamber of misinformation

Tessa Silver, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR  
Harry Dweck, STAFF WRITER

The current online world is plagued with an epidemic of lies. There is so much misinformation in our world that the Associated Press publishes a weekly edition of “Not Real News,” a feature of fake news stories that have been published recently. The content varies from President Biden’s supposed plans to give all illegal immigrants \$5,000 Visa gift cards to FDA efforts to start a “pandemic” with harmful medications disguised as decongestants.

Misinformation is by no means a new concept, but the degree to which it pervades society today is incredibly alarming. Despite the fact that the internet (and particularly social media) is overrun with conspiracy theories, embellished content, and dangerous misinterpretations, it has become the dominant source of information for Americans, especially for younger generations.

Pew Research found that in 2022, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter were the primary news source for 66 percent of young people. At the same time, according to Gallop, a record 78 percent of Gen Z trust what they read online, compared to just 60 percent who trust reputable national organizations.

In theory, social media can be used as a tool for exercising freedom of speech, avoiding the restriction of the distribution

of information to a few powerful institutions. In practice, however, misinformation makes productive online discussions nearly impossible. In 2018, MIT researchers found that posts containing falsehoods reach 1,500 people on Twitter six times faster than truthful posts. This phenomenon, initially observed and coined in the political scene, is dubbed as “post-truth,” and was named the 2016 Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionary. The

most prominent example of the damage misinformation has caused is our own democracy. For example, CNN found that 38 percent of adults in the United States did not believe in the results of the 2020 election, and USA Today polls show that over half of Trump supporters have already decided that the 2024 election will be rigged. This January, the World Economic Forum ranked misinformation as the greatest global risk, citing its potential to further widen societal and political divides ... undermine the legitimacy of newly elected governments [and] infiltrate public discourse.”

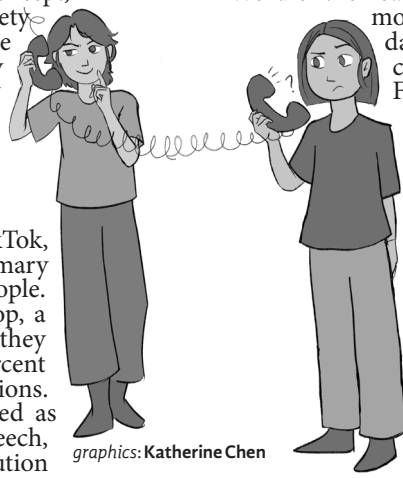
Improving how we process information online may not be as

difficult as it seems. According to Matt Groh, a researcher at MIT’s Media Lab, when we simply pay attention to the quality of a source, we’re

much better at detecting misinformation. If the legitimacy is not clear even after some research, it’s often useful to find the original evidence the author cited and come to a conclusion without the influence of a secondary source. In general, when

we process information, it’s also important to apply the same levels of skepticism and thinking to all content, regardless of whether it aligns with our values or commonly accepted opinion. Without active awareness of our biases, we’re much more likely to believe falsehoods if they align with our own narrative.

In an age where the internet and social media are everywhere in our life, it’s our responsibility to combat misinformation and to think and advocate for truth, no matter how tedious it may seem. Next time you see something shocking, remember that meaningful information and ideas usually can’t be expressed in a single tweet or Instagram post.



graphics: Katherine Chen

## Section 230: the digital “get out of jail free” card

Chloe Zhao, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR  
Iniya Karimanal, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For many of us, engaging with the worldwide web is something we do without a second thought. While we expect these public spaces to adhere to the law, in reality, they facilitate enormous amounts of dangerous illicit content every day. However, despite our constant wariness against internet dangers, there is little legislation actually addressing the issue. To understand why this is the case, we have to talk about Section 230.

Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act was originally designed to nurture the growth of emerging internet platforms. The act provides broad immunity to online platforms from civil liability based on third-party content. This clause ensures the free and open flow of content, which has played a critical role in shaping online commerce and communication, creating an atmosphere where opinions and ideas can be shared at unprecedented speed and quantity.

Despite its benefits, Section 230 was written a quarter century ago and is now obsolete. A combination of widespread technological advancements since 1996 and the broad interpretations that courts have given Section 230 has left online platforms immune to repercussions regarding an assortment of illicit activity on their services. They are thus free to moderate content with little transparency or accountability. As such, companies do what they know best: cut corners.

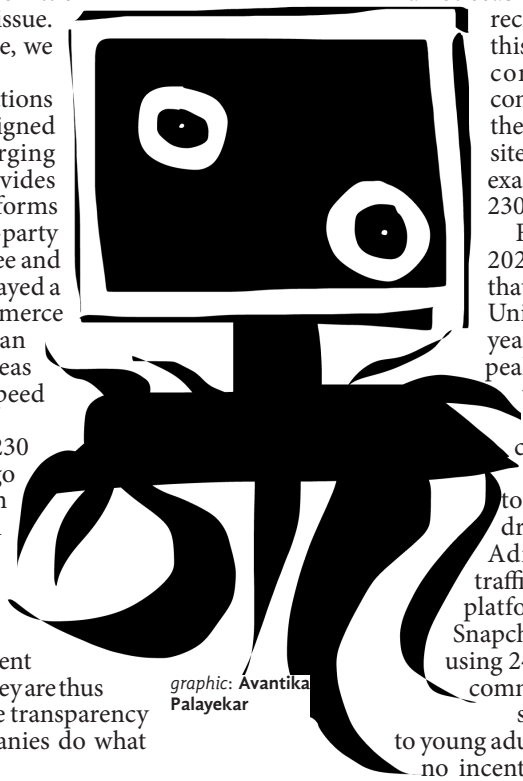
Today, the consequences of Section 230’s framework are evident. With an account profile on social media, anyone can converse with thousands of other users at a time. Alyssa Currier Wheeler, associate legal counsel at the Human Trafficking Institute, said that in recent years, there has been a noticeable 11 percent growth of trafficking recruitment on social media. Despite this significant spike, social media companies still demonstrate a complete lack of accountability for the trafficking recruitment on their sites, which is further exacerbated by Section 230.

Furthermore, in 2023, NPR reported that for the first time in United States history, yearly fatal overdoses peaked above 112,000, with young people and people of color being the most affected. This can be linked to social media posts promoting drug use: the Drug Enforcement Administration found that drug traffickers advertise on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube using 24-hour posts to escape traditional community guidelines. In this manner, social media fuels the sale of drugs to young adults and children. Companies have no incentive to moderate malicious posts

like these as long as they get clicks, and therefore revenue. It’s critical to stop the issue at its root by holding social media companies wholly responsible for the dangerous content produced on their platforms. It is critical to [hold] social media companies wholly responsible for the dangerous content produced on their platforms.

like these as long as they get clicks, and therefore revenue. It’s critical to stop the issue at its root by holding social media companies wholly responsible for the dangerous content produced on their platforms. If Section 230 is repealed, social media companies will finally be pushed to moderate criminal posts on their platforms in fear of costly lawsuits. The main problem with Section 230 is that it relies on a broad application to fulfill its intended purpose of protecting companies. Unfortunately, as with many other laws with broad coverage, Section 230 is prone to being abused for its loopholes. A Supreme Court brief documenting Gonzalez v. Google LLC details that Congress’ efforts to combat sex trafficking have been thwarted by misinterpretations of Section 230. In 2016, the First Circuit held that the website Backpage.com was immune from liability under Section 230 for claims that it knowingly facilitated the trafficking of three girls. Congress responded to this decision by clarifying that Section 230 “was never intended to provide legal protection to websites that ... facilitate traffickers in advertising the sale of unlawful sex acts” and amended Section 230 instead of repealing. Yet, even after this amendment from Congress, courts have continued to cite Section 230 and dismissed trafficking cases based on the broad immunity interpretation. If the section still causes misinterpretations even after amending, the only path left is to repeal it completely.

When our laws fail to protect those most vulnerable in our population and instead shield the perpetrators from responsibility, something needs to change. Our generation of children and young adults is currently being denied a safe online experience and is constantly victimized by online criminals. It’s time that our legislation holds tech giants responsible for the crimes that they are facilitating.



graphic: Avantika Palayekar

# Consumerism is being advertised as self expression, and it's killing the planet

Joy Chen, Stephanie Liao, and Andrew Kuo, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Corporate behemoths don't only sell products — they sell concepts. Companies tell consumers that their products will make them cool, productive, and successful; this is mainly achieved through the use of social media. The modern era has made teenagers, a demographic that has always been easy to influence, even more vulnerable to companies dictating their lifestyles and more importantly, their personal worth.

The influence of social media advertisements is undeniable. Ads are everywhere online, but they also often cross over into real life. Companies do their best to make teenagers think they need whatever it is they're being sold in order to be up to date with current trends. This is only amplified by seeing influencers with those same products. According to Forbes, companies create advertisements by following four basic precepts: a successful advertisement must be memorable, meaningful, strongly tied to a specific brand, and able to "communicate how the product ... makes [the consumer] better." These messages often pressure viewers into purchasing these products to achieve the "ideal" life.

Aside from extensive advertising, companies promote consumerism by engaging in a phenomenon known as planned obsolescence, where they purposely design their products to age poorly, so that people feel the need to buy the newest version. According to France24, multiple countries are investigating Apple for intentionally installing software updates that harm battery life and make repair difficult.

Overconsumption not only impacts a teenager's wallet, but also the environment. In today's age of social media advertisement, companies push out new trending products at staggering speeds; more often than not, these mounds of products end up being improperly disposed of. This results in substantial amounts of mismanaged waste

The modern era has made teenagers ... even more vulnerable to companies dictating their ... personal worth.

sitting in landfills. A prime example is the electronics industry, which, according to The World's Counts, makes up 70 percent of overall toxic waste. The majority of a phone's carbon footprint is derived from its manufacturing processes, which involves the usage of rare earth minerals. In order to extract these minerals, the mining process creates a huge amount of toxic waste, such as mercury, which can flow into nearby waterways and pollute marine ecosystems and drinking water. Gold and tin mining have also contributed to deforestation in the Amazon, which stores 150–200 billion tons of carbon. According to a 2022 study by Lövehage et al., the representative carbon footprint of a smartphone is estimated to be 50 kg of carbon dioxide. In 2021, Apple generated 52,490 tons of highly toxic waste.



graphic: Katherine Chen

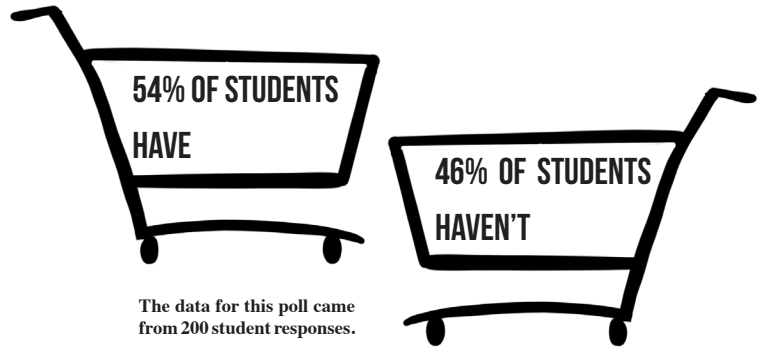


With social media encouraging people to replace their phone every one or two years, both the emissions of production and the impacts of waste are exacerbated.

While it's easy to acknowledge the current climate crisis and the role that consumerism plays, it's much more difficult to take action and break out of our current cycle. In our generation of teenagers specifically, a herd mentality is highly pervasive. Breaking free from this pressure starts with separating overconsumption from social status — overconsumption isn't "cool," and there's no reason to get rid of an older but still functional gadget just in order to replace it with the latest model. There's a lot we can do to combat corporate schemes, even ones by powerful companies, such as switching to more responsible brands with products that are known to work well for many years. Buying the latest gizmo isn't the way to a happy life, so the next time you think about buying an item you see online, ask yourself: do you truly want this, or is it a manufactured need?

## PHS STUDENT SURVEY

HAVE YOU RECENTLY BEEN INFLUENCED TO PURCHASE SOMETHING ONLINE BY THE INTERNET?



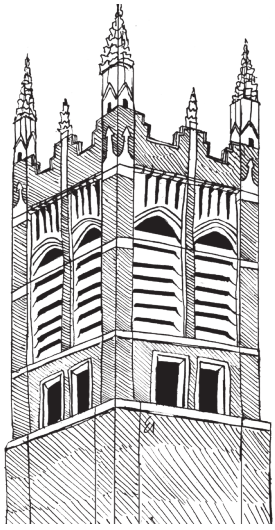
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## Addressing our inaccurate history textbook

Editorial

The United States has a history riddled with oppressive institutions and unethical war practices. However, as much as we like to believe that Americans are becoming more aware of our country's faults, our view on history ignores details from the United States' complex history that are essential to properly understand broader historical themes.

Some of the most obvious examples from the classroom exist in the PHS's AP United States History textbook, *The American Pageant*. In a particular section, it addresses the government-supported internment camps for Japanese Americans as well as the Holocaust. However, *Pageant* notably omits America's pardoning of Unit 731, a unit of the Japanese Imperial Army that conducted lethal human experiments during World War II and the Second Sino-Japanese war. The United States government, which oversaw the rebuilding of Japan post-World War II, granted political immunity to high-ranking officials who were instrumental in perpetrating war crimes in exchange for the data pertaining to the human experiments conducted in China. Instead of disclosing this critical part of the American occupation of Japan, *Pageant* instead chooses to only focus on praising the American-reformed Japan, championing General Douglas MacArthur's "stunning success" in introducing "Western-style democratic government" and rebuilding the Japanese economy. Ultimately, the textbook's negligent approach frames this critical historic event in a way which only showcases the successes of Western paternalism by ignoring the United States' involvement in condoning atrocious war crimes.

Alongside disregard for international affairs, our textbook consistently misrepresents the United States' domestic conflicts as well, often at the expense of

marginalized groups. For example, *Pageant* discredits the self-sustaining spirit of Black Americans. Instead of celebrating their feat of self-liberation during the Civil War by abandoning Confederate plantations and fleeing to Union lines, *Pageant* instead claims that "Blacks found themselves emancipated and then re-enslaved" by Union troop movements, as if they had no agency themselves, and emphasized that many enslaved people "initially responded to news of their emancipation with suspicion and uncertainty." Through *Pageant's* lens, the Emancipation Proclamation caused slaves to rise up, when in reality it was the other way around.

Additionally, *Pageant* consistently utilizes the term "mulatto" to describe biracial people of Black and white descent. The term originated from the word "mule," and was used to compare biracial people to hybrid livestock. Today, it is considered a racial slur, and has no place in being used to describe a demographic of people.

*Pageant* misrepresents important parts of history, making it harder for millions of students to resonate with current social justice movements. Even if most textbooks fail to provide this critical information, our understanding of American history should not halt at the AP curriculum. Instead, PHS should strive to universally include supplemental materials to make up for this disparity.

A true understanding of American history should be the primary objective of participating in a history course, not conforming to a narrow minded AP curriculum. Action needs to be taken — Princeton, a community constantly advocating for the spread of progressive ideas, should not continue to support the *American Pageant's* inaccurate, cherry-picked, and whitewashed version of American history.

# The Tower

Princeton High School  
151 Moore Street, Princeton, New Jersey

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### Mission Statement

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

### Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of the Tower consists of a select group of 14 Tower 2024 staff members. The views of board members are accurately reflected in the editorial, which is co-written each month by the Board with primary authorship changing monthly.

### Letter and Submission Policy

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

### The Tower Online

The Tower is available to read online at [www.towerphs.com](http://www.towerphs.com)

The newspaper accepts advice from the administration and the advisors in regard to the newspaper's content; however, the final decision to print the content lies with the Editors-in-Chief. The Tower's articles do not necessarily represent the views of the administration, faculty, or staff.

## In vitro fertilization rights after Roe v. Wade

Tamar Assayag, MANAGING EDITOR

This past February, Dr. Zev Williams, director of the Columbia University Fertility Center, informed CNN Health that around two percent of U.S. births occur through in vitro fertilization (IVF), a process in which an egg is fertilized in a lab and later transferred back into the uterus. Since the first IVF baby was born in 1978, this method of conception has grown in popularity and improved the livelihoods of many families, from heterosexual couples struggling with infertility to same-sex couples looking to conceive biological children. However, recent developments in Alabama have complicated and stunted the process, adding unnecessary difficulty to a procedure that is already financially and emotionally costly.

In December 2020, three different couples sued a fertility clinic when a patient at an IVF clinic in Alabama accidentally destroyed their embryo samples. Although the case was initially dismissed at a lower level, on February 16, 2024, the Alabama Supreme Court overruled this decision, stating that frozen embryos are children, and are protected as such by Alabama's Wrongful Death of a Minor Act; this act has now been modified to include "all unborn children, regardless of their location," as explained in the decision.

In this ruling, Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Tom Parker did not attempt to mask his religious bias, stating in the case that "human life cannot be wrongfully destroyed without incurring the wrath of a holy God." Parker's direct religious reasoning has raised essential concerns regarding the court's blatant disregard for the separation of church and state; the judiciaries' decision was deeply rooted in Christian belief, while simultaneously dismissing our freedom of religion, as granted by the First Amendment.

The government, and thus legislation, should represent the views of the majority. Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022, Alabama has completely banned abortion. Now, with the most recent development in the reproductive rights of Alabama citizens, those who do not want to give birth are forced to, while those who seek fertility treatments in order to start a family are restricted from doing so. It's been abundantly clear that this ruling has nothing to do with protecting lives, and everything to do with controlling them. A poll conducted by CBS News in the weeks following this decision found that

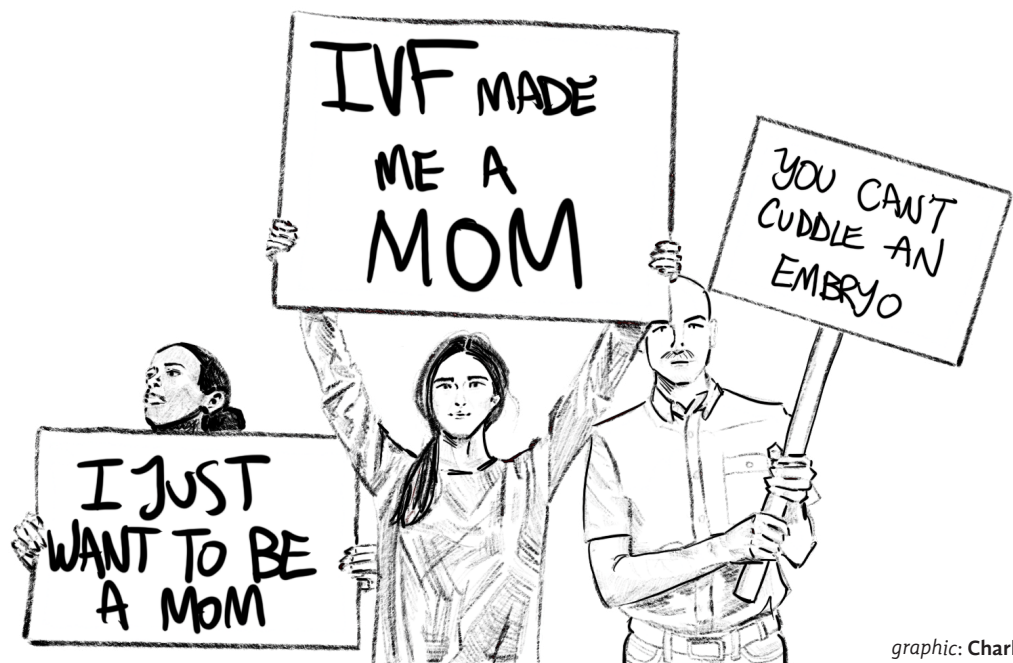
86 percent of Americans believe IVF treatments should remain legal.

Although this ruling originated from one isolated incident, that does not mean that other states with similarly biased and religious politicians will not follow suit. Yet, this decision evidently does not represent the majority voice of the people. This ruling continues the debate regarding reproductive rights; in fact, even conservatives are divided on the issue, despite the public impression that it was right-wing politicians who pushed for this detrimental ruling in the first place.

Since this ruling faced national backlash, politicians were incentivised to take action. On March 6, Alabama governor Kay Ivey signed a bill providing IVF doctors and clinics with legal protection against future lawsuits.

However, several clinics have not resumed their operations due to the fact that the law fails to address the legal standing of families and doctors with embryos currently stored in Alabama clinics. As a result, several patients have voiced their desire to move their frozen embryos out of state, but even that has become a challenge as some embryo transfer services, such as Cryoport, have yet to resume services in Alabama.

While such a radical decision is unlikely to occur in New Jersey, we should always remain aware of events that occur nationally and globally, not just locally. Pro-life laws have never carried out their intended purpose of "saving lives," but instead have controlled and endangered women. This new ruling, and its basis in religious scripture, is highly unconstitutional, which begs an important question: Why are we allowing religiously-biased politicians to police people's lives, and when will we put them to an end?



graphic: Charley Hu



# VANGUARD PRESENTS: THE BRAIN

## Remembrance, reverie, and ratatouille: the science behind nostalgia

Syra Bhatt, VANGUARD CO-EDITOR

There's a scene from Disney's "Ratatouille" that holds a special place in my heart: Anton Ego, the stubborn, irritable restaurant critic infamous for his acerbic reviews, tastes a variation of the movie's titular dish that sends him back to the kitchen of his childhood home. We see him as a little boy, his eyes lighting up at the first bite of his mother's steaming ratatouille. Flash forward to the present, and it's the first time we see Ego's face soften since the beginning of the movie.

I've never tried ratatouille, but I am familiar with nostalgia, the wistful affection people have for the past. The word itself is a Greek compound combining "nostos," meaning "homecoming," and "álogos," meaning "sorrow." It was termed a disease by medical student Johannes Hofer in 1688. While documenting the symptoms of Swiss mercenaries serving in foreign countries, Hofer linked the soldiers' depression to their homesickness and longing for the mountains. At the time, the specific diagnosis was coined as a "mal de suisse" — a strictly Swiss illness.

Admittedly, medical research and remedies were quite limited back then (reminder: rum and whiskey were listed as treatments for PTSD); today, nostalgia is considered an emotional state rather than a disease. Psychologist Clay Routledge explains that, although sadness and loneliness may trigger longing for the past, nostalgia actually "enhances well-being, feelings of social connectedness, and perceptions of meaning in life." In reminding us of the "good ol' days," nostalgia is proof that we have continuity in our lives. It shows us the past, reminding us that we can never truly return, but then wraps us in the warmth of knowing we still have time to experience all that life has to offer.

Individuals are typically nostalgic for positive memories linked to self-discovery. This is represented visually on the lifespan retrieval curve, which shows the number of memories a person forms at certain ages in their lifetime. The curve reveals "the reminiscence bump" — an arch on the graph between the ages of 15–25 observed in adults over 40, suggesting that we have an increased remembrance of events that happened during our young adulthood. These specific memories are stronger than others created in our lifetimes, and are known to influence our core values, attitudes, and aspirations. By looking back on them, we can find security in connecting the dots between the important parts of our past and our present selves.

For Anton Ego, nostalgia is his mother's flavorful layering of stewed tomatoes, zucchini, and eggplant. For me, it's the click-clackety sounds of tap shoes as they hit linoleum flooring. But for all of us, nostalgia is more than just melancholia; it's a bittersweet and powerful emotion capable of changing our outlook on life. Re-experiencing the memories that define who we are helps us learn to love our lives for not only what they've been, but what they can become. Nostalgia reminds us that we matter, and that we each have a purpose — and that's what we live for.

MEMORY  
LANE →

Graphics: Charley Hu

# THE ANATOMY

## Occipital Lobe

The occipital lobe is responsible for most visual perception: color, form or shape, and motion. Messages received from the retina of our eyes travel through the optic nerves and are decoded in the occipital lobe, where that information is formed into something our brain can perceive and use to carry out necessary functions. It's located at the very back of the skull, and has a groove dividing its left and right sides, similar to the other lobes.

## Parietal Lobe

The parietal lobe helps all the different parts of the brain work together. It is responsible for self-perception, learned movements, location awareness, and sensory integration, which translates our senses into things we can understand. The parietal lobe is located at the crown of the skull, the top part of your head.

## Frontal Lobe

The frontal lobe is the largest lobe in the human brain. It is responsible for a variety of significant functions, including voluntary functions (like walking, writing, and speaking), expressive language, and higher-level thinking. Specifically, the frontal lobe is home to certain parts of the brain that manage thinking, self-control, muscle movements, and memory storage. As the name suggests, it is located at the forwardmost area of the brain. Additionally, the frontal lobe helps with reasoning, understanding of social situations, and learning and recalling information.

Aarna Dharmavarapu, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

## Cerebellum

The cerebellum controls voluntary movements like eye movement, speech, and posture. It's also responsible for muscle control, which involves balancing, coordination, and movement. Aside from controlling muscle movement, the cerebellum also plays a role in other cognitive functions, such as language processing, comprehension, and memory. It's located at the back of the head, just above the area where the spinal cord connects to the brain.

## Temporal Lobe

The temporal lobe helps us use our senses to understand and respond to the world around us. It's located just behind the frontal lobe, and below the parietal lobe. Some key areas of the temporal lobe are the amygdala, which determines emotions; the hippocampus, responsible for storing memories; and the fusiform gyrus, which is known to link visuals and memories.

# STUDY TIPS

Jieruei Chang, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

## Sell All Your Clothes

Victor Hugo, the French novelist, was apparently a major procrastinator. He once promised to finish a book by April 1829 — but had not yet written a single word when the deadline rolled around. He managed to postpone the deadline to December 1830, but spent the time going out instead of writing. His publisher was not happy; in fact, he was so unhappy that he threatened to sue. So what did Hugo do? As the story goes, he sold all his clothes (except for his pajamas), essentially trapping himself inside his house. By January 1831, he had finished "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame."

I'm not saying that you should sell all your clothes when it's grind time on a research project or when you're panicking two days before the final exam. It might be more reasonable to lock yourself in your room, or shut off the notifications on your phone. You could change your work environment so you don't accidentally fall asleep while studying, or tape a list of clear and specific to-do items on the wall. But hey, if selling all his clothes worked for Victor Hugo, it might work for you too.



## Explain Like I'm Five

Richard Feynman was a quantum physicist, but his eponymous study technique thankfully has no partial differential equations. It's built around the idea that to truly know something, you need to be able to teach it. After you're confident that you've internalized a concept, grab a friend with no prior knowledge and try to explain it to them. If you find yourself stumbling past certain concepts, that's probably where you should direct your attention.

What I like about this technique is that it forces you to actually know the material, rather than just regurgitate the formulas. Sure, a volt is a joule per coulomb, but what does that actually mean? Can we find an analogy to make it more understandable? If we treat a coulomb of electric charge like a ball with mass rolling down a hill, then a volt is the height of that hill — which determines how many joules of potential energy the ball has at the top of that hill. If you really understand it, you should be able to explain it to a metaphorical five-year-old. My ball-rolling-downhill analogy helped me understand electricity, but it's not quite at five-year-old level yet. I suppose that means I've got more learning to do.

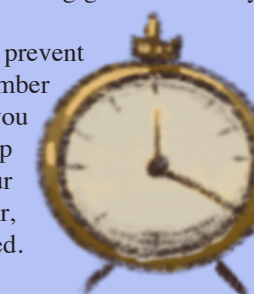


## Get Some Exercise (And Some Sleep)

Know when to start studying, and know when to stop. Test scores do not necessarily have a positive correlation with the number of hours studied. Obviously, not studying at all is probably a bad idea, but the law of diminishing returns still applies: prolonged study sessions may not yield proportionate benefits. Too much studying can wear out your mind, meaning that it won't be at its best when you need it. Sometimes it's better to take a break than to keep cramming.

But what kinds of breaks are best? Exercise is one option. It releases endorphins, hormones which improve your mood and reduce stress by acting as natural pain relievers. I'm incredibly unathletic, but I like to go on bike rides, play table tennis (badly), or walk my dog. "Touching grass" definitely helps.

A good night's sleep is also important, not only to prevent irritability and fatigue, but also to make sure you remember what you studied. Your brain doesn't switch off when you sleep; spikes in oscillatory brain activity during sleep have been shown to be a key part of consolidating your memories. So before you panic and pull an all-nighter, ask yourself: is it really worth it? No. It's not. Go to bed.



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT: BRAIN SUPERFOODS

Asya Morozov, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

## Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds are very nutrient-rich; they contain around three to six grams of protein per handful. Protein-rich foods aid neurotransmitters, which help the brain carry messages from one nerve cell to another. A study done by researchers from the Madrid Institute of Health in 2023 showed that consuming 60 grams of nuts and seeds may be linked to strengthening memory and blood flow in the brain. Although this is most helpful for people above 50 years old, who make up 19 percent of those who suffer from cognitive impairment, the consumption of nuts and subsequent building of proteins and cognitive capacity in the brain is beneficial for people of any age.

## Dark Berries

Dark berries like blueberries and boysenberries are full of antioxidants and anthocyanins. Antioxidants stimulate blood and oxygen flow, particularly in the brain, which can increase focus and brainpower. They are an essential nutritional element of one's diet. Anthocyanins are small molecules that can cross the blood-brain barrier and induce helpful processes in the brain. They can prevent brain cells, which do not replenish themselves after loss, from aging, and can even provide protection against cancer. Both antioxidants and anthocyanins can also prevent free radical cells, which damage healthy cells in the body, from getting into the brain. This lets brain cells last longer and preserves cognitive potential later in life.

## Avocados

Avocados contain many B-vitamins, which are crucial to brain health because of their involvement in homocysteine metabolism. Homocysteine is an amino acid that increases one's risk for heart disease, stroke, dementia, and neural tube issues. B-vitamins metabolize homocysteine, breaking it down and reducing its harm to the body. Eating avocado is beneficial in all stages of life, from building brain health and intelligence in babies to preventing cognitive degeneration in elderly people.



# BRAIN TEASERS

Zoe Nuland, VANGUARD CO-EDITOR

Aritra Ray, MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Chloe Zhao, OPINIONS CO-EDITOR

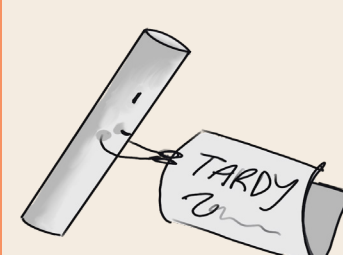
1)



2)

I fly by when you're having fun. I drag my feet when you're in Peer Group. Everyone is allotted the same amount of me, yet I am the most precious commodity.

3)



4)



Answers: 1: Dime a Dozen, 2: Time, 3: Chocolate, 4: Pac-Man

Graphics: Katherine Chen and Charley Hu



# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Spring into the new season with these two movie reviews

### “Peter Rabbit”

Chloe Lam, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As spring is right around the corner, many people are adding movies that capture the spirit of the season to their watchlist. “Peter Rabbit,” released in 2018, is a comedy movie for people of all ages. The movie is set in a neighborhood full of vibrant flowers and charming fields, which conveys the film’s main topics of joy and renewal. The film also has a heartwarming message with its portrayal of an unconventional family and the importance of respecting and understanding each other’s situation.

The main character, Peter, is adventurous, mischievous, and curious. His siblings Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail are similarly playful, and can sometimes cause trouble. Throughout the film, an animal lover named Bea forms a special relationship with all the rabbits, her affection towards them making her a fan-favorite character. Despite their love for Bea, Peter and his siblings are

always stepping into her neighbor Thomas’ garden to annoy him, creating a rivalry with Thomas, which becomes a big issue in Bea’s relationship with him and one of the primary conflicts in the story. Without any regard for how their actions are annoying for the humans, Peter Rabbit and his siblings relish in the humorous response they get from Thomas, and their energetic behavior brings a sense of life and excitement to the audience.

Not only is the movie full of humorous and clever characters, but the story also provides the audience with an important message of respecting those who are different from us. The rabbits’ and neighbor’s mindsets change throughout the story, as they realize the importance of respect, kindness, forgiveness, and the consequences of their actions. This sweet conclusion teaches people to treat others with empathy and compassion, while celebrating friendships and the significance of home.

### “The Sound of Music”

Jane Hu, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Some may go on vacation over spring break, but for those like me, who find themselves bored over the week-long break from school, I recommend watching “The Sound of Music,” directed by Robert Wise, as it is a movie that will leave one mesmerized without a doubt. Released in 1965, “The Sound of Music” is a heartwarming movie based on the story of the Von Trapp family, a singing group originating in Salzburg, Austria during World War II. Maria, played by Julie Andrews, is sent away from her abbey to act as a governess to a family of seven children, so that she is disciplined prior to becoming a nun. The family she stays with are the children of a retired captain, George Von Trapp. The children are extremely well-mannered but sheltered, and Maria teaches them to enjoy their lives more. Though the captain initially disapproves, when he sees how close Maria has gotten to his children, he begins to appreciate her more, and the two fall for each other soon enough.

In addition to the touching storyline, the movie contains several catchy songs that intertwine beautifully with the story’s plot. These songs, such as “Do-Re-Mi,” “The Lonely Goatherd,” and “Sixteen Going on Seventeen,” narrate the characters’ lives as the plot thickens. One of my favorite songs is “Sixteen Going on Seventeen,” featuring the oldest daughter, named Liesl, who sings about entering womanhood. The musical dynamics disclosed in the song capture the nature of Liesl’s relationship with Rolf, a delivery boy who is in love with Liesl. The song starts off soft and mellow, but then the orchestra in the background undergoes a subtle crescendo. After the vocalists stop singing, the orchestra continues, slowly crescendoing and accelerating until the song comes to an awkward

halt. This unique song ending perfectly describes one’s first love: it’s awkward, but also exhilarating and wonderful. Unlike many movies, in which songs are used only as background music, “The Sound of Music” incorporates music into the plot. The scenes are constantly entertaining as the singers are always dancing with the flow of the song. The director does a fantastic job showing the developing relationships between the characters by revealing all their true feelings through song, adding depth to the story. In addition to developing sentimental relationships, the film also includes songs that are humorous, such as “The Lonely Goatherd.” A common aspect shared between all of the songs in the movie is the emphasis on the songs’ buildup. This buildup allows the songs to have a stronger ending and feel more complete.

Further strengthening the story, the clothing aesthetics of the characters add insight into their personalities. The children in the movie wear matching clothes, demonstrating the strong bond that the family members have with one another. While Maria initially seems to be the odd one out with her dull, gray aprons and flashy dresses, her wedding gown when she marries the children’s father at the end of the movie depicts her fully becoming an official part of the family.

One of the best things about this movie is how relatable it is. Although it was released more than half a century ago, the songs manage to cover endearing interactions between family members, describe cheesy romance, and express happiness and freedom, all while carrying out a touching storyline. No doubt, “The Sound of Music” will leave you craving for more romance during the remainder of your spring break.



graphics: Charley Hu

## Fresh picks for your outfits; what PHS students are wearing this spring

Amelie Kraft, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



“I am excited to wear spring dresses.” - Miyu Kawagoe '26



“I am excited to wear a crochet shrug that I ma[de].” - Mercy Ebong '26



“I’m a big fan of jorts.” - Rica Eleches-Lipsitz '25



“I feel like I really don’t like jeans because they’re kind of uncomfortable, so I am excited to wear some shorts because spring is the perfect weather — summer is far too hot, winter’s OK, but spring’s pretty nice — so I’m excited to wear some shorts and band t-shirts.” - Zack Ware-Huff '26



“I’m excited to wear tank tops and shorts, and not to have to wear hoodies anymore.” - Anna Krystofik '27



“I would say low waisted mini skirts.” - Blake Jung '24



photos: Amelie Kraft  
graphics: Charley Hu

# A tale as old as time: “Beauty and the Beast” musical

Daniel Haiduc and Layla Saint-Pierre,  
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS



In the musical number “Gaston,” Konrad Hedges ’26, in the role of Gaston, sings about his self-admiration, along with the enthusiastic support of the other villagers.

For this year’s musical, the PHS Spectacle Theater presented a rendition of “Beauty and the Beast,” in collaboration with PHS Orchestra to bring this tale to life. Audiences had the opportunity to experience this production in the auditorium from March 14 to 16.

In preparation for the musical, the cast practiced singing, multiple choreographies, and acting, which proved to be challenging when combined.

Alternating between two casts, the Red and Blue casts, each offered its own interpretation of the characters. For Samara Raju ’24, who portrayed Belle in the Red Cast, this marked her first time playing the lead role.

“Belle is] a confident woman who is well-read and purposeful, yet elegant,” said Raju. “Maintaining all these characteristics throughout the show [was] difficult ... It’s the ability to prepare for the show and having everything you need that will determine your success!”

Similar to Raju, Enea Meloni ’24, who played Gaston in the Red Cast, the arrogant hunter determined to marry Belle, faced his own share of challenges, namely, portraying Gaston’s misogynistic tendencies.

“Gaston always carries himself in a certain way,” said Meloni. “You always have to pose as if anyone could

take a photo of you at any time. You’re supposed to keep your chest really big, never [slouch], and speak with a low voice, which can be tough when singing.”

Other actors in the production were also confronted with difficulties regarding intertwining acting and singing together seamlessly. Edward Cao ’24, who played the Beast in the Red Cast, found modifying his voice to be a challenge, as he also had to convey his character’s growth throughout the musical to the audience.

“In order to imitate the Beast’s tone, I [had] to completely change my speaking voice by adding grit, which [could] be hard on my voice sometimes,” said Cao. “On the outside, he’s an angry detested Beast, but it’s important for me to show his vulnerable side.”

Julianna Krawiecki, drama teacher at PHS, took on the responsibility of directing the show.

“Along with getting the costumes and cast ready, the copyright paperwork can take months. Directing a production is a huge responsibility,” said Krawiecki. “The students experience[d] many opportunities to explore their talent and [were] excited to share their hard work.”

The production also featured music from the PHS Orchestra, who performed in the pit under the

stage. Since the beginning of January, the orchestra rehearsed the orchestral score by Alan Menken in order to synchronize with the actors’ singing.

“There [were] a lot of parts where the orchestra [wasn’t] able to just sight read the music on the spot. Those parts require[d] a lot of work, but [we got] through it slowly in class,” said Audrey Kang ’24, one of the principal violinists in PHS Orchestra.

When it came to coordinating the music with the acting and the singing, the orchestra teacher and conductor, Robert Loughran, played a crucial role.

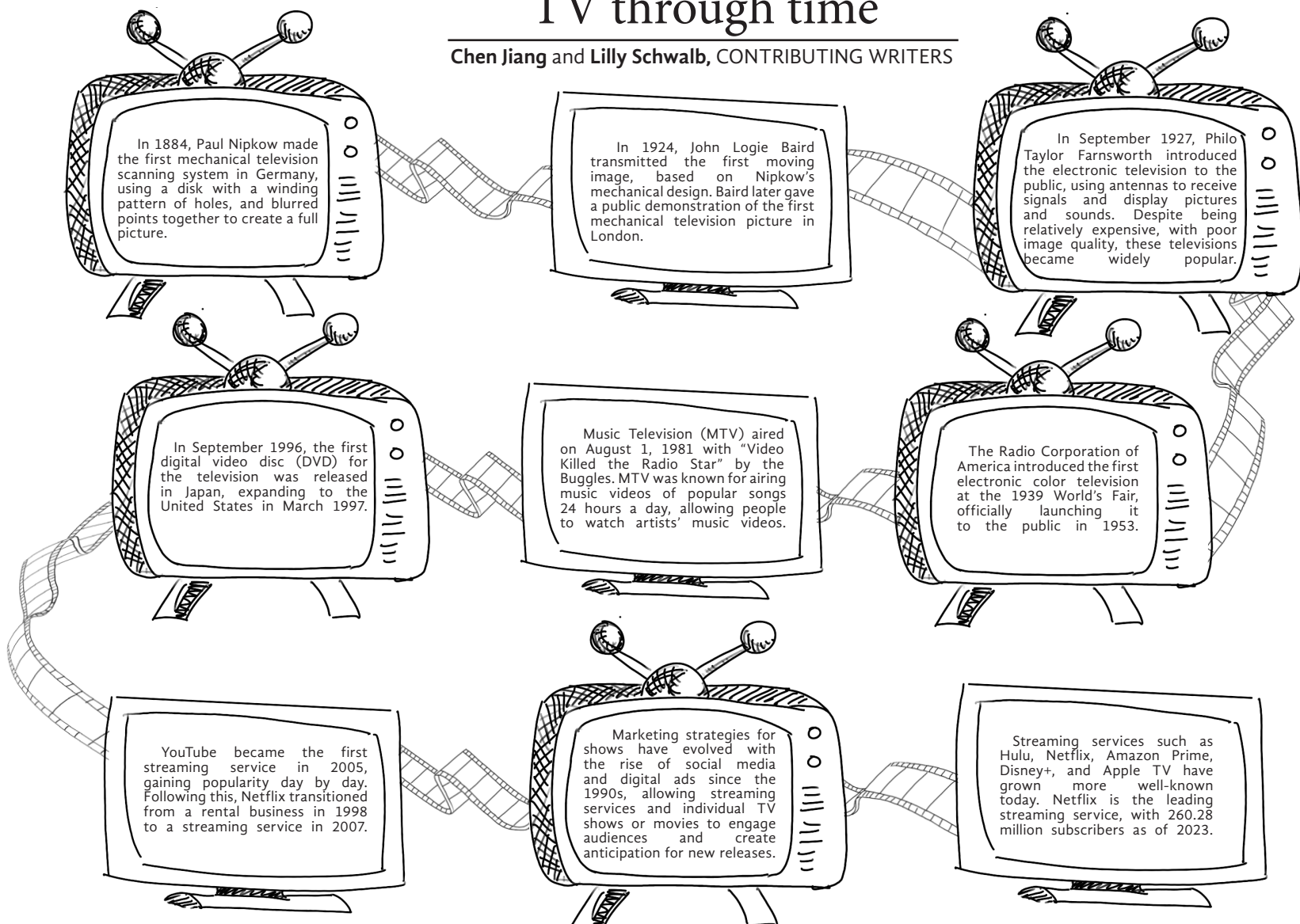
“Following the course of action of the drama, I [had] certain cue lines that I refer[ed] to,” said Loughran. “As we [got] nearer to our entrance as an orchestra, my hand [went] up to tell the orchestra that it [was] time to come back into focus. I then [got] the tempo and cue[d] the orchestra. Between the script and the score, it [was] a balanced act.”

Ultimately, the cast was eager to show everyone all the long hours they dedicated, making the musical a memorable experience for everyone involved.

“We [rehearsed] almost every day since mid-January, and I just [knew] it [was] going to be a really fun and energetic show,” said Meloni.

## TV through time

Chen Jiang and Lilly Schwalb, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS



graphics: Ava  
Friedman and  
Charley Hu

# The rise of the indie pop artist Noah Kahan and his new record breaking album “Stick Season (Forever)”

Gabby Kaputa, STAFF WRITER



graphic: Johanna Chen

The indie folk pop genre has been gaining popularity since the release of Taylor Swift’s back-to-back albums “Folklore” and “Evermore” in 2020, and has been influenced by bands such as Mumford and Sons and The Lumineers. Incorporating many styles in his songs, such as pop and folk, Noah Kahan has emerged from the scene with his breakout album “Stick Season,” released in 2022, with songs featuring intricate storytelling and raw, uncut singing. Many of his songs — which were an outlet for his struggles with depression, anxiety, depersonalization, and seeking help — have inspired thousands and led him to start The Busyhead Project, named after his 2019 debut album “Busyhead,” a charity with the goal of raising \$1 million to donate to mental health organizations.

Since the release of “Stick Season” in 2022, Kahan has released two other variations of his album: “Stick Season (We’ll All Be Here Forever)” with six new songs, and an extension of his previous song “A View Between Villages,” and “Stick Season (Forever),” released this past February, featuring his hit “Forever” and six new collaborations with other well-known artists. These collaborations not only introduce many of his fans to artists they hadn’t previously listened to, but also benefit his career, because they allow him to grow his platform, as some of these singers have been trailblazers for their respective genres of music.

were previously released had given me the impression that it would be more intense. However, in the last minute and a half, the tempo completely shifted into a heartfelt, boot-stomping vibe. The listener can really feel Kahan’s emotions emanating through the song; it reminded me of “Vagabond” by Caamp and “White Ferrari” by Frank Ocean. I really enjoyed this song because the tempo change was

## “She Calls Me Back” with Kacey Musgraves

Kacey Musgraves is a country artist, best known for her songs “Merry Go ‘Round” and “Slow Burn”. Her career was an instant hit starting in 2013, when her debut album “Same Trailer Different Park” won a Grammy for Best Country Album of the year. I was really looking forward to this collaboration as I have enjoyed Musgraves’ songs in the past, but I was rather disappointed with the song. As the song progressed, it felt as though Musgraves was struggling to keep up with the pace during the faster bursts, and her voice sounded like she couldn’t fully sing and enunciate the lyrics. I also didn’t like how autotuned her voice sounded towards the end. While I think the song was good at the start, by the end I was disappointed and would give this song a 5/10.

Kahan’s new album also features re-recordings of his songs from the original “Stick Season” album. Although there is nothing inherently different about the re-records, newer listeners should listen to the re-records before progressing to “Forever” and the collaborations. These new additions display a continuation of Kahan’s journey, representing him trying to move on from the places and people that shape him, as he reflects on the past and allows his listeners to experience a

## “Forever”

Forever is the only new song on the album. It is about a person’s perspective on time and how this perspective can change from something feared and dreaded to something anticipated. The song started out slow and quiet, which initially surprised me, as the snippets that

“He beautifully connects people with his music and simply moves the audience.”

## “Northern Attitude” with Hozier

Hozier is an Irish singer known for his alternate indie songs such as “Unknown/Nth,” “Would That I,” and his breakout song “Take Me To Church.” As a huge fan of Hozier, this was my most anticipated collaboration, and, needless to say, this song did not disappoint. Hozier’s baritone vocals in the background harmonizing with Kahan’s voice was nothing short of magnificent, and I thought Hozier’s voice was perfect for the slower parts that he sang in “Northern Attitude.” My one issue with the song was that I wish Hozier’s vocals were slightly louder; I felt they were a little too distant and I had to strain to hear them. Regardless, I would love to see these two artists work together again. Overall, I would give this song a 9/10.

## “Everywhere, Everything” with Gracie Abrams

Gracie Abrams is a pop artist best known for her two albums “Minor” and “This Is What It Feels Like.” Although I had never heard of Abrams before, I was pleasantly surprised with how well her voice paired with Kahan’s. While she wasn’t someone I would have picked to sing this particular song because of how soft her voice is, I believe Abrams did a great job and her voice brought on a new meaning to the song. I would give it a 7/10.

Based on his growing popularity and continuous hit songs, it’s clear Noah Kahan is going to go far. He beautifully connects people with his music and simply moves the audience to recollect experiences and moments we can all relate to. His strengths lie in his ability to remind us of themes of family, self-discovery, change, and love. “Stick Season (Forever)” seems to mark the end of an era — just last month Kahan told Rolling Stone that he is unsure of what comes next for his music, but declared “[he is] glad [he] get[s] forever to find it.” I would absolutely encourage readers to give Kahan a listen. If you need any recommendations, my top five must-listen songs are “All My Love,” “Your Needs My Needs,” “Forever,” “Orange Juice,” and “Paul Revere.”

# From stage to screen: the acting career of Sedona Raphael ’24

Aleena Zhang, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

From back to center stage, Sedona Raphael ’24 has had quite a successful high school acting career. Recently featured on the TV show “Law and Order,” Raphael has played over 15 roles since her debut in middle school. While others are out with friends, Raphael devotes all her time to acting programs and auditions, often spending long restless nights filming self-tapes. After graduation, Raphael aspires to major in musical theater to continue to master her art.

## What productions have you been in and what roles have you played?

I played Katherine in “Newsies” last year, which was super fun; it was a great experience to get to have that role. Some of my favorite roles that I have played [are] Double Zero in “The Wolves,” ... “Mary Poppins,” Bambi Bernet in “Curtains,” and ... about seven different roles in “The Laramie Project.” It was crazy, it was a self-directed show [over three weeks], so our cast was made up of ten actors who basically walked the process ourselves.

## When and how did you start acting?

I grew up singing in the back of my mom’s car or just for fun, and so music has always been a part of my life. For a long time, I was actually a competitive gymnast, so that was how I performed then; on the floor [and] on the beam. One day I had an injury where I couldn’t go to the gym anymore, so my mom decided to sign me up for an open call at a community theater for a little musical, and I ended up getting the lead ... once I did that, I did not want to go back to the gym, and then I really started pursuing acting and theater professionally.

## Can you describe your acting and training background?

I take private voice lessons, I have an acting class, and I do a lot of summer intensives. A lot of learning I’ve done though, is from different projects I’ve had the opportunity to be a part of. I’ve always been the biggest supporter of the fact that you watch and you learn. Being around other people, you can always pick up new information. Even just watching a TV show, when someone has a line, I would just pause it and say it back as myself to see how I would say that line. I [am] so grateful to have all these opportunities and the training that I need to get this far.

## How do you prepare for auditions under time pressure?

It’s a bit different for musicals and TV and film. For musicals, I always have an audition binder with all my songs that I sing, and those will be ready to go at any moment. And I have about six monologues in my head at all times, so I can just throw them out any time they are needed. If it’s a musical, I will always do character work and understand the show and the background and why it’s an important story to tell. For TV and film, I’ll get a request for a self tape, which is where you film yourself at

home doing the material that they sent you. I’ve had cases where they send you a scene that morning and you have to record it and get it back by that night. So it definitely takes a lot of practice, and I’ve gotten better at it over the years, but it can be a little stressful. There are a lot of great people that will always help you, and it’s really fun.

## Do you get any criticism from judges or just being in the public view? How do you deal with that?

It’s hard because part of being on stage and performing and acting is being vulnerable, which is not something that’s super easy, especially when you’re telling such a truthful and important story. I think some of the best advice I’ve ever been [given] is that you’ve got to do it because you love it. Because it’s such a hard business and artist-subjective, so what I like isn’t going to be the same as what someone else likes, and that’s okay.

Sometimes it comes with criticism, and sometimes it’s hard to understand why. The biggest thing is to just keep going and not let anybody get in your head; and know that if you’re doing it because you love it, it’s the right thing.

## What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself or someone who aspires to become an actress?

Don’t take yourself too seriously, and find the joy in what you are doing. Art is about telling important stories and making change and using your voice to promote kindness and good. Perfect is boring and unattainable, nobody likes perfect. You don’t want to see somebody be perfect, they’re not human. I would just say be yourself and don’t really care about what other people think. Do it because you love it.



photo: Emily Kim

Sedona Raphael ’24 looks over an audition script.

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LEFT: Christina Fernandez, *Untitled Multiple Exposure #4 (Bravo)*, from the series *Untitled Multiple Exposures*, 1999. Courtesy of AltaMed Art Collection, AltaMed Health Services.  
© Christina Fernandez, courtesy of Gallery Luisotti, Los Angeles. RIGHT: Khalilah Sabree, *When Things Fall Apart*, 2016–17. Collection of the artist. © Khalilah Sabree

# SPORTS

## Baskets and brackets: March Madness at PHS

Asya Morozov and Dester Selby-Salazar,  
SPORTS CO-EDITORS  
Kaelan Patel, STAFF WRITER

Every March, basketball fans across the United States switch their television channels from the NBA to college basketball to watch collegiate athletes compete in one of the most highly-anticipated sports competitions of the whole year: March Madness.

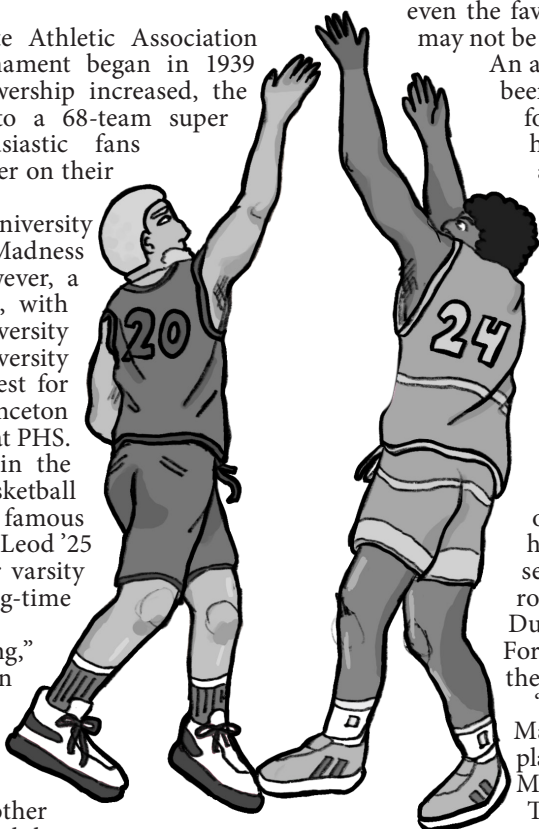
This National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I tournament began in 1939 with eight teams. As viewership increased, the tournament developed into a 68-team super tournament, with enthusiastic fans tuning in every year to cheer on their local teams.

Before 2023, Princeton University was ousted from March Madness four times in a row. However, a great run to the Final 16, with wins over both the University of Arizona and the University of Missouri, sparked interest for the tournament in the Princeton community and especially at PHS.

Among those invested in the tournament are PHS's basketball players, who look up to famous collegiate players. Justin McLeod '25 is a player on PHS's junior varsity basketball team and a long-time fan of the tournament.

"I find it very entertaining," said McLeod. "I've been watching [March Madness] for four years now. I like the intensity."

One aspect that sets March Madness apart from other tournaments is its unpredictability. The yearly tournament is based around a seed ranking, in which the



graphic: Chloe Zhao

teams with the best records play the teams with the worst records. Despite this, lower-ranked colleges frequently beat well-known institutions. Taking into account that one loss results in total elimination from the tournament, even the favorites to win the tournament may not be guaranteed the title.

An avid fan, Jackson Zwick '27 has been watching March Madness for seven years and dedicates hours to rewatching games and predicting the potential outcomes of the tournament in his own bracket spreadsheet.

"There's always the one blue blood that goes down to a small mid-major school ... I love watching the small teams upset the big teams," Zwick said.

One such big team is Duke University, which has a strong academic and athletic reputation. The Duke Blue Devils have won 17 NCAA titles and have had some of the biggest comebacks in NCAA history. However, Duke has also lost seven times in just the first and second round of the tournament. Even for Duke, all it takes to lose is one bad day. For McLeod, this uncertainty is one of the best parts of the tournament.

"There are so many upsets in March Madness because of the pressure on the players, which causes them to fold," McLeod said.

The ups and downs of March Madness may make it entertaining, but another beloved part of the tournament is the game brackets, which viewers fill out

with their predictions for how matches will play out. Out of 2.8 billion brackets ever filled out, not one has been perfect. While these odds may seem discouraging, the prospect of being the first to have a perfect bracket is exactly what motivates people to fill out their brackets every year.

“Even the favorites to win the tournament may not be guaranteed the title.”

There are plenty of bracket makers at PHS. Owen Kelly '25 is one of the most passionate, and has dedicated hours to creating the perfect bracket.

"What makes creating brackets so exciting is the fact that no one has ever had a perfect bracket before," said Kelly. "It gives you a reason to care about these games even if you are not a fan of [some of the] teams."

These brackets and their fame have spawned many copies, with predictions on various themes running alongside the basketball ones. For example, PHS's biology department sets up an animal-themed bracket every year, something that biology student Marcus Strum '27 really appreciates.

"[March Mammal Madness] adds character to the science wing and lets students continue their education when hanging out in the hallways," Strum said.

PHS's drama classes have a similar activity: March Monologue Madness, a contest based around four rounds of themed monologue performances. Drama teacher Julianna Krawiecki created this activity to inspire her students to improve their acting through friendly competition.

"[March Monologue Madness is] a fun way to bring everyone together and work on a variety of acting skills, memorization, collaboration and camaraderie," Krawiecki said.

Although not as popular at PHS as March Madness, the biology and drama departments' brackets still reflect the widespread excitement and anticipation surrounding the tournament in an academic environment like PHS.

## The value of dance in diversity, connection, and understanding

Asya Morozov, SPORTS CO-EDITOR  
Shoumili Banerjee and Claire Yang,  
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Dance is a universal form of human connection — a way for people to express and enjoy themselves and their culture through the movement of their bodies. Throughout centuries, dance has grown and diversified, growing from localized traditional styles to a global, ever-evolving activity. Almost anyone can name at least a few different styles of dance, and, chances are, they will name dances from all around the world. Although it may not seem so at first glance, dance is prominent at PHS, from official dance classes to clubs and programs, all of which help students connect with each other and with different cultures.

PHS dance teacher Janelle Wilkinson teaches her class all sorts of dances, many of which feature in the school's cultural assemblies. Most recently, the Black History Month assembly featured a whole section dedicated to African influence on dance, which both showed off PHS's talented dancers and introduced the audience to a culture they may not be a part of. In her class, Wilkinson's main goal is to always make sure her students are comfortable while exposing them to new cultures.

"A student may not like West African dance, but they would love to do tap dance. They don't like the salsa, but they love to do bachata, or maybe they don't

like the waltz, but they love to do hip hop ... I think it's important ... for the students to learn the history of these cultural dances as well ... not just learning the dance," Wilkinson said.

Studying the historical context of a dance helps students understand its influences, and encourages greater appreciation of the choreography and music. Wilkinson also exposes students to new types of dance each week, allowing them to broaden their knowledge of different dances. PHS is a home to many diverse communities, and cultural sharing is common in all aspects of school life. Dance classes like Wilkinson's both encourage and facilitate this process, contributing to a healthier and more accepting school environment.

A PHS dance group with particular focus on culture is Korean Cover Group (KCG), a club that covers dances by Korean artists. These dances are often difficult and require a lot of teamwork and effort but, when

properly executed, are beautiful displays of connection and understanding between students of different backgrounds all unified around one passion. With members from many different cultures, KCG has learned to adapt to its members' unique skills and knowledge to make everyone feel accepted and to make learning dances more unique and personal. One of the club's leaders, Caroline Gu '24, is particularly proud of this accomplishment, praising the way that different dances emerge depending on what resources are available.

"Dance is an extension of culture. It also involves rhythm and music. So certain areas and certain cultures can develop dance very differently in accordance [with] what sort[s] of instruments are available and ... their social values," said Gu. "I feel like being able to represent that in dance can also represent the culture of it."

Gu stresses that even though Korean is in the name of the club, anybody can join to learn about Korean traditions and music and add their own twist on K-pop dance covers. Gu herself is not Korean, but joining KCG brought her a sense of belonging, and let her learn more about Korean culture, an idea that she wants to spread past her club and into the wider PHS community.

Another cultural dance club at PHS is the Bollywood Club. Bollywood dance, although originating from classical Indian dance, has, over time, incorporated many different dance styles, including bhangra dance, jazz dance, and even hip-hop. Bollywood dance is comprised of many graceful motions, making it

hard to learn and to perform beautifully. This dance style's inherent fluidity, present in both its origins and performance, has attracted people from all cultures. Ishaan Banerjee '24, co-president of Bollywood Club, particularly loves experiencing new cultures while also delving deep into his own.

"It's fun to see people from different cultures get immersed in something [that] me and some of the other leaders have experienced for a lot of years," said Banerjee. "So ... through the dance, it's a good way to express yourself and participate in this new culture and learn about it."

Cultural variety is what makes PHS so diverse, and clubs like the Bollywood Club help to spread positivity and inclusion. Banerjee's favorite part of Bollywood Club is how willing everyone is to learn something from a different culture.

"I think [dance is] a good way to include different cultures and increase diversity. It's a good way to increase diversity at PHS, especially because dance is such a universal language that all people can participate in," Banerjee said.

Dance at PHS is a place where students can find themselves and learn more about different cultures. Both dance clubs and classes champion diversity, inclusion, and comfort above all. These dance circles strive to spread these values through dance, history, and the power of human connection.



photo: Charley Hu

Left to right: Bollywood Club members Joseph George '25, Nethra Santapur '25, Shivraj Patel '24, Krish Khanna '24, Syra Bhatt '25, Logan Hollingsworth '24, Aaryana Yenuga '24, Vivian Clayton '24, Aidan McKenzie '24, Rhea Kaycee '25, and Anika Hadap '24 pose after performing at Asian Fest on 3/8.



photo: Emily Kim

Left to right: Dance students Leah O'Neill '27, Jason Carter '27, Vika Miliaieva '27, and Michael Bess '26 follow along as Mrs. Wilkinson demonstrates a step.

## Badminton birdie catches wind at PHS

Asya Morozov and Katie Qin, SPORTS CO-EDITORS  
Gabriel Andrade and Thomsen Lord, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

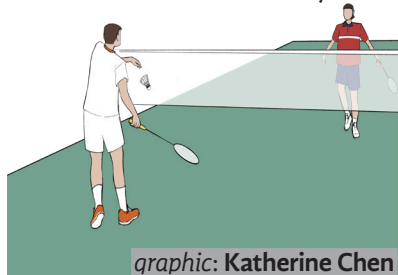
Badminton is often thought of as a game that is played at the family cookout or on a warm day at the park, not a sport. Few know of its professional side or its reputation as one of the most intense and fast-paced sports in the world. These professional players train for years to hone their speed and accuracy, but are still underestimated because of the casual viewer's lack of knowledge about the sport.

Badminton has centuries-old roots, originating from a game called "battledore and shuttlecock," different variants of which were played in ancient civilizations such as Greece, China, and India. The modern version of the sport became popular in the middle of the 19th century in British India and eventually spread worldwide, becoming an Olympic sport in 1992.

However, the sport has never gotten much recognition in the United States. This is due to the fact that there is already an abundance of professional sports leagues in the United States. However, times are changing: the UBX Pro League, the first professional badminton league in North America, will launch in 2025. The UBX Pro League's goal is to make badminton more prominent. Here at PHS, the Badminton Club has begun implementing this same

initiative, which has introduced many more students to the sport.

Founded by William Yao '24, the Badminton Club strives to create camaraderie among the student body through badminton. Although badminton is played in most gym classes during the winter, Yao noticed that many students view the sport as simple recreation or even as a chore due to its association with the class.



graphic: Katherine Chen

Through his dedicated leadership, the club has created an inclusive environment in which students of all backgrounds can come together to enjoy the sport.

As an immigrant, Yao realized that badminton isn't as popular in America as it is in China, so founding the club was his way to not only expand the variety of options students had for sports, but also to teach others about an important part of his culture by trying new things.

"We have [this] club to [introduce other] people to our culture," said Yao. "It's brought more of the people who weren't involved in sports together ... [people can] come in and have fun with their friends."

There are a few basic techniques needed to play a game, such as different serve types, which are easy to learn and put into practice, making accessible badminton accessible.

"It's brought more of the people who weren't involved in sports together ... [people can] come in and have fun with their friends."

Aside from the sport's convenience and accessibility, club co-leader Nags Muthiah '25 also places great value on badminton's recreational and unifying potential.

Although few U.S. schools have an official badminton team, many, including PHS, have clubs that occasionally play friendly matches with each other. This makes the club members hopeful about the creation of an official team.

"We're gathering up to make a team and we play against other schools," said Yao. "Our first match was against Basking Ridge in November last year."

These matches were entirely organized by students, from funding to transportation and any other resources the players required.

Badminton is yet to have a large impact, but Muthiah remains optimistic on its potential influence.

"I don't think it's changed the culture at PHS ... yet, since the Badminton Club still feels [very] small. I'd say it changes more like the break culture," said Muthiah. "It opens up a new activity to do at lunch time, Tiger Time, or if you have a free and if you want to join someone's gym class."

Although badminton may not become an official sport at PHS for a long time, as the sport is steadily gaining popularity through the Badminton Club, with true potential to positively impact the whole PHS community through its emphasis on inclusion, fun, and connection.

"We had few people [when I started]... we have way more people now," Yao said.

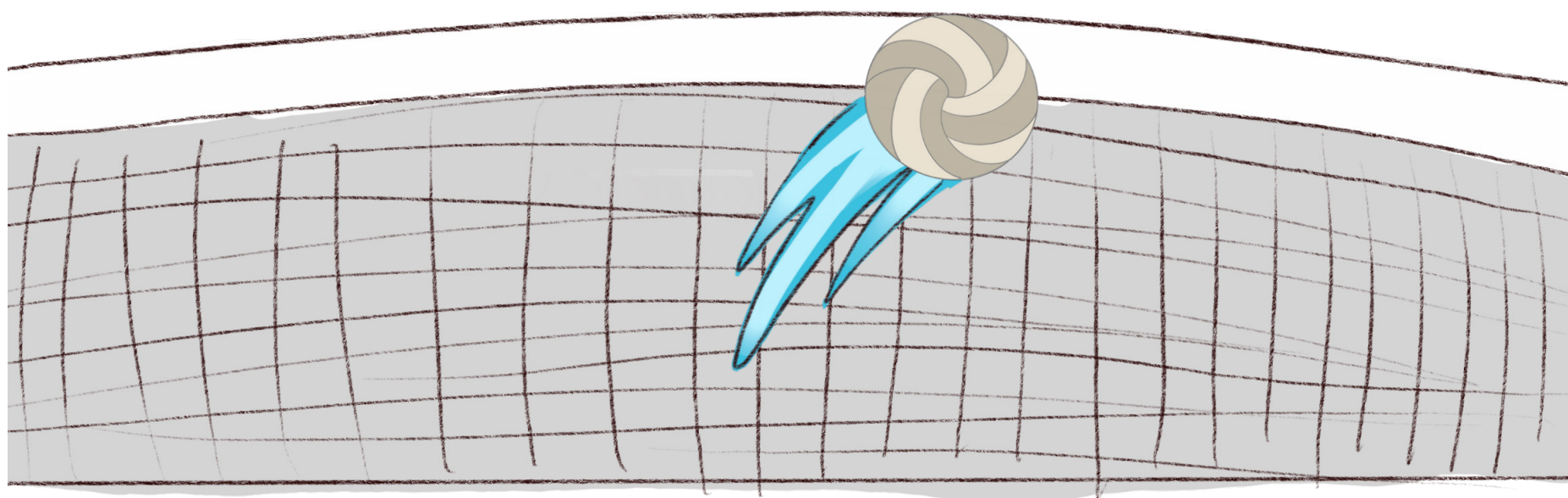
## PHS Takes

Asya Morozov, Katie Qin, and Dester Selby-Salazar, SPORTS CO-EDITORS

### Before, NCAA rules permitted for only one touch for setters. What do you think of the new NCAA volleyball rule change which allows for a setter to take two touches?

I think it defeats the whole purpose of that position, and it doesn't help because it makes it harder for the hitters to hit the ball when there's spin on the ball. [However] it's only in collegiate volleyball, so it doesn't affect me.

Camila Barbosa '27



"I know a lot of people were upset about the rule change at first, and I wasn't really happy about it either, but I think in the long run it's gonna benefit the game because [the no double touch rule] has always been a rule that was very difficult to make judgments about and there was a lot of inconsistency in the calls. So I think in the long-run it will be easier for judges with the new rule."

Sonya Bachurina '26

"I don't like it. NCAA should stick to the traditions that made the sport of volleyball. I like to reject modernity, and instead embrace tradition. They're removing skill from the game."

Evan Weinstein '25



"Permitting doubling as a rule that applies to all levels of the game doesn't make sense to me because while it could be understandable in lower levels of play, when pros are allowed to double, it reduces the practice, control, and refinement needed to become a pro player."

Kaden Li '26

graphic: Charley Hu

# Winter Sports Recap

Asya Morozov and Katie Qin, SPORTS CO-EDITORS

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE SEASON?

## BOYS SWIM 13-1

"I think my favorite parts of the season were the fun, intense meets where everyone was supporting each other and giving [their all]. I will cherish [my teammates] forever. I proudly call them family after everything we've been through together."  
- Alex Aprikian '24

"My favorite part of the season was winning [Mercer County Tournament]."  
- Zachary Guan '24



David Xu '25 races in the 400 freestyle relay.

photo courtesy: Zachary Guan

## BOYS BASKETBALL 11-13

"[My favorite memory of the season was] going out to dinner with the team. We got super [close], spending time outside of practice [to] hang out [because]... Coach Noone had us going really hard for 90 minutes [every practice]."  
- Henry Doran '24

"My favorite [part] of the season was connecting with the team ... which helped us play together better."  
- Matthew Ghaim '26



Findlay Moses '26 rushes to follow the ball.

photo courtesy: Rohan Viswanathan

## GIRLS SWIM 14-1

"I really enjoyed the energy that the team had."  
- Vivian Lee '26

"The most memorable part was the last meet since everyone showed up to support the girls team, and, even though we didn't win, it was really nice to see the school spirit."  
- Viviana Cristofanilli '25

Courtney Weber '24 powers through the 100 breast.

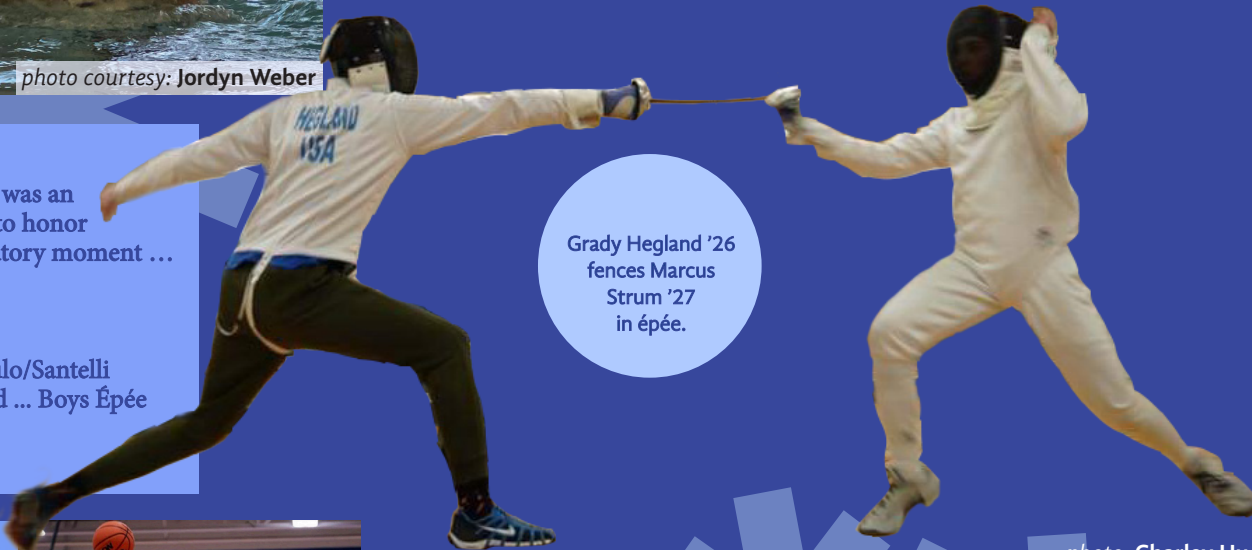


photo courtesy: Jordyn Weber

## GIRLS FENCING 0-10

"[I liked] the state championship ... it was great. [There are] many stronger fencers out there, and it was tough, but it was very interesting and a good opportunity."  
- Hatsune Ishii '26

"My favorite part of the season would be the meets. Not only was I able to cheer on my teammates, I was also able to coach them, and see them improve in live time."  
- Helen Yu '27



Grady Hegland '26 fences Marcus Strum '27 in épée.

photo: Charley Hu

## GIRLS BASKETBALL 15-9

"The Colonial Valley Conference [named] us the surprise team of the year. It definitely carried us through some tough victories, which was great for team chemistry."  
- Ash Nieman '26

"We had ten wins in a row, and it was just the best feeling ever to be able to achieve such a great thing with my teammates!"  
- Anna Winters '26



Gabby Bannett '24 shoots a hoop.

photo courtesy: Gabby Bannett

## GIRLS HOCKEY 3-11

"I think my favorite part of the season was all the team bonding we got to do, like the team dinners and team lunches ... it really brought us closer as a team."  
- Maya Hagt '25

"[I loved how] when we have our last practice, we dress up in costumes and ... we spend the practice doing different types of games and drills ... it's super fun."  
- Tatiana Hadzic '25



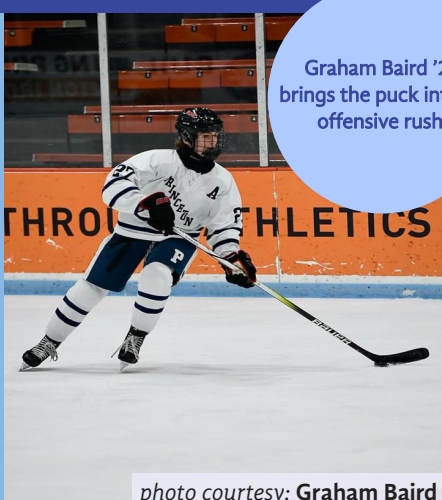
photo: Katherine Chen

Emily Yun '26, Logan Hollingsworth '24, and Maya Hagt '25 protect the goal.

## BOYS HOCKEY 5-13

"My favorite part was Emil Vecchi's ['26] first goal during an end-season game against West Windsor. It got the whole team rowdy and he proved Tyler Goldberg ['24] wrong."  
- Graham Baird '24

"My best moment of the season was probably either the second game against Notre Dame or the first game against Hopewell. It was just a real competitive game against rival schools, and you could tell everyone out there [had their] heart on the line."  
- Noah Vitulli '25



Graham Baird '24 brings the puck into an offensive rush.

photo courtesy: Graham Baird

## TRACK

"For me, the best part of the season were my races. They are challenging in the moment, but when they go well it is really rewarding. The competitive aspect of them is also fun because it adds a level of importance to the race."  
- Steven Cenci '26

"My favorite part [of the season] was going to the Armory in New York City. My teammates and I wore matching bows in our hair to run the 400 [meter race]. Talking to people in the heat lines is always so fun, and they're all nice. After our race we just got to hang out, and on the bus ride home we stopped for snacks."  
- Kacey Howes '26



Kajol Karra '26 runs in Princeton University's Jadwin Gym.

photo courtesy: Rohan Viswanathan