



Sophomore Cole Gagnon playing in Volleyball Tournament hosted by the Class of 2027

## Talk of Change: The Facts behind Schedule Change for Next Year

By Jing Williams

One of the most contentious topics this school year has been the talk of changing the schedule for next year. Teachers and students alike have strong opinions, but for those who haven't heard much about it, Jody Chamberlain, the high school principal, announced in October that she was looking for a new schedule that would cause less time gaps between math and other core classes and that she was enlisting a "task force" called the Commodore Navigators to provide student input on the decision. Her statement to the Navigators reads that "Our current scheduling structure results in significant gaps in students' learning", especially in concern to mathematics, in which students can experience a six-twelve month gap. (See pg. 2)



**Seniors raise \$6400 for Wounded Warrior Project**  
They walked to Button Bay for this Walkathon Project (Pg. 6)



## FFA heads to National FFA convention

Many students have also competed in recent 4-H competitions (Pg 3)

## Index

Activities & Clubs..... 3-8  
 Photography.....5 & 13  
 Viewpoints...9-11 & 14-16  
 Games.....12

## Talk of Change

*(Continued from Front Page)*

Although it was not specified what exact schedule Chamberlin was looking into, the idea was to focus on year-long classes, likely in an A/B format. This traditionally looks like having eight classes all year long that switch every day. Chamberlin said in the October assembly that the Navigators would come up with three possible schedules she would then decide between sometime around Thanksgiving break.

The first Commodore Navigators meeting took place on October 25th open to anyone that was interested, including teachers. Around 25 students and 10 teachers showed up in what ended up being an intense meeting. Chamberlin presented evidence synthesized from ChatGPT to facilitate discussion which many students and faculty expressed concern about. One of these students was Connor Brogan who voiced his opinion that the “First ‘study’ was a meta-analysis of over 50 different studies, which found the results to be either inconclusive or invalid” and that the “Final source ‘Queen’ was a book ‘The Block Schedule Handbook’ and actively promotes the block schedule”. Many people asked questions during the meeting, at least four of them having to do with what math would look like under an A/B schedule, and questions as to what evidence pointed to gaps in learning. Chamberlin cited during the meeting that her evidence was largely anecdotal, but a group including Gabe Hamilton, director of learning, was working on compiling standardized testing and course grades to highlight certain trends that has now been released.

In a response to the heated meeting, Chamberlin called for smaller group meetings, and from that, 4 student groups and one adult group were formed.

DAILY SCHEDULE	Semester 1		Semester 2	
	A Day	B Day	A Day	B Day
8:00 – 8:20 (20)	Crew	Crew	Crew	Crew
8:25 – 9:40 (75)	Math 1	ELA 9	Math 1	ELA 9
9:45 – 11:00 (75)	Health	German 1	Adventure PE	German 1
11:00 – 11:40 (40)	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
11:40 – 12:55 (75)	Science 9	Science 9	Art Essentials	World Geo
1:00 – 2:15 (75)	STEM	CAD	World Geo	CAD
2:20 – 2:45 (25)	Compass	Compass	Compass	Compass
2:45 – 3:10 (25)	Compass	Compass	Compass	Compass

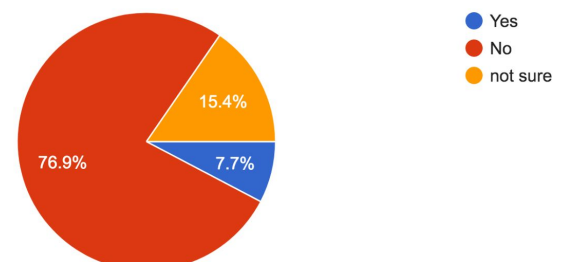
A Sample Combined A/B schedule from Jody Chamberlin

In a meeting last week with four students, they decided to put the “Combined” A/B schedule forward, a hybrid format where some courses, likely freshman and sophomore core classes, would be year long, while upper level courses would have the chance to be semester long, such as Math 3. Chamberlin says she now plans to take this schedule to the middle school principal, Colden Golann, who will see if there are any issues with the sharing of staff between middle school and high school. Other possibilities considered included a quarter schedule and an A/B schedule with “Skinny”, which are shorter class periods that would meet either everyday or every other day.

The current seniors had an A/B schedule their freshman year, during COVID, and responses to that experience have been mixed, as can be seen in the visual below, one of the questions from a survey sent out to the senior class from the newspaper editors. It is unclear how much COVID had an effect on this, and how things might look different in a combined A/B schedule, so it will be interesting to see what impact this new schedule will have on student academics and school experience.

If you could go back to the A/B schedule, would you want to?

13 responses





By MaryBeth Cosgrove

This year is going to be a great one for the performing arts in our school! We will see performances by our band, chorus, Addison Repertory Theater at the career center, and the spring musical here at VUHS.

On October the 24th the band and chorus kicked off the year with a splendid performance from middle school and high school. This concert included songs such as "Blackbeard" by Randall Standridge and "The Loyal Legion" by John Philip Sousa. They were followed up by the middle school chorus and the high school chorus, who sang "I Will Sing" by Michael Engelhardt and "Legatum" by Ryan Main, among others.

At the concert, there was a big announcement about the upcoming spring musical! Ms. O'Hara informed everyone that this year's show will be 9 to 5, a fun, upbeat show about women in the workplace featuring music written by Dolly Parton.

At the career center, A.R.T. has been working on a play called The Brothers' Grimm Spectaculathon that will be performed the 7th and 8th of December. This show features lots of fairytales you know and love, and some you may not have heard of, but with a twist to each.

## VUHS students involved in multiple Youth Agricultural Programs

By Torrey Hana

In the past two months, VUHS students involved in youth agricultural programs such as 4-H and FFA have taken advantage of opportunities out-of-state to learn more about agriculture. In September, many VUHS/VUMS students represented Vermont Dairy 4-H at the Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, MA. (Pg. 4)



Charlotte Coffey and other Singers in Choir, the Winds Section photos from On the Horizon Newsletter

On December 13 and 14, the HS chorus will be combining with Mt. Abe and Middlebury to put on the opera Dido and Aeneas, a greek tale about romance, featuring Gina Lebeau as Dido, Rory Hendee and Phoebe Raphael as Belinda, and Maddie Stroup as Clarissa with performances at Mt. Abe.

Also coming up are the Jazz band and Commodore Singers concert 'Tunes and Treats' just before the holidays on December 18th, a band and chorus concert on February 19th, the spring musical on March 20, 21, and 22, and a play written and performed by the A.R.T. students on March 28, 29, and 30. We hope to see you at some of these performances!



Photo of FFA from On the Horizon Newsletter

# Agriculture

*(Continued from previous page)*

Participating 4-Hers competed in both fitting & showmanship and confirmation classes. In fitting & showmanship classes, 4-Hers demonstrated their skills in preparing and presenting their animals against others in their age group. Results for VUHS/VUMS students are as follows: Jordan Hutchins received third in Junior Class A; Collin Chamberlin, fourth in Junior Class D; Kylee Shepard, first in Junior Class E; Lola Rollins, third in Junior Class G; Jayden Ploof, sixth in Senior Class A, Torrey Hanna, second in Senior Class D.

In confirmation classes, animals competed against others of their age and breed, and were judged on their appearance and structure. Results for VUHS/VUMS students are as follows: Jordan Hutchins' Shelburne Derringer Bonnie, first place Brown Swiss summer yearling; Jayden Ploof's Ruthless Skyhigh Wishes, second place Brown Swiss summer yearling; Collin Chamberlin's Robeth Jordy Sasha-Red, Holstein Junior Champion and Reserve Grand Champion, as well as first place Holstein fall calf; Lola Rollins' Avonlea Askn for Karma-ET, Jersey Reserve Junior Champion, as well as first place Jersey fall calf; Torrey Hanna's Muddy Branch Boomerang Suddenly, fourth place Jersey winter calf; Kylee Shepard's Four-Hills Gigawatt Babe-ET, third place Jersey fall calf. Jayden Ploof and Kylee Shepard also won fifth place in the creative grilled cheese division of the Grilled Cheese Contest. Torrey Hanna earned third place in the senior division of the dairy general knowledge written exam.



Vermont dairy 4-Hers at Eastern States Exposition. Photo from Torrey Hana.

In late October, Calvin Almeida, Gerrit Beenan, Delaney Bicknell, Megan LaFountaine, Zack Norris, and Abigail Visser attended the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, IN, with advisor Bill Van De Weert. The Vergennes FFA earned a Bronze Emblem in Parliamentary Procedure. The Parliamentary Procedure Leadership Development Event tests students' ability to effectively communicate ideas during a meeting. Components included a general knowledge exam of parliamentary law, a ten minute demonstration of parliamentary procedure, oral questions, written minutes of the demonstration as well as a team problem solving activity. In addition to competing, members of the Vergennes FFA said highlights included going on a business tour, attending a concert, and going to see a rodeo. Members also enjoyed shopping at the FFA Mega Store, and attending a college expo.

In early October, Torrey Hanna attended the National 4-H Dairy Conference in Madison, WI, as one of seven delegates from Vermont. The National 4-H Dairy Conference is an opportunity for youth from across the United States and Canada to learn more about the dairy industry through four days of hands-on workshops, lectures by industry leaders, tours of farms and other significant dairy sites, as well as spending a day at the World Dairy Expo. The Vermont delegates spent an additional two days at World Dairy Expo, and were able to see the Supreme Champion and Junior Supreme Champion cows crowned at the Supreme Ceremony on Friday.



## Fall Sports Season in Photographs



Cross Country - Photo submitted by Torrey Hanna



MAV Football Team - Photo submitted by Hayden Bassett



Rowing Team - Photo submitted by Sophia Johnson



The Golf Team - Photo by Bill Clark

### Upcoming Winter Sport Events:

- Boys Basketball JV/V Game Dec. 13 Home vss Danville 5:30/7:00
- Girls Basketball Game Dec 14 Home vs Fairfax 1:00/2:30
- Indoor Track Meet Dec. 14 at UVM
- Wrestling Tournament Dec 14. JV at Otter Valley JV and Varsity at ConVal NH



Isabelle Van Voorst - Photo taken by Sophia Johnson



Bass Fishing - Picture submitted by Zach Norris



Senior Boys - Picture submitted by Ethan Croke



# VUHS Green Team

## Updates

By Sophia Johnson

The Green Team has been working on some important projects over the past year! Last year we had a committee work with administration research on different types of Eco friendly cars to become the new driver's ed car, and we ended up getting a Toyota RAV4 plug-in hybrid. This car is one step to reduce carbon emissions and improve sustainability in our community. Another group worked on collecting 1,000 lbs. of soft plastic in conjunction with a company called NexTrex who took the plastic and turned it into a bench, which is now located outside of the high school gym doors.

Green Team has also planned an Environmental Day since spring of 2023, providing field trips off campus to teach classmates about the importance of protecting the environment. Some of these places students went to in the past were Middlebury College, Kahart Farm, Sweet Roots, and Bird banding to see the effects of climate change and sustainability efforts in our community. This holiday season, the VUHS Green Team encourages you to try looking at local second hand stores before ordering gifts online! Email [greenteam@anwsd.org](mailto:greenteam@anwsd.org) to find out more information or come to our meetings on Thursdays during lunch in B4.



New Hybrid Drivers Ed Car Green Team picked out



Bench made with 1,000 lbs. of soft plastic collected by Green Team

## Senior Walkathon Raises \$6400 for Wounded Warrior Project

By Rory Couture

In October the Class of 2025 completed their Senior Walkathon! Each year the senior class chooses a charity to support during their walk, and many years students have chosen to walk to Kingsland bay or another town nearby. This year the students chose to walk the 8 miles to Button Bay in Ferrisburgh, and some students even walked the 8 miles back to the High School. For the cause this year they proudly chose the Wounded Warrior Project. The Wounded Warrior project is a nonprofit charity that raises money to aid veterans who are suffering from mental or physical injury. At the beginning of their fundraising journey, the senior class had a goal to raise \$3,500 for the charity, but through help from the community, hard work, and dedication they ended up raising over \$6,400! The Class of 2025 would like to thank everyone who supported them through their fundraising efforts.



Photos from Lynn Kayhart

# Rowland Conference Speech

By Kendra Jackson – Full Send Member

Page 7 - The VUHS Current November 21, 2024

This speech was written by Full Send Member Kendra Jackson for the Rowland Conference, which brings schools, teachers and students together to discuss how to better our schools and recognize those who are doing so.

Being seen as a student can change a whole day, whether it's a simple "Hello, how are you?" or a smile and a wave. There are days when school simply feels hard, and walking into morning advisory and having a teacher say good morning can completely change that. Being seen as a student can make it feel like there's a reason to be in the building.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I realized that the teachers I truly felt seen by are the teachers of the classes I was excited to show up to daily. I'm a shy student, so I'm not the type to jump in and answer questions without a teacher-student relationship. In the classrooms where I had this relationship, I felt more comfortable giving my input and sharing a lot more than I would've shared. My English teacher, Mr. Steen, made me comfortable with my writing. He always knows how to help me find my voice when I think it is impossible. My middle school math teacher, Mr. B, always knows how to get a laugh out of me. Even though I haven't had him as a teacher since my middle school years, I know I could always go back to him for anything I may need. My Spanish and morning meeting teacher, Ms. K, was always the first one to ask, "Is everything okay?" when I was a little quieter than usual or had my head down. And then there's a teacher like Frau, our German teacher at school. I have never had a class with her, but she always greets me as I walk by her room. These are just some of the teachers in my school who have really made a difference for me. For all these teachers, I started off as just another student in one of their courses, but these teachers are the ones who really got to understand me as a student and as a person.



Kendra Jackson giving speech – Photo from Kristine Kirkaldy

It's essential that students are seen because it will open up a completely new classroom environment. Students who feel a sense of belonging will be more excited to participate in class.

It's not only teachers; friends and classmates can make their peers feel seen as well. Maybe that's by giving a smile in the hallway or helping out with a problem they may be stuck on. This small gesture can lead to much larger connections. These connections are vital to have throughout the school year and can really change what high school looks like for a person. I know my friendships have changed over my high school years, but I have a group of friends I know I can count on no matter what. And then I have my peers in my classes who I know are always willing to help me. If I get stuck on an assignment.

When educators really take the time to build a student-teacher relationship, it makes a huge difference. Each student has their unique input to add, and having this relationship can open up that level of sharing. Instead of just learning the student's name, try learning their strong points, their points of struggle, their favorite things to do, and their least favorites. Building from these few simple things takes a relationship from just knowing us as students to knowing us as people. I feel that it's really important for high school students to have a support group, both of other students and teachers. This support group could be made up of multiple different people or just a couple, but I believe it's very important for every student to know who they can go to in any given situation.



# 17 New Members Inducted into Vergennes National Honors Society

By Jing Williams

On November 11th, 17 new members were inducted into the Otter Valley Chapter of the National Honors Society (NHS) at Vergennes High School! To be considered for NHS, students must have a scholastic average of 3.45 and then go through a rigorous application process to become a member. This year's inductees were MaryBeth Cosgrove, Rory Couture, Axel de Boer, Torrey Hanna, Nilah Fitzgerald, Abigail Flint, Ava Francis, Amelia Giroux, Scout Jacobson, Chance Koenig, Gina LeBeau, Faith McAllister, Phoebe Raphael, Libby Ringer, Quincy Sabick, Ashtin Stearns, and Eleanor Wilkinson-Sachs.

Current members of the National Honors Society are Ethan Croke (President), Jing Williams (Vice President), Sophia Johnson (Secretary), Mia Kutchukian (Treasurer), Grey Fearon and Megan Mentzer. The induction itself featured Vergennes graduate and Recreation and Programming Director of Vergennes Martha DeGraaf as a guest speaker and Vergennes Principal Jody Chamberlin spoke as well. President of the NHS, Ethan Croke says that "Last year, we made a positive impact through blood drives and fundraisers for charity, and we're excited to continue that work this year in order to support the community around us." Congratulations to the NHS inductees!



Pictures of New and Current Members of the National Honors Society - Picture credit Lynn Kayhart

## Benefits of Pursuing Language Learning

By Mia Kutchukian

Languages build bridges between people, something I have both noticed and experienced. Taking advantage of the language opportunities at VUHS is a great way to expand not only future opportunities, but also to experience personal growth. Starting to learn a language can appear an extremely daunting task, but is also very rewarding as you gain higher comprehensive skills, a global perspective, and meet new people to interact with. Being vulnerable and making mistakes can be difficult, but is necessary in order to improve. Building basic vocabulary skills can build your confidence, allowing you to expand your knowledge by participating in conversations with others learning the same language, or native speakers. (Pg. 11)



# 8th Graders in Band and Chorus this Year

By Petra Fearon

This year brought a big change to the music department for both the high school and middle school – the eighth graders have joined the high school band and chorus. This change has been met with a variety of reactions, spanning from frustration, to confusion, and to eagerness for the upcoming year.

Why did this change occur when the last several years have seen many efforts to keep the high school and middle school music programs distinct? High school principal Jody Chamberlin responded to an email inquiry saying it was “to provide more opportunities for all students across our schools.” She explained that both her and the middle school principal, Colden Golann, collaborated with counselors and the Performing Arts departments so they could create a schedule to “accommodate as many students as possible”.

Chamberlin acknowledged there would be benefits as well as challenges: “For example, in Chorus, adding 23 more students has been both exciting (especially when everyone performed at the concert!) and occasionally difficult, as some 8th graders are adjusting to high school expectations.” It is certainly true that high school band and chorus will both push students harder and become more difficult, especially to people who haven’t experienced that before. The eighth grade had to plunge into the high school repertoire instead of gradually getting there in middle school classes. Chamberlin did say she appreciated the high school students’ patience with the change and their help supporting the eighth graders.



The HS Chorus with 8th graders at the October Concert

Rory Hendee, senior and the President of Chorus admitted about the change this year that “In the beginning I had a lot of mixed feelings, I was definitely worried about the difference it was going to make for the year, especially with it being my senior year. However, as the semester has gone by I’ve noticed how this is actually a really interesting opportunity”. She goes on saying, “For the first time in my high school Chorus experience I get to see the risers packed full of excited students with the want and desire to perform”. If you went to the October concert, you could see and hear the difference Hendee describes; the stage was full and the volume high. Hendee also adds, “I think this is a really good opportunity for the upcoming freshman to get a look at higher stakes choirs, and allows them to try cool things like Dido and Aeneas”. Hendee is referring to the upcoming opera VUHS is participating in with Mt. Abe and Middlebury high schools. Hendee continues saying, “It also gives us as high schoolers a cool opportunity to challenge ourselves to blend with different types of voices.” It seems while there may be challenges with this new change, there are also many great outcomes as well. Hendee finishes saying: “I see a lot of potential with this group of singers”.

Next semester will see more changes in the music department when the band and chorus switch from having class every day to classes being on A days or B days only. With many scheduling discussions under way, it’s still unclear whether this change will continue into the fall and if eighth graders will continue to be a part of the high school band and chorus.

# Opinion Editorial on Schedule Change

By Morgan Davis

The schedule change may be one of the most talked about topics in Vergennes Union High School these past few weeks. Meetings with Jody and constant conversations among students in classrooms and the hallways about the possibility of this change are happening all the time. My first two years of high school were spent with an A/B schedule at Burlington High School, and I see no good outcome, for any students, if this were to come back to VUHS. A/B schedules prevent student engagement, create a high-stress environment, and lower academic performance.

My experience with learning is that success comes from intentional time and engagement with classwork and, equally as important, teachers. At Burlington High School, balancing 8+ classes throughout the year did not allow me to form meaningful relationships with my teachers and classmates, and coming to class felt like a chore rather than routine. Already within less than three months at VUHS, I have created meaningful relationships with teachers and peers, making classroom environments feel more communal and cooperative, and forcing a change back to the A/B schedule would shatter these connections. When teachers have the time each day to get to know their students, they can support them better. They see the things that may need extra attention and also see the ways their students thrive. Teacher-student connection allows for goal-making, and working together to help succeed. An A/B schedule would double the amount of students a teacher sees, and not allow for these meaningful daily connections.

Similarly to above, changing to an A/B schedule would double the number of classes students and teachers would have to manage.

This change would create high stress on everyone in the building. Students would have twice the workload, not allowing for as high quality work for their classes. Balancing four classes a semester, versus eight or more classes for a year, has significantly lowered my stress levels already. I am able to have a routine with my homework and not be worrying about the wonder of what other work I could be doing. For teachers, they would face the same stress. Double the class load, double the grading work, and double the amount of students. It would simply be too much.

In terms of academic performance, students are able to carve their own path and be more focused on their learning with the 4x4 schedule. An A/B schedule takes away intentional learning in classes with higher stress, and prevents students from moving at a pace they feel supports them best. For students who want to excel in their education, they are able to do so. For example, at BHS, the highest level of math a student could get to without taking multiple math courses at once, was pre-calc in their senior year. At VUHS, I know students taking AP Calculus as sophomores, allowing them to then take dual enrollment courses if they wish to for their junior/senior years. For students who don't wish to take this high of a level of a class, they are able to continue learning as they feel comfortable and take a wide variety of classes.

In conclusion, an A/B schedule would ultimately diminish student learning, classroom environments, and backtrack our student body from success. We have a very successful schedule for students and teachers, and experiencing both schedules for me has shown very clearly the more successful option, the 4x4.



## Language Learning

*(Continued from Pg. 8)*

No matter what you envision for your future, learning a language can be very beneficial. One of the new ways to get involved with language learning at VUHS is the recently added weekly German language table! We currently meet on Fridays during lunch and it is a fun, engaging way to keep up or improve our German skills. All language levels are welcome, including beginners. If you have any questions please reach out to [mikutchukian@anwsd.org](mailto:mikutchukian@anwsd.org) or [jkepes@anwsd.org](mailto:jkepes@anwsd.org). Even if it's simply starting a Duolingo streak, I encourage all students to get involved in learning a language and seek out ways to practice, and if you are interested, take a look at these beginner German phrases to the right!

12 PHRASES IN GERMAN FOR BEGINNERS	
<b>Guten Tag!</b> Hello!	<b>Guten Morgen!</b> Good morning!
<b>Auf Wiedersehen!</b> Goodbye!	<b>Entschuldigung!</b> Excuse me.
<b>Wie geht es dir?</b> How are you?	<b>Danke.</b> Thank you.
<b>Ich liebe dich.</b> I love you.	<b>Bitte.</b> Please.
<b>Es tut mir leid!</b> I'm sorry.	<b>Schön dich zu treffen</b> Nice to meet you.
<b>Danke, mir geht es gut.</b> Fine, thank you.	<b>Vielen dank.</b> Thank you very much.

Basic German Phrases for Travel -  
Wanderlust Chronicles Travel Blog

## Opinion Editorial on Schedule Change Process

By Grey Fearon

In the past month I've been utterly perplexed by the general uproar around Ms. Chamberlin's proposed schedule changes. I find the whole process to be filled with unanswered questions. More than anything else, I'm concerned about the impact this has on our school environment. In the past four years I've never witnessed such outrage against the administration, not only from students, but from teachers as well. We've created a culture that shuts down any administrative input, and I'd like to get to the root of this problem.

An issue was created right from the start, as the schedule "problem" was identified without any discussion. Chamberlin made it very clear that there was to be no debate over this. Things needed to change. However, to label a problem is to identify a solution. Asking for school input when there's no room for debating the issue is simply giving students and teachers the illusion of choice. From the get-go, Chamberlin informed the ANWSD Board of Directors that the schedule would change no matter what, under the assumption that the current schedule creates gaps in math learning. (Pg. 13)



Play online  
<https://interacty.me/projects/19a1dd3e8651b601>



- Down

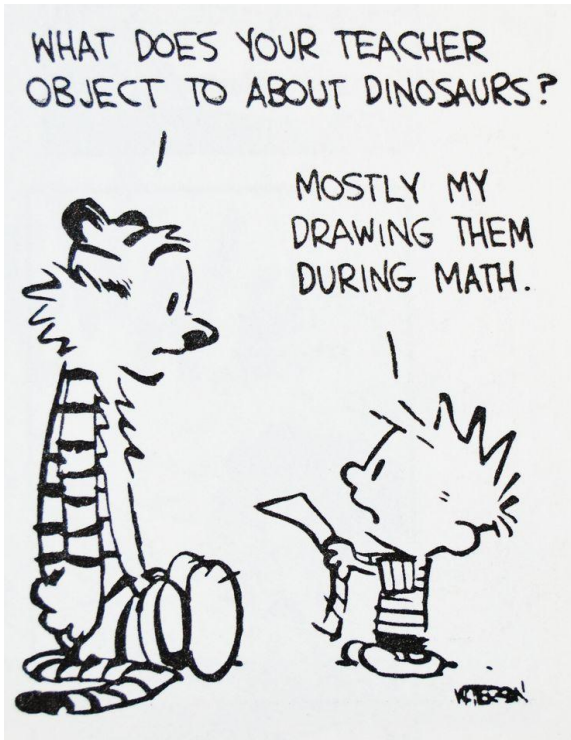
  - 1. This teacher once shared a classroom with Bobo the clown
  - 2. This teacher has been teaching social studies the longest
  - 3. This teacher graduated VUHS in 1991
  - 6. This teacher moonlights as Santa Claus
  - 8. This teacher once took a trip to Aruba
- Across

  - 4. This teacher has two pianos named Estelle and Petunia
  - 5. This teacher has multiple tattoos of her dog
  - 7. This teacher is the closest to becoming a yo-yo master
  - 9. This teachers name rhymes with bologna

Use these clues and teacher’s **last names** to solve the Crossword!

Sudoku: Fill in 1-9 for each 3x3 box

	6		7	8				4
5		8		4			3	9
	1	4						
				3		5		
	8			2	6	3	7	1
7	3			5	8			6
			3			4		
	5		2	1		8	9	
		1		7				3



Calvin and Hobbes Cartoon by Bill Watterson

Unscramble the words

1. Wrohmoke
2. Oclhso
3. Vntgkhasngi

Puzzle #1

3	6	9	7	8	2	1	5	4
5	7	8	6	4	1	2	3	9
2	1	4	5	9	3	7	6	8
1	9	6	4	3	7	5	8	2
4	8	5	9	2	6	3	7	1
7	3	2	1	5	8	9	4	6
8	2	7	3	6	9	4	1	5
6	5	3	2	1	4	8	9	7
9	4	1	8	7	5	6	2	3

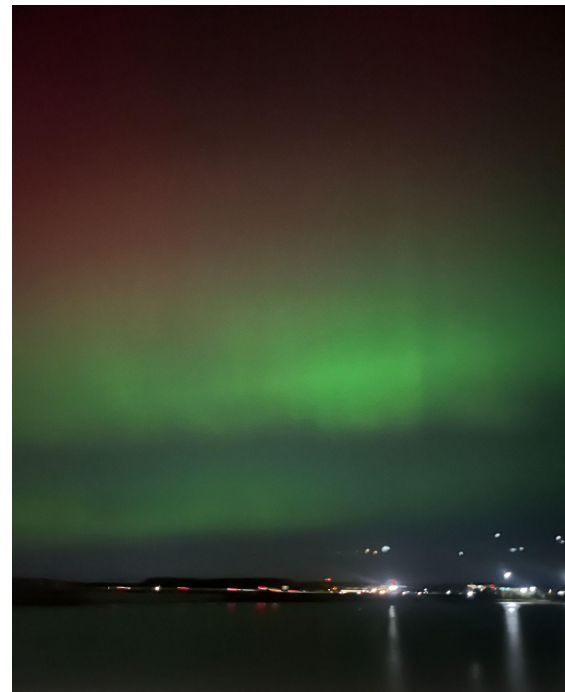
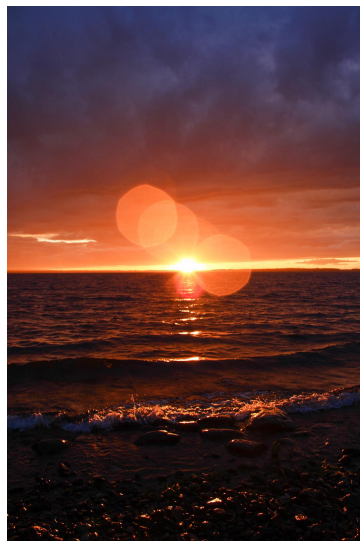
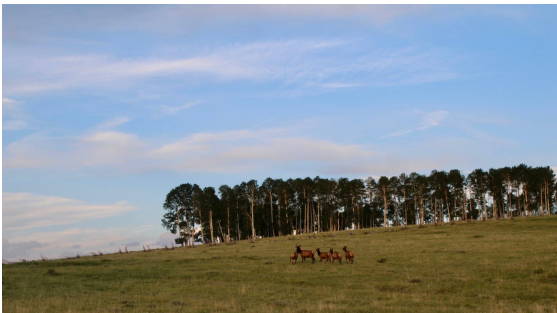
1. Homework 2. School 3. Thanksgiving

- Across
- Down
- 1. Grabin
  - 2. Coffey
  - 3. Kayhart
  - 6. Wycokoff
  - 8. Steen
  - 4. O'Hara
  - 5. Ploof
  - 7. Story
  - 9. Mahoney



## Student Photography

These are photos taken by Maddie Stroup and Sophia Johnson. Some of these photos come from Vermont and a few were taken out West in Colorado and Utah. Capturing a moment in time to preserve a memory is special, especially since nature is such an important part of our world. If you would like to submit your photography, nature related or not, email [jiwilliams@anwsd.org](mailto:jiwilliams@anwsd.org)!



# Opinion on Schedule Change Process

*(Continued from Pg. 11)*

At the October 14 school board meeting, Chamberlin was immediately asked if the new schedule would align with Mt Abe's, a question that she dodged. Seemingly, there's no reason that this would be the case, other than a proposed plan allowing students from both high schools to take classes at the other next year. However, every schedule suggested has indicated whether or not it would achieve alignment with Mt. Abe. This may seem insignificant, but there's reason to be suspicious. Anything that brings our school closer to Mt. Abe is labeled as "good", and that bias is shown in schedule selection. This is not uncommon from an administration that's made many attempts at bringing the two schools closer together. Our school continues to live in the aftermath of a failed merger vote.

It's also worth noting that Vergennes is no stranger to schedule change. Each new administration proposes an equally new schedule to "fix" the school, and our current situation is not different. Although Chamberlin has indicated that the new schedule doesn't have to be A/B, the original meeting made it clear that we're going to shift in that direction, despite having had an A/B schedule in the past. It's very common, not just in education, for new administrations to leave their mark by making major changes, and for that reason I'm very hesitant to see this whole debate as much more than a need to mix things up. I'm increasingly worried that any schedule differing from our current one seems to be treated as an admirable solution. As Chamberlin moves closer to making a decision, it becomes clear that a schedule for next year will be decided before the month is over.

No matter the choice, I have no doubt of its quick demise.

That being said, the outrage of the school remains unexplained. My confusion with this began at the initial scheduling meeting. A significant number of students participated, far more than I had expected. Additionally surprising, they were all repeating the same soundbite facts, as if instructed to do so. One comment about moving through math classes was in heavy rotation around the school, despite its claim being false. More importantly than the legitimacy of this statement is its repetition, illustrating a larger problem. Many of the opinions held by students now come directly from teachers. Though student-teacher collaboration on this matter is certainly commendable, I would assert that the reason students are so involved is because they've been partially convinced by teachers to resist the schedule change. Chamberlin cites this possible influence as the main reason for dividing teachers and students in these discussions.

Furthermore, the loudest voice on the issue no longer properly represents the school as a whole. The students coming forward to oppose the schedule change are disproportionately high achieving, and therefore not the students experiencing issues with the current schedule. It shouldn't be ignored that a majority of the school shows disdain for the A/B schedule, but it should be noted that there's a bias here based on which types of students speak their mind on administrative issues. Just because students aren't speaking out in opposition to our current schedule doesn't mean they don't exist.



## Further Opinion on Schedule Change

*(Continued from previous page)*

Regardless, this situation is certifiably a mess. Most importantly, no evidence from our school has been presented to suggest that our schedule needs to be changed at all. The reasoning has been boiled down to "anecdotal evidence", a fancy way of saying "no evidence". More recently, Chamberlin had Director of Learning Gabe Hamilton compile data together in a "convincing way". I hope I'm not the only one who sees a problem with "data" being gathered specifically to support a predetermined argument, as this is a reflection of obvious confirmation bias. Why was a decision made before evidence was organized? The data compiled only showed that math scores have gone down for certain classes. No attempt whatsoever has been made to analyze and compare the various schedules our school has had. Math tests need to be compared over time, and the data currently being given proves nothing. Another graph compared students who completed both Math 1 and Math 2 in a year with students who had taken just a single math class. However, rather than comparing the two groups in the same place, they selected a time where the latter group wasn't taking a math class at all. This is not just bad data, it's data that purposely misleads students, teachers, and the school board.

In a meeting with Ms. Chamberlin, I asked why the schedule had been changed three years ago, from A/B to 4x4. She admitted to not knowing we even had an A/B schedule three years ago. This is in no way a personal attack, it merely demonstrates a huge problem. There is no evidence.

Data gathering should always be the first step in serious decision making. The entire senior class, along with most of the staff at Vergennes, has experienced both an A/B and a 4x4 schedule, yet no attempt at all has been made to gather comparative data from them. As a whole, this decision is being rushed into. The current proposed schedule was selected, in large part, by a handful of students with no professional or research backed knowledge on scheduling. It's obvious that the goal is simply to produce any change. Without real reason, we cannot proceed.

Realistically, every schedule has pros and cons. If the 4x4 schedule was really impossible to make work, the whole nation would have shifted away from it by now, and yet the opposite is happening. We need to make what we have work for everyone. Math classes should be scheduled together each Spring. Math 1 should be followed with Math 2 in the next semester, and they should be advertised as a package deal. All math classes could be linearly aligned in this way, so that no gap is created. At the very least, we need to stop rushing into decision making.

Still, even if the schedule issue is resolved, we are a school divided by conflict. Teachers and students angrily discuss the process in the hall, administrators feel the entire conflict is merely resistance to change, and letters of complaint are being written to the superintendent. This is a serious problem.

## Further Opinion on Schedule Change

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I've been told repeatedly by high achieving students that the kids failing at math will continue to fail under a different schedule, because they're simply not trying. It is here, finally, that we arrive at the heart of the issue. Many students protesting the changes don't think the math scores decreasing are even a problem, because they have contempt for struggling students. I've also been told that the administration is simply trying to make things harder for teachers. Similarly, both the principal and superintendent have told me that the entire debate stems from teachers not wanting an increased workload. Every side of the issue seems to believe that their opposition is overlooking the students at our school. This, I'm happy to report, is not the case.

What we begin to lose in the chaos of debate is empathy. High achieving students love to advocate, but struggle to understand that this debate doesn't center around their needs. As soon as something doesn't immediately benefit affluent, college-bound kids, a disdain for struggling students manifests itself.

It's ridiculous to assume that the administration's actions stem from anything but a desire to help kids. No action here, on either side, is made with malicious intent. Similarly, it's absurd for a claim to be made that teachers are acting primarily out of self-interest, when their entire profession is a lifelong dedication to helping students. Perhaps when the majority of the teachers at the school say kids do better under a 4x4 schedule, someone should listen. We've reverted away from an attempt to understand each other, and instead constantly assume ill-intent. I swear to you, whether student, teacher, or administrator, that everyone at the school has a primary goal in this process of helping students. No one should be attacked here. High achieving students have immense influence at Vergennes, but seem to feel no responsibility towards anyone who "isn't trying".

A school must serve all people. It's not only the right thing to do. It is the responsibility of every student at this school to help the students around them. Education is a purely social experience, and in order to move forward from this issue, we need to reunite as a school community. I encourage all of you not to ask 'who's out to get us?' but rather, 'what do we owe to each other?'

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## Note from the Editors

Thank you so much for reading our first edition of the VUHS Current! It means a lot to have support from teachers and classmates, and we would love to hear from you for story ideas, student submission or any other comments. We would like to emphasize that the views expressed in the opinion articles belong to the writers of the articles, and **are not** a representation of the newspaper or editor opinions.

If you would like to join the reporting crew of The Current, please reach out to [jiwilliams@anwsd.org](mailto:jiwilliams@anwsd.org) or talk to any of the editors: Jing Williams, Sophia Johnson, Quincy Sabick and Mia Kutchukian. Have a great Thanksgiving break!