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The Cougar Chronicle

The Student Newspaper of Haddam-Killingworth High School

District Creating Plan for High School Building

By Caroline Ignatuk

Haddam-Killingworth High School was constructed in 1976. Due to the age and condition of HK, major reconstruction must be done to maintain modern and adequate learning, as well as to provide mandated access under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) . A master plan for the school is currently being discussed by the board of education and community.



A rooftop view of Haddam-Killingworth High School.
(image courtesy of RSD 17)

"It is estimated that more than $100 million is needed to improve them from fair or poor to 'good' condition, not including updates to learning spaces," according to a June 3 *HK Now* article.

The aging design is increasingly costly to maintain. To that end, Regional School District 17 has hosted a number of community meetings to discuss a master plan being created for the building. The next meeting was scheduled for Nov. 16.

The master plan will be created to "repair, rebuild, or replace the school building, and hopefully will provide the students with supportive educational learning experiences and spaces."

A subcommittee of the board of education has been meeting regularly to discuss issues related to the school. Recently, a survey was conducted among hundreds from the community about the conditions of the school. Based on this information, it became clear that action had to be taken.

The board is working with Tecton Architects to investigate and assess the high school's functionality.

Students are encouraged to participate in this decision by listening to the board of education on Nov. 16 and offering their first-hand experiences in the building.

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***News Analysis*:**

Opinions Vary on New E-Hall Passes

By Caitlin Kukta

The E-hall pass system was implemented in 2022 to replace the Google form sign-out system that was introduced during Covid. The pass system began as digital passes that were created on the school-issued Chromebooks or student phones to be approved by the teacher.

This year the formatting has changed significantly. Now every classroom has a “kiosk,” or a computer set up in the classroom permanently on which a student requests a pass and then receives approval to leave the room. These are designed to track a student's movement from a classroom: where they go, for how long, and how often they leave that class.

There are mixed feelings about the E-hall pass system. Most students report the system to be “time-consuming” and “annoying.”

Junior Grace Miller said, “I don't like it because it is inconvenient; it takes up more time where I could just be where I need to be.” Statements like this seem to be the consensus for the students I spoke with, the majority being that the hall pass system is simply just “annoying.”

Junior Chase Lenart said the system is a “waste of money and typical hall passes would be just as useful."

As a student, I agree the passes can be annoying at times, but I also understand that if different systems had worked in the past then we would not be using this one.

When teachers are asked the same question, the responses are quite different. Most teachers enjoy the new “ease” of the online pass.

Erika Babjack, the school's child development teacher, said, "I think it is a work in progress that will be efficient once we have practice and work out the kinks. I really actually do like it. Being able to digitally track our students is more efficient than paper and pencil, which does not actually get looked at or used.”

However, there are times where the Chromebooks don't work and teachers have to take time to fix the issue. I have noticed that in many classes the computers are sometimes difficult to use and take a long time to load and when in a hurry to get where you need to go, it can be frustrating and many will just leave without signing out.

There are also some teachers who can't use it due to user error in the moment. So this does call into question the overall accuracy of the data.

Assistant Principal Adam Apicella said, "The data is as reliable as we make it.” Having something that follows the honor system in a school with around 500 teenagers is never 100% reliable, he added, but when the hall pass system is used symbiotically with the cameras in the school, administrators can find information that the hall passes or cameras alone could not, such as vandalism in the bathrooms.

I also asked the assistant principal if the passes improved instructional time. “For the most part, yes," said Mr. Apicella. Teachers are more aware of students that leave their class, he added, so it's beneficial for figuring out things that happen during class time without interrupting instruction.

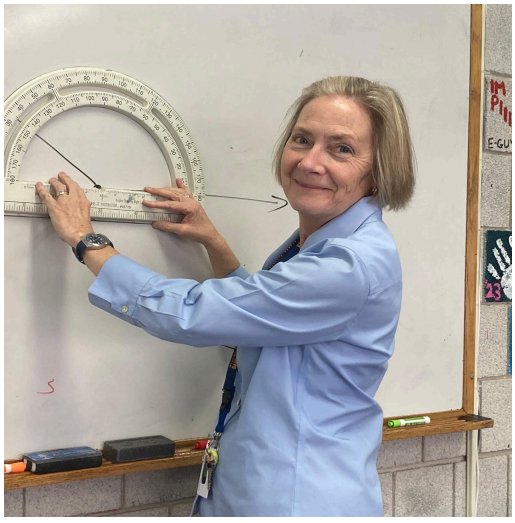
"There is no perfect way to solve this issue, but it gets better as the year goes on,” he concluded.

Love for Teaching Draws Math Teacher to HK

By Chloe Oboma

When walking down the halls of HK, one might stumble upon a fashionable, optimistic, and charismatic teacher. This teacher is none other than Mrs. Kelly Ryan, the new addition to the math department who teaches geometry.

Mrs. Ryan taught for 38 years and retired, but she loved teaching so much she decided it was time to come of retirement



Mrs. Kelly Ryan
(photo by Chloe O.)

and do what she loved best. She said, “I love teaching. I'm teaching because it's what I like to do.”

Out of all the schools now needing teachers, why HK? Mrs. Ryan said she looked at many schools and thought HK was the best, noting how the staff is extremely supportive. The math department, in particular, is very helpful and she said she is very happy she decided to work here.

Mrs. Ryan enjoys working in a small school because she can recognize everyone's face in the halls, an important point for her because she is passionate about teaching her students: “My students are hard workers and consistent.”

Drama Players Present "Vintage Hitchcock"

By Sami Pach

The HK Drama Players presented their fall play on Nov. 3-4. The play performed was "A Vintage Hitchcock: A Live Radio Play," written by Joe Landry.

Full of spies, suspense, murder, and romance, the series of three Alfred Hitchcock stories – "The Lodger," "Sabotage," and "39 Steps" – the show was a hit with all audience members. The show was presented to the audience in the style of a 1940s live radio broadcast, including foley sound effects and a musical score performed by HK’s own crew.

The show had a great turnout and the drama club is excited to move on to their next endeavors, starting with the senior-directed, one-act plays.

In the spring, the club will be presenting the hit musical "Bye Bye Birdie." Auditions will be on Feb. 12. Everyone is welcome to come and show their talents. No specific skills in singing are required to participate in a musical – anyone committed to "making the show amazing" is invited.

"Swifties" Enjoy Singer's New Concert Film

By Sydney Wrinn

Taylor Swift's film, “The Eras Tour,” premiered Oct.13, attracting both fans who did not see her recent concert in person

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and those who just wanted to relive it.

The film wasn't just all songs, as she would stop and explain what each song meant to her and why it belonged in her movie. People of all ages are coming together to watch and experience what fans call a magical experience.

HK Swiftie Addison Burr states, "It was 100% worth it to see the movie." However, some people disagreed, saying it was "unnecessary."

People are encouraged to get up during the film to dance and sing, while others can enjoy the show from their theater seats just as much.

Taylor Swift wanted to offer this movie to allow fans who weren't so lucky to experience what others did.

Cross Country and Soccer Post Winning Campaigns

By Reagan Aronson

Here's an update of several successful HK fall sports campaigns:

Girls' Soccer

The HK girls' soccer had a successful regular season with a record of 9-3-4. The team finished 4th overall in the Shoreline Conference, but lost to Portland, 1-0, in the first round of the tournament.

The team defeated Abbott Tech, 7-0, in the first round of states. Suffield eliminated the team in the second round.

The team beat North Branford on Senior Night, Oct. 13, with all seniors – Leah Walton, Tulanh Criscoulo, Sammy Rumermin, Emmi Chellenback, and Mar Fulcher – scoring goals and senior goalie Laurenza posting a shutout.



Boys' Soccer

The HK boys' soccer team concluded a successful regular season, finishing 2nd in Shorelines at 12-2-1. The team earned a first-round bye in states and proceeded to defeat Coventry, 1-0, in round two, and Oxford, 3-0, in the quarterfinals. At press time, the team was slated to play Shepaug in the semi-finals.

Cross Country

HK's cross country teams had fantastic seasons, completing a first-place sweep in Shorelines on Oct 19. All the varsity runners hit personal records with Jack Cozean finishing 3rd in a time of 15:59.60 and Charlotte Behnke finishing 2nd with a time of 19:02.70.

Daniel McCourt finished 6th and Cozean 10th in Class SS states, as the boys' team finished 3rd overall. Six HK girls finished in top 20 at states, including Keira Sehl-Albert at #10. Overall, the girls finished 2nd in Class SS.

More Fall Sports in Next Edition!

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