

# THE BUZZER

Primus Inter Pares

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The Voice of Hastings High School



## After a Year of “Unknowns,” Three Seniors Chart a Path Forward

by Julia Mooney

*Contributing Writer*



[Senior Parade, Picture Courtesy of *The Enterpriser*]

decided well before COVID; the moment she realized that this was something she wanted to do was in between sophomore and the middle of junior year. Even though she could not visit until February, Margaret was allowed to join one of Geneseo’s Geology Club Zoom meetings, and she got the chance to ask questions to students who are passionate about Geology. A tip Margaret would give to other athletes that want to play sports in college is to email coaches as early as you can (between sophomore and junior year is best).

Caroline Anderson will attend The College of William and Mary this fall. For Caroline, COVID-19 definitely made an impact on her decision. She was able to visit William and Mary over spring break; if she hadn’t visited the school, she admits she most likely would not have decided to attend in the fall.

As for her advice on making such a big decision, Caroline said, “ Say out loud, ‘I go to this college,’ and if you smile when you say that, then it is the right fit for you.” Her decision was particularly difficult because she applied to fourteen different schools.

For Caroline, one important factor swaying her decision was the school’s athletics: she wanted to be active and not just sitting around in her dorm. Caroline has been playing field hockey since seventh grade, and she plans to play club field hockey at William and Mary. This school year, Caroline broke the school record for shot-put, at 28 feet and 8 inches. She is very close to being able to throw in college, and if she trains more over the summer, she could eventually be a walk-on for the William and Mary Track and Field program.

Although she is happy with the end result, Caroline, along with others, found it hard to get a feel for the colleges she was applying to; she debated between William and Mary and Scripps College. Scripps had track and field as well as field hockey, but William and Mary had the kind of environment that most appealed: it is known for attracting “the fun and nerdy” type, which is how she defines herself. Caroline wants to major in Biochemistry and minor in Creative Writing.

COVID-19 did have some unintended impacts on her path forward: during the summer after her junior year, Caroline had been planning to attend a creative writing program in Ireland. However, the program got cancelled, and Caroline ended up taking a neuroscience course over the summer instead, a class that nudged her toward a potential future major. She said, “ If I went to Ireland and I absolutely loved it, it might have been different, but we’ll never know for sure.”

At William and Mary, there is a scholar program where students receive \$3,000 for researching anything, and Caroline says she will probably apply to do something “science-related.”

Sammy Muench will spend his next four years at Tufts University, which is near Boston, Massachusetts. He has always had his eyes on Tufts, but he also had some interest in schools on the West Coast. If it hadn’t been for COVID, quarantine, and the travel advisories, Sammy might have considered the schools out on the West Coast more than closer schools like Tufts. However, this year included many unknowns, so he decided to look at schools that would allow him to be “closer to his family and friends.”

One notable difference this year was that the application pool was much more competitive. Because most schools did not require SAT or ACT tests, more students applied to reach-schools, schools that they never thought they could possibly make. For every student, the process of applying to college has undeniable ups and downs, but Sammy was very fortunate to have a “support system” that helped him through the college process.

This past year, Sammy had the chance to continue cross country and play club ultimate frisbee. However, at this point he is currently undecided what he wants to do in terms of sports.

In terms of academics, for some time now, Sammy has known that he wants to minor in Data Science and major in Political Science. COVID though has only strengthened his passion in science. Tufts has a mix of what he wanted: it’s small but not too small, and it has the majors he was interested in. He took a virtual tour and heard about the “campus’s energy” through word-of-mouth even though he only got to visit the campus in person right before he committed. He said he could only picture himself being there and it felt right.

## Interview With an Emerging Division 1 Athlete: Melanie Daley

by Julia Rotiroti

*Contributing Writer*

Melanie Daley, a graduating Hastings High School senior, is a Hastings household name and D1 women’s basketball commit at Northwestern University. Averaging 27.1 points, 7.2 rebounds, and 3.3 assists, Daley is leaving Hastings having set serious records and having led the varsity girls basketball team to their first championship.

As she prepares for the next challenge, Daley reflected on the critical point in her life when she finally knew basketball would be her focus: “I’ve been playing since I was five. Up until sixth grade though I was playing soccer and basketball, and between them both, it was neck and neck. I really did not know which one to choose, but I went home and I was shooting around one day, and I said, ‘I think this is the sport I really see myself going forward with and going pretty far in.’”

Her father has been a critical mentor throughout her journey. “My dad is someone who has always been on my back [...] He has always been my biggest supporter.” Her coaches, too, have also supported her by pushing her to be the best she can be.

Daley emphasizes mental tenacity and drive as key to her success. In fact, Daley fancies herself as one of her biggest motivators: “I motivate myself a lot, and while I’ve had a lot of people motivate me, I feel you can’t get anywhere, if you are not self-motivated.” Daley emphasizes that passion is essential to fulfilling any goal, and there must be an internal drive in order to achieve anything.

As the class of 2021’s high school chapter concludes, Melanie Daley has high hopes for her future playing at Northwestern University. She is going to take this opportunity to “live out my dream and just make the most of it. I’ve worked really hard to get to where I am, so I don’t want to squander it when I get there. I want to play hard and show everyone what I can do, and on top of that, get a great academic degree.”

Lastly, Daley noted that Hastings has instilled effective leadership skills in her, and “I think I can bring those skills to Northwestern.”

## WHAT’S INSIDE...

### Letters to 9th Grade Selves

We asked our graduates to pen letters to their freshmen selves. Hear the advice they would have given to the ‘mini-me’ versions of themselves.

### Tips for Underclassmen

We sat down with a number of seniors to get their tips for being successful in different academic areas.

### What Will the Seniors Miss?

From Amjo’s tea to the Simplicity of being a kid—find out what our senior class will miss

### How Did We Become Yellow Jackets?

With the help of the Hastings Historical Society, we unpacked the history (and mystery) behind our school’s mascot.



# EDITOR’S PAGE

## Editorial

In 1961, American playwright Arthur Miller wrote, “A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself.” The same principle applies to a school newspaper—a school newspaper should facilitate dialogue within the school that helps bolster the community. When positive things occur, such as accomplishments from the student body, the school newspaper should unite the community, to rejoice and relish in a sense of town pride. When negative things occur, the school newspaper should help the community process and understand the present issues; a newspaper seldom solves issues by itself, but it should aid students and faculty as they digest, hopefully, move towards solutions.

When the pandemic shut schools in March, 2020, our community received a serious shock. The ordinary bonds of community splintered, making it doubly difficult to process the traumas of isolation and, for many in the community, loss. In times like the spring of 2020, a school newspaper is critical. A newspaper can remind people that their struggles are universal; it is necessary to keep the community thinking about important social and local issues; it is necessary to keep the community informed. Unfortunately, like many extracurricular programs,

It seemed like The Buzzer could not conceivably continue during a pandemic as it had previously. Just as The Buzzer faced this seemingly insurmountable challenge, its senior staff, then juniors and one sophomore, themselves trying to figure out how to navigate their own COVID lockdowns, charted a course forward. The staff transitioned the paper to an online platform, negotiating a contract with a webserver, and working with the administration to try something bold and new; they contacted isolated underclassmen writers, continued reporting on important issues like the growing unrest in Hastings and America after the death of George Floyd, and proceeded to release issues online. Even though many community-bolstering programs, such as sports and music, understandably shut down, The Buzzer continued its mission and operated throughout the whole of the pandemic.

This effort was only made possible by its incredible staff, which included five of our outstanding graduating seniors: Kaylee Oppenheimer, Caleb Painter, Jacob Prisamet, Malcolm McNulty, and Sophie Prevallet.

As editor-in-chief, Kaylee Oppenheimer undertook the monumental task of coordinating dozens of younger writers while continuing to write many stunning articles herself.

Caleb Painter spent hours

learning how to transfer The Buzzer’s platform to a website, a task which, if unsuccessful, would have jeopardized the newspaper’s entire enterprise.

Jacob Prisamet slogged through hours of Board of Education meetings, keeping the public updated on issues of school policy with his concise and informative articles. Malcolm McNulty kept the community smiling in a time of tears with his pieces about food and film.

Sophie Prevallet introduced unique perspectives on arts and culture, resurrecting a struggling part of society and adapting it to the pandemic.

The Buzzer wishes to congratulate and thank these departing seniors, confident that their tenacity and creativity will help them succeed in any endeavor. With its eyes on a post-pandemic world, The Buzzer will continue to provide balanced and well-researched content that keeps the community in discussion and reflection. The Buzzer will continue to publish pieces about social issues such as race, gender, sexuality, and religion. It will also publish short, concise pieces intended to answer lingering questions in the community. The Buzzer hopes, too, to widen its dialogue with staff and administrators. In sum, it intends to spark debate and discussion about important issues while celebrating the aspects of Hastings that make our town unique.

# BUZZER STAFF

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*The staff of The Buzzer would like to make it clear that this publication is a newspaper written for and made open to everyone in the Hastings High School community. We would like to encourage every student to feel able to contribute to the paper, whether that be by writing, taking photographs, or discussing the issues presented in the content. The Buzzer is an interdisciplinary resource, and everyone is encouraged to take advantage of it.*

Parenting of Children of Color’s food truck fair, took place on June 13th, 2021, and was a celebration of international flavors, with food from Ghana, Haiti, and France, among others, being represented.

“We started P-CoC approximately one year ago with the mission of inspiring racial equity, supporting ethnicity, cultural expression, fair treatment and education for all in our town and in the surrounding areas,” said Karina Vilalona, communications director for P-CoC. “The Community Outreach Committee was eager to do a large-scale community event, but we were hampered by Covid 19 and all of the restrictions. As things started to improve, we began planning for the Food Truck Fundraiser.”

“We thought it would be an excellent way of getting the community to come out in a safe way and share in a really special experience... Our hope is to grow this into a yearly event. By selecting a widely diverse group of chefs, P-CoC hopes to use food as a “conduit to learning about people and cultures from different parts of the world.”

### Heaven’s Kitchen

At the Heaven’s Kitchen Food Truck which serves Haitian food, the three chefs found their way to each other, despite taking different paths. Chef Jordan Pierce’s mother

## Connecting through Cuisines

By Catie Cho and Julien Amsellen  
Managing Editors

was the one who noticed his passion for cooking, and ultimately suggested that he pursue it. After studying culinary arts in Orlando, Florida, he moved onto working in restaurant management, and eventually, to Heaven’s Kitchen.

Chef Ynelson Deriscar grew up in Haiti, and at ten years of age, he told his mother that her cooking was “inadequate”, and took over the cooking from there. After moving to the United States at age twelve, he, “developed a passion for cooking by watching and helping his mom, cousin, and aunt.” Deriscar attended culinary school in New Jersey, and is now an executive chef.

While their co-worker, Leila Campomanes, didn’t go to culinary school, her motivation still shines through her work. She graduated from Rutgers University with a double major in Nursing and Psychology, and is a registered nurse at the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. In addition to running a food truck, she also founded an organization in 2012 called Love Never Fails Charities, where she aids in raising funds and awareness for issues like sex trafficking.

To Leila, cooking is a way to remember her father. “My father was a chef at a five-star hotel and it was our dream to have a restaurant together,” she said. “My father passed away seven years ago, but our dream still lives.”

According to the chefs of Heaven’s Kitchen, there are infinite rewards of

eating and sharing food connected to a strong ethnic tradition (a sentiment that is shared by almost all of the chefs at the fair). “[For white people...]there are so many benefits of trying out new flavors and different kinds of food from various cultures,” says Campomanes. “Just ask Jordan. He’s white and he can tell you first hand. All the spices and fragrant ethnic foods just bring so much joy in one’s life.”

People of color benefit as well. Campomanes elaborated: “food always brings people closer together. Once different cultures bring their own specialties to feast at a table, everyone will taste and see how beautiful they are. We believe that food can be used as a vital tool to unify all of us.”

This idea of unity is even present within the Heaven’s Kitchen name. Pierce is white, Deriscar is Black of Nigerian and Haitian descent, and Leila is Asian, hailing from the Philippines. “Our food truck is called Heaven’s Kitchen because we know that heaven consists of every nation and every tribe. That’s how we see all of the cuisines we serve, and that’s how we are able to connect our cuisines with different cultures.”

### Latusion Truck

Everyone has that one movie that inspires them, but for Chef Fabian Marquez, Jon Favreau’s critically acclaimed film Chef brought that inspiration to a new level. “I

love the restaurant business, but something about that movie made me realize that there was more to just being a behind the scenes chef in a busy kitchen, with a full dining room and not having relationships with any of your customers.”

The joys of cooking were never foreign to Marquez. The delicate aromas of his grandmother and great-grandmother’s Peruvian food led him down an early culinary path. Food was a crucial part of Marquez’s household and furthermore, his family was in the restaurant business. His birth into the art of good food slowly guided him toward a career in the culinary field. “Right after high school I knew exactly where I wanted to be and who I wanted to become.”

After attending the Art Institute of New York City, where he found himself in the Culinary Arts program, Marquez landed a job at a country club, but the fit wasn’t right. “I was continuing to learn there, but I knew I didn’t belong there.” His next job was invaluable to his evolution as a chef: “...a line cook position at an award winning Italian restaurant owned by an Iron Chef.” He learned all he needed to know as a chef under the guidance of this chef, and spent eight years at the restaurant, eventually becoming the chef de cuisine.

After the better part of a decade, however, Marquez once again saw that all was not ideal in his career. “Something wasn’t right, I didn’t feel completely happy,” he remarked. Tracing back the problem to (continued on page 11)

# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## What Will Seniors Miss the Most About Hastings?

By Aisha Nassar  
*Contributing Writer*

Mary Weinstein: “I will definitely miss my friends the most!”

Josie Rohan: “ Probably my friends and my family and ESPECIALLY my dog.

Thatcher Clough and Owen Silleck: “I would say the sense of community among classmates. Especially padj. A lot of people see padj as just some place in the woods where people go to drink, but it gives off a real sense of community.”

Chris Wyatt: “I think that’d I really miss being in a tight community and being around my friends, family, the school, food, city, and everything.”

Chloe Caraballo: “My friends, I’ve been with most of them since beginning of elementary school and they’ve become like family and people I’ll always love.”

Kimberly Rosner: Hastings as a town, I’ll miss amjos iced tea in the morning. And the people I care about of course. The thing I’ll miss the most about Hastings high school particularly is the lunch ladies. They have the most positive energy and make me smile when I’m moody in the morning.

Kylie Korz: “I think I’ll miss the teachers the most because they always made me feel comfortable asking questions and made learning fun and interesting.”

Ryan Goldberg- “going into town to get bagels during lunch.”

Sophie Prevallet- “I’ll definitely miss the community that exists in Hastings; it’s nice to walk around and see familiar faces and to know everyone who I pass in the hallways.”

Benna McDermott- “ahh that’s tough! I’m going to miss the close knit community and all the people I’m friendly with in my classes and on sports teams but might not stay in contact with post graduation. I’ve known a lot of these people since kindergarten and it’s hard to imagine not going to school with them next year!”

Melissa Nadler- “I think what I’ll miss most is seeing my friends and teachers in the hallways and even just the little waves you get from people who you aren’t even close with.”

Elanora Comashi- “I think that I will miss my teachers from HHS because of how open you could be with them. You could literally talk to them about anything and I loved that!”

Sophia Manero- “I’m going to miss recognizing everyone— in town, in school. It’s comforting to always see so many familiar faces.”

Gianna Berntston- “i really liked the teachers!”

Hunter Mitchell- “my friend group definitely! really tight knit and supportive.”

Atri Ray- “I think that i’ll miss messing with the English department. besides that, my friends. “

Elana Zadrina- “I will miss all the bonds I formed with people.”

Tilly - “I’ll miss peoples’ drive to do well for others and the sense of closeness in the schools.”

Emma Poure: I think I’ll miss my friends the most. High School was rough but they really kept me going.”

Zack Kotronis: “I would say just how close knit our community is, everyone knows everyone and I don’t think we realize just how special it is to have such a bonded community. that small-town passion is something that will always stay with me in the future.”

Lindsay Drozd - “Probably the atmosphere- I think most of the students are genuinely good people and the teachers did a great job.”

Ana Fernandez- “The comfort of the small town I grew up. I’ll miss the playgrounds and the places I used to go to as a child.”

Kalani Martial- “No matter how much Hastings made me wanna quit and give up, it was my friends and family that kept me going, so I’d have to say that I’ll miss my family and friends the most.”

Sara Makulec- “The thing I’m going to miss most is definitely just knowing that everyone I see in school has been around me since I was in kindergarten and that we’ve grown up together.”

Jacob Prisament - “I’m going to miss the welcoming community from Ms. Gagliardi in the office to all of the wonderful teachers I’ve had.”

Bebe Seidenberg - “the friendships, teachers (I love them), and how beautiful HOH is.

Kaylee Oppenheimer- “I’m really going to miss the profound recognition and love I feel from this incredible community for simply being myself. I’m going to miss HHS teachers so much; they uplift me and inspire me. I’m really going to miss the quiet beauty of this town, the way the farmers market shines in the sunlight on Saturday’s with joy and exuberance, the way that I can just walk into a teacher’s classroom at any time during the day and have a wonderful 30 minute conversation, the way that I know almost everyone’s name in this high school... I think I’m also going to miss the gentle missteps I’ve taken in Hastings where the only consequence is growth. I think I’m just going to miss the simplicity and beauty of being a kid.”



# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## Letter to 9th-Grade Self

by Kim Rosner  
*Contributing Writer*

Dear 9th-Grade Kim,

You're probably dying to turn fifteen, but hold on to fourteen for just a little longer—you're only fourteen for what will seem like a moment in the future. Yes, I still remember the overwhelming day of my freshman orientation back in 2017; I'm not that much older. My senior guides for the day were right: high school does go by really fast despite the highs and lows. I know this will sound cliché, but it's true. I learned a lot about myself and had countless new experiences that have shaped me into the person I am today... blah blah blah.

most popular you'll ever be in high school is first semester freshman year. I know had so much fun on freshman year soccer and thought #HGVS4ever, but every year after that soccer was affected by my (or should I say our) mental health... I was supposed to be in the video, well in this case on the team (future meme reference, you won't understand it now). Surprise! Your parents get divorced right off the bat. You join the track team and make new friends. I had such a good time with my track friends. High school will help you learn not to be restricted by being friends with people just in your grade.

I'm nostalgic for those nights we stayed up late singing to the top of our lungs, midnight diner runs, going to Wendy's and McDonald's, and hanging out multiple times a week. Senior year, I have an amazing group of friends and the best boyfriend ever. He bakes and cooks for me—it's the best thing ever. But some people you consider best friends will still leave without ever telling you why. It's weird how fake people can be to each other.

I ended up going to mental hospitals and partial therapy programs, missing months of school. I was hospitalized for severe depression and very dark thoughts.

Remember in eighth grade when you used to make those "I'm triggered" jokes and thought it was the funniest thing ever? Well, it's not. It was insensitive and immature. I get triggered super easily now and get ex-

tremely bad mood swings. The mental hospital stays were super hard to go through, but I got the help I needed, which I'm beyond grateful for. I met a ton of people from the hospitals, a very diverse group of people, and they were all very interesting and had their own stories to tell. I'm sorry, but this next lesson you'll learn the hard way: Do NOT chase after people who don't make an effort to give you time. It's not going to work out like Dustin Hoffman's character in The Graduate (Mr. Scotch reference). Teenagers are generally confused in multiple areas of life, and a lot don't know what they want in a relationship. Committing to a relationship should be walking side by side at the same pace, not playing catch-up.

My biggest achievements were making the varsity soccer team, winning most artistic for senior superlatives, the student teacher for my English 10 class (shoutout Ms.McKenna) giving me a 100 on my essay of the year, and getting the help I need (well, you and I), submitting my AP art portfolio, getting into colleges, committing to Manhattanville, and being more comfortable and open with my sexuality.

Oh also... Dad is your physics teacher. You dye your hair blonde, then pink, then blue, then purple, then back to blonde. Something I learned this year that I wish I learned sooner is that not using my phone can be really beneficial to my mental health. Especially since Covid boredom increased my screen time to



[Kim Rosner]

eleven hours daily at one point, but fortunately not anymore. Drawing, writing, singing, and walking Barky seem to be pretty effective coping mechanisms. I was super lonely throughout high school. The key to confidence for me is to fake it till you make it. Kind of works.

Ugh, I barely talked about Corona—NOT the alcohol. 9th grade self, there is a pandemic that puts the world into lockdown for months. We were quarantined for such a long time.

I am catching up with people I haven't talked to in a while over phone messaging and it's really nice to hear from them. I've also been texting elderly people in my life more often and expressing my gratitude for them.

Be thankful for the life you were given, be thankful for the times you don't have a sore throat, be thankful for the times you're not outside freezing cold. Be thankful for not only the big aspects of life but also the little moments of safeness and relief. And as for you, get your head out of your fantasy life and start actually living life. You are the main character, QUEEN, period. I wish you could tell people how you feel and stick up for yourself, but that's something we'll work on over time.

I'll leave you with this quote that will seem incomprehensible to you now, but you'll understand it when you're in my current position. "So, this is my life. And I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I'm still trying to figure out how that could be," (Stephen Chbosky, The Perks of Being a Wallflower). And here's a quote I find inspiring regarding others: "...it matters not what you've done but what you do with what you've done for others." (Noah Centineo).

Best of luck,  
Kim Rosner  
(P.S. I finally learned how to correctly spell the words "definitely" and "exercise"!!!!)

*"Be thankful for not only the big aspects of life, but also the little moments of safeness and relief."*

I met so many new people and formed new connections. You are so much cooler and swag and hotter now. I can legally buy a lottery ticket and you can't...hahaha loser. Juuuust kidddddingggg. I'm going to warn you now, but there are tons of life spoilers coming up. This is your only warning... so buckle your seatbelt and proceed with caution. If you're not fourteen-year-old Kimberly Rosner and you're reading this, feel free to grab some popcorn and enjoy this letter!

Freshman and senior me can agree that eighth grade was a horrific year for Kimberly Rosner. The

## Where To Start?

by Sophie Prevallet  
*Contributing Writer*

Dear 9th Grade Sophie,

I remember being a freshman and thinking that high school could not end soon enough. My days were spent looking to the future, as if graduation was my only salvation. Now that graduation is weeks away, I'm looking back on my time in Hastings with both regret and contentment. Regret that I hadn't spent more time living in the present moment rather than looking to the future; contentment with the fact that everything I experienced led me to where I am now.

Where do I start with this? There's so many things I wish I could tell you. First and foremost, trust yourself and trust your gut. You're the only one who knows what's right for you; don't be afraid to stand up for yourself and say "no" in uncomfortable situations. Surround yourself with people who support and inspire you. Stay true to yourself. Foster your passions and do what you love. Try harder in Chemistry! Seek help from teachers. Spend more time with your parents. Don't spend all your money on food.

High school is tough, but in the end you'll be a better person because of it. Whether it be good or bad, nothing lasts forever. Cherish your friends and family; don't dwell on your bad days. Graduation will come faster than you think!

Sincerely,  
Sophie Prevallet



[Sophie Prevallet]



# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## Letter to My 9th-Grade Self

by Kaylee Oppenheimer  
*Graduating*

Dear freshman Kaylee,

I'm writing to you as a high school senior about to embark on a journey hopefully filled with scientific inquiry, joy, friendship, and discovery. But I'm not ready. Not just yet. I need some time to reflect on these past four years and get closure. What better way to do that than to give you some advice?

When I was brainstorming ideas for my personal college essay, I recalled a strangely familiar memory, one that didn't make sense yet seemed crucial. While it didn't make it onto CommonApp, I think it's worth sharing: I was five and playing with my Israeli cousins in the kibbutz Hafetz Haim under a starlit sky in Israel. My cousins ran away from the playground and towards the waft of kosher cooking, but I stayed behind. As the stillness and silence of the night crept in, my imagination ran wild. I became convinced that there were bottomless holes in the ground beneath me and that if I fell in one I would be transported across the world. Classic Israeli Alice in Wonderland. Before each step my heart anticipated the drop. I became terrified. Not terrified of falling, but terrified of experiencing the unpredictability of where I would end up on the other side of the hole.

I'm telling you this little anecdote because not that much has changed since you were five. You're still immensely curious and overwhelmingly idealistic. But you're also sometimes afraid of the unknown. Most people are.

You're scared of relationships morphing and adapting beyond your control. I know having control feels safe to you right now, but it's change and the constant upheaval of conventional thought and feeling that drives progress. Our world embraces the tension between movement and stillness. And there's something deeply moving and inspiring about that. Not to mention change and the constant upheaval of conventional thought and feeling that drives progress. rnative (SUPA reference —you'll understand it later).

Here are some spoilers. You'll lack the hindsight and the self-control to stop two stress fractures from occurring. However, you will have the control and agency to stop running when you realize you've had

enough. And once you stop running, writing for The Buzzer will become the most influential activity of your high school career.

You won't be able to control your Science Research journey amidst a pandemic, but you will have the self-assurance and strength to take ownership and embrace falling into the unknown; you'll design your own project completely by yourself and on your own terms. And because of this, you'll find success, immense joy, and more passion than you ever thought possible.



[Kaylee Oppenheimer]

But there's one thing you'll have trouble letting go of and releasing into this world. In seventh grade, you were asked by one of your peers if you were bi. You'll never forget that day. You were terrified. You panicked and went on a monologue discussing how you could never like girls. For a second, you felt relieved that your Academy Award-winning performance of being straight meant that your secret was safe and your world wouldn't change. But after that moment of stillness, you felt sick. You felt like you were disregarding and disrespecting your own identity, your own place in the world. And that felt awful. In trying to maintain stability and perceived order you subverted your agency and limited your voice. But I promise you that by sophomore year you'll be braver. Stronger. And when you come out as gay to your family you'll feel relieved not for just a second, but for a while.

(Continued on page 15)

"You can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future" - Steve Jobs

## Tips for Underclassmen From the Class of 2021

by Eric Louis Bagtas  
*Contributing Writer*

Before they head off to their next destinations, we wanted to pick the seniors' brains for their advice on how to succeed in different academic areas. Below is a curated list of some of their advice.

### History

History across the world is similar to that of a narrative or story, and just like with stories, it is important to properly connect different events together and consider the relationship between them. Flashcards, mnemonics, or youtube videos can be helpful in memorizing facts. However, the most important advice you can get is to simply have fun with the class.

### Math

For up-and-coming mathematicians, the TI-Nspire CAS is a godsend for difficult equations. However, it is important to challenge yourself—focus less on boring easy problems and more on ones that require complex thought—and keep your brain thinking: Kenken or sudoku are good games to play to maintain math skills, but do not overdo them. When topics get too difficult, "zoom out" and find a larger strategy or go after school to see your teacher for help; they are happy to help you!

### English

Remember to read a lot when it comes to taking English class—at least 15 minutes a day. As well as that, do not rely on sparknotes or shmoop; it is actually much easier to read the book than to look stuff up online. In regards to school assigned books, take notes on odd/interesting details for class discussions. These observations can also be useful in the body paragraphs of essays you are going to write. While they are daunting to write, planning a rough outline—jotting main ideas and placing them in order—can make essays easier to manage; you can even take advantage of peer editing or a thesaurus for better vocab. Just do not do everything last minute.

### Science

Psych contains a principle "there is a reason for exhibiting a certain kind of behavior", which can be carried over to other sciences--mainly the ones taught by the school. Instead of memorizing vocabulary, one should study the general ideas and processes and take

into account reactions from a holistic perspective. For further material to deepen your understanding of science, you can turn to the teachers after school or youtube videos.

### Health

Don't feel too awkward and pay attention in Health. Do the work and you will pass—in both the class and real life, as the topics taught are important. Ms. Kehoe, the teacher, is nice and understanding, so don't be disrespectful or the one student who always giggles in the back of the room :]

### P.E:

It is not the same as middle school. One mistake and you are getting a zero. I Just kidding, but, seriously. with participation and good behavior, you can get 5 out of 5 points each class. Just do not be the one doing the least amount of work—middle of the pack should be enough. Make friends in this class because it can greatly enhance your time running around and having fun. Oh, and anticipate dancing.

### All The Rest...

Time management, work productivity, and maintaining a social life are important ways to survive. These miscellaneous tips should help you get by: Never procrastinate on any assignments. When you first receive some work, it is better to complete it as fast as you can, so you can have more time for other things.

Make an effort to make your work the best it can be for the long term. However, remember to take a break once and while to avoid overloading yourself.

Additionally, extracurricular activities are a good way of keeping a balance whether you started a club or participate in sports. They can be fun and a great addition to your future college application—do not stress too much about this and choose a school you want to go to. Enjoy HHS while it lasts and try not to gossip too much—it breeds jealousy. And most importantly, the school has a dark basement.



# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## What Books Impacted Seniors The Most in School?

by Maya Tadmor, Bianca Arnon, and Erin Lobovsky  
*Contributing Writers*

Mr. Abrams, a high school English teacher, said he hoped that for students reading gives them “a cognitive break from their world.” On top of this, he aspires for the books he assigns to spark discussions and questions that change the way students see the world.

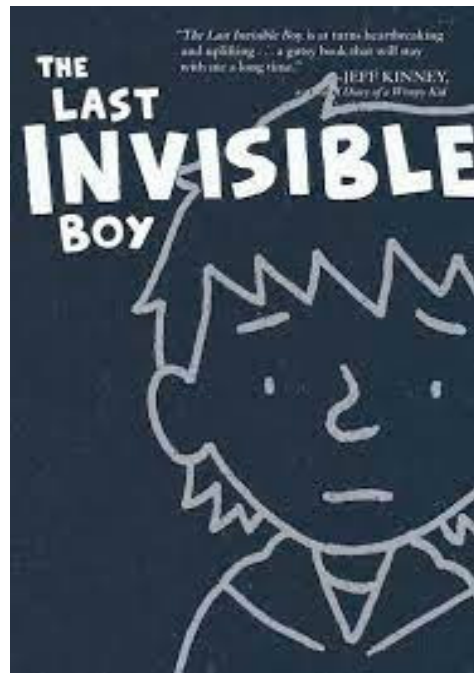
No two people are going to have the exact same preference in books, and that’s what makes reading so amazing. We reached out to seniors to find out what books they most loved reading over the years and to get their advice on how to make reading part of our lives.

When looking for a new book, senior Róisín O’Flaherty, who told us that she reads about once a week outside of school, has an appreciation for books that involve new and captivating topics. “It gets more intriguing to me when [it feels like] something close to home, so I like a lot of realistic fiction or dystopian stuff.”

Conversely, Sofia Hayes, who reads every night for pleasure, tends to lean towards stories that are distinct to an author: “In a good book, for me personally, I’m really drawn to a specific voice.”

Bebe Seidenberg, who does a lot of reading over the summer, especially at camp, responded with an unusual answer: “I like unsatisfying endings to books.” She explained, “I don’t know, I just like them.”

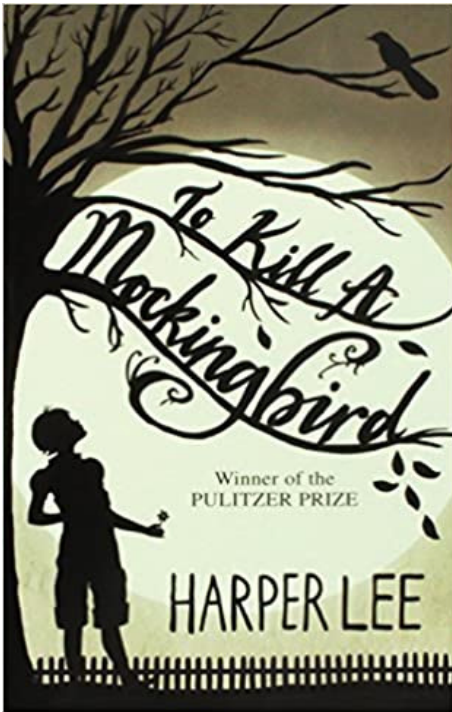
Each senior we spoke to named multiple books that they felt glued to their hands when they were reading. Hunter Mitchell felt a strong connection to a graphic novel read in elementary school called *The Last Invisible Boy* by Evan Kuhlman.



“It’s about a character whose dad died, and [the author]

spoke about it so poetically and it sorta blew my mind.” This book sparked his interest in reading for years to come.

Leo Belsky described *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, which is a book taught in 9th grade, as being one of his favorites from his high school years, as well as *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry.



*To Kill A Mockingbird* was loathed by some of the seniors we spoke with and loved by others; in fact, Bebe and Leo unknowingly share the same love for this novel.

“It was like *The Office* for me,” said Bebe. “I watched that over and over and over again and it was like that, I couldn’t put down those two books,” said Bebe, referring to the Harper Lee classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker.

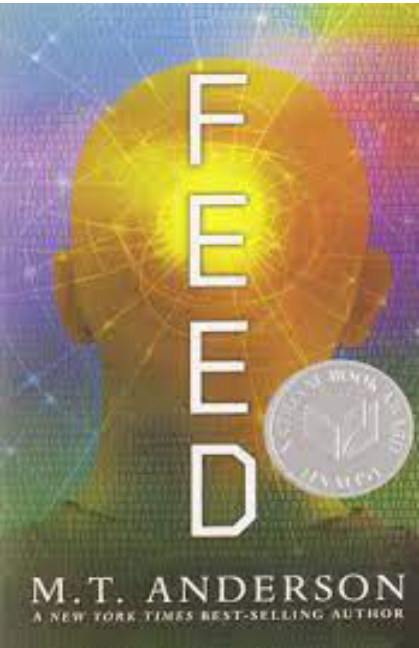
Sophie Prevallet was inspired by *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath and wishes she could read it for the first time again, now that she is older. Another book she mentioned was *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, “which is about about modern day slavery in prisons. It totally changed my perspective on everything.”

Josie Simon has read many books by Becky Albertelli, as she loves the author’s voice: “It just goes back to my favorite stuff, so anything Becky Albertelli.”

Róisín O’Flaherty recommended *It’s Kind of a Funny Story* by Ned Vizzini and described the storyline as, “one that people relate to,” especially high schoolers. Sofia Hayes was excited to share two of her favorite books, *The Great*

*Gatsby* and *Let The Great World Spin* by Colleen McCann. Bebe Seidenberg felt strongly about Kurt Vonnegut books, specifically *Cat’s Cradle* and *Slaughterhouse Five* (but not *Welcome to the Monkey House*).

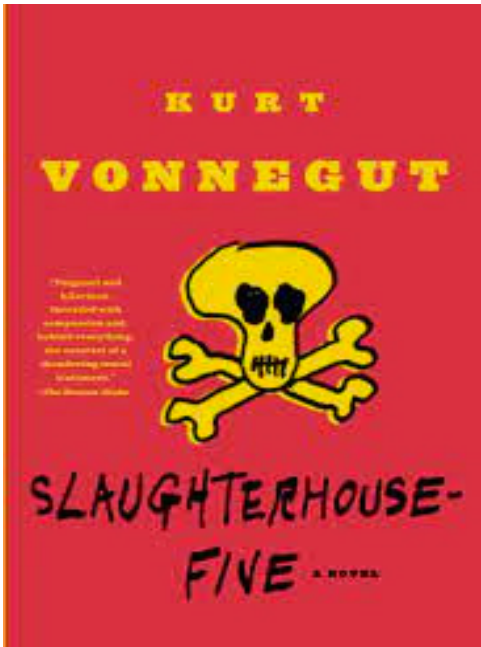
The seniors also reflected fondly on some of the projects they did based on reading. Hunter Mitchell and Sophie Prevallet both enjoyed doing specific research projects that focused on different and relevant issues in today’s society. Hunter mentioned a poetry project that he worked on in Mr. Abrams’s class. This project was based on the poem “The Graveyard” by Neil Gaiman. “We had to make a film where we memorized the poem and recited it on film and Mr. Abrams let me do that poem with one of my own and connect it all together,” Hunter explained. Likewise, Sophie did a poster project about the struggles women face regarding body image, inspired by M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*. inspired by M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*.



As for how to keep reading in a world filled with distraction, the seniors had some ideas. Keeping up with or even picking up the habit of reading can be very difficult, especially in a world where there are so many options of how to spend your time. Technology takes up the majority of our day and for many people it is considered more consuming than a book. Josie Simon advised people to switch out screen time for reading before bed. She related to the pull and urge to watch “Tik Tok video after Tik Tok video” but understands that she will get a better night’s sleep if she reads instead. She also recommended going out of your comfort zone and not feeling stuck within the

books that your teachers provide. “There is something out there for everyone,” she says.

Leo Belsky also underscored the importance of reading for mental development; he said that just reading whatever interests you is so important because people don’t read enough anymore. He thinks people, “[shouldn’t] read only what [others] tell [them] to read; if you find a book and you like it, don’t worry about whether other people think it’s a good book or whether it’s critically acclaimed or not— As long as you enjoy it.”



As for their Reading bucket lists, many seniors can’t wait to start on a number of incredible books. Sophie had some unique picks, including *Blood and Guts in High School* by Kathy Acker, a story of a young girl departing from Mexico to live in the United States on her own. Hunter apologized for not having read it sooner, but *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace is next on his list. Josie Simon has been reading *Americana* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, but it has been a slow read, so she has *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck teed up for the future as well. Leo and Sofia are both interested in getting into classic authors, from Vonnegat and Shakespeare. Lastly, Róisín showed interest in the intergenerational conflict that *A Children’s Bible* by Lydia Millet discusses, and will likely read that soon.





# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## Seniors’ First Memories of Hastings’s Schools

by Macey Renzin  
*Contributing Writer*

When you have been in the Hastings school district for all thirteen years like seniors Jeremy Serbee, Caroline Anderson, and Sophia Maineiro, you have some pretty great stories to tell.

Jeremy recalled a very specific memory back from Ms. Kinally’s kindergarten class with his friend Noah. “ I wasn’t a very sensitive kid, but I had this really weird attachment to this one glue stick.” Jeremy said, “because it was a new gluestick, and no one had used it, and it was purple and I had stuck the thing out all the way so I pretended it was a lightsaber. And I was like ‘Noah! Look, it’s a lightsaber!’”

Caroline also remembers a story for kindergarten: “I was sitting with my now best friend actually, that’s how we became best friends, in kindergarten. And she was drawing a purple cow, and I thought she was cool, cause there was no way I could have pulled a purple cow off.” Caroline added, “So props to her, but I commented on the drawing and I was like ‘What are you making?’ And she was like ‘It’s a cow!’ and I was like, ‘Well cows aren’t purple,’ and she was like, ‘Well, imagination cow,’ and I was like, ‘Wow, okay.’ She was pretty cool.”

Sophia says, “I think I’ve blocked [middle school]out.” However, it does seem like Sophia had some pretty good times at Farragut. “I remember in sixth grade in history class we had the Grecian festival, and for me, the most memorable part was not the festival.” For Sophia, the excitement came from the build up. “Everyone would show up to history class just totally decked out in gear for their city state. I was Megara and we were blue. I wore like ten sweaters, and socks because for each item of clothing you wore, you got a point, and even though it was summer, we all wore sweaters because we wanted to bring extra clothing so we could get points.”

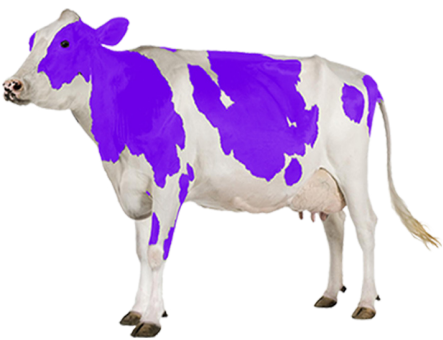
Jeremy thought of his friend Yuga Namba, who ended up moving to Japan at the end of middle school. On their first day of fifth grade, “I was trying to pretend I was, like, too cool to be nervous. I was just like you know, trying to like mock up, and like just like look around, get ready for the day.” Yugo apparently didn’t feel the same way. “Yug comes up to me and he puts his arm around me, and he’s like ‘Are you ready for the future Jeremy?’ and I was like, ‘Dude, stop being a nerd, we got this, we’re gonna be cool.’ I love Ugo, I still talk to him.”

Sophia remembers she had a bit of a wardrobe issue on her first day of high school. “I wore a green baseball cap and I remember I put a lot of time into my outfit for the first day of high school. Mr. Hunt was going around and trying to point out signifiers on each person to remember their name.” Sophia got recognized for her green baseball cap. “I remember being afraid for the next month that if I didn’t wear the baseball cap he wouldn’t know my name, so I wore the baseball cap every single day freshman year.”

Caroline had a tough time recalling her first day. “I think I was so anxious I kind of put it out of my mind.” She did remember her fear of the seniors though: “all of the seniors were out front wearing their senior shirts, and it’s not even like they were any bigger than any of the freshmen; they just felt so big and scary. So when I walked through the front door I was really afraid someone was going to, ‘Freshman Friday’ pick me out, and make fun of me or something.” Once she realized that no one noticed her, she said, “Okay, I think I can survive high school.”

Jeremy thought back to his first walk to high school. “I was walking to school on my first day with Alex Grossman, Zoey Grossman, Mr. Scotch, Hannah Scotch, and my older sister. And the whole walk there I was just like keeping my head down, cause I was walking with all these older high schoolers. All these other people were either a grade above me or a senior, when I was a freshman.” The first day jitters didn’t last for long, “I remember being so nervous, and then having the most fun ever, on my first day. Just so much fun.”

The Class of 2021 seniors are at the end of their Hastings schools experience, but looking back on the past can be a great way to go forward into the new. It could be something as simple as a shared love of cows with your best friend, or the excitement of a school project to perfectly sum up your time in Hastings; now these seniors have nothing left to do but look forward to the new memories their next first day of school will bring.



# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## A Trip Down Memory Lane: The Class of 2021’s Favorite Courses

by Mamie Rushkoff  
*Managing Editor*

Seniors were asked to reflect on their schooling experience in Hastings, and shared their favorite memories in different classes throughout their school careers. Take a trip down memory road and read about the Class of 2021’s favorite classes from their school careers.

**What was your favorite class in elementary school and why?**

Art Class with Mr. Morgan: Watching videos on the famous artists was very entertaining, and Cayla Ossen even adds that the “intro song to that *Famous Artists* show has definitely been permanently ingrained into my brain.” (Cayla Ossen, Kate Jones)

Gym: If you went to gym class at Hillside Elementary School, you will definitely remember the inflatable blow-up courses. The obstacle course and double slides were something to look forward to every year. Mr. Stanley was also an amazing gym teacher who welcomed new and old students. (Rex Jacobsen, Chris Rotiroti, Kimberly Rosner, Jonny Amaral, Nicolas Wisnivesky, Kate Jones, Reign Peterson)

**What was your favorite class in middle school and why?**

Mr. Cecere’s History Class: This class will always be remembered. From fun movies to the stock market project, Mr. Cecere made every class lively and engaging. (Rex Jacobsen, Ryan Goldberg, Melissa Nadler, Kate Jones)

Earth science: Although the Regents were super stressful at times, Earth science was very entertaining, and Mr. Brownstein was always able to keep the class’s attention. (Atomu Hicks, Emily Cartwright, Cayla Ossen, Marcus Cortijo)

**What was your favorite class in high school and why?**

Facing Ourselves and English 11 Honors: An overwhelming number of seniors responded with English 11 Honors and Facing Ourselves as their favorite classes in their entire schooling career, citing the books read, the discussions held, and the insight in the courses. Atomu Hicks suggested students were, “taught how to observe and question things, which is an extremely fundamental skill.” Kate Jones also added that “Mr. Abrams gave us so many independent artistic liberties” which helped students expand their minds. (Caroline Rosner, Marin Diz, Atomu Hicks, Kimberly Rosner, Kate Jones)

Journalism, Theatre Arts, 1960s Literature, and English with Mr. Marciano: So many students fondly recalled their various electives with Mr. Marciano. He always made class interesting and fun. Lindsay Drozd shared, “A funny memory was when Mr. Marciano asked me to throw him the eraser for the white board and I threw a bad throw and he said, “No wonder the basketball team lost.” And I thought that was pretty funny- we won though so I have to say he was wrong.” (Lindsay Drozd, Marin Diz)

Although the seniors are leaving, the stories they made and told will not be forgotten. The seniors will be able to tell these stories for years, and so will the teachers who taught them!

## Four Seniors Reflect on their Time at Hastings

by Tess Iosepovici  
*Contributing Writer*

**Who is one person in Hastings you would miss the most?**

Sophie Prevallet is going to miss her friends— some including Bebe Seidenberg, Dylan Rubin, Chris Wyatt, Colin McSpedon, Devin Lopez, Hunter Mitchell, and many of the sophomores she has gotten close with. She started becoming friends with the sophomores at the beginning of her junior year. They’ve all really connected and formed great friendships which she is extremely grateful for.

Jennifer Goiz is going to miss Mr. Marciano, her theatre teacher. He has taught her not only to be a creative person, but to also let go of her ego and not care what other people think. She is definitely going to take those lessons with her into the real world.

Sofia Hayes is going to miss her underclassmen friends the most, especially all of her memories with them. She will miss her upperclassmen friends immensely as well, but they are all going separate ways together. Her underclassmen friends will be staying in Hastings, and parting will be more painful.

Dahlia Seidel is going to miss Mr. Abrams the most in Hastings. She had him her junior year and says that he is not only a nice person, but he values everyone's opinion and is extremely encouraging. He made her want to do better.

**What is one thing that you’re going to miss about living in a small town?**

Sophie is going to miss the community of the town. She says it is nice seeing everyone in school. She also remarks how everyone knows each other. Waving to people in the hallway, even when she’s not close friends with them, is something she really cherishes. She loves knowing everyone's name and it is something that she will sadly have to let go of a little bit going into college.

Jennifer is going to miss the safety of living in a small town. She feels that she has a big privilege being able to walk around Hastings and wear whatever she pleases, without having to worry if she could possibly be in danger.

Sofia is going to miss the accessibility in Hastings. It’s so easy to get anywhere and her friends are usually just five minutes away. Hastings is a very contained town, which is extremely nice.

Dahlia is going to miss being a door or two away from her friends. She is friends with a lot of people on her street and it is always fun to see them just when she walks out of her house.

**What is your favorite memory from a class you took in all of high school?**

Sophie’s favorite memory took place in her sophomore year Chemistry class. Mr. Rosner let her class pull the emergency shower, which everyone found hilarious.

Jennifer’s favorite memory was in her freshman year theater class. Everyone was sitting in a circle, not taking class too seriously and making jokes with Mr. Marciano.

Jennifer would like to take her academics more seriously in college, and focus on classes that she finds deep interest in. She is excited to learn more and prioritize college academics.

Sofia is looking forward to still being able to see some familiar faces while walking around, but also is looking forward to seeing more people she doesn’t know. She’s excited to get out of the “Hastings bubble” and to have her own space, where no one knows all of her business.

Dahlia is looking forward to meeting new people. She loves Hastings and the tight knit community, but she is ready to make the leap into a larger community. She is also looking forward to taking classes that she is passionate for, with people that are also passionate for that class. *(Continued on page 10)*



# GRADUATION

## Commencement Speeches

by **Sophie Mulaire**  
*Managing Editor*

As the school year comes to a close, graduates of high schools and universities turn their tassels and prepare to take the next step in their lives. The softened regulations and the steady decline of COVID-19 cases has allowed for graduation ceremonies to make a tentative comeback. One of the most memorable moments of the event are the commencement speeches given by valedictorians, salutatorians, class presidents, alumni, or even honorary celebrity guests.

The speakers aim to inspire and uplift the graduating class, commend them on their accomplishments, and give them some advice and insight into their futures. Some speeches are riddled with humorous jokes and light-hearted language. Others take a more serious approach, and talk about hardships, triumphs, and overcoming adversity. What sets a great commencement speech apart from others is the speaker's ability to project authenticity and use their platform as a form of self-expression with the hopes that somebody listening in the audience will become inspired or energized by their words.

Below are excerpts from commencement speeches delivered by a wide range of people throughout the years. Some are celebrities, some are high school students, and some are professionals, but the one thing they all have in common is that their speeches are both gripping and moving, and their orations, now memorialized forever, will continue to inspire new generations of people.

**Steve Jobs**  
Founder of Apple, Steve Jobs shared some inspiring stories from his life with Stanford University's graduating class of 2005, and spoke about how important it is to find your passion:

"You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only

way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle."



**Paxton Smith**  
2021 Valedictorian of Lake Highlands High School in Dallas, Texas, Paxton Smith courageously swapped out her approved speech with one hidden in the pocket of her graduation gown. Smith decided to use her platform on the stage at her highschool graduation to speak out against the new abortion laws that had just recently been passed in her home state, sparking nationwide applause and admiration:

"...I'm talking about this today, on a day as important as this, on a day honoring 12 years of hard academic work, on a day where

we are all gathered together, on a day when you are most inclined to listen to a voice like mine—a woman's voice—to tell you that this is a problem. And it's a problem that cannot wait. And I cannot give up this platform to promote complacency and peace, when there is a war on my body and a war on my rights."

**Conan O'Brien**  
Conan O'Brien's 2011 commencement speech to the graduating class of Dartmouth University was a memorable one, both for his comedic timing and hilarious sarcastic comments, but also for his amazing life advice:

"It is our failure to become our perceived ideal that ultimately defines us and makes us unique. It's not easy, but if you accept your misfortune and handle it right, your perceived failure can become a catalyst for profound reinvention... [T]oday I tell you that whether you fear it or not, disappointment will come. The beauty is that through disappointment, you can gain clarity, and with clarity comes conviction and true originality."

**Bina Venkataraman**  
The editorial page editor of The Boston Globe, Bina Venkataraman spoke to the class of

University of Southern California about everyday heroes, and how impactful each person can be:

"Look for heroes not on the silver screen, or the pedestal, or even at this podium—but at eye level and within reach: the people in your life who have been afraid, but have done the right thing anyway... the people who have shown you by example how to be bold... Prize all moments of bravery, even the small and unrecognized ones. You can be heroic whenever you choose, whoever you are, without being perfect or celebrated or superbly talented."



**Joyce DiDonato**  
American lyric-coloratura mezzo-soprano, Joyce DiDonato addressed Juilliard's graduating class of 2014 in a tear-jerking, awe-inspiring speech:

"One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself, right here, right now, in this single, solitary, monumental moment in your life, is to decide, without apology, to commit to the journey, and not to the outcome."

## Graduation at Different Levels

by **Amanda Scholz**  
*Contributing Writer*

How does graduation look to different levels of graduates? Some of graduates' thoughts varied by age, but some of them remained the same. The older the people who were interviewed, the more prepared they felt to enter the next stage of their lives. The senior, Sophia Mainiero, in high school and the eighth grader, Macey Renzin, were similar in that they were both excited about new classes, academic opportunities, and new people (teachers and fellow students). Macey claimed that she had "kinda grown out of middle school and [feels] ready for the next step." She is excited about the independence involved in high school.

The preschooler, Desmond Owens, seemed more focused on his own enjoyment than academics, claiming he was excited for the bus rides, to see his friends, and is "curious to see what the place looks like." The fourth grader, Mae Weinstein, was interested on the growing up part. She could not wait to use "credit cards" to buy lunch at the cafeteria—I chose not to burst her bubble—and also wants to be closer to town to buy things. (continued on page 15)





# STAFF REFLECTIONS

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## HHS Teacher’s Graduations and Career Paths

by Amanda Scholz  
*Contributing Writer*

**Ms. Shandroff**, the current head of the science department, admits that, though she was awarded the “Most Likely to Be a Teacher” award at her graduation, teaching was not always her passion. She recalls being a good English student and somewhat enjoying the subject in high school. She didn’t find anything that she was particularly passionate about for a job and decided to take accounting in college. Ms. Shandroff quickly realized that accounting was not for her and went into the field of physical therapy, which was her major in college. This was the career she pursued for ten years after graduate school. While teaching kids who were in physical therapy, she realized that teaching was her true calling. That is when she settled down in our school as a beloved science teacher.

Mr. McCann

**Mr. McCann** went through a whole list of careers before he found his place teaching physical education. He was interested in many things, such as architecture and physical therapy. In college, he studied movement and sports studies and minored in health education, but still wasn’t sure what he would do with either. He eventually realized he wanted to be a teacher, and got his masters in health education. He has some fond memories of his graduation, and remembers being quite excited for his future. He was accompanied by his high school sweetheart, who later became his wife. For those who are graduating, he advises that you write down all about the 24 hours surrounding your graduation, because you wouldn’t want to forget one detail of this big step in your life. He wishes he had done this, because he feels like some of the memories are slipping away from his graduation in White Plains, where he went to school.

Ms. Thompson

**Ms. Thompson**, a very special and fun-loving science teacher, actually won class clown at her high school graduation! She has carried this great skill with her, and shares it with her students everyday in her classroom and in the halls. Ms. Thompson had originally gone into accounting like Ms. Shandroff, and similarly, she found that accounting was not her calling. Switching her major to biology, she thought that being a pharmacist might be a job that suited her well. She applied to pharmaceutical school but got waitlisted. During the semester she was waitlisted, she had time to think over her decision. She came to the conclusion that teaching would be a good option. She ended up getting into pharmacy school, but instead went on to receive a PACE (teaching adolescents degree). Looking back on her high school career in Valhalla, she recalls getting a sports booster award at her graduation. She was also quite the softball and volleyball player during her teenage years.

**Ms. Rudolph** describes her graduations as an event full of opportunity and excitement, a moment full of hope. In high school, Ms. Rudolph’s intelligence was not a cool trait, so it wasn’t as much of value to her as it may have been today. Even though her intelligence wasn’t that cool, she still had dreams of becoming a prosecuting attorney. However, through the process of becoming a prosecutor, she read an autobiography, *Assata* by Assata Shakur about her arrest and life in a political asylum in Cuba. This book completely changed Ms. Rudolph’s perspective of law and prosecution, she realized that she probably couldn’t work in the court system and changed majors.

She decided to become a teacher for adolescents, and she studied English Education of Adolescents and got her masters in Gifted and Talented Education. Finally, she came back to where she had gone to school to be a teacher: Westchester.

**Ms. Browne** is an art teacher that teaches many different art skills.

She recalls her graduation being moved indoors to the gym because it had rained, and they ended up having to stream it through some classrooms since the gym was a bit too small. Even though the 2021 graduation must likewise be streamed, Ms. Browne hopes, “the sun can shine and you can throw your hats in the air”. (Ms. Browne didn’t get to throw her hat, since the gym was so confined). Before high school, she had no exposure to art, but she found a love for sculpture and construction art in college.

At first, she planned to major in history and minor in music, but those were just interests, and there wasn’t an obvious career path in mind for her. She changed her major to art and amusingly remembers that the color of the hood she received at graduation was brown, and she thought it should have been more colorful. She went on to receive her masters in art and teaching. Ms. Browne then became an elementary school art teacher, and finally found her place in our high school, wanting to teach more specific art skills like sewing and graphic design. She has a million pieces of advice of which could not all fit on this page, but the main idea is to live in the moment, be kind, and immerse yourself in everything possible!

**Ms. Geller** is the only teacher that I interviewed who had always known that she wanted to be a teacher. When she was a sophomore in high school, she had an amazing and dedicated geometry teacher who inspired her to pursue a career as a math teacher. Ms. Geller’s parents didn’t have as many opportunities as she did, and it was her father’s dream for all of his children to go to college and get a good education. She was the first of her siblings to achieve this goal.

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## Keeping the Building Running in the Age of COVID-19

by Camilla Mischka  
*Managing Editor*

When the pandemic struck, people went into a cleaning frenzy. Hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies sold out in a matter of days, and people were on a mission to make their homes and their lives spotless. According to Cision NR Wire- less the amount spent on cleaning supplies went up by 34%, and the amount spent on hand sanitizer increased by a whopping 838%. I met with members of the Building and Grounds Department as well as the Custodial Department at HHS to learn how COVID has been affecting their lives and jobs.

When comparing schools before and during COVID, members of both departments stressed that COVID required them to pay more attention to tiny details. For example, they began religiously cleaning door knobs and railings. Pre-CO-VID, not every classroom needed cleaning before and after a class was over, but now the cleaning staff has to make sure to wipe down whatever may have been touched after each class. Elaborating more on the subject, one member of the department stated, “It made the job much harder because we were here since covid started and never left. There was a lot of preparation, along with responsibility, before people came in. We had to make sure everything was safe.”

“In hybrid we were cleaning more because we had to go in between each class and with a limited staff that would be very difficult,” said a member of the custodial staff. When the whole student body went fully into school, the staff mentioned, “It made it easier because we didn’t need to get into [the classroom] between each class, which allowed us to not have to wipe the surfaces as much. The antimicrobial covered the surfaces which made it easier.”

A member from one of the departments reflected on the outlook of the custodians: “There was no complaining. Whatever the task was, everyone did what had to be done.” When COVID first hit, the entire staff was dressed up in full body suits and gloves. They went on to say, “We had no idea what was ahead of us and a lot of people were very nervous.”

New techniques were needed in order to accommodate the situation. “Fortunately, seven years ago we bought an electrostatic sprayer which really helped with COVID,” the building and grounds department said. “The sprayer would envelope around the chair, allowing you to cover a room in two minutes.” These techniques will also help in the future: “I think we have all learned quite a bit about disinfecting and social distancing. This experience has taught us a lot.”

Reflecting on whether they would have done anything differently, the department stated, “I think the people who were here understood that this was different and new to everyone. Maybe looking back we could’ve [done something dif- ferently], but it was new so I don’t know if I would have done anything differently. If I am around for the next pandemic maybe I’d have tips for those working through it.”

Lyla Gatterdam, a sophomore at Hastings High School, went on to say “They [the cleaning staff] have done a lot for us [the student body], especially during the times of COVID. I would like to give them a big thank you for everything they’ve done, even the things we can’t see.”

“I thought they did a herculean task, and they did it without much recognition at all. They’ve worked to keep us safe and comfortable while they’ve carried on with all the other responsibilities they have,” said English teacher Mr. Scotch.

Lastly, the principal Mr. Adiepietro added, “The Buildings and Grounds department didn’t miss a beat throughout this whole thing, and they are the reason our building is open.”



# RETURN TO NORMALCY

## Mr. Adipietro’s Vision of the Upcoming Year

by Oscar Hayes  
*Contributing Writer*

During the summer of 2020, parents, students and teachers alike were all asking the same question: What will school look like in the fall? It was a big question, as there were many possibilities. In the end, we got a school year like no other. With hybrid learning, plastic barriers, and masks, it was certainly strange.

As more Americans receive the vaccine, it is looking like this upcoming school year will be a bit more on the normal side.

I sat down with principal Mr. Louis Adiepietro to talk to him about his hopes for the upcoming school year. The first thing Mr. Adipietro told me was that he hopes to see, “full in person instruction, no remote option, and classes and schedules as normal.” Mr. Adipietro wants to see us “back to what we were a year and a half ago”.

Even as more people receive the vaccine, returning to normality is still a challenging task. According to Mr. Adipietro, because a person’s vaccine status is a “confidential issue,” there cannot be differing guidelines for those who are vaccinated versus those who are not. He said that it would not be fair to expose people who chose to not get vaccinated. Thus, any plan has to take into account that some students or staff may not be vaccinated.

After this weird COVID-19 year, there is another question on people’s minds: What will happen to snow days? In New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio has snatched away snow days, a beloved tradition. In early May, he announced that all snow days will become remote days. Mr. Adipietro said that he “cautions not to have remote snow days unless we really need to.” Unless our school district runs out of snow days (six maximum), snow days are most likely here to stay.

Although this pandemic school year had mostly negative impacts, there were a few small positive impacts that could change our school for the better.

“Frequent hand washing” and “good hygiene” were two things that Mr. Adipietro said we should still continue even after COVID-19 is over. He also said that parent meetings might still occur on Zoom, creating greater convenience for working parents. In the end, Mr. Adipietro really emphasized that he wants the school to be as normal as possible, and that he wants to see students go “back to being teenagers.”

## The Stress and Joy of “Returning to Normal Life”

by Isabelle Aiken  
*Contributing Writer*

As vaccinations across the United States go up while cases trend down, many states are starting to shift back to “normal” or, more accurately, pre-Covid life. However, that leaves students with the question: how will they re-adjust from this seismic change of routine?

Hastings High School social worker Ms. Christina Repp said, “Due to the expansive growth the brain undergoes during age 13-22, the amygdala grows to three times the size during this time. Now let’s toss a Covid-19 pandemic into the mix? Poof, we all have a lot of anxiety.”

In other words, for adolescents, returning to “normal” life may not be as simple as it seems. Over the course of the coronavirus pandemic, anxiety rates spiked among teens, particularly high school students. The National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), a government organization focused on advancing health and scientific research, found in a study on young Americans that Covid-19 increased generalized and social anxiety. The study also concluded that among female adolescents, symptoms of depression and panic disorder also increased. Suffering from both increased academic stress and coping with an unrecognizable world, adolescents are experiencing new levels of anxiety during these times of perseverance and tragedy.

The American Psychological Association defines anxiety as, “emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.” The physical symptoms of anxiety are often overlooked, regarded as an excuse to miss school or skip out on sports practice. Hundreds of studies performed internationally have confirmed the severity of these symptoms. A Harvard Medical School article concluded that the autonomic nervous system, a system that a person does not consciously control and is responsible for heart rate and blood pressure, is to blame for adverse physical anxiety symptoms.

Dr. Gloria Szeszko, school psychologist, agreed with the general consensus among adolescent therapists and psychiatrists about next steps: teaching coping mechanisms to those experiencing increased anxiety and depression is usually the most effective way to lessen them (with the expectation of medication). Szeszko explained that a popular and effective coping mechanism is listening to music. This works by distracting the mind from anxiety-triggering thoughts. She also understands that for many anxiety carries an overwhelming force, and encourages engaging in relaxation exercises.

## Food Truck Fair (Continued from page 2)

by Catie Cho and Julien Amsellen  
*Managing Editors*

its root led him to his roots: a desire to spread his culture to the world was not attainable in any established restaurant. A Peruvian Bistro in Westchester was close to a perfect fit, but Marquez knew that to fully marinate the food in his roots, the restaurant would have to be his.

So, after falling in love with the film *Chef*, he knew a food truck would be the precise way to create foods that represented his background and engage with his customers on a deeper level. Driving back from his work one evening, he spotted a bread delivery truck for sale at a nearby gas station. Unwilling to lose this excellent opportunity, he broached his dream of opening a food truck to his wife. After much discussion, Marquez chose to follow his dreams. Over two years, tireless efforts, and lots of money, Marquez’s made his food truck a reality. “I kept telling myself if I was able to put so much hard work and a lot of time into restaurants...that weren’t mine[,] why couldn’t I do that for myself.”

Being the first “Peruvian Latin” food truck in Westchester, Marquez has one goal all along: “I have a mission to put Peruvian food on the map. My mis-

sion that I’ve had for years was to have everyone all over the world love and appreciate Peruvian food as much as I do.”

**Leila’s Crepes**

Leila Zambrano of Leila’s Crepes, one of the food trucks at the fair, has been cooking for years. “I started cooking at an early age to help my parents with my three siblings,” she said. “Coming from a Latin background, cooking has always been a big part of my life. It’s something that not only brings me peace, but helps to bring a smile to others.”

However, a food truck wasn’t always the plan for Zambrano. She had always wanted to own her own cafe, and when she started dating her now-husband, they would often go on “crepe dates” together. “One day I just said, ‘Hey, I can make these!’ So I made him some of my own recipes,” she explained. “We knew we couldn’t afford to open a cafe ... well the rest was history, we had our very own crepe truck a few months later.”

Zambrano’s purpose through her food truck is not solely to get people’s

mouths watering. He believes that food encourages people of all backgrounds to commune and explore something varied and new together. She pointed out that, while crepes are commonly associated with France, their popularity across the world has allowed different cultures to infuse this age-old treat with their own unique twist. “That is just one example of how food can be shared, appreciated & innovated,” she added. In an effort to express her Ecuadorian roots through cuisine, Zambrano has recently opened a new food truck that serves empanadas. Despite the influence of her Latin heritage on this new business, the “American culture” that has so greatly molded her remains as present as ever. “I think it’s the perfect balance for those who want to be reminded of tasty food that represents another country but still represents the place we call home.”

Zambrano noted that in an area such as Hastings, which is overwhelmingly white, the impact of cuisine that represents diverse cultural backgrounds is

key. Besides the introduction to new, delicious flavors, people get to attain a more profound understanding for the culture from which that food originates. “It’s not about liking something or disliking it,” remarked Zambrano. “It’s about understanding and connecting to the parts of it that bring all of us together.”

Zambrano believes that anyone, regardless of background or race, can enjoy, connect, and learn from eating food from various cultures. “Although food may have an origin, it does not care who’s eating it,” Zambrano continued. While she could not speak to the effects of food on people of color compared to white people, Zambrano mentioned “everyone in general benefits from trying new things and experiencing different cultures.” As a first generation immigrant who had to build her business from scratch, Zambrano made it clear to people of all races that they should chase their dreams. “Despite what anyone may have to say or who’s doubting you, take the leap,” concluded Zambrano. “Hard work always trumps talent and privilege.”



# A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

## Message to the Class of 2021 from the Faculty

*Collected by contributing writer Aisha Nassar and managing editor Camilla Mischka.*

- Mr. Adipietro-** “Congratulations Class of 2021! You all have persevered and conquered through a very difficult year and a half. I believe it will not only make you stronger but wiser as well. Good Luck!!”
- Mr. Abrams-** “I had the pleasure of getting to work with you in probably one of the most difficult times in recent memory, and I’ve always been so impressed by your compassion.”
- Mr. Blum-** “Well done to a class that will live in history, who laughed through a pandemic, brought us out the other side and did so with energy, charm, intelligence and warmth. Congratulations, best of luck moving forward.”
- Mr. Riss-** “The Class of 2021 was my first group of fifth graders—they accepted me as a new (and frankly, terrified) teacher following the tragic passing of my predecessor Mr. Kerness. We have grown up together, and while I wish them well, I will also miss them terribly. All best wishes for a bright future!”
- Mr. Hunt-** “To the class of 2021, as much as you feel cheated by having a year under Covid, I feel that we actually got cheated by not having you folks around for the year. You’re an amazing class, and I wish you the best of luck in the future.”
- Mr. Ronser-** “It’s a very special class to me because two percent of them are... my twins. So I proudly watch my last children leave school, and have known many of their classmates since their nursery years. This is a class that led the school through what is arguably the most difficult year we have ever had in education, and they were great role models for the rest of the school and the community at large. I wish them the greatest of fortune!”
- Mr. Scotch-** “It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; It is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Mr. McCann-** “We have all now lived adversity for the past 14 months. In the future, when you find yourself struggling with other hardships, think back to this time and how you got through it. Good luck class of 2021”
- Mr. Smith-** “Congratulations Seniors! Don’t be bummed that your upperclassmen years were lived out through the challenges of the pandemic. Embrace it! Think about the street cred you’ll have for the rest of your life. Every other year is boring. As a member of the class of 2021 you are all built different.”
- Ms. Kehoe-** “Congratulations, you made it!! I hope when you look back on your high school career you realize how much adversity you overcame and how you handled it with grace. As you move on to the next chapter in life I hope you remember the lessons you learned in the past year and half and go do great things! Good luck!”
- Ms. Grassia -** “Congratulations to the class of 2021! I am so proud of the things you all have achieved during your time in Hastings, and I am so grateful to many of you who made the library your home during your time at FMS and HHS. You shaped the library into a space I am proud of, and I will be missing you all very much as you begin the next adventure in your lives. Best wishes always, from your librarian!”
- Ms. Duquette-** “Congratulations to the graduating class. You’ve dealt with a lot of obstacles these last couple years, but I’m not surprised because you are a dynamic group of students. I will always remember with fondness those of you who were in my language arts class, best of luck.”
- Mr. Cecere-** “To the graduating class of 2021, you guys made it through probably the most difficult point in your life between last year and this year and if you can make it through that then you can pretty much accomplish anything. So I look forward to reading and hearing about you guys in the next few years. Be the best, enjoy.”
- Ms. Felipe-** “To the Class of 2021- wishing you all much success as you move beyond the walls of Hastings High School. I have fond memories from your time as 8th graders: most especially our fun trip to Chelse Piers. I hope you will continue to search for your passion and use the next few years to expand your knowledge, and find what truly makes you happy. My passion is teaching math, and I thank you for being a part of my journey back in the 8th grade.  
Be well and Congratulations!”
- Ms. Denton-** “I love, love, love the graduating class. I had them for 5th grade and I wish them the best.”

## The Cubicled Classroom

by Seamus Pugh  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Plexiglass barriers, which Hastings High School uses to separate desks and rows throughout its classrooms in order to prevent transmission of COVID-19, are a visible reminder of the virus for Hastings students. The school administration made the decision to erect barriers when the majority of the student body returned on April 12, 2021: “There was still a level of anxiety among students and staff because we were coming back in full [to the school building],” said Mr. Adipietro, the Hastings High School principal. “Whether you believe [that barriers are effective] or not, many people felt better that the barriers were up.”

The barriers provided an initial sense of comfort to many teachers as their students returned to the building. Ms. Geller of the mathematics department said, “In September, when we first came in [to the hybrid model], the CDC and the news and my [outside] research all said that the barriers were part of keeping us safe. They were one more layer of protection, after masks. I figured the more layers of protection we have against the virus spreading through the air, the better.”

Ms. Aleiner, a French and Latin teacher, said, “Judging by the fact that no one [in my classroom] has gotten sick so far, I think they certainly didn’t hurt.”

OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, counsels that although, “[...] barriers do not replace the need for physical distancing,” they can lessen the threat of the virus between workers. According to OSHA, the intent of a plexiglass barrier is to, “[...] block face-to-face pathways between individuals in order to prevent direct transmission of respiratory droplets.”

Unfortunately, the barriers also presented challenges to many teachers. “They were terrible,” said Mr. O’Brien of the history department. “Anything that gets in the way of a physically close conversation with a student makes it more difficult to have a meaningful conversation.”

Ms. Aleiner agreed: “They are very bothersome for the teaching process. They impact sound and communication. That was definitely a trade-off.”

Ms. Geller noted that, although they did not impact communication in her classroom any more than the masks, visibility was a concern. “Visibility through the barriers was a challenge,” she said, “and students had trouble seeing through them to the Smart-Board.” Mr. O’Brien noted that it was similarly challenging for teachers: “Looking out at a sea of plexiglass with reflections hitting the glass, combined with the masks, made it hard to even identify who the students in the class were.”

Although the barriers were comforting to some, others were troubled by the lack of sound scientific evidence supporting their effectiveness. Mr. O’Brien said, “I do not think they were scientifically proven to be useful. In my opinion, they presented no advantages.”

Wafaa El-Sadr, a professor of epidemiology and medicine at Columbia University, reported to CNN in October of last year that no studies had proven that barriers effectively prevent the spread of COVID-19 through large droplets. Besides, reports CNN, the virus can spread through aerosols emitted from the nose and mouth, which the barriers cannot effectively counter.

Indeed, the barriers might even present disadvantages in combating the virus. According to the Office of Research Services at the National Institute of Health, barriers, “[...]may have a negative impact on airflow within a space.” Airflow is crucial to preventing particles containing the virus from lingering in a space such as a classroom.

Still, says Mr. Adipietro, “the barriers were there to calm the anxiety of the students and staff.” They certainly defined an era of the lives of Hastings High School students. It is possible that these students will recount stories of the plexiglass-stuffed classrooms with the same feelings that their grandparents remembered government-issued dog tags, duck and cover drills, and bomb shelters.

Regardless, Mr. Adipietro said definitively that, “The barriers will not be here next year.”

# STUDENT OPINIONS

## What Books Should Hastings Add to its Curriculum?

by Frances Canant  
Contributing Writer

*Fahrenheit 451*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are all titles familiar to current and past Hastings High School students. English classrooms have deeply analyzed these classics for years. Yet it seems to many that Hastings needs something new. Though these novels are considered incredible works of literature, they primarily feature cisgender, straight white men as their protagonists. And though their themes remain relevant today, many high school students find them hard to relate to. What new books need to be added to the Hastings curriculum? What issues and topics need to be taught and how can they be conveyed through characters so they are relatable to students?

Through my observation Hastings’ current English curriculum probably lies in the middle of public schools across the nation—more diverse than some and less diverse than others. Students read the “classics” throughout grade levels but these classics do not inhibit the inclusion of books unlike them. Mr. Scotch, member of the English department, shared that he did not feel Hastings was heavy on the group of books deemed as “classics.” Based on conversations with current students, it seems that many students do not find issues with the topics and diversity in the current curriculum; they simply wanted more. Unlike many public schools across America, the curriculum in Hastings is not heavily “standardized” (excluding what is necessary for state testing). This means that teachers are not necessarily required to teach certain books.

Literature can evoke a strong emotional response in any person. This is why diversity in literature is crucial to providing a proper education. Michelle Lawson of St. John Fischer College found that “this type of foundation [multicultural literature] is the most valuable lesson educators can give to their students because it not only increases their knowledge in an academic setting but it prepares them to be a part of an ever changing society” (2013). When students begin English classes, they are immediately introduced to one keyword—theme. For example, themes of growing up are universal as all humans experience a “becoming;” however, it is the way these themes are conveyed where meaning is lost. For some students, these themes

disappear because the characters seem so foreign to themselves. Conversely, many of the books in the high school curriculum do not seriously challenge topics unfamiliar to students’ life experiences. Reflection, important in reading, is something which is achieved through exposure to a variety of characters and settings.

Issues within the current curriculum differ depending on the person experiencing them. Sophomore Catie Cho felt that the school should acknowledge that their current novels are no longer adequate and should open this discussion to the greater Hastings community. She felt that although many novels neared discussions of important topics (e.g. Holden Caulfield’s struggles with mental health in *The Catcher and the Rye*), it is not substantial enough in today’s age. Mental health and modern experiences, such as managing your online presence, are so intrinsically linked that students do not feel a significant connection to their novels’ protagonists.

In addition to a lack of diversity, genres and forms of literature are missing. For example, “for-fun” novels are often not included in high school and independent reading varies from teacher to teacher.

One national study found that fifth graders alone spend 5.4% of their free time reading and still this percentage decreases with age (Cullinan, 2000; Greany, 1980). Other styles of teaching books, such as units dedicated to independent reading or small “book clubs,” may encourage students to enjoy novels and not view them as a necessity to get through school. Additionally, these books offer a greater amount of unique experiences for students to choose from.

Introducing new books into the curriculum HHS is not a harrowing task. Two members of the English department, Mr. Scotch and Mr. Blum praised the district for being incredibly flexible to new ideas. For example, this spring the sophomore classes were introduced to *Another Brooklyn* by Jacqueline Woodson—a story about a young Black woman looking back on her childhood of displacement and longing. Mr. Blum learned of it from a colleague. This year, the sophomore english classes many read novels about the transformation of growing older and the corresponding sense of identity. Another Brooklyn fit per-

(continued on page 14)

## Reflection on Online School

by Samuel Kennedy  
Contributing Writer



According to a Census Bureau survey, of parents and guardians, 93% of school-age children were engaged in some form of online learning. Most high school students, including me, lost nearly half of their high school experience to COVID-19. Society is just beginning to return to its previous state of normalcy, but before that process began everyone had to endure life through a deadly pandemic. I was lucky to only lose my high school experience. Some people lost jobs, loved ones, and things that are much harder to replace. Regardless, as video calls replaced classrooms, students became accustomed to online school. What has this wide-spread phenomenon meant for Hastings High School students and what does it mean for our school as we move forward? I think this pandemic should bring the mental health of our students to the forefront of discussion, and that hopefully this experience has taught us that there are still ways we can and should make Hastings High School a better place for students, including a more liberal use of time off to counter the intense time constraints school places on us.

I understand the opposing argument: extra time can be used to make up for the disparities that come with remote learning, and more online school hours mean that students have more time to learn the curriculum, and it gives teachers more time to teach the curriculum. In a year of so many uncertainties, we could have very well had exams that students would need to be prepared for regardless of circumstances, and at the end of the day the final grades still matter whether remote or not. Still, I disagree with this mentality.

After talking with fellow students over the past year, I’ve learned that the part people liked most about online learning was the extra sleep. It may have only been an hour or thirty minutes more, but students cherished it. This points to a clear lack of sleep among students and a problem with the high school’s early start time. This is supported by students’ frustration with the removal of flex wednesdays, as well as late starts. These programs were

beloved by students because it allowed them to sleep more, and catch up on work. A study by the National Institute of Mental Health shows that teens’ melatonin levels get higher later in the night compared to preteens, and they do not feel sleepy until later in the day. The current schedule treats 12th graders the same as 5th graders, but there are clear biological differences that this schedule doesn’t seem to acknowledge.

Unlike the spring of 2020, this year’s students had a full class structure with a planned out schedule. This was extremely helpful, and provided much better academic support and communication. This was absent during that first spring semester. It is extremely hard, however, to sit in front of a computer for six hours on end. I sometimes found my eyes would be bloodshot and my head would hurt, but I understood that if students were to look away they might miss important information during the lesson. The Flex Wednesday program was supposed to address this problem by offering a break for students, but we still received assignments. This would usually keep us online for an hour or more. While it totalled less than six hours of work, it meant that some of us were still spending a lot of time online. This was bad for both physical and mental health. Ultimately the program wasn’t just removed, it was replaced by another six-hour school day, worsening the situation for online students. I believe that moving flex wednesdays was an altogether bad move, in my opinion, and while some may have looked at it as a loss of learning time, it provided the break that students needed.

Personally, this pandemic has been the low point of my life, and while I felt safer in remote school, it caused a lot of harm to my mental health. I felt extremely isolated from my friends and lonelier than ever. I was completely stuck in a rut that I’m still not fully out of.

I lost contact with a lot of people and many of the things I had been looking forward to

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# Prom-on-the-Hudson



## Farewells!

This year we are saying goodbye to a number of talented staff and administration members. We will miss them dearly, and wish them the best of luck in the future!

Teachers	Custodians	Teacher Aide	Administration
David Felberbaum	George Giannone		Valerie
Naomi Gilbert	Juan Villamar	Stephanie Hammond	Henning-Piedmonte
Sandy Lutzker	Calvin Williams		

## What Books Should Hastings Add to its Curriculum? *(continued from page 13)*

fectly into this niche while also being written by a Black woman and discussing themes of identity in ethnicity, religion, and womanhood. This book was not meant to “replace” other books commonly read during tenth grade, but rather to add to them.

Today, however, there are even greater difficulties in incorporating more books into the curriculum. The English department looked at a 30-point checklist, developed by the NYU Steinhardt School of Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, which was designed to help assess books in terms of their representation of marginalized groups. It includes a multitude of subcategories such as “Diversity of Characters, Decolonization/Power and Privilege, and Accurate Portrayals.” Within these categories, the teacher is provided short descriptions

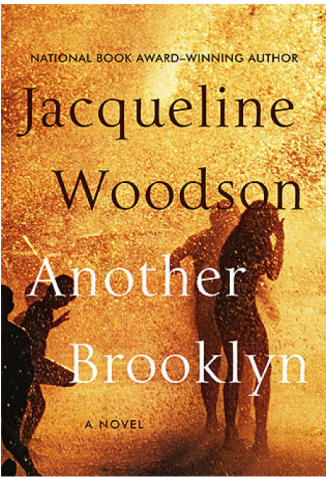
of different tasks a culturally responsive book might accomplish. vague (example).

Though it is important to all English teachers that new novels incorporate some of the 30 points, it is unrealistic to search for a novel that can appease the wishes of every person who will read it. This is the biggest issue for many teachers when choosing new books—finding those that achieve a balance, one of meeting enough wishes without being overly compromising or too ambitious.

Yet the question of the future curriculum English department still stands. Mr. Blum notes that there almost certainly will be something new in at least one classroom next year. This may promise the change some students wish to see but it cannot be expected to occur overnight. Mr. Scotch, for one, is searching for books that embody “Culturally responsive

curriculum, texts that respond to the moment, that interact with the readers, and books that raise significant issues.”

Today, there is a delicate balance between books that challenge a reader and books that are simply outdated. Choosing between texts is not a simple task. Both old and modern texts may carry the same valuable lessons. Pitting two books of different authors and time periods against one another is not the way to make this choice. The superiority of one novel versus another is personal and not as simple as grading them on the same scale. As Mr. Scotch put it, books “that respond to the moment [the state of our society], that interact with the readers, and that raise significant issues” matter in our world today.





# Kaylee Oppenheimer’s Letter To Self

*Continued from page 5*

I know seventh grade seems like a while ago, but the fear you have of the unknown won’t disappear. It’s innate, and the experiences you wish didn’t occur will actually help thread the fabric of the tapestry of who you are and who you will become. Explore every hole you stumble across and if you ever get scared of falling, remember that you’re at once descending and rising depending on your point-of-view.

When I was really young, I used to wish that I could close my eyes, snap my fingers, and everything in the world would be at peace. I used to strongly believe that I was a real-life prophet (Moses who?) and used to pray for people all the time, hoping that my words would fix everything. But our molecular world tends toward entropy and disorder, not perpetual stability and stillness. The world that you dream of exists, but words alone won’t find it. Be a protein catalyst in your own self-discovery, and make sure to have molecular chaperones that will help build you up. Keep dreaming, Kaylee. I’ll be cheering for you from UChicago (another spoiler!). You got this!!! - Kaylee

## Reflection on Online School (continued from page 14.)

(e.g. summer camp, the spring musical, etc.) were cancelled. I had never felt so hopeless and so alone in my life. I was surrounded by my family, but that honestly made it worse at times. It was restricting, and so the only time when I did not feel restricted was when I was alone. It was a spiral of terrible emotions and feelings, but I made it through with regular calls to my friends. Just talking made surviving quarantine a lot easier. Online school was not, and could never be, a platform for friendship. Having to go out of my way to keep up with friends in a time when I was feeling especially low and lacking energy made maintaining friendships extremely difficult. and was mentally taxing. Online school wasn’t as much the problem as not being at school with friends; this digital replacement just could not provide me with the environment I needed. There was no social space, and part of that is due to the restrictive nature of video calls. I lost contact with a lot of people who I relied on in school to. I think losing some academic time in the name of self-care would have been a net positive.

I would like to note that I am appreciative of the teachers and administration for all they have done to make sure that students were learning during this unprecedented situation. It was an extremely rare problem that the school could not have prepared for. All of my teachers have been consistent in their prescence and making sure that I, as a remote student, had the materials and knowledge I needed to succeed even during this time of hardship for all of us.

I believe that online school was a necessary evil in my mind. It was the safest and smartest option given the circumstances, but it could not provide the same support that in-person school does. Still, I think there are some valuable lessons we can learn from this experience to make HHS a better learning environment for students going forward. I’m optimistic that from this we will make more proactive changes to help students’ mental health as we begin to return to some degree of normalcy.

## 5 Questions; 4 Seniors (Continued from page 8)

by Tess Iosepovici  
*Contributing Writer*

Sofia’s favorite memory is her freshman year Biology class. She had Ms. Gizzi, who was fun and a very comforting teacher to have freshman year. Ms. Gizzi was welcoming to Sofia and her high school career.

Dahlia’s favorite memory is from the band, specifically the music trip to Boston her freshman year. She liked the music pieces she played and loved getting ready for performances and awards with her friends.

Who is the funniest teacher you've ever had?

The funniest teacher Sophie ever had was Mr. Marciano. He always cracks jokes and excels at bantering. He was really entertaining.

Jennifer says that Mr. Marciano is the funniest teacher she has ever had. His cheesy jokes and humor are very similar to her’s. He never fails to make her laugh.

The funniest teacher Sofia ever had was Mr. Lopez. He made comments and the class was very engaging. Overall, it was a funny eighty minutes.

The funniest teacher Dahlia ever had is Mr. Rubino. She says he is really funny and is always there to crack a joke.

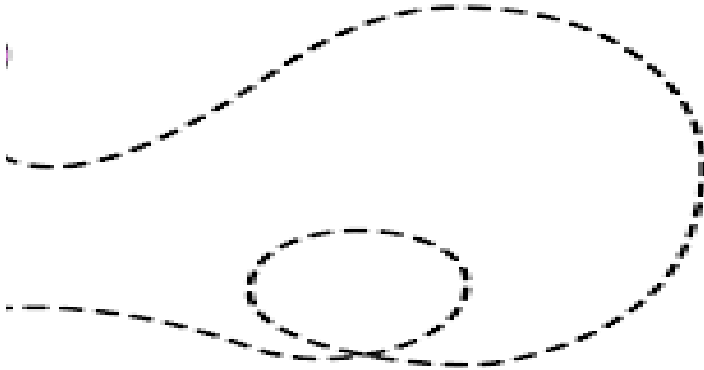
What are you looking forward to most in college?

Sophie is looking forward to meeting new people and fixating her classes in a way that they revolve around her. She wants to have a personal revolving study, and to take classes that she is actually interested in.

Jennifer would like to take her academics more seriously in college, and focus on classes that she finds deep interest in. She is excited to learn more and prioritize college academics.

Sofia is looking forward to still being able to see some familiar faces while walking around, but also is looking forward to seeing more people she doesn’t know. She’s excited to get out of the “Hastings bubble” and to have her own space, where no one knows all of her business.

Dahlia is looking forward to meeting new people. She loves Hastings and the tight knit community, but she is ready to make the leap into a larger community. She is also looking forward to taking classes that she is passionate for, with people that are also passionate for that class.



## Graduation at Different Levels (Continued from page 9)

Reflecting on the school they would be leaving, all four students said that they would miss the people. Mainiero stated, “I will miss having close relationships with my teachers.” Others also claimed that they would miss their friends who are in other classes or taking other paths. Some also menioned leaving behind beloved toys and playgrounds.

When asked what they were the most excited to leave behind, the responses varied from person to person, including busywork and bullies.

Graduation also brings regret. Many people regret not trying new things or joining new clubs. They wish they had taken advantage of the opportunities that might have introduced them to new aspects of life. Maneiro revisits one such regret. “I wish I had taken Latin . . . and tried harder as a Freshman.”

The graduates also reflected on the lessons they learned. The older interviewees hope to balance their social and academic life, and some of the younger ones will keep an open mind and be less judgmental about opportunities that have yet to come their way.





# Buzzer On The Back

## What is Behind the Yellow Jacket’s Name?

by Barney Smith  
*Contributing Writer*

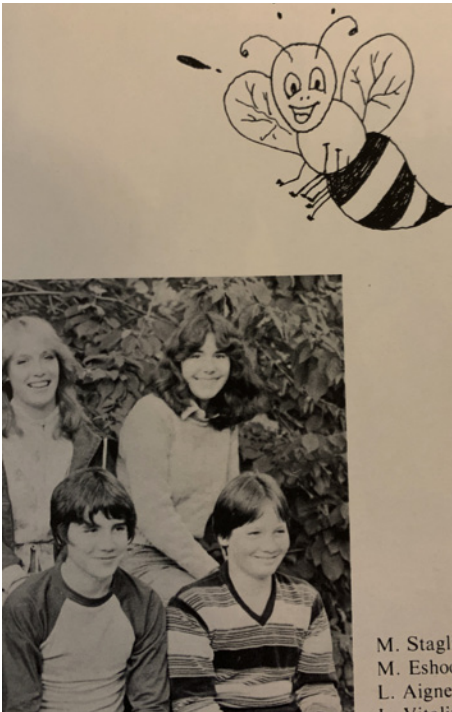
As a new student at Hastings High School, I find a lot of things here really cool: the cafeteria, the dark room, and of course, our mascot the Yellow Jacket. Ever since I got my year planner at the freshmen orientation, I’ve been dying to know what the Yellow Jacket’s name is! I asked many students and teachers and they all didn’t know either. I decided to enlist the help of the really cool people at the Hastings Historical Society, who were kind enough to dive deep into the old books and find out the truth for us!

### A Yellow Yearbook

Looking through the records from 1927 to the present, the Historical Society was able to infer that the 1940s really marked the first mentionings of Yellow Jackets in general. The 1943 school yearbook was called the “Yellow Jacket” because of its yellow cover. In 1945, the school basketball team became our first team to be called the Yellow Jackets. In 1947, the Yellow Jacket got a bigger role: the yearbook was absolutely full of Bee-references and included numerous illustrations of yellow jackets throughout the book. It also talks about Yellow Jack, who seems to be the first given name of our very own Yellow Jacket!

### From Yellow Jackets to “Buzzing” Bees

The Buzzer is turning 70 years old this year! The Buzzer first got its name in 1951. The 1950s were also a hot spot for yellow jacket appearances in the yearbooks. After the 1950s, there were not really many mentions of the yellow jacket in yearbooks again until 1982, when the Yellow Jacket adorned the front cover!



[Yellow Jacket sketch on a 1982 Yearbook Page, The Hastings Historical

### A Bee By Any Other Image?

There were many different variations of yellow jackets drawn over the years, and there still are some now: our school ID

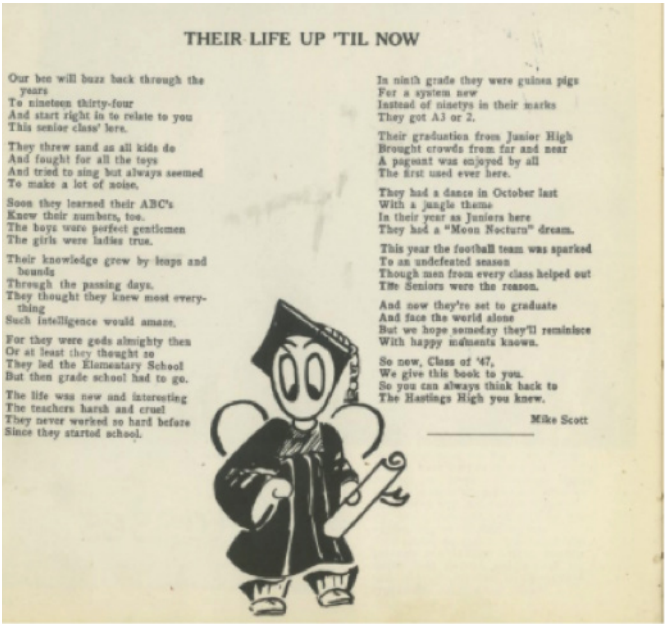
cards have an angrier yellow jacket with blue stripes, and the athletics teachers occasionally have a more muscular Yellow Jacket drawn on their uniforms. In the early 1990s, the Yellow Jacket was drawn to be angrier and more muscular. After the millenium, we saw the Yellow Jacket as we know it today on the yearbook cover! However, the athletic teams still have tough-looking ones.

Natalie Barry then told me that she had talked to Jeanne Newman, who was a photography teacher at HHS from 1984 to 2007; Jeanne Newman said that she is sure the yellow jacket image we have today is a stock image. After she reached out to a past yearbook advisor of the school, Brian McGuinness, we could confirm that it is a stock image. Here’s the funny thing: the college, Georgia Tech has our Yellow Jacket, but with a different colorway. I asked Mr. McCann, an athletic teacher, about how he feels about our mascot and its involvement on the team uniforms. He said, “I love the mascot, I really do... I think it’s nice that the school has a mascot and I love the design,” Mr. McCann also thought it might be cool if our mascot was a honey bee, because he is fond of them and owns a hive himself. Mr. McCann even showed me the Georgia Tech

mascot when we started talking about variations seen around the school. He also showed me that his school uniform polo has a more muscular Yellow Jacket (quite fitting for Physical Education). I then talked with the one and only Mr. Merchant, a photography teacher who attended Hastings High School himself in the 1990s and early 2000s. I asked him if the Yellow Jacket was a big thing when he was attending our school, and how he feels about our mascot in general. “When I was growing up, I can’t remember if Buzz played a big part in our pep rally, maybe we didn’t have a Buzz Costume.” He replied, ‘However, my kids always love seeing Buzz. Sometimes he makes appearances at Hillside’. Now after taking this wild ride with me. Which name do you like better, Yellow Jack or Buzz?



[1997 HHS yearbook, Hastings Historical Society]



[Left: “Yellow Jack”, 1947 HHS yearbook, photo taken and research done by Natalie Barry and Lisa Zimmerman from the Hastings Historical Society. Right: 1947 Yearbook page from the Hastings Alumni Association ]



[Thank you so much to the Hastings Historical Society: Natalie Barry and Lisa Zimmerman for researching everything and taking a deep dive into the old books for us! Thank you to Jeanne Newman and Brain McGuinness, Thank you Mr.Merchant and Mr.McCann. All photos credited from the Hastings Historical Society, the Hastings Alumni Association, one Ebay Listing and self taken photos]

