

the INDEPENDENT

Volume XXII Number 3

Manchester Essex Regional High School 36 Lincoln Street Manchester, MA 01944

December 15, 2014

School Council administers academic integrity survey

Administration will collect data on severity of academic dishonesty, write updated policy

By **Natasha Statz-Geary**
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In hopes of ultimately decreasing the prevalence of academic dishonesty, the school administered an academic integrity survey to all students and teachers.

The survey, which was given on December 3 during advisory, was originally discussed last year when Principal Patricia Puglisi first began working for the school.

“Last year when I came on board, I did an entry plan, and I met with all different kinds of constituents (faculty, students) to identify concerns to focus on, and one of those was academic honesty,” Puglisi said.

Additionally, she noted that the School Council also identified academic integrity as an area in which they wanted to explore more.

Puglisi further explained that as of now they do not have any data on the amount of academic dishonesty happening in the school, so that’s why a survey was given before more steps were taken.

School Council member Ariana Jackson expressed a similar sentiment.

“We did not want to assume that there is a large amount of cheating in the school, so first we decided to survey students to see

how widespread the issue really is,” she said.

The survey was adapted from an online survey that Rutgers University made accessible

to schools across the nation.

“I took that survey from Rutgers and made changes to suit our school’s own situation and needs,” Puglisi said.

‘The survey was really thorough and will help teachers promote academic honesty.’

-JENNIFER COLEMAN



NATASHA STATZ-GEARY PHOTO

Senior Louisa Spofford took the multiple choice part of the academic integrity survey during the advisory group meetings.

Following the survey, Puglisi said the School Council will review the results at their December meeting to discuss “what the data is really indicating to us.”

Then, after identifying the issues at hand, the school will take measures to address how to improve academic integrity.

“We’re hoping to make small focus groups of students and faculty that will meet in January following winter vacation to talk more about what the survey is saying to us,” Puglisi said.

History teacher Jennifer Coleman feels optimistic about the future of academic integrity at the school.

“I think that the survey was really thorough and will help teachers promote academic honesty and ensure that we’re seeing students’ own work and not the work of others,” she said.

Some students feel less hopeful about the accuracy of the results. “To be honest, I’m not entirely sure that everyone was completely honest on the survey,” senior Libby Dulski said.

Band, chorus members receive invitation to Senior Districts

By **Courtney Fraser**
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Five out of nine students from band and chorus were accepted to perform at the 2015 Northeast Senior Districts Music Festival.

The Northeast Senior Districts held on Nov. 15 were open to schools in Northeastern Massachusetts and students who have a strong passion for music, according to Band Director Joseph Sokol.

“You are dealing with some of the finest singers and musicians who have the opportunity to represent their school districts,” Sokol said.

Junior and band member Alexi Goldsmith-Solomon was accepted as first chair snare drum player for the festival orchestra that will be held on



COURTESY OF DONNA O’NEILL

Alexi Goldsmith-Solomon, Sara Rhuda, Tucker Evans, Jenny Duff, and Joshua Ward qualified for Northeast Senior Districts. The students will practice with other musicians from the region.

Jan. 11 at Lowell High School.

Goldsmith-Solomon auditioned against 19 musicians at the Northeast Senior Districts. Of the 19 students, only seven were chosen to perform at the festival this winter.

Chorus members participating in the Northeast Senior Districts include sophomore Jenny Duff, senior Tucker Evans, and juniors Sara Rhuda and Joshua Ward.

“I am tremendously proud of all the students and those who auditioned for Senior Districts and All-States because I know first-hand it’s a great accomplishment,” cho-

ral director Donna O’Neill said.

Rhuda achieved a perfect score at the audition. This coming year will be her third year attending the music festival.

“We get guest directors from colleges who know what they’re doing and have a passion for music. It’s a great opportunity to do complicated music with people that want to be there and know what they’re doing,” Rhuda said.

O’Neill said Rhuda has improved immensely in talent over the course of several years.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Debaters achieve perfect records, win two events

By **Olivia Bonaccorso**
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Twelve debaters competing in Public Forum, Lincoln Douglas and Novice Lincoln Douglas represented Manchester Essex at the Little Lexington Tournament at Lexington High School.

The tournament took place on Nov. 23 and hosted hundreds of students from across the region.

In the Public Forum event, which consists of two partner teams debating a current events related topic, juniors Charlie Davis and Jenny Cochand and junior Oscar Heanue and senior Hannah Riordan had perfect records of five wins and zero losses.

“I was very happy with how Jenny and I performed at the tournament. It was the highest I

had ever placed at a local tournament, and I had never made it to a final round before, so it was a great experience to debate against a lot of competition and achieve success,” Davis said.

Davis and Cochand made it to the final round in Public Forum, coming in second in the pool. Riordan and Heanue earned third place in the pool. Cochand also received a speaker award.

Debate team members Emmett Strack and Connor Senay, both juniors, also competed in Public Forum with a record of two wins and three losses.

“The public forum pool had some great competition. It was fun to compete against such strong teams,” Strack said.

In the Lincoln Douglas event, senior

‘The public forum pool had some great competition. It was fun to compete against such strong teams.’

-EMMETT STRACK

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

News

Drama Fest
-page 3

Features

Holiday health
-page 4
Phone cases
-page 5

Opinion

Pro/Con: AP limit
-page 8

Sports

Winter sports
-page 9-10

Arts

2015 movies
-page 12

News Brief

Footlocker cross country

After a successful end to the cross country season, five of the team's runners participated in the Northeast Foot Locker Cross Country Championship in Bronx, New York.

Foot Locker was the last race as a part of the cross country team for senior captains Cameron Holley and Olivia Lantz.

"It's impossible to signify six years, two state championships, and three years as a captain... in one race. But [Foot Locker] was a great way to end it," Holley said.

The championship consisted of seven total races.

According to junior captain Charlie Davis, who placed 14 out of the juniors and 23 overall in the junior senior race, over 1,100 runners participated in the seven races.

While juniors Connor Senay and Nathan Evans joined Davis in that race, Holley and Lantz participated in the championship races. In this competition, runners from every grade can attempt to qualify for the national meet in San Diego, which can be done by placing in the top 10.

Lantz, who finished 15, was excited to run alongside so many talented athletes.

"The competition's very good, and it's a great opportunity to run against those girls because they're some of the best in the country," Lantz said.

The runners also enjoyed getting to spend with one another.

"The experience of going to New York with your teammates is ... something I'll remember forever," Lantz said.

Internet capabilities improved throughout the school

By Connor Senay
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Recently, the Internet capabilities have been upgraded to provide for the growing amount of technological devices entering the building each.

New wifi access points have been put up on all three levels of the high school and in the auditorium. There has been an upgrade in the routers due to a lack of access, and modems will be installed in the near future to quicken Internet access, according to high school principal Patricia Puglisi.

Puglisi said these changes are crucial for improving Internet capabilities that students and faculty need access to on a daily basis.

"The building was originally designed for about 30 devices per floor. This only took into account laptop carts because people did not carry cell phones like they are currently. Now, this limit has been expanded, and the ultimate goal is to support three devices per person," Puglisi said.



CONNOR SENAY PHOTO

Junior Charlie Davis utilizes the improved Wi-Fi in the auditorium. There are now new access points all over the school.

Puglisi also said network administrator Stephen Kwiatek is working on a three to five year plan with the techni-

cal taskforce to focus on other upgrades and allow people to use more devices in school.

Kwiatek said he has been working in areas throughout the school to find "bottlenecks"

that cause slow network traffic and little to no connectivity.

"To fix this problem, we purchased new access points for the high school wing, which can handle four times the amount of connections compared to the originals on each floor. Our next step was to upgrade the Guest Wi-Fi firewall, and this has a faster CPU and more memory to increase the speed of the network," he said.

A change has been made in website filters as well. According to Kwiatek, the new and upgraded web filtering services have better filtering options in comparison to the old system so as not to hinder classroom lessons by blocking sites that are useful for academics.

"Based on all of these upgrades, there should be a significant increase in the performance of the network. Adjustments will be made periodically to keep up with technological change, so expect other upgrades to be completed soon," Kwiatek said.

Robotics By the Sea starts season off with a win at its first competition

By Maura McCormick
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Robotics By the C took first place in the Savage Soccer Robotics Tournament at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

The tournament, which took place on Nov. 15, included 48 teams total from all over New England.

The school's team began meeting in early November to put the robot together.

Each team was given a kit of materials to use to construct the robot.

Robots had to pick up Ping-Pong balls and place them in sloped tubes. They could also lift the tube to a steeper angle.

The winner of each round had to have the highest positioned Ping-Pong ball in the tube.

Robots were rewarded with additional balls for accomplishing certain other tasks as well.

For example, if the robot placed a large cube in a certain section of the field, the team would receive an additional four balls in its tube.

If the robot knocked over the ball dispenser, the team



COURTESY OF JOSEPH MCDONOUGH

The robotics team placed first at its first competition of the year. Here, the team is with its two robots.

would receive one additional ball. Senior captain Sam Creighton described the team's approach to the challenge.

'We spent a lot of time trying to make it a very fluid design...'

-SAM CREIGHTON

"We decided to do it in large loads. We spent a lot of time trying to make it a very fluid design where things happened quickly but also with control," he said.

The team chose only to focus on moving the balls to the tube, rather than using the alternative methods to gain balls.

The robot the constructed

was "about the size of a sheet of paper," according to senior captain Julia Whitten.

Whitten said alliances are a key factor in robotics competitions.

Each round consists of two alliances: the red team and the blue team. Each alliance has three teams from different schools, but in each round only two of those teams compete.

Each team is on the randomly selected alliance for the qualifier rounds. They then move on to elimination rounds, during which teams can choose new alliances.

"We'll keep a list of robots that failed in certain rounds and robots that were less reliable to get an idea of what kind of alliance we want to form," Whitten said.

The team also made two different robots to allow for as many people to be involved in construction as possible.

Team adviser Joseph McDonough said that getting new members more involved is one of the team's key goals for the season.

Whitten said the tournament served as a great "introduction for the new kids."

She said this small-scale tournament provided the perfect opportunity to teach new members how tournaments work without overwhelming them.

The Savage Soccer tournament was a smaller precursor to the final tournament of the season that the team will begin preparing for in January.

Spaulding Education Fund hosts annual Night of Stars talent show fundraiser

By Maddie Conway
INDEPENDENT ASSISTANT EDITOR

In order to raise money for the Spaulding Education Fund, the annual A Night of Stars talent show was held in the high school auditorium in front of a full house. This evening of performances took place on Nov. 23.

According to the Spaulding Education Fund's website, their mission is to "enhance the school's curriculum beyond the scope of tax-supported budgets." Spaulding funds programs such as the artist in residence and the various speakers who come to talk to the students and staff throughout the year.

In order to provide the money for such programs, Spaulding hosts fundraisers such as A Night of Stars, which is a display of local talent. A Night of Stars raises a significant amount of the money that Spaulding uses to fund its programs.

The program gives students an opportunity to share their talents publicly and for a cause directly benefitting them.

Led by Master of Ceremonies sophomore Robert Carter, performances ranged from dance routines to duets and piano pieces. Some of the performances that have appeared for many years are the Soundwaves and a troupe of Irish step dancers. Soundwaves sang the songs "No Rain" and

"Lonesome Road," and the step dancers danced a treble reel.

"It is tradition for the Soundwaves to perform at A Night of Stars, and we were representing the school," said sophomore Jenny Duff.

A Night of Stars is directed by Karen Strating, who used to be an elementary teacher at Memorial School, and Elizabeth Edgerton, an English teacher at the high school. Auditions are held for people wishing to perform; the show this year was narrowed down to 27 individual acts.

"The show is always really well thought-out. The auditions ensure that no one is screwing around," said sophomore Annabelle Lord-Patey, who

has been in the audience for A Night of Stars many times.

According to performers and people in the audience, A Night of Stars is so popular because it uses the talent of students and other people in the area to raise funds.

"When students perform, their relatives and friends want to come see [that student]. Those relatives and friends might invite others to come, and so on, so the amount of people who turn out for A Night of Stars increases exponentially," said sophomore Nellie Boling, who volunteered as a technical supervisor.

"I think it attracts people because it is so diverse in the acts with so many different kinds of performances," Duff said.

School places on College Board AP Honor Roll

Administration, teachers, students work to maintain AP achievement

By Hannah Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

College Board announced their fifth annual AP District Honor Roll, a list of 547 schools in the United States and Canada that are being recognized for their success in teaching the AP curriculum. The school placed on the list among dozens of other Massachusetts districts. The College Board offers 34 AP courses, and MERHS runs approximately 16 of these courses each year. Honored schools were selected on a basis of expanding the number of students enrolled in AP courses while maintain-

‘Usually they’re the most interesting classes, and they’re usually more fun. A lot of kids, in my experience, haven’t found that the workload is too bad.’

-TUCKER EVANS

ing the level of high scores of 3 and above on AP exams. All students in AP classes take the corresponding test for that course each year in May, and the College Board scores each exam on a 1-to-5 scale in June with the help of college professors and AP teachers.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said that the College Board reviews individual school data to determine if a school has increased the portion of its population taking APs while continuing to score well on the cumulative test.

“We’ve been able to open the door of AP to more students,” she said, adding that there has been a “concerted effort” over the past

Massachusetts	Gloucester Public School District
Massachusetts	Grafton Public School District
Massachusetts	Hamilton Wenham Regional School District*
Massachusetts	Hampshire Regional School District*
Massachusetts	Hingham Public School District*
Massachusetts	Hopedale Public School District*
Massachusetts	Lenox Public School District
Massachusetts	Manchester Essex Regional School District
Massachusetts	Marblehead Public School District*
Massachusetts	Marlborough Public Schools
Massachusetts	Maynard Public School District
Massachusetts	Mt Greylock Regional School District
Massachusetts	Nantucket School District
Massachusetts	Natick School District*
Massachusetts	Nauset Regional School District*
Massachusetts	Needham Public School District*
Massachusetts	Newburyport Public School District

COLLEGEBOARD.COM

The school was placed on a list of 547 districts that increased the number of students in AP classes and maintained passing scores.

few years to make AP classes more accessible for all students.

Puglisi said that a continuation of this effort will involve adding several more courses in academic departments that run have comparatively less AP

classes than others; AP Chemistry is a possibility for next year’s course catalog alongside AP Environmental Science, which is run every other year.

Social studies Department Chair Lauren DuBois said

that she is a proponent of the “open door” policy with flexible prerequisites that allow many students to take APs.

“One big push for us in the social studies department was to lower the prerequisite to allow more students to take APs. I think from sophomore year to junior year you see a growth in students’ ability and maturity, and the opportunity to figure out what you like,” she said.

The Social Studies department has expanded AP offerings in recent years to include two blocks of AP Psychology and blocks of AP United States Government & Politics and AP Comparative Government & Politics.

Senior Tucker Evans, who will have taken 11 AP classes by the time he graduates, said that one benefit of AP courses is their rigor in regards to college applications.

“Usually they’re the most interesting classes, and they’re usually more fun. A lot of kids, in my experience, haven’t found that the workload is too bad,” Evans said.

Drama club selects Drama Fest play, begins competition preparation

By Sarah Williams
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

At this year’s Drama Festival, the drama club will be performing the comedy play “Volpone” by Ben Johnson.

Volpone, which is Italian for the word fox, is a one act play about a very rich old man named Volpone, and the people in Venice who want his money and he tricks each of them into thinking that he or she is the person who is going to get the money in his will.

“I think this play is unique because the people we have playing each role is so good and can do something so cool and interesting with their role,” Chelsea Rose, the co-stage manager, said.

Volpone, the main character will be played by junior Alex Buck. “The role of Volpone, as far as I can tell from the one time I’ve read through

the script, will be a lot of fun to do. He’s a very greedy and manipulative character, and I’m definitely going to have a lot of fun figuring him out,” Buck said.

The play was written during the renaissance and was originally a full length play, but it has been updated into a one-act play form so that it is shorter. There are around seven to ten parts in it and students also participate in technical roles backstage, so there will be about 20 students working on it.

“I’m really excited to work with the people I worked with last year again. A lot of my same cast members and technicians are coming back. I think

we are also going to get some new people, new freshmen. It is fun to get new faces and sort of show them the ropes,” director Elizabeth Edgerton said.

‘We like the spirit of festival, and we like hosting the other schools because we’ve got a good space for it.’

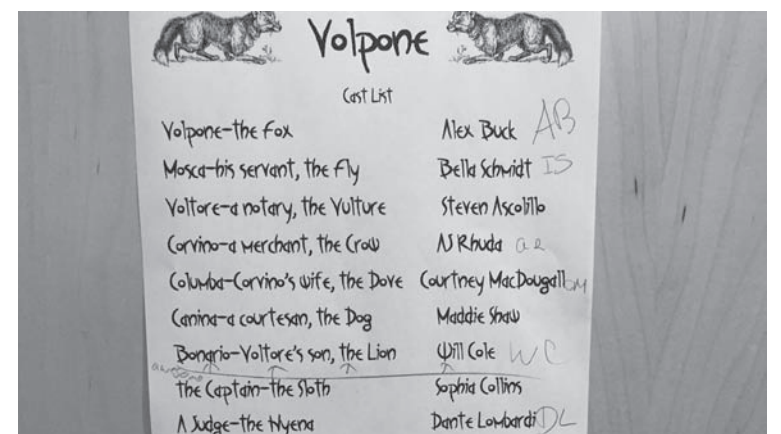
-ELIZABETH EDGERTON

Drama Fest run by the The Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild will be happening at the Manchester Essex Regional School on Feb. 28 with a possible

open dress rehearsal on Feb. 25.

Although there is never a particular theme to Drama Fest, the drama club likes to decorate with one when the school hosts Drama Fest.

“We like the spirit of festival, and we like hosting the other



SARAH WILLIAMS PHOTO

Drama is performing “Volpone” in this year’s Drama Festival, a multi-round theater competition between local high schools.

schools because we’ve got a good space for it,” Edgerton said.

There will be seven other schools performing in Drama Fest at Manchester-Essex Regional High School. “I’m excited to see all the other schools shows once they are all

done and finalized,” Rose said.

“The best thing about Fest, besides being a part of a fantastic cast and a fantastic show, is meeting people from other schools and watching their shows. I love seeing what their decisions are in regards to set, cast, et cetera,” Buck said.

Senior class modifies starboard

By Hannah Riordan
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

As in previous years, the senior class will display their college acceptances on a bulletin board near the guidance office. Director of Guidance Beverly Low said that the name of the board may change from “starboard” to something else, but that students will be able to publicly post their admissions decisions.

“I’ll be honest, I had mixed feelings about it [the starboard],” she said. Low said that her concerns stemmed from the dis-

trict’s mission to educate all learners and the message that a board celebrating pursuit of academic success might send to students who intend to have a different post-graduation plan.

Members of the senior class also had conflicting views on the ideal composition of the starboard.

Senior Chris McAuliff said that he strongly supported a traditional starboard with a star for each acceptance letter a student receives.

“I just think we should have one because we’ve worked for 12 years and we should be able to show it,” he said.

Senior Andy Creighton said that he thought every student should have one star on which to put all of their acceptances with a circle around the school to which they decide to matriculate.

“We should have a board right next to it where everyone posts their rejections. It shows that everyone gets rejected,” he said.

Delaney Byrne and Julia Whitten, also seniors, felt that students should only post stars for the schools that they plan to attend.

“There’s no reason to have a star for every place you get in if you’re only going to one school and you only want to go to one school,” Byrne said.

Per Low’s request, senior class co-president Devon Musgrave-Johnson put a poll in the Class of 2015 Facebook group to ascertain whether or not students wanted to be able to post all of their acceptances on the board.

Over a third of the senior class voted for some type of college acceptance board.

“I think that the students should have a voice in how the board looks. I’m new, and you all know the culture way better than I do. I’m a very democratic person in that I don’t think our office should make decisions in a vacuum,” Low said.

CONTINUATIONS

SENIOR DISTRICTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“I know, personally, how hard

Sara works. She has tremendous talent, a pure voice, and puts much work into her passion for music,” O’Neill said.

Of the four chorus students, Rhuda and Evans received All-State recommendations and will be auditioning for the event in January in Shrewsbury.

Acceptance into All-States gives musicians the opportunity to spend three days in Boston at the Seaport Hotel, rehearse at the World Trade Center, and perform at Symphony Hall.

“It’s a great experience for the students, musically speaking. A lot of these musicians are thinking about pursuing a career in music and going to the Northeastern Senior Districts and All-States is highly beneficial,” Sokol said.

DEBATE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Nick Albertazzi won his division and received a speaker award as well received a speaker award as well.

“Although there were only a number of debaters in the LD pool, the kids were really competitive which just made for a good tournament,” Albertazzi said.

“I was really proud of the whole team since we were at the top of two divisions and took home multiple awards for Manchester Essex,” Cochand said.

With the holidays spanning a few weekends in December, the debate season slows down briefly.

“I was glad to get some of my points early in the quarter because December doesn’t have a lot of tournaments, and January is a tough month to compete because of midterms,” debate judge senior Meghan Conway said.

Health Matters

How to stay healthy during the holidays

By Devon Musgrave-Johnson
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

With sweater weather just around the corner, it's getting easier and easier to justify a few extra Christmas cookies or an extra helping of Grandma's extra cheesy baked mac and cheese; but it's important to remember that staying healthy during the winter is just as important as it is for the rest of the year.

The holiday season is full of temptations, and the first thing to remember it that it is okay to give into these a little bit. According to the Chicago Defender, people who try to go without eating any sweets during the holidays actually end up eating more later on. Plus, holiday cookies taste delicious, so who would want to pass them by?

That being said, exercise is also something that people can't afford to pass by. For people who don't do a winter sport, the cold and wet weather can drain any and all motivation to work out.

One of the most important things to remember is that fruits and vegetables still need to be eaten during the holidays.



ANI-BEE/FLICKER.COM

During the holidays, it can be tempting to indulge in the many sweet treats that seem to be everywhere. But, it is important to not get too carried away and to learn to moderate your intake.

Gym memberships can be expensive, but getting exercise doesn't have to be. YouTube has an abundance of work out videos for people of all skill and motivation levels.

Even when watching food intake and exercise, it is still central to look at what is being consumed, not just how much.

One of the most important things to remember is that fruits and vegetables still need to be eaten during the holidays. With so many other

yummy treats on the table, essential vitamins are easy to miss out on. Apps like MyCalorieCounter allow users to see just how much of each essential nutrient they are taking in.

It is also easy to make traditional holiday recipes healthier. For example, applesauce can be used in many recipes in place of butter, and even substituting regular pasta for a whole grain variety can greatly impact a dish.

Overall, the key to health during the holidays is the same as it is during every other day of the year: moderation.

Report cards transition from a hard to digital copy

By Avery Shaw
INDEPENDENT STAFF

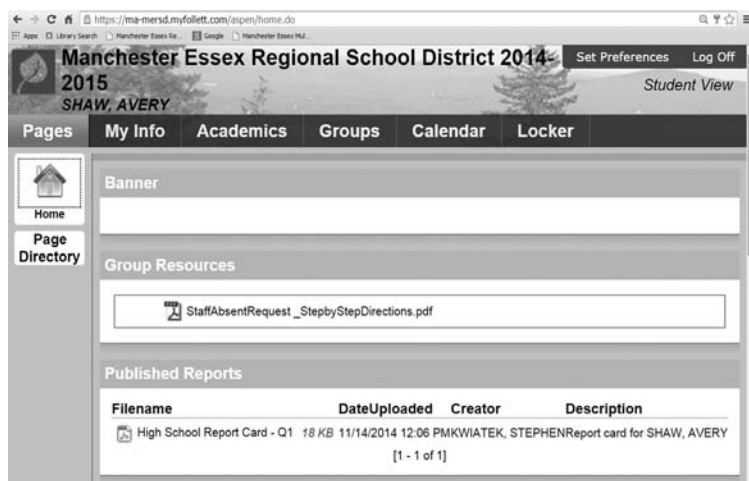
To save money, paper, and manpower, both the high school and middle school of Manchester Essex have changed their methods of sending out report cards from a paper copy delivered through the mail to an electronically posted copy.

High school Principal Patricia Puglisi discussed the school's reasoning behind the change in systems.

"Printing the report cards and mailing them are not very green, which looks bad being that we are a green school, and it also takes a lot of man power and postage to do that on a regular basis. Given that Aspen has that capability for us to be able to communicate that information electronically, we just believe that's more in line with how people do business these days," Puglisi said.

This change was influenced by the success that other school districts have had with the electronic system, Puglisi said.

"Both the prior schools I worked at did all communication online in terms of grading and report cards, and it is just a



AVERY SHAW PHOTO

Whether or not to provide only a digital copy of report cards has been a topic of discussion as of late. While it is a greener way to distribute grades, some parents are finding the Aspen online system difficult to maneuver when searching for the report card.

more streamlined way to do it, and students do get their report cards more quickly," Puglisi said.

From a parent's perspective, the new "frustrating" online system deters from parents viewing their children's report cards, according to Mary Clunan, parent of a Manchester Essex high school student.

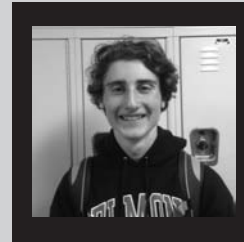
"It affected my motivation to check my child's report card. Even though I eventually managed to see the report card, it ended up being time consuming. I would get frustrated because I was having trouble figuring out the website," Clunan said.

Puglisi had anticipated flaws in the system but overall believes that the transition was smooth.

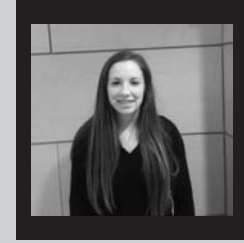
"I think one thing we could have done better is providing more explicit directions on where to find the report card on the student's page, but overall it was pretty efficient in terms of making sure all the grades were in and getting posted. Certainly there is always room for improvement, and we continue to try to improve in our use of Aspen," she said.

Sophomore Charlie Otterbein appreciated the modern approach to the report card system.

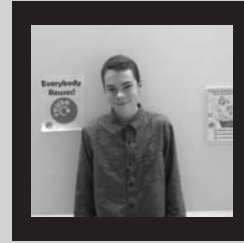
"I like the accessibility of the report cards. I no longer have to wait to see my grades. Considering how everything else is online now, I think it is appropriate to have our grades there too," Otterbein said.



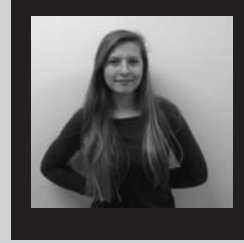
Freshman
Patrick Guinee:
Gym games



Freshman
Holly Fossa:
Woodworking



Sophomore
Jack Garvey:
Improv



Sophomore
Bridget Kiernan:
Roller blading

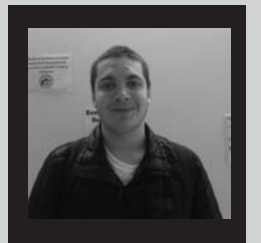
Student Speak

What is your ideal Workshop Wednesday?

Junior
Jenny Cochand:
Stress relief yoga



Junior
Devon Depaolis:
Nutrition



Senior
Annie Deconto:
Archery



Senior
John Decker:
Programming



An Instant Printer for Smartphone Users

By Sarah Williams
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Perfect for this day and age of only technologically-saved photos, the Instax printer allows you to print photos from your phone onto Polaroid shaped cards.

With more and more pictures simply being saved online or on electronic devices, people no longer have as many physical copies of photos. However, with the Fujifilm Instax SHARE Smartphone Printer SP-1, the problem of having no physical copies will be gone.



By using the app Instax Share, which is compatible with iPhones and Androids, you can send photos to the miniature printer “anytime, anywhere,” according to the Instax website, to print out a photo.

With the new Polaroid trend popping up, people are starting to embrace the old-fashioned way of taking pictures, one film strip at a time.

The printer has some special effects, including being able to re-print previous pictures. It also has different templates to print your pictures out on, such as Real Time, Limited Edition, Facebook and Instagram, Square and Standard style.

Like the vintage Polaroid cameras, the picture must be given a moment to appear on the Polaroid film before it is ready to be stored away in a Mini Instax photo album, available for \$12 at Urban Outfitters.

The Instax is \$179.99 plus tax with each Instax mini film cartridges costing around \$10. Depending on the site, these prices can fluctuate.

Because the printer runs off batteries, it can be easily taken along on trips and out of your home for constant access.

Creating a Christmas Wish List

By Courtney Fraser
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Christmas is coming closer, and the wild quest for finding the perfect gift for a loved one, a friend, or someone in your family has begun.

Of all the new, trending products being released into the market, finding the ideal present may seem impossible.



POLAROID.COM

One of the newest pieces of technology released this year was the Polaroid Instant Print Camera. For teenage girls, this would be a present worth waking up early to on Christmas.

The Polaroid Camera sells at a price of \$92 and can be found at Urban Outfitters.



LLBEAN.COM

In the subject area of footwear, many girls have shown interest in moccasin slippers found at L.L. Bean for a price of \$69. Popular colors for the shoes include graphite or brown.



BEATSBYDRE.COM

Headphones have shown popularity in recent months among guys, too. At Best Buy, Beats Solo 2 headphones sell for \$199.99 coming in a wide selection of colors.



TIMBERLAND.COM

For guys, a popular item on their Christmas list may be a pair of Timberland Work Boots. These shoes are sold in various stores such as Macy’s and the Footlocker for \$130.



SEPHORA.COM

Stores that supply make-up, such as Sephora, are helpful in finding gifts for girls. A common item seen on many wish lists includes the NAKED Eye Shadow Palette by Urban Decay for \$54.



LIFEPROOF.COM

A final present that may be ideal for most guys on Christmas morning is the Apple LifeProof iPhone case sold at Best Buy or online at Amazon.com for \$79.99.

These cases are indestructible and protect not only your phone from cracking but also the money that could be spent trying to repair it.

STUDENT PROFILE

Molly Lynch



By Lydia Parker
INDEPENDENT STAFF

What is your favorite movie?
“Princess and the Frog.”

What is your biggest fear?
Raccoons.

What is your favorite holiday?
Christmas.

What is your favorite song?
“Blank Space” by Taylor Swift.

What is your favorite sport?
Basketball and softball.

Who is your favorite singer?
Taylor Swift.

Do you have any siblings?
Yes, an older sister named Rebecca.

What is your best subject?
History.

What is your favorite food?
Cookies.

What is your favorite season?
Summer.

Annual Friendship Tree lighting draws crowd

Manchester Women's Club sponsors town tradition, hosts musical groups from high school, elementary school

By Avery Shaw
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Held at the First Parish Church, the annual Friendship Tree lighting was hosted by the Manchester Women's Club on Dec. 7.

The Manchester Women's club consists of about 60 volunteers over 50 years of age and sponsors the event every year, according to Martha Elder, a two-year member of the club.

Elder explained the club's purpose.

"We are community oriented. We give two \$5,000 scholarships every single year to children. And that's the whole point: to give back and to help the education of young kids," Elder said.

The event consisted of a concert, including the Manchester-Essex School Band, Soundwaves, High School Chorus, Memorial

School Chorus, and La Petite Choral performing inside the First Parish Church.

"It is always a great way to start off the holidays. The music, the community coming together, and all the children are what the holidays are really about. It's just a lot of fun," band director Joe Sokol said.

After the show, members of the Women's Club volunteered to dress as Mrs. Claus and to hand out candy canes and hot chocolate. The lighting of the Friendship Tree took place on the Town Hall Common directly after the concert.

Elder explained why she chose to volunteer to hand out candy canes.

"My favorite part is the children, of course. When they come up to get their candy canes, they are just precious.

They look at me with their eyes wide open, and usually I have to bend at the knees to their level so they won't be scared or afraid. And I have to just stand there or

'It is always a great way to start off the holidays. The music, the community coming together, and all the children are what the holidays are really about. It's just a lot of fun.'

-JOE SOKOL



AVERY SHAW PHOTO

The Manchester Women's Club puts on the annual lighting of a "friendship tree" each December. This year, the ceremony took place on Dec. 7 and featured various musical performances.

else they will start walking back as if they are afraid I'm going to pounce on them. It's just the cutest thing," Elder said.

This event has become a

tradition for the families of the Manchester community, according to Charlie Otterbein, a sophomore who attended the event.

"Ever since I moved here, we

have gone to the tree lighting," Otterbein said, "When the tree gets lit up, they count down from 10 and it just brings the whole town together."

Student athletes partake in sportsmanship conference

By Ethan Andersen
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Six students traveled to Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Mass. in order to participate in a sportsmanship conference.

The conference, which took place on Nov. 21, hosted students from schools located all across the commonwealth.

Athletic Director Kelly Porcaro attended the conference and selected the students who participated: juniors Brandon Bartlett, Hunter Flood, Ethan Andersen, Sydney Christopher, Julia Bonaccorso, and Kara Hersey.

"I always take juniors and ones that are involved in multiple sports. I try to pick some athletes that play traditional team sports and some that play more individual sports," Porcaro said.



KARA HERSEY PHOTO

Juniors Kara Hersey, Julia Bonaccorso, Brandon Bartlett, Ethan Andersen, Hunter Flood, and Sydney Christopher attended a sportsmanship conference at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough.

Bartlett said the conference was not only educational but entertaining as well.

"I think that the MIAA, who sponsored the conference, did

a really good job teaching us what student athletes had to do in order to help encourage good sportsmanship, but they also kept us entertained," he said.

According to Bartlett, the conference included a magician and motivational speaker who taught the participants about the importance of sportsmanship on and off the field.

"It seemed bizarre at first, to have a magician at a sportsmanship event, but he had a touching life story that really made an impact," Bartlett said.

Hersey explained how athletes aren't the only ones who need to promote sportsmanship.

"The speakers were really fun but effective. They got us to think about ways we could make our fans

more active while remaining positive to both teams," she said.

According to Porcaro, the key to good sportsmanship is starting it early and leading by example.

"The main purpose of the conference was really to bring aware-

ness to sportsmanship. It starts with little kids and carries all the way to professional athletes. If we can start early, it makes a big difference," Porcaro said.

Porcaro emphasized the importance of sportsmanship; according to her it's

not just specific to high school students but an essential trait for daily life and life in general.

'I always take juniors and ones that are involved in multiple sports. I try to pick some athletes that play traditional team sports and some that play more individual sports.'

-KELLY PORCARO

Use of personal laptops by students debated in classrooms

By Lydia Parker
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Students' personal laptop use in class has pros and cons. Some teachers and students find laptops a tool for learning while others believe the distractions they offer outweigh the benefits.

The use of personal laptops in class is a many sided debate. Certain classes such as history allow laptops for note-taking and classwork, while the entire English department has adopted a no laptop policy for students.

History teacher Lauren DuBois believes that when used

correctly, laptops are beneficial for students. "I think laptops provide a great opportunity to give students the ability to research in class and find information and varying sources on their own," she said.

However, DuBois also feels that laptops can distract and take away from students' time in class. "The problem is when it becomes a distraction and they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing. If we

can focus on proper use in the classroom, I think laptops can be an educational tool."

'If we can focus on proper use in the classroom. I think laptops can be an educational tool.'

-LAUREN DUBOIS

Many students in the high school use laptops in school daily. Junior Olivia Tyler said that laptops are a helpful tool for students.

"Laptops can be very beneficial because they make it easier to quickly type out notes, access the Internet, and organize all of my work."

Some classes lend themselves



LYDIA PARKER PHOTO

Sophomore Tommy Tofuri takes notes on his laptop during class. Many teachers are concerned about the distractions of computer use.

to laptop use better than others. DuBois said the history department's curriculum lends itself well to laptop use. "We do a lot of small research projects, so to have the capacity to look at websites in class and research individually is an opportunity for interactive learning."

The English department's no laptop policy is designed to maximize the attention English students give their teacher, that quite frankly would be difficult for me not to check, such as my email or social media," she said. things that quite frankly would be difficult for me not to check, such as my email or social media," she said.

Academics

Should there be a school-wide AP limit?

Pro

Hannah Riordan

In an impressive feat of branding, marketing, and implementation, the College Board has created a frenzied obsession with just two letters – AP.

These days, we hear of AP students, AP teachers, AP tests, AP preparation books, AP models, the AP level, and even the AP Honor Roll upon which our school has been placed.

Our incessant need to get ahead in college admissions is, I think, what fuels the ridiculous, ever-competitive adoption of heavy AP course loads. Every upperclassman aiming for admission into selective schools feels the anxious need to take as many APs as one can possibly handle (or not handle once it's too late to make a change).

While workloads vary from course to course and some AP courses have less nightly homework than their Honors or CP counterparts, for the most part, APs contain more difficult material and more intense pacing of the content.

The pressure to take APs is quite an oppressive one. As students choose to take four, five, or six APs at a time, they are committing to taking many rigorous courses all year and many day-long, soul-sucking tests in the spring.

When a few top students set the norm of taking four or more APs senior year, other competitive students feel pressure to follow suit, loading up on AP courses just for the sake of having the letters AP on their transcript a couple more times.

Guidance counselor Karen D'Amour said that there currently is a technical AP limit in place in the student handbook; students who take more than three AP courses are supposed to sign a waiver indicating that they fully intend to do so. Over time, the enforcement of the policy has degenerated so much that most students no longer know that such a waiver exists.

According to D'Amour, because guidance now reviews all student schedules by appointment before junior and senior year, those students who do want to take more than three APs have conversations with their guidance counselor and typically their parents about what that entails, including one to two hours of homework per night in each AP course that they take.

With a guidance-mandated and guidance-enforced AP limit, students would be compelled to examine the reasons behind taking so many APs and hopefully be less inclined to take so many at once.

Academic competition can and has become unhealthy at the school. Limits in the handbook would effectively eliminate the guesswork of scheduling that drives paranoia about how to best overwork to impress admissions officers.

Similarly, the school profile would indicate to colleges and universities that students are limited to taking three APs at a time, removing the competitive element of scheduling in which students attempt to pack in impossibly difficult course loads just to get ahead of their academic counterparts.

Con

Zack Even

While high school is intimidating, demanding, and often stressful, the majority of students will still agree that the days they spend as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors are preferable to those spent in any preceding grade.

Why? Because, in high school, teenagers receive what so many crave: freedom.

These freedoms include selecting classes and learning to tailor a schedule to one's own passions and capabilities.

It's important to recognize limitations while at the same time attempting to grow through new and challenging experiences. Without using high school as a testing ground, allowing students to find the style and pace that works best for them, college becomes a nightmare of overwhelming options.

Restricting these freedoms is dangerous even when it comes to a rule as simple as a limit to the AP classes a student can be enrolled in, and even if that number can be overruled with a signed waiver.

While a restriction of three APs may still exist in the Student Handbook, guidance counselors have nonetheless shifted how they deal with the number of AP classes a student takes, recognizing that such a broad restriction can be counterintuitive.

"In the guidance office, we're meeting with students individually. At that particular time, if you're interested in taking more than three, we might talk to a parent or discuss it with you," guidance counselor Karen D'Amour said.

D'Amour correctly believes that schedules should be looked at in the context of each student rather than limited by somewhat arbitrary rules.

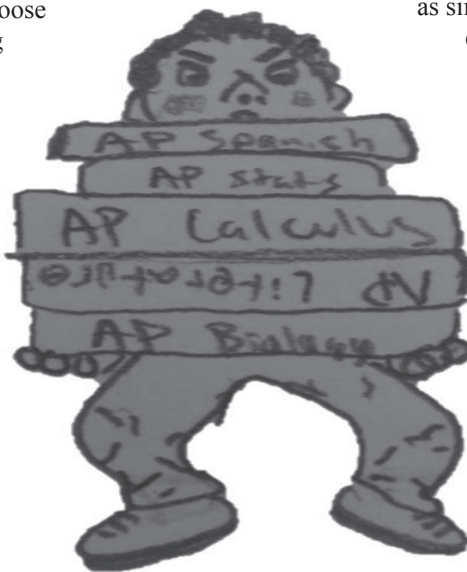
"It's all about tailoring the courses to the student individually and not so much about the number of APs you're taking," she said.

Some students simply learn better at a faster pace.

Even if the rule can be worked around, why should the school encourage these teens to take classes in which they may enjoy themselves and learn less?

This rule also contributes to the idea that APs give each and every student an unbelievable workload. While these classes are rigorous, the work is nonetheless manageable, and the school should be careful not to promote the idea that these classes are nearly impossible to succeed in when they may help many of the school's students excel.

While no restriction may create a more competitive environment, as some students may strive to take the more APs than anyone else, a small dose of competition is healthy; kids can benefit from a taste of college and beyond.



ETHAN ANDERSEN ILLUSTRATION

Naviance creates competitive, stressful environment for students

By Julia Bonaccorso
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Every student entering junior and senior year is introduced to what will quickly become his or her new best friend and simultaneously his or her worst enemy: Naviance.

This program is designed to help students prepare for post-secondary goals.

Whether the student hopes to attend a college or enter the workforce, Naviance is always there whether they like it or not.

Working solely with data from graduated students within the school district and the student's GPA, Naviance pairs teens up with possible schools that would be within their reach. Later on in

the college process, students can enter the schools they are applying to into Naviance. With this information the program is able to configure a list of how many students are applying to which schools.

Though it sounds convenient for teens to have all the statistics right at their fingertips, Naviance can cause students excess, unneeded stress.

As many juniors and seniors already know, the dreaded college process is truly a beast.

From scheduling visits to grueling applications, college is a massive stressor for teens who already are carrying enough on their shoulders. With the high standards set on them to get perfect grades, be star athletes, and spend their limited free time vol-

unteering or studying, students are breaking under the immense pressure. Teens need something that will help them tackle notoriously overwhelming college process in a productive way.

Naviance is meant to be the place that can help teens stay organized and feel comfortable with the college process, but it has proven to have the opposite effect.

Instead of helping students by providing useful information, Naviance creates a competitive and stressful environment.

Though all statistics on the site are anonymous, simply seeing how many students are competing to get into schools adds unneeded anxiety. In a time that teens are already under so much stress, websites like Naviance should be dedicated to eradicating any unnecessary worry.

For students, knowing how many other kids are applying to



JULIA BONACCORSO PHOTO

Naviance increases the stress of the college application process.

the same schools as they can be interesting, but it is ultimately nonessential information that only adds another layer of stress to students' psyche.

This calls into question whether programs like Naviance are actually effective in aiding juniors

and seniors with the college process or just causing extra anxiety. When embarking on the treacherous journey of applying to college students shouldn't pay too much attention to the information on Naviance; their energies are better spent elsewhere.



An armistice in the war against Christmas

By **Natasha Statz-Geary**
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Let me start this by saying that I am not religious. I have never attended church. I have never been to Sunday School. The little I know about religion has been solely derived from what I've been taught in school. With this being said, I still feel that the so-called ideological "War on Christmas" is becoming slightly overblown. In the age of increased political correctness, everything is becoming white-washed in fear of being offensive, namely Christmas and other religious holidays during this time of the year. While I do not mind calling this time of year "the holiday season" to include all celebrations, I find it slightly absurd when I hear about how a school in Texas has banned the colors red and green from a holiday dance. First of all, the idea that red and green somehow are highly religiously offensive is ridiculous; they're just colors, not religious convictions indoctrinating children to become Christian. Furthermore, even Christmas trees technically don't hold Christian symbolism; Puritans considered them Pagan mockeries of Christmas, and their popularity in America only came from the influx of German immigrants during the 19th-century. While not seeing the innate offensiveness of Christmas trees may be ignorant of me considering I'm not religiously affiliated, I don't see how a mere decoration and two commonplace colors could be so offensive. Additionally, it's not like America is suppressing all the other holidays; in elementary school we were taught how to play dreidel, ate potato latkes, and learned about the tenets of Judaism and Hanukah. This is the basis of religious freedom, a fundamental component of the First Amendment of the Constitution; all religions are free to practice what they will and will tolerate other religious groups. It saddens me to see "the most wonderful time of the year" ruined over the need to be politically correct. I may never understand the religious complexities of the holiday season, but I truly believe that underneath it all, this time is year is a time to bond with loved ones, to give back to the community and the less fortunate, and to relax and be grateful for all that we have. I enjoin us all to embrace our own holiday traditions and to truly accept those of others.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Hornet pride reaches new height in the school

Between Spirit Week, pep rallies, and athletic success and support for our teams, Hornet pride and school spirit is running rampant through the Manchester-Essex community. This year's Spirit Week featured some of the most active classes ever. Whether it was Movie Day, Decade Day, Twin Day, or Spirit Day, students and teachers alike could be seen all over the halls of the high school in creative and spirit-filled costumes.

On Color Day and Hornet Spirit day, nearly everyone, regardless of grade, showed spirit by donning specific colors as well as the traditional green and white.

The last day of Spirit Week, which was topped off with the fall sports pep rally, truly showed how the school has transformed with regard to school spirit. The gymnasium boomed with cheers, applause,



CHARLIE DAVIS PHOTO

Students compete in the Quidditch match at the October pep rally.

and even laughter during the school's inaugural quidditch match.

At this point in the fall season, the teams that walked down to the center of the gym were

met with thunderous encouragement from high schoolers and middle schoolers alike.

As the season continued, so did the explosion of school spirit. Achievements of all of the

fall teams, clubs, and individual students fueled this wave of Manchester-Essex Pride.

Golf, boys' soccer, girls' and boys' cross country, and field hockey all moved on to achieve post-season success. Especially in the case of the boys' soccer team, MERSD students, parents, and faculty supported the Hornets with vigor.

Social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and even the infamous Yik Yak, buzzed with encouraging and congratulatory updates that both filled athletes and students with pride and also fostered more excitement throughout Manchester-Essex.

The atmosphere of school spirit has brought positivity and unity to the entire school. School spirit and Hornet pride has given students, and even the local community, an avenue to become more involved and enthusiastic about Manchester-Essex.

Anonymous social media app creates unsafe environment

By **Charlotte Freed**
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Yik Yak is the newest form of social media that has surged through the halls of Manchester-Essex. Becoming popular just a couple of months ago, the app is, essentially, an anonymous Twitter.

Based solely on this idea, Yik Yak could go one of two ways: it could either be a source of friendly and supportive commentary from other students, or it could be a way for students to easily and anonymously write mean comments that otherwise would not have been shared.

The Yik Yak of Manchester and Essex rarely contains malicious content aimed at another student. The Yaks usually consist of funny comments or the "Journal Jesus" reminding people that a journal entry for English class is due that weekend.

However, the risk of hurt-

ful comments being made is far too high. The anonymity of the app can create a very aggressive, unkind, and sometimes scary environment for students. Although rare, the occasional comment

that picks out an individual student does not encourage a supportive environment that all of us prefer to have.

For example, it is not acceptable to call out a peer using derogatory words based on his or her looks or private relationships with other students.

Likewise, because of the small size of our school community, students can easily decipher who a certain Yak is talking about, which causes further embarrassment for the subjected student.

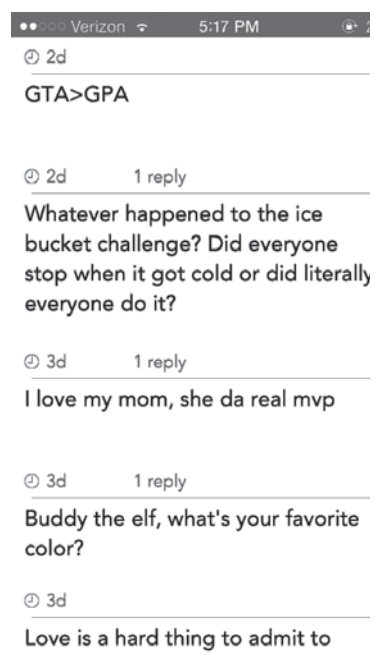
Furthermore, the Yik Yaks

in different towns have already experienced similar issues with a general feeling of insecurity caused by remarks attacking a particular person or community.

Olivia Hazlett, junior at Marblehead High School, said that within the first month of Yik Yak spreading to the school, there was an anonymous bomb threat made through the app in the spring of 2014. The threat caused measures to be taken in which students were no longer

allowed to use the app. Clearly, Yik Yak provides too much opportunity for students to feel unsafe, attacked, or bullied. Whether the Yik Yak in any community is hateful or purely innocent, the risk of cruel comments made about another student is too high to outweigh the benefits of having a more supportive or humorous anonymous social media app.

It is not acceptable to call out a peer using derogatory words.



Yik Yak can be used as a medium for both positive and negative comments; however, students tend to use the social media outlet in a more negative manner to insult peers.

the INDEPENDENT

Editors in chief
Hannah Riordan
Natasha Statz-Geary

News Editor
Charlie Davis

Features Editors
Charlotte Freed
Oscar Heanue
Sarah Williams

Opinion Editor
Connor Senay

Arts Editors
Zack Even
Devon Musgrave-Johnson

Manchester-Essex Regional High School
36 Lincoln St, Manchester MA 01944
978-526-4412 newspaper@mersd.org
online at <http://www.memo.mersd.org>



The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class. Editorial space is available to all MERHS students, faculty, and community members.

All submissions must be signed and put in the newspaper mailbox in the front office of MERHS.

The Independent reserves the right not to print letters and to edit the content for clarity and length. While letters can be critical of an individual's actions, they cannot slander or libel.

The staff editorial may be considered the opinion of the staff of The Independent.

By-line opinions are written by individual staff members and should not be considered representative of the entire staff.

The Independent staff hopes that all Manchester and Essex citizens will take advantage of this forum. The paper is meant to serve the school community, and we are open to suggestions to help it better serve its purposes.

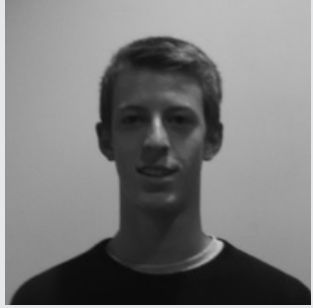
Staff
Julia Bonaccorso
Olivia Bonaccorso
Courtney Fraser
Maura McCormick
Amber Paré
Lydia Parker
Avery Shaw

Sports Editor
Ethan Andersen
Maddie Conway

Faculty Adviser
Mary Buckley-Harmon

Follow us on Twitter:
[@MERHSjournalism](https://twitter.com/MERHSjournalism)

INDOOR TRACK



Cameron Holley



Troy Ciarametaro



Ben Bichet



Samantha Woodman



Megan Clark



Olivia Lantz

Coach: Mark Dawson

Captains: Seniors Troy Ciarametaro, Ben Bichet, Cameron Holley, Olivia Lantz, Samantha Woodman, and junior Megan Clark

Record last year: Girls': 3-6, Boys': 2-7

Goals: To achieve individual improvements and have more people qualify for States

Impact players: Seniors Olivia Lantz, Ben Bichet, Troy Ciarametaro, Cameron Holley, Emily Moore, and junior Charlotte Freed.

Coach's quote: "This year, we want even more people to qualify for States."

Captain's quote: "Because we're a small school, it will again be difficult for us to compete against some of the bigger schools, but we hope to continue our forward progress in our fifth season as a varsity program."-Senior Troy Ciarametaro

BOYS' HOCKEY

Coach: Derek Papalegis

Captains: Seniors Kyle Nelson and Marc Castonguay

Record last year: 6-12

Goals: To beat last year's record and make the tournament.

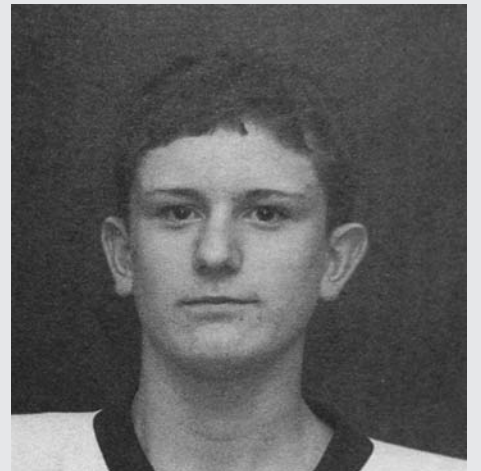
Impact players: Senior Alex Tognazzi, junior Anthony Lange, sophomore Jackson Rice, and Rockport players Kyle Nelson, Marc Castonguay, and Jameson Kamm.

Coach's quote: "Our roster consists of 15 freshman and sophomore players, so for us to be successful this season, these young players must work hard."

Captain's quote: "We have a lot of players that have the potential to be good, so hopefully, we can get those guys to really come forward and step it up this year." -Marc Castonguay



Kyle Nelson



Marc Castonguay

GYMNASTICS



Lizzie Ranger

Coach: Eliot Davis

Captains: Senior Lizzie Ranger, and Hamilton Wenham seniors Olivia Young and Caroline Kerrigan

Record last year: 1-8

Goals: To improve last year's record.

Impact players: Manchester Essex senior Lizzie Ranger and Hamilton Wenham seniors Olivia Young, Caroline Kerrigan, Kirstie Smith, and Phoebe Hagberg.

Coach's quote: "This year we have a lot of first-time members on the team, so we hope to build a strong foundation for future seasons."

Captain's quote: "I am hoping to see some JV kids from last year move up to varsity and get to showcase all their hard work at the meets." -Lizzie Ranger

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Bryan Shields

Captains: Seniors Will Burgess, Craig Carter, Justin Eichenberger, and Winston Feuerbach

Record last year: 16-7

Record this year: 1-0

Goals: Make it farther into the state tournament than last year, win Cape Ann League, and win Division North.

Impact players: Seniors Craig Carter, Justin Eichenberger, Will Burgess, and Winston Feuerbach.

Coach's quote: "We'd like to pass the semi-finals where we lost last year to Saint Clement by five points. Hopefully we can get to the North Final and play at the TD Garden."

Captains' quotes: "We only returned one starter, so I want to see how the young guys mold and come together as a team. More importantly, I want to shock people who think we may not be as strong as last year." -Senior Winston Feuerbach

"Considering that we have very little height on our team this year, our team will mainly need to focus on defense, which will be our key to winning games." -Senior Justin Eichenberger



Winston Feuerbach



Will Burgess



Justin Eichenberger



Craig Carter

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Lauren DuBois

Captain: Senior Fraley Morton

Record last year: 13-9

Goals: To go farther than the team had gone in the previous year by making it past the semi-finals.

Impact players: Seniors Fraley Morton and Phebe Biggar, and juniors Sabrina Pallazola, Kara Hersey, and Sydney Christopher.

Coach's quote: "I've been really lucky. I always have a great group of girls that enjoy not only playing basketball but... playing with each other and being on the team together."

Captain's quote: "We only lost two seniors last year so we all work really well together and know our roles on the team and have a lot of fun." -Senior Fraley Morton



Fraley Morton

SKI TEAM

Coach: Tim Wonson

Captain: Captains have not been elected

Boys' record last year: 4-8

Girls' record last year: 4-6

Goals: Ski fast, have fun, and qualify both teams for States.

Impact players: Seniors Chris McAuliff, Parker Edington, and William Kiley, sophomores Sam Prudden and Wolf Hahn, and freshman Emily Clark.

Coach's quote: "I think we have a really strong team this year, and I hope that they can represent themselves and their school through their performance."

Senior's quote: "We have some experienced skiers but I think the younger members of the team can really make an impact and help us win some important meets." -Senior Chris McAuliff

SWIM TEAM

Coach: Shannon Alger

Captains: Juniors Erin Carlson and James Phelan

Record last year: 4-4

Goals: To keep up the pace set from last year and continue to improve and work on endurance

Impact players: Juniors James Phelan and Erin Carlson

Coach's quote: "We have a very talented group of swimmers and I'm so impressed with their enthusiasm and drive."

Captain's quote: "I think that this year could really be our best year yet. We have a lot of great people coming in, and last season definitely boosted our confidence" - Junior James Phelan



James Phelan



Erin Carlson

'Nightcrawler' explores journalistic integrity with bloody lens

By Zack Even
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Blockbuster staples including nauseating car chases, horrific home invasions, and questionable decisions populate "Nightcrawler," a bold new thriller from first-time director Dan Gilroy.

The surprise of the film? Jake Gyllenhaal, who plays the polite and upbeat Louis Bloom, an unemployed and self-pronounced "hard worker" whose charming demeanor falls apart almost too quickly.

When a jobless Bloom pulls over one night behind a wreck, he unexpectedly finds an appealing and doable career: "nightcrawling," or filming the aftermath of crashes, crimes, and other horrid events in hopes of selling the video to news stations.

As a veteran of the scene explains to Bloom, "If it bleeds, it leads."

Gyllenhaal has spent much

of his career playing likeable, albeit sometimes troubled and complex, characters, which is why seeing him as Bloom is both startling and exciting.

With each friendly wave or eager bob of the head, the audience has to fight to see through Bloom's thin disguise.

Bloom is charismatic and calculating, enthusiastic yet unfeeling, a strange blend of qualities that Gyllenhaal somehow manages to combine into a believable, engrossing character.

Bloom rapidly adapts to the nightcrawler lifestyle, familiarizing himself with L.A. roads and police codes and establishing a relationship with a local news station.

Before long, Bloom starts seeing himself more as a director than a reporter. Arriving at a scene before the police, he drags a bloodied corpse across the pavement like a prop, setting up what he believes is the perfect shot.

"Nightcrawler" isn't just gory fun. The movie raises ques-

'Nightcrawler' isn't just gory fun; the film raises questions about our bloodthirsty society.



NIGHTCRAWLERFILM.COM

In an unexpectedly unsettling performance, Jake Gyllenhaal plays Louis Bloom, an unemployed man who discovers a new career path: filming and selling footage of L.A.'s crimes and crashes.

tions about our bloodthirsty society and how we see the world through the same red-tinted lenses Bloom dons in a more literal way.

Nina Romina, the morning news director played by an intimidating Rene Russo, cuts out important details from a multiple homicide story, opting to portray the drug dealing victims as unlucky affluent innocents. Sadly, this same sensationalism is un-

doubtedly present in the coverage of recent tragedies from which Americans cannot turn away.

However, the film's message could be stronger; its own appeal largely stems from its graphic imagery, making its theme seem somewhat hypocritical.

The movie's muted message isn't its only problem; the ending is unsatisfying and the character of Bloom, while compelling,

often has unclear motives. He asks anyone he can for a job and then, once he starts on the titular career path, works tirelessly to create a nightcrawling network and stubbornly negotiates the price per video, yet the money doesn't seem to interest him.

Despite its faults, "Nightcrawler" represents an impressive debut by Gilroy and a significant step forward in Gyllenhaal's career.

Two new rap albums fail when compared to artists' past projects

By Oscar Heanue
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

"A Better Tomorrow"

While rap groups have always had a tendency to lose their edge or fade away, staying relevant has never proven difficult for hip-hop's most storied collective, the Wu-Tang Clan.

Two decades after the release of their original classic "36 Chambers," the group has released "A Better Tomorrow," as a pleasant reminder that unlike groups like A Tribe Called Quest or The Fugees, the Clan is still together.

The project opens with "Ruckus in B Minor," which features sampled vocals from deceased Wu-Tang member Ol' Dirty Bastard, followed by verses from each of the group's eight living members. The presence of all nine of the original members of the Clan helps introduce a recurring theme of togetherness and fraternity.

While "Ruckus in B Minor" introduces the album with a pre-

dictably gritty Wu-Tang sound, the remainder of the album takes a completely different approach.

In "A Better Tomorrow," RZA seeks to show that despite being the longest-lasting group in hip-hop, the Clan's sound is still evolving. The album possesses a far more mellow sound than Wu-Tang is known for, a strategy that provides both hits and misses.

The style is most noticeably changed on "We Will Fight," an incredibly messily-produced song. The horns that provide the basis for the beat sound weak and distant, and the repetitive hook gels poorly with the rest of the track. The Clan's adapted style begins to see success in later tracks. "A Better Tomorrow," stands out as the album's best, featuring a crisp, soulful piano beat and technically sound verses from Method Man and Raekwon.

The album marks a new chapter for the Wu-Tang Clan. While the project has a number of low points, it still serves as a pleasant reminder that the group is still together and still evolving.



WUTANGCLAN.COM

Rap releases from both the Wu-Tang Clan and J. Cole disappoint but show glimpses of the artists' true capabilities.



JCOLEMUSIC.COM

By Connor Senay
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

"2014 Forest Hill Drive"

J. Cole's third album and current home address, "2014 Forest Hills Drive," showcases a new persona that recalls a famous idiom: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Coming over a year after the release of "Born Sinner," "2014 Forest Hills Drive" flew under the radar, leaving the listener skeptical at its lack of hype.

The first track, "Intro," contains a soft, after-dark piano beat with Cole crooning, "Do you wanna be...happy?" repeatedly as the beat becomes more orchestral. Soft and emotional runs are part of Cole's new style of experimentation and introspection.

If only he didn't stray from his roots on this album, listeners would be more than satisfied.

One such track that Cole shines on is "Wet Dreamz." Admittedly, this is an uncomfortable track name, but there is

reason for its acclaim. The beat is a catchy drumline with a soft choir singing "Oooh" in the background, and the point of the song is to tell a story, regardless of the story's occasional vulgarity. This is what the fans wanted.

"January 28th" has a relaxing, palatable sound, and "03 Adolescence" and "A Tale of 2 Citiez" have their moments of self-reflection while remaining lyrically strong; however, the lethargic beats make them more difficult to listen to.

Despite the occasional uptempo production found on tracks such as "Fire Squad" and "St. Tropez," the obnoxious wordplay on "Fire Squad" and melodramatic duet with a female singer on "St. Tropez" squander the potential to return to the classic J. Cole.

Closing with an outro skit on the lengthy "Note to Self," Cole doubts the potential success of his album, carelessly saying "I don't know if it's gonna work or not, I don't give a f**k!" If he chose to care, this album could have been satisfactory.

Chorus, Soundwaves visit Boston Symphony Hall for open rehearsal

By Amber Paré
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Chorus students and members of the Soundwaves took a break from preparations for upcoming performances to travel to Boston Symphony Hall to witness an open rehearsal for performers including cellist Yo Yo Ma, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

According to chorus teacher Donna O'Neill, the rehearsal on Nov. 20 was open to all high school students in Boston and surrounding areas. Students departed from the school by bus in the morning.

The performance was preceded by a pre-rehearsal conversation



COURTESY OF DONNA O'NEILL

Chorus and Soundwave members travelled on a field trip to the Boston Symphony Hall to view an open rehearsal and interview between the director Andris Nelsons and renowned cellist Yo Yo Ma.

between Yo Yo Ma and Andris Nelsons, director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, according to sophomore Dante Lombardi.

"I loved the whole experience..."

I felt like I really got to know [Yo Yo Ma] even though I wasn't directly talking to him," he said.

The Tanglewood Festival Chorus and Boston Symphony

Orchestra later performed a world premiere piece written specifically for Boston's orchestra.

"The performance of the piece with the composer himself present was a phenomenal experience. Students learned a lot about high-level ensemble rehearsals and what it is like to be a professional performer," O'Neill said.

Students enjoyed the performance and expressed gratitude for the experience. "I am so thankful that I was able to see the performance. It was very inspiring because I am a performer and a chorus student," senior Courtney MacDougall said.

According to O'Neill, members of the chorus and Soundwaves are continuing to prepare for upcoming performances.

The Soundwaves' December performances include the high school concert, Manchester tree lighting, Essex holiday festival, the Council on Aging luncheon, and an event to benefit Doctors Without Borders, an organization that provides Ebola aid.

O'Neill said that she is looking forward to the Soundwaves' upcoming performances this year and believes that the A Capella group will continue to take advantage of new opportunities.

"The group is doing a phenomenal job keeping up with the performance demand, especially considering that eight of the 16 members are new this year. The group loves to perform and is continuing to work hard, maintain perspective, and have fun," she said.

2015 to be a big year for film

By Devon Musgrave-Johnson
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens” – December 18

Though many fans of Star Wars would like to forget that the last three films in this franchise came out, the buzz and excitement for the next installment is nevertheless overwhelming. Fans are eager to relive the Star Wars experience in theaters.

“Paper Towns” – June 19,

With the box office success of “The Fault in Our Stars,” it’s no surprise that another John Green novel is being adapted into film. John Green fans and the general public alike are excited for this movie, anticipating that it will live up to its predecessor. The story follows an awkward but lovable boy named Q and his adventures with his mysterious dream-girl Margo.

“Focus” – February 27

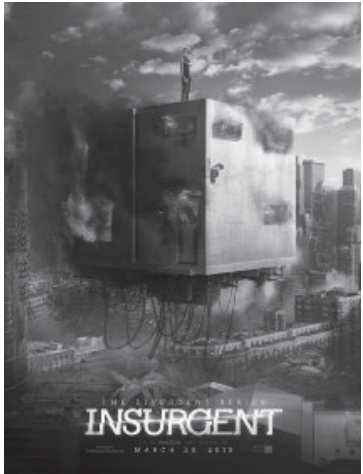
As the only film on this list that isn’t a sequel or adaptation, “Focus” draws from Will Smith’s star power and an interesting premise to build anticipation. The film, a romantic crime drama, centers on a con artist who falls in love with the rookie whom he has taken under his wing.



MARVEL.COM



WARNERBROS.COM



DIVERGENTSERIES.COM



STARWARS.COM

“Avengers: Age of Ultron” – May 1

In the wake of Marvel’s “phase 3” announcement, buzz for the second Avengers movie has done nothing but increase. Marvel is a powerhouse of the film industry, and fans are expecting the best from this film series

“Hunger Games Mocking Jay Part 2” – November 20

The movies of the “Hunger Games” franchise have consistently enthused fans with the sto-

ry of a twisted government and a battle to the death; and the recent release of “Mocking Jay Part 1” has left viewers craving more

“Insurgent” – March 20

Another book adaptation, this sequel to “Divergent” is likely to be even more action-packed and mind-bending than the first installment. The “Divergent” series follows a girl named Tris attempting to navigate a world in which everyone is defined by only a single virtue.

WEBsurfer

By Connor Senay
INDEPENDENT EDITOR



Ba Ba Dum

Ba Ba Dum revolutionizes the way we are able to learn new languages. With five interactive games covering 1500 different words in 15 languages, a basic vocabulary could be built in several minutes. The website starts you out on a quite simplistic game, spitting out a random term with four pictures to choose from in the four boxes on the screen. Choose correctly, and a thumbs-up image will appear, and a thumbs-down icon will appear for a wrong answer. I chose a harder game to test, and one such game displays the letters of the term scattered in a line with a picture above, and you must know the term and be able to spell it correctly, testing not only familiarity but ability to write it out. This website is no Rosetta Stone, but it builds an elaborate enough vocabulary to identify various objects in the language of your choosing.

Let’s Travel Somewhere

Let’s Travel Somewhere brings you to any random place in the world through Instagram pictures. The website has a “Fresh” button which displays the most recent and popular photos from places all around the globe. Located at the top of the page alongside the “Fresh” button is the “Destination” button, which allows you to view photos by continent, then more specifically by country or region. For example, I dove into the Italian countryside and saw some beautiful rolling hills and mountains, along with a quaint house and classic blue car. Whatever you wish to view in the world, you can travel there sitting behind your computer.

GeoGuessr

GeoGuessr quizzes you on world geography, providing a view on Google maps that allows you to move around and guess that exact location. Your score is determined by the proximity of your answer to the correct location. For example, I was given a view of a desolate road with surrounding grasslands and a small hut with what appeared to be farm animals. My guess was a town in South Africa, but the correct location was the countryside of Sao Paulo, Brazil, earning me a measly score of 37 points. Whether for pleasure or for building knowledge, GeoGuessr is an entertaining site to test out.

What to...

Watch:

TV

“It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” Season 10

In what will surely be a continuation of the show’s typical depravity, “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” season 10 premieres on January 14, 2015. Writers, starring actors, and executive producers Charlie Day, Rob McElhenney, and Glenn Howerton will reprise their roles as Charlie, Mac, and Dennis, best friends and owners of Paddy’s Pub. Fans of the show’s previous nine seasons should look



FXX.COM

forward to 10 new episodes. Fans of “The Office” and “Arrested Development” would enjoy the witty, irreverent satire ever-present in “It’s Always Sunny.” The stellar cast never fails to entertain throughout the show’s history. We can only wonder what mischief The Gang will get into next.

Read:

Book

“Nice Is Just a Place in France: How to Win at Basically Everything”

“Nice Is Just a Place in France” is by the creators of betcheslovethis.com, a popular blog that mimics and satirizes tabloid websites and gives bitingly honest advice to readers.



BETCHESLOVETHIS.COM

The Head Betches, as they call themselves, outline their philosophy for “getting what you want” and being “on top” in the world. When taken at face value, these “life lessons” seem ridiculous, encouraging selfish, materialistic behavior. As the creators have said in interviews, however, their writing attempts to satirize many issues for young women today, overdramatizing everyday problems as the mainstream news media does in order to point

out its insanity. “Nice Is Just a Place in France” is full of smart pop culture references and would be a perfect way to spend a day relaxing over holiday break.

Listen To:

Album

“My Everything” Ariana Grande

Ariana Grande exceeds expectations in her sophomore album “My Everything.” She enlists collaborators like The Weeknd, Big Sean, A\$AP Ferg, and up and coming electronic artist Cashmere Cat, successfully manipulating her stylistic range across the album’s 15 tracks. Her beautiful singing voice stands out despite her oftentimes ambiguous pronunciation of the lyrics. Fans of Britney Spears, Rihanna, and Mariah Carey (to whom she is frequently compared) should enjoy “My Everything” because of its variety and cohesiveness. Radio hits like “Love Me Harder” and “Problem” are worth a listen, as are lesser-known songs like “Best Mistake” and “Be My Baby.” “My Everything” has a song for fans of every genre, and as a whole the album represents an impressive fusion of musical styles.



ARIANAGRANDE.COM

By Hannah Riordan, Independent Editor