



The Talon

Gripping News



Volume VI

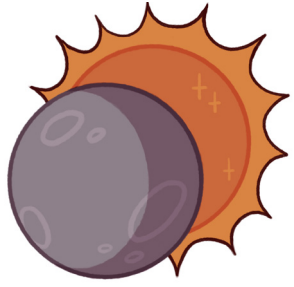
Issue III

Onteora High School

Boiceville, NY 12412

April 2024

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Illustrations courtesy of Lily Stoudt

Onteora Reconfigures in the Face of Declining Enrollment

By Abby Elliott, Sophomore, and *The Talon* Staff

	BENNETT	PHOENICIA	WDSTK	TOTAL ELEM.	MS/HS	DISTRICT
2004/05	355	213	404	972	1,139	2,111
2023/24	243	116	151	510	539	1,049

Statistics compiled by *The Talon* Staff from district enrollment data on www.onteora.k12.ny.us

Over the past five years, Onteora's Board of Education has explored the idea of reshaping the Onteora Central School District. In the last year, they finally reached their decision.

In an email dated November 3, 2023, Superintendent Victoria McClaren wrote to members of the Onteora Central School District informing them that a district reconfiguration was underway. In the opening of the letter, she shared these staggering statistics on enrollment: "In September of 2004, there were 2,111 students enrolled who were being served in four buildings. Today, while operating the same number of buildings, the District serves 1,056 students." With a student enrollment decline of 50% within the past 10 years, it has been decided that keeping Onteora's campus widespread across four buildings is no longer possible. This June, the Phoenicia Elementary School will wave goodbye to its final students.

By 2028, so too will Woodstock Elementary close its doors and the entire district will be taught on a centralized campus. Bennett will house grades K-5, Onteora Middle School 6-8, and Onteora High School 9-12.

How did we get here?
In May of 2019, the district commissioned school study consultant Kevin S. Baughman, Ph.D., to conduct the School Building Utilization and Grade Configuration Study. The Baughman Report was submitted to the Board in December, 2019, and enumerated six potential district configuration scenarios, listing the benefits and concerns of each scenario, including enrollment,

transportation, and fiscal impact. It would prove a central document in the coming years.

In addition to compiling past enrollment data, in this report, Dr. Baughman estimated that Onteora's enrollment will continue to decrease by a total of 38% over the next 20-year

to the schools." Indeed, this intense community investment endured through the next five years.

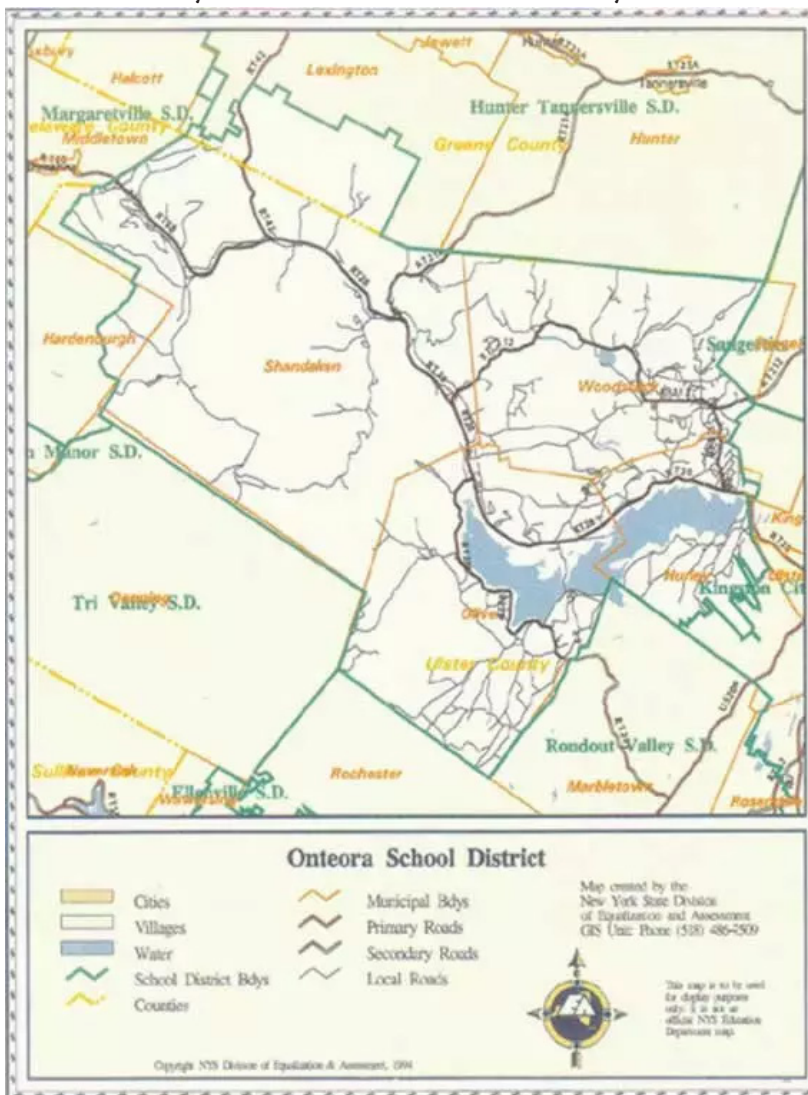
Discussions stalled during the covid years.

Then, in late 2022, the Board of Education resumed its discussions on reconfiguration. They returned

to the Baughman Report and created the Board Ad Hoc Committee. This committee decided to host three World Café events in order to discuss "a configuration plan that can adapt to declining enrollment." A world café is a type of structured discussion where participants converse around small tables, much like those in a café. Superintendent McClaren wrote in an email to the district that these meetings sought to have "balanced representation" by including teachers, non-teachers, faculty, administrators, parents, students, the PTA, the Booster Club, and various community members.

Finally, on May 2, 2023, the Board passed the following resolution:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District hereby reconfigures the elementary school buildings and grade levels as follows for the start of the 2024-2025 school year: (1) Phoenicia Elementary School will be closed at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 school year; (2) Woodstock Elementary School and Bennett Elementary School will each encompass grades K-5; and (3) the District will work toward a unified central campus by 2028. ("May 2023 Board Resolution")



Map of the Onteora School District, courtesy of www.onteora.k12.ny.us

period, a decline of approximately 196 students every 10 years. The report also mentions that "the majority of students attending Phoenicia are currently traveling by bus past the Bennett school." Therefore, the closing of Phoenicia will reduce the overall bus mileage of the district.

The study also summarized the results of a district-wide survey consisting of 560 responses from the Onteora community. The document notes, "the student and community response far exceeded what has been previously observed by the consultant in similar size districts. This could be indicative of a strong student and community connection

Letter From Your President

Dearest Onteorians,

I hope third quarter has treated you well!

Student Government is looking to host a mural contest to fill the white space near the gym entrance. Artists, keep an eye out for information coming soon!

If you are following the Outdoor Classroom Initiative, we have good news: Mr. Edelman has ordered seven more benches for the courtyard, and we hope to create one full classroom for the spring.

Seniors! Check out the Senior Section in the library. You can use your phones and enjoy some tea or hot chocolate. Also, make sure to order your caps and gowns. Graduation is right around the corner!

Cheers,
President Sophia Odató



Her Supreme Eminence, courtesy of *The Talon Staff*

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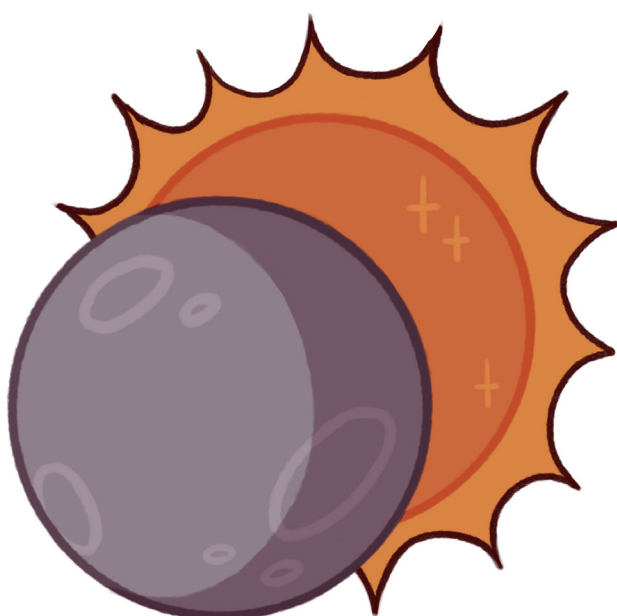
Did You Catch the Solar Eclipse?

By Melanie Milla, Junior

A total solar eclipse occurred on the afternoon of April 8, 2024, and its path was visible in the Catskills and throughout Ulster County, although the best visibility was northwest of us, in areas like Jamestown, Syracuse, and Lake Placid. The path of the eclipse covered a total of 11 states, including our own, and was the last total solar eclipse visible to the contiguous United States until 2044. Although there will be other annual and partial solar eclipses much sooner than that, the difference is that in a total solar eclipse, the moon completely covers the sun, creating nighttime-like darkness during the day.

Nearing the end of the third quarter, excitement about the total solar eclipse became a topic discussed by many members of the Onteora community, and curiosity arose about whether or not Onteora schools would close, as other school districts in the Hudson Valley opted for closure in response to concerns for student safety.

Many members of the community voiced their concerns and opinions on how to address the situation in terms of safety and significance. On March 20th, Superintendent Victoria McLaren sent out a district-wide email announcing the decision to prioritize student safety by employing an early dismissal on April 8th. According to McLaren, the district reviewed the path and timing of the eclipse with respect to the school day, and although talk of closing school had occurred, it was ultimately decided that the preservation of instructional time was more important, especially with the recent return from spring recess.



Courtesy of Lily Stoudt



Image of the 2024 eclipse, courtesy of *Creative Commons*

Superintendent McLaren provided the following statement to *The Talon* regarding the considerations and process for this unprecedented decision:

“ We reviewed the path and timing of the event with respect to our school day. I also had a conversation with an ophthalmologist regarding the potential for permanent retinal damage when viewing the eclipse without taking the proper precautions.

I wanted to ensure that we didn't put students in danger during this event. If the timing of the event had been different, we may have had the opportunity to work through it within the school day, but since the most impactful portion of the eclipse would be during our elementary dismissal and the time students are then on the bus on the way home, it appeared that we would be in a position to be unable to ensure that the students were taking the appropriate [eyecare] precautions. We also didn't want to put bus drivers in a position to be concerned that students might be looking at the eclipse without appropriate protections while they were driving and unable to ensure the children's safety.

We are always aware that our decisions can create a difficult situation for parents, but we cannot make our final decisions based solely on the impact on parents.

”

All in all, this rare occurrence presented a unique opportunity to learn more about astronomy and encouraged us to educate ourselves about rare and special astrological occurrences and events.

High School English Department Welcomes Student Teacher

By Shelby Buryk, Sophomore

I recently interviewed Ms. Scherman, the English department's new student teacher who has been observing and assisting with Ms. Loheide's classes. I asked her a few important questions regarding the rudiments of her experience in English education, to which she answered in very well-explained responses that are certainly worth reading.

What sparked your interest in education?

That's a really good question. I'm someone that's always been really passionate about social justice and activism since a young age, and I started thinking, "What career could help me keep that passion alive and do something more with it?" For me, English education is the perfect blend of my love for writing and my passion for social justice. Being able to teach students literature and help them analyze it would expand their empathy, especially when seeing different cultural views, which specifically helps to develop critical thinking skills.

Did your love for English begin before your love for education, or did they come together?

I think that my love for English came first, like a deep love. I was definitely interested in teaching since the beginning of high school, but I'd always felt specifically connected to words; I would write in the way that people doodle. I'd sketch little poems, or write down words that I thought were pretty in my notebook. I was a big journaler. Learning how to write essays in high school was like magic for me because I think that essays help me make sense of my opinions; they're a form of organization that works with the way that I think.

Writing always made sense to me, and sort of felt like home. I was an English major going into college, and then I started tutoring writing, taking education classes, and student teaching, during which I became just as in love with teaching as I was with writing. I think education is the most important way for you to make a change in the world.

What advice would you give to students, especially those who are interested in the same things as you currently are?

My advice would be that high school does not last forever. I had a hard time in high school, and even though I had natural abilities to write, school just wasn't easy for me. I was a huge procrastinator and totally not a homework-doer, so I sort of fell off in high school because of the immense stress and pressure that I'm sure a lot, if not most, of high schoolers feel. Whether you're going to college or not, whatever you do next is your choice; that's when you get to pursue the things that you're genuinely interested in. That's when you really get your personhood and your inspiration to do what you truly want to.

So, my advice to students is just to not get too stuck in the high-school-is-forever mindset, because it's totally not, and there's so much

more to look forward to. I'm a completely different student now that I'm in college rather than high school; I have much more motivation and joy when learning. To those who are specifically interested in English or education, I'd say to focus on balancing your time, make sure to leave room for relaxation and self care. If you don't find time to rest, your body will make that time for you. For people going into this field, I have to say that teaching can really drain you, so you'll have to make time for things that fill you with joy. If you're not making time for yourself, then you can't make time for other people. Your emotions and self love are what make you able to do this job.



Ms. Scherman, courtesy of The Talon Staff

Would you model your future classroom after your high school experience? If not, how would you do it differently?

My high school experience was certainly an inspiration of mine for teaching. In high school I struggled so severely with anxiety, and that really got a hold on me. So, my model for teaching would include being a friend to students whenever I can, giving them the space and time they need to prioritize their mental health.

I am not a huge homework advocate; I think class discussion, writing, art, and things of that nature are more engaging for students. When students enjoy being here, and they find it to be a safe place, that's when they are the most comfortable to learn. Also, I wasn't super close with my high school teachers, which was partially because I wasn't the best student, and that makes me want to be the type of teacher that any student can trust and go to with any issue.

I think that all students are amazing whether they are getting the best grades or not; they have so much insight and creativity in different ways.

I'd rather be an advocate for students than an advocate for the work that they have to do.

You mentioned that you'd also visited a middle school, and now you're at a high school. So, which of the two would you be more interested in teaching?

That's such a hard question. It was always my dream to teach high school, specifically 11th and 12th, because I love the content, like Shakespeare, and a deep analysis of the classics. I will say that I've learned that you can go a lot deeper in middle school than I initially thought. It's very important and influential to be able to reach students at a younger level.

In terms of my dreams as a teacher, being able to get really deep into the literature content would be more accessible to me in the higher grades; however, I would be really excited for any grade level, honestly. I'm just so excited to start.

If you were to think about your future career as a kid, was this something that you would've imagined yourself doing?

Oh, no. My child self was totally into fashion designers, veterinarians, singers. I was also super interested in law at some point, which definitely has a huge English or writing component and, again, that huge passion for change. But, when it really came down to it in high school, I was like, "Okay. I need to think about what I really want to do." I thought about the thing that I loved most, which was writing, and I wanted to make a career for myself that would incorporate that as much as possible, which, for me, was teaching. First, you have to study it and master it, and then it becomes a part of your life every day, which I think is lovely.

I knew that I wanted to work with people, and that I didn't want to do something where I'd be alone. I want to see smiles on peoples faces everyday. Teaching is so wonderful because you get to build relationships with not just students, but with your peers and teacher friends.

How long have you been at Onteora? What do you enjoy about it so far?

This is my first week, so I'm only four days in. Like I'd said, 11th and 12th were always my dream grades to teach. Ms. Loheide also has a mythology elective which has been super fun.

Also, Ms. Loheide as a cooperating teacher is a really wonderful role model and example of an English teacher; she has such a genuine care for not just the content, which she's an expert in, but also her students. I can see how she makes an effort to build sincere and personal relationships with them, which is something that's really important to me too. She's also extremely kind to me; she's been so warm and welcoming. She's helped me a lot already with starting to plan future units and lessons that I'll do. It's everything I want. I got so lucky.

I also think that the students are just great. They're really smart and clearly a very creative group, which I love to see. It inspires me a lot.

What's All This March Madness?

By Luc Millenson-Wilens, Sophomore

March Madness is the annual college basketball tournament to determine the best team in the country. The teams that made the final four last year were UConn, Miami FL, San Diego State, and Florida Atlantic University. The tournament starts with 68 teams, eventually reducing to 64, 32, 16, 8, 4, 2, and finally to 1.

It starts in late-March and ends in April. Last year, UConn won the whole thing. The way the tournament works is using a system of “seeding” decided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association Basketball

(NCAAB) board. The seeding system is designed to prevent very strong teams from playing each other in the very beginning of a tournament.

There are 32 conferences—collections of sports teams, usually in the same area. For example, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) consists of schools in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, South Carolina, and Missouri. Each conference has a tournament at the end of the season. If you win the conference tournament you automatically qualify for the NCAA tournament.

The other 36 teams are chosen by a committee based on regular season performance.

The reason March Madness is so popular and widely liked is because it is single elimination which makes everything more intense. Every single game is win-or-go-home

for the teams. People enjoy filling out a bracket of who they think will win with their friends and competing against them.

The seeding system works like this: in the first round, the four 1-seeds, who are considered the strongest teams, each play a 16-seed, considered the weakest. Meanwhile, each 2-seed plays a 15-seed, each 3-seed a 14-seed, and so on. In the second round, the winner of 1-16 plays the winner of 8-9, 2-15 plays 7-10, 3-14 plays 6-11, etc.

This year, the 1-seeds are UConn, Houston, Purdue, and North Carolina. As I am writing this, North Carolina and Houston have been knocked out, and UConn and Purdue are in the final four. The other two teams in the final four are NC State, an 11-seed who has made a great run knocking out the 2-seeded Marquette and the 4-seeded Duke on the way to



Courtesy of Creative Commons

the final, and 4-seeded Alabama, who knocked out 1-seeded North Carolina on the way to the final four.

Every year, there are teams who are consistently good. They are referred to as “Blue Bloods.” These include North Carolina, Duke, Kentucky, Villanova, Kansas, and UCLA. These schools almost always do well in the NCAA tournament and are usually favorites to win.


Overall, March Madness is a widely liked sports competition and a popular event to watch and compete with friends.





Courtesy of Creative Commons


Adam's Top Five Travel Destinations

By Adam Grady, Sophomore

 5.) Costa Rica: I went when I was 12, and it was an amazing experience. My family stayed at an eco-village next to the beach. There, I was able to build great friendships and contribute to the village. I was cooking, cleaning, and having an overall fun time. The food in Costa Rica is good. If you're looking to eat healthy, this place is for you. I have to say, my favorite part about Costa Rica is the beautiful beaches. I highly recommend going.

 4.) Iceland: I went to Iceland in March. It was a wonderful experience to see the northern lights and connect with some very kind people. The architecture was amazing, and the views while driving along the coast were very scenic. My favorite part of Iceland wasn't the northern lights; it was actually the lagoons. If you don't know what lagoons are, they're basically pools of natural thermal water from Iceland. It was a very unique and calming experience. I went to three different lagoons: Secret Lagoon, Blue Lagoon, and Sky Lagoon. My favorite was the Sky Lagoon because of the coastal location and its many great amenities. Another part of Iceland I really enjoyed was going to the ice caves. They were very beautiful with a smooth texture. The reason I didn't put it higher on the list is that it was very expensive, and there were not many vegetarian food options. That being said, it was a once-in-a-lifetime trip, and I will remember it my whole life.

 3.) Canada: I went to Canada twice, first when I was six and then again when I was eight. Canada is a spectacular country. The people were the kindest, warmest people I've met on my travels. I went to Montreal, and it felt like I was teleported to France. It was definitely a culture shock, but I got used to it and started to enjoy it. The food was great, but the winter was very harsh. I liked it because it felt festive, but it definitely wasn't for everyone. I also visited in the summer, and the country was also stunning. I was able to get a fun round of golf in and enjoy the views. Overall, I very much loved Canada for the people, the culture, and the views.

 2.) Greece: I went when I was 10 years old. Greece was one of most fun, beautiful countries I've been to. During my time in Greece, I was fortunate to visit Mykonos, Santorini, and Athens. Mykonos and Santorini are both coastal islands. I went swimming and really enjoyed it. I was even able to snorkel and take in the crisp, blue water. Athens emitted a different vibe; it was bustling, with streets full of energy and life. As a long-time basketball watcher, I was enthusiastic to learn that the Giannis Antetokounmpo Court was in the heart of Athens. I had to go play there. I went as soon as possible, and it was even more beautiful than I imagined. There was a huge mural in the center, and the court was in great condition. It was a fun experience, just like the trip as a whole. It was pleasure to try new foods and really soak in the atmosphere and views.

 1.) Italy: My trip to Italy took place when I was 11 years old. No words can describe how much I love this place. First is the people. They were so kind to me and my family. Then comes the views. They were breathtaking, and the most beautiful sights I've seen in my life. From the Tuscan countryside to the heart of Rome, Italy is not short of spectacular vistas. My favorite part of Italy was actually a small town overlooking the ocean called Cinque Terre. There was a beautiful soccer pitch next to the ocean, and I was lucky enough to play with some locals who were really friendly and had a great time. The food was amazing, especially the pasta. The amazing gelato was the cherry on top. So if you're going to Italy, I highly recommend going to Cinque Terre. As far as cities go, my favorite was Florence. The architecture was amazing, and the history was fascinating. The atmosphere was great, and the late night walks while eating gelato was one of the highlights of my trip. Italy is a fascinating country that I recommend you go to if you get a chance.

All in all, traveling has taught me a lot about myself and different cultures. It has put me out of my comfort zone and has opened my eyes to all the new possibilities the world has to offer.

Academic Pressure: A Student Perspective

By Talula Kirschner, Sophomore

Should school and classes be your number one stressor? Sometimes it is. But that should not be the norm. At the end of the day, the grades you generate don't define you as a person and are not more important than your health and well-being.

Say it's eleven o'clock; you've had a long day of school and after school activities, and you also have to finish an assignment. But you are EXHAUSTED. Is it better to stay up for this one school assignment than go to sleep? Unless it is worth a large percent of your grade, it's probably not that important. Your health should come first. It's more important to take care of yourself than to push yourself to the brink for a grade.

Some people push themselves extremely hard in high school, and even though there are consequences to their well-being for this, they believe that it's worth it. But being unhealthy or suffering from school is not cool and does not make you smarter than the people who don't do that. In fact, putting yourself before schoolwork and not letting it control your life is more respectable.

Part of what school should teach you, besides the content, is how to balance your life and prioritize important things. School is usually a 14–18-year-old's most prevalent and cardinal event. And it should be taken seriously because it does matter, and it affects your life in a lot of ways. Putting in effort is necessary, but too much can start to hurt your person.

There's a fine line between being academic and being reckless with your health. Stress can do more damage than you might think, so being able to manage and control it is vital. And a good night's sleep of at least eight hours can make all the difference in your day. Overall, we need to stop encouraging unhealthy habits and start promoting ways to balance your schoolwork, other activities, and wellness. Because that truly is the most important thing.



Illustration courtesy of Lily Stoult

Who's in Charge of the Chargers?

By Caleb Frank, Senior

The current lynchpin of electric vehicle ownership is the public charging infrastructure. The majority of charging for most owners is done at their homes, in units attached to either a driveway or a garage. However, when they go on longer trips, those owners are forced to rely on public infrastructure.

Oftentimes, these third-party installed charging units struggle with uptime rates (the amount of time a charger is functional compared to the time it is in need of repair), as well as ease of usage. This is a far greater issue for owners of CCS EVs, which refers to the majority of non-Tesla EVs, than for owners of NACS EVs, which refers to Tesla EVs. Because Tesla's network is installed and maintained by Tesla itself, they have horizontally integrated the charging process—controlling everything from the charging car and the charger itself to the software both pieces are using to communicate with each other. This has led to industry-leading reliability rates. However, for CCS (non-Tesla) owners the situation is very different. Other automakers do not have their own charging networks like Tesla does. Instead, they rely on third-party networks like Electrify America and EVGo. Though many automakers invest in and fund these networks, they do not control them or have any ability to improve their reliability. This leads to low uptime rates, sometimes as low as 60%, and a general inability for a driver to completely rely on a station to work.

One of the biggest reasons car buyers decide against an EV is the large learning curve such a novel car requires. The largest part of this learning curve is public charging. Not only do trips have to be planned around charging in a different way than in gas vehicles, but an

EV driver must also be well versed in trouble shooting methods if and when something goes wrong. Because so much of this process is done through apps, this learning curve is maximized for older drivers or those less familiar with technology. In total, making the switch to electric requires a lot of education and familiarity with technology, a difficult step for many. The prevalence of unreliable chargers makes this switch that much more difficult, ensuring decreased adoption.



Courtesy of Creative Commons

Another key factor regarding public charging is accessibility. If you have access to a private charger at your home, the burden of unreliability at public stations is greatly eased because the majority of your charges will be done at a charger you know is working and always available. However, this requires having either a garage or a driveway, as well as the upfront funds to pay for the unit and the installation. Those in urban areas or those without a place to put a home charger are forced to rely on public infrastructure regularly. This

in turn means that the negative experiences of this situation are magnified for some EV owners more than others, which then further harms the accessibility of the technology for many prospective buyers.

If there is a strong need for reliable chargers that every driver, Tesla and non-Tesla alike, can use, what can be done to achieve this? One of the key steps is already being done—the opening of Tesla's network. Their network has, up until a few weeks ago, been used exclusively by Tesla owners, but it is currently being opened to other automakers one by one starting with Ford. This will continue for many automakers to come until the vast majority of EVs can charge using Tesla's network through an adapter. However, it is necessary for other networks to be equally reliable to avoid concentration of power and data in the hands of one company. One of the biggest ways to improve reliability is to replace older units. These units were installed before mass EV adoption and were not engineered for frequent usage. As usage increases, these units are breaking more often and slowing down their maximum speeds. Many third-party networks are in the process of improving reliability by updating and retrofitting old installations with newer stations better engineered for constant use.

In general, as with all technologies, charging infrastructure will improve as adoption rises. However, it is very important to promote accessibility and a minimized learning curve by focusing efforts in upgrading and improving the system as quickly as possible. As with many novel technologies, EVs are a difficult switch to make and often available to some more than others. Prompting upgraded public charging infrastructure will be a key step in opening a more sustainable transit method to more people.

Botanical Murders: The Umbrella Assassination

By Charlie Smith, Sophomore

In the first issue, I wrote about the more lethal inhabitants of nature, their traits, toxicity, and modern uses. As I've stated before, poisons have never failed to intrigue me. Nevertheless, I am perfectly sane. In this issue, I'd like to bring light to one of the infamous assassinations of the Cold War: "The Umbrella Assassination." If you're someone who's into true crime, I think you will find the case as interesting as I did.

The poison used in the assassination is called ricin—a natural toxin found in the seeds of the castor bean plant. It can come in many different forms, such as a powder, mist, or pellets. It is 6,000 times more poisonous than cyanide. Ricin works by getting inside your cells, then preventing them from making proteins your body needs to survive. Without these proteins, cells die. Death can occur in as little as 36 hours, depending on dosage and method of exposure. The symptoms of ricin poisoning may vary depending on how it enters the body. For example, someone who inhaled it may experience different symptoms than someone who swallowed it.

Ricin was the suspected toxin used in the murder of a man named Georgi Markov. In his case, a small metal ball was lodged in the back of his leg. It was so small, the person examining it dropped it multiple times and was sent scrambling desperately on the floor trying to find it. Smaller than the size of a pinhead, it was almost completely missed during the autopsy. The pellet was inserted into his leg via a poisoned umbrella, in broad daylight. Markov was waiting for a bus on the Waterloo bridge, when he was jabbed in his right thigh by an umbrella from a stranger passing by. It wasn't until much later, after he called his family doctor, that he noticed the small, swollen spot on his thigh. He died on September 11, 1978, at 10:50 a.m., most likely from kidney failure and acute septicemia—the clinical term for blood poisoning.

The assassin responsible for his death still remains unknown, though investigators (along with the British government) have their suspicions due to Markov's messy past with the

Bulgarian government. Whether or not this was a case of political assassination is still a mystery, but it was definitely considered such. Before he immigrated to the UK, Markov was a playwright and novelist in Bulgaria. He also had close

elites as well as the government caused him to flee to Italy in 1969, then to the UK in 1970. Two years later, he was tried for desertion and sentenced to six and a half years in prison.

For the remainder of his life, Markov continued to live in the UK and after starting his career working for the BBC, as well as working for Radio Free Europe (RFE). His work with the RFE is what many believe to be the most probable reason for his assassination. As more Bulgarian writers started to broadcast for RFE, they rose to prominence among the Bulgarian public. These new authors provided more insight on the day to day life of Bulgarian elites, as well as their secrets. They directly countered official Bulgarian media, which made tensions higher as they began to gain more influence.

Around the same time of Markov's murder, another RFE journalist was attacked in a very similar manner. While investigating Markov's murder, investigators were able to interview Vladimir Kostov—the victim of the second attack. Kostov said he heard the crack of an airgun, then felt a sting in his back. An incredibly small metal ball was surgically removed from his back, the same kind of object that had been found in Markov's body during autopsy. It was at that point when investigators started connecting the dots. Ricin was said to be one of the supposed murder weapons, along with the umbrella, but even that wasn't known for certain. The conclusion was made solely by process of elimination based on Markov's symptoms. They did end up testing it on a pig to see if it would exhibit similar symptoms to Markov, which it did. Even so, nobody ever really knew for sure.

Most of the factors involving the assassination still remain unknown, and to be honest, it was a complete mystery from the start. There was far too little evidence for anyone to explicitly blame the Bulgarian government, or really anyone for that matter. Most of the evidence was solely circumstantial, so there isn't much that could have been done. It's cases like these that are just as interesting as they are unsettling.



Courtesy of Charlie Smith

connections to the prime minister of Bulgaria, even having access to top-secret documents which he used to write his screenplays. Unfortunately, many thought his writing was controversial, to say the least. The Bulgarian government wasn't pleased with the satirical, sarcastic tone that many of his plays brought to the stage. The outrage he was receiving from

The Sweet Spot: Brownie Recipe

By Talula Kirschner, Sophomore

Brownies are a simple, staple dessert that everyone should get to enjoy. This recipe makes the richest, chewiest, fudgiest brownies in just one pot. Sorry to those who like cakey brownies. This family recipe has never let us down, whether it's for a last-minute bake sale, party, or brownie sundae; they are always a hit, and there are no crumbs left.

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and chocolate completely. Then remove from the heat, and add the sugar. Next the vanilla and then the eggs. When you add the eggs, mix for at least a minute to ensure they're fully combined. Lastly add the flour and walnuts. Line a square pan with parchment or grease with butter, and pour the batter into it. Bake for about 45 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Enjoy!



Courtesy of Creative Commons

INGREDIENTS

1 cup butter; melted
4 oz unsweetened bakers' chocolate
2 cups granulated sugar
1 ½ tsp vanilla extract
2 eggs
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup walnuts (optional)

Beloved Cartoon Gets its Second Live-Action Adaptation

By Harsimran Kaur, Sophomore

I have come to the realization that I have watched a lot of television in my 16 years of living. I am drawn to TV-shows more than movies, mostly because I grow attached to the characters I watch on the screen and don't want to let go of them, and movies are just way too short for me. I tend to get obsessed with shows and make them my whole personality for a while until I get bored of them and move on to the next. But *Avatar: The Last Airbender* has had a hold on me like a parasite since the first time I watched it when I was around eight or nine. No matter how many times I rewatch the show, I will never get bored of it.

Recently, *Avatar: The Last Airbender* was made into a eight-episode live-action series by Netflix that came out on February 22. This live-action series stars Gordon Cormier as Avatar Aang, Kiawentiio Tarbell as Katara, Ian Ousley as Sokka, and Dallas Liu as Prince Zuko.

As someone who absolutely loved the 2005 animated series, I had extremely high standards for this adaptation, and I wasn't that disappointed. It stuck to most of the major plot points in the first season of the show and did a very good job adhering to the original. The show is definitely good when compared to the absolutely horrendous, whitewashed 2010 movie which had horrible casting and CGI that was just not it. The movie just sucked, and it didn't help that a whole 22-episode

season was supposed to be covered in an hour and 43 minutes.

If you do not know anything

Airbender named Aang, who was frozen in ice for 100 years with his sky-bison Appa while the rest of



Courtesy of Creative Commons

about *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, you're missing out on one of the best shows ever. *Avatar: The Last Airbender* follows the Avatar, an

the airbenders were wiped out by the Fire Nation. The Avatar is the master of all four elements rather than just one like the rest of the

benders and is reincarnated in the Avatar Cycle. Each lifetime, the Avatar is reborn into one of the four elements, cycling through fire, then air, water, earth, and then starting again with fire. The current avatar, Aang, was found by Sokka and Katara, and they help him with his journey of learning the four types of bending. Aang is the only Airbender left in the world since the Fire Nation wiped them all out. This show centers on friendship, found family, and second chances.

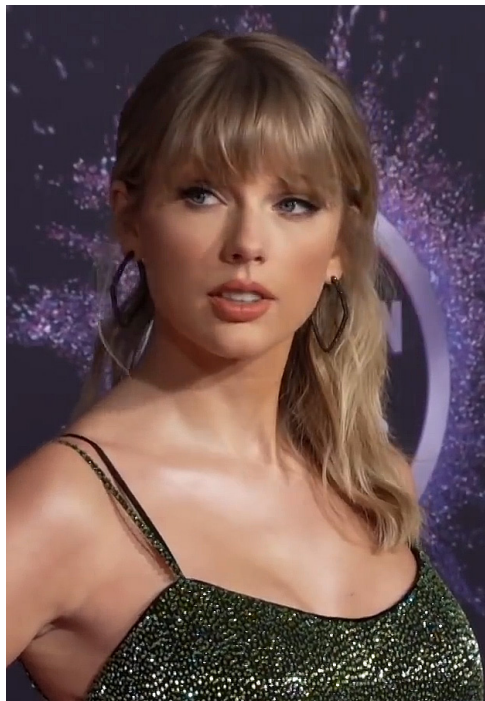
All of the main characters in the show are aged from 12 to 16. Aang, who is supposed to save the world from the war, is only 12 years old (well, technically 112). A fan favorite and the oldest of Team Avatar, Zuko is the scarred and banished prince of the Fire Nation with severe family issues, searching high and low for the avatar hoping to have his honor restored to him. Sokka and Katara travel around the world helping Aang master the other elements, so he can do his duty to restore balance to the world by defeating the Fire Lord, the main villain of the series in charge of the war.

Overall, I would tell everyone to watch *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. It's an amazing show. Personally, I would recommend watching the original animated one first and then the live-action, so you can pick out the differences. I would give this live-action adaptation a million out of five, but I'm biased because this show was my childhood.

Why Are Some Football Fans Angry at Taylor Swift?

By Lucia McDonagh, Sophomore

Throughout this NFL season, all the focus has been on the Kelce brothers, and while they are talented, this attention is not exactly about their talent, but rather due to the blonde-haired, blue-eyed superstar in the stands. The typical American football player romance between Travis and Taylor has led to Travis in the crowd at many of Taylor's Eras Tour concerts and Taylor in the crowd at most of the Kansas City football games. These appearances, at heart just two people in a relationship supporting each other, have drawn a lot of negative attention from onlookers.



Courtesy of Creative Commons

When Travis goes to Taylor's concert, he does not experience any negative reactions from her fans. He is welcomed, called a good, supportive boyfriend. He trades friendship bracelets with other fans and enjoys himself. When Taylor supports Travis at his games, she gets booed and told she is "ruining football." This unfriendliness is the result of the cameras constantly flashing to Taylor to see her reactions during the game. While Taylor cannot control the cameras, she still gets booed and hated for it.

Swifties (Taylor Swift fans) that come to Travis's games also

get hate just sitting in the stands watching the game. These reactions so clearly embody a problem in society. People can't stand a happy, confident woman being so powerful.

Through winter, the news has been cluttered with football fans expressing their unwanted opinions on Taylor and her one or two minutes of screen time per game. Republicans have brought her into politics, something they previously told her to "stay out of." These politicians were convinced that Taylor and Travis would publicly support Biden at a big football game. They had no evidence to back up these accusations, yet they kept spreading them, gathering Taylor more undeserved hate among American Republicans.

Through all of this, Taylor has basically remained unfazed, used to this kind of senseless hate, just because people feel the need to express negative opinions. No matter what she does, people react, making up reasons to hate her, to tear her down, revealing massive problems in our society.



Courtesy of Creative Commons

Horoscopes

By Delilah Lieberman, Sophomore



ARIES (Mar. 21–Apr. 19)

Aries, oh Aries, you have a lot to hold.
Clean out your backpack—I can smell the mold!
When's the last time you looked through that
thing?
How many binders do you really need to bring!?



LEO (Jul. 23–Aug. 22)

Leos, your time to shine is now,
So get on that stage, and take a big bow.
You truly deserve the good things to come,
So enjoy the warm weather—go on a run!



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21)

Roses are red.
Violets are blue.
You should wash your hands
If you don't want the flu.



TAURUS (Apr. 20–May 20)

There once was a sign called taurus.
Its outfits were as lovely as a chorus!
If you're a taurus, I'm talking about you.
Keep wearing the best outfits, as you do.



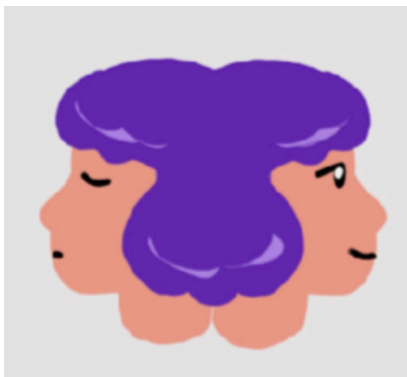
VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sep. 22)

Virgos, you've done it again:
You're on your phone scrolling when you
should grab paper and a pen.
You really have to start doing your homework,
So stop your instagram stalking—no need to
lurk!



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19)

The weathers getting warmer, and so are your
vibes,
So get on the dance floor, and show us your
jives.
Don't be afraid to be your true self,
But don't get cocky, or consumed by your
wealth.



GEMINI (May 21–Jun. 20)

As spring arises so does stress,
But I can smell good things—I sense success.
You may be in a school related slump,
But you're doing great—you deserve a fist
bump.



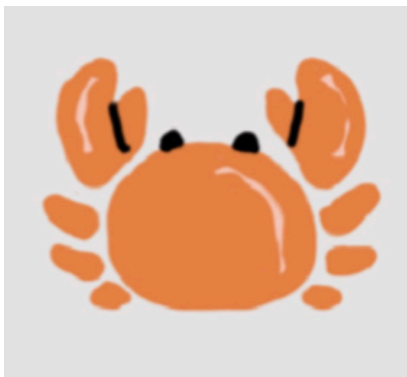
LIBRA (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Libras, there can be more than one winner.
Let others have the spotlight, and go eat your
dinner.
You can share the attention, once in a while.
I truly think once you step back, it'll make you
smile.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18)

Aquarius, I know times are good.
You've worked at life the best you could.
Make sure to take some time to relax,
And listen closely to the facts.



CANCER (Jun. 21–Jul. 22)

Cancers, try not to put yourself in drama,
And reread your essays—implement those
commas!
Perhaps your lack of useful punctuation
Is caused by the interruptive conversations!



SCORPIO (Oct. 23–Nov. 21)

Scorpios, you may be unlucky.
Stop opening umbrellas inside—it's not funny.
You should do things that make you feel good,
Or practice meditation—there's no need to stay
put!



PISCES (Feb. 19–Mar. 20)

The roads ahead are long and narrow.
You'll feel like you're doing archery without an
arrow.
But all you need is right in front of you,
So hold your head high and look for the clues.

AP SEARCH

By Virginia Potter, Senior

Words

- | | |
|----------|--------------|
| PSYCH | ART HISTORY |
| CHEM | FRENCH |
| CALC | WORLD |
| HUG | ECON |
| COMP SCI | ITALIAN |
| EURO | GERMAN |
| APUSH | JAPANESE |
| BIO | SPANISH |
| APES | CHINESE |
| LANG | SEMINAR |
| LIT | RESEARCH |
| GOV | MUSIC THEORY |
| STATS | LATIN |
| PHYSICS | |



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Onteora Teachers Crossword

By Samatha Navarro, Sophomore

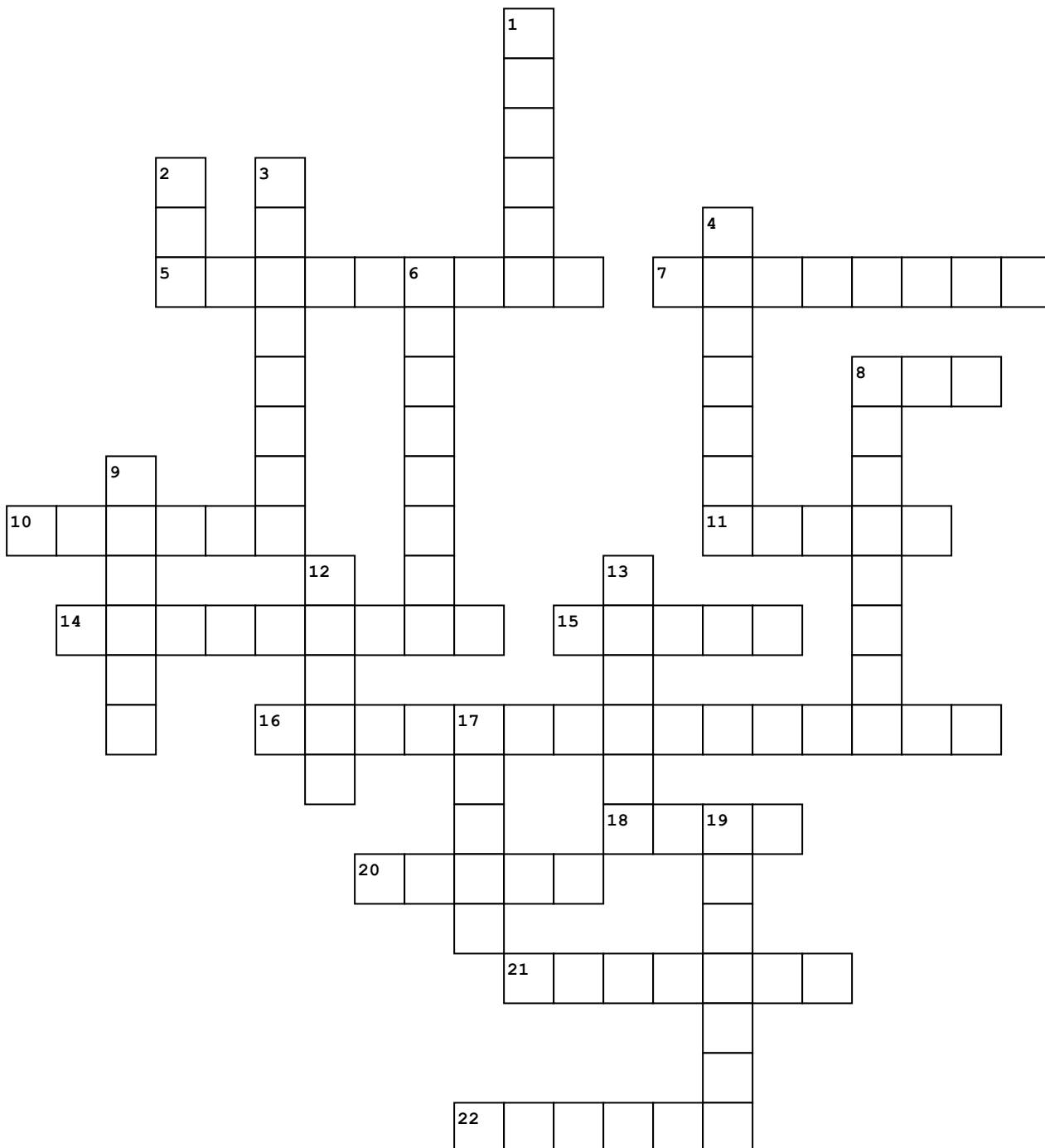
Clues

ACROSS

- 5. The sub, basically a teacher
- 7. Makes the yearbook happen
- 8. Shares a name with a candy dispenser
- 10. Has a love for moles
- 11. This guidance counselor speaks Spanish
- 14. Most fabulously accessorized mathematician
- 15. This guidance counselor speaks French
- 16. This wildy athletic thrill-seeking administrator climbed Mount Everest
- 18. Often bikes to work
- 20. Gives out Life Savers®
- 21. Cinephile teacher who does not have a favorite movie
- 22. Do not challenge this teacher to a push-up contest

DOWN

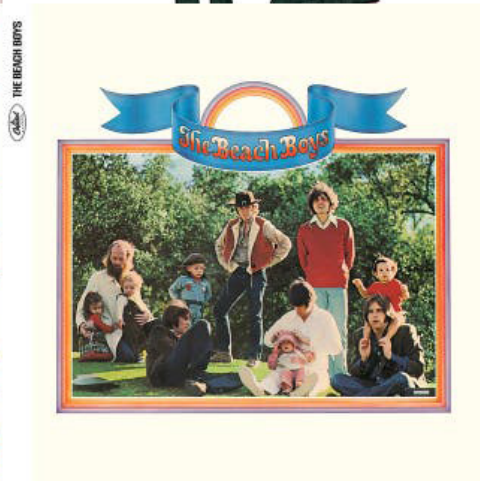
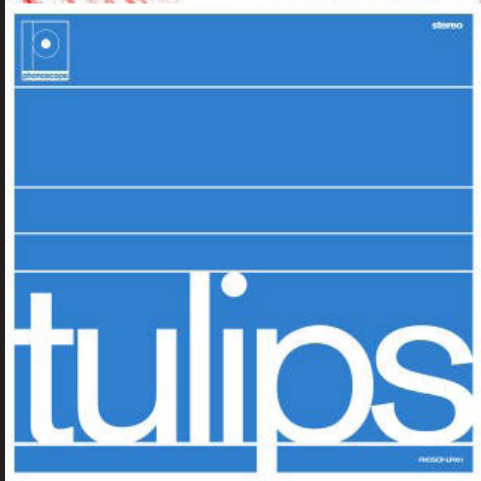
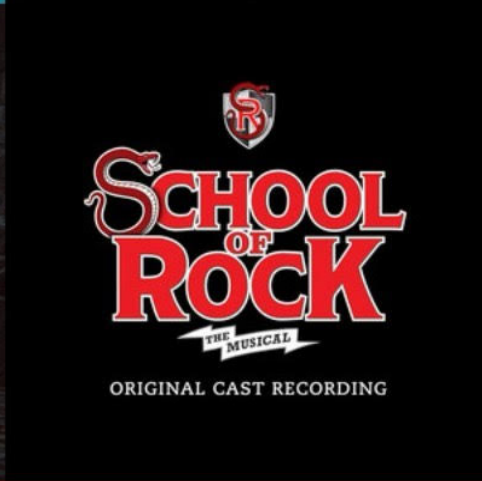
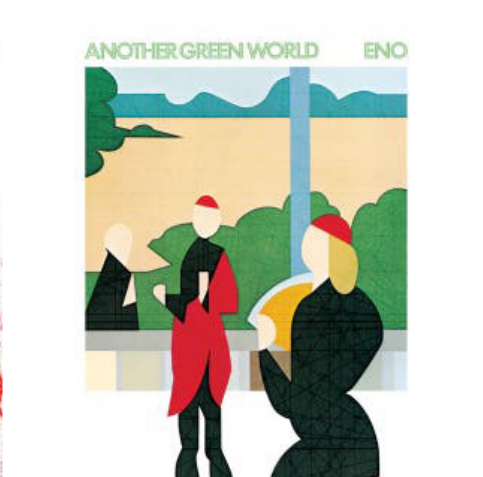
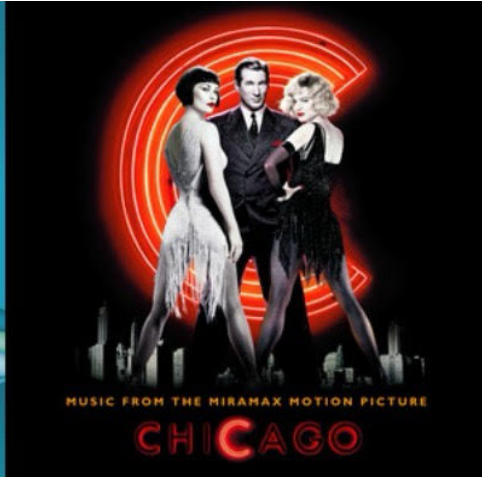
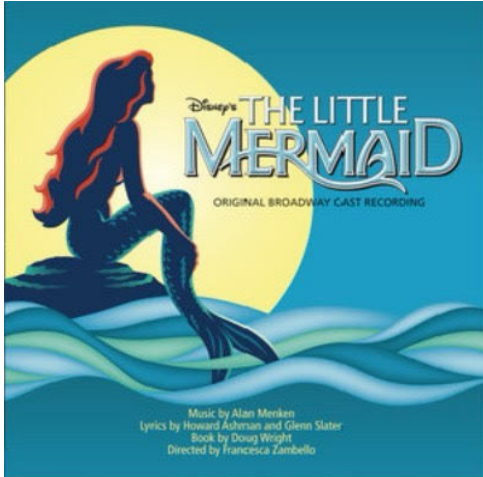
- 1. Esta maestra acaba de servir como jurado.
- 2. TORTOISE CROSSING! Proceed with caution!
- 3. Reduce/Reuse/Recycle yogurt cups
- 4. Deadhead
- 6. "Kill two stones with one bird"
- 8. Hall monitor most likely to harangue you for a pass
- 9. "Shake your head yes"
- 12. Monitor who gets you home safe, first name
- 13. Harvard Model Teacher
- 17. Teacher with doppelganger daughter
- 19. This soon-to-be retiree won't mark you late if you bring coffee



Playlists

By Ada Helm, Senior

By Shelby Buryk, Sophomore



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ATTENTION STUDENTS!

Do you like to write? Have something to share with the Onteora community? Just want somewhere to hang out after school? Join The Talon! Meetings are Wednesdays in Ms. Conroy's room (Room 117). Hope to see you there!

Founder of *The Talon* Goes Far!

The Talon sends many congratulations to our founder and first editor-in-chief, Ben Johansen, '19, for his journalistic achievements as a political writer for *Politico*. Ben attended his first White House press briefing on April 4th. Ben's questions to White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre were powerful and garnered a lengthy response. Thanks for continuing your work as a role model for us all!



Ben outside the White House, courtesy of Elaine Conroy

