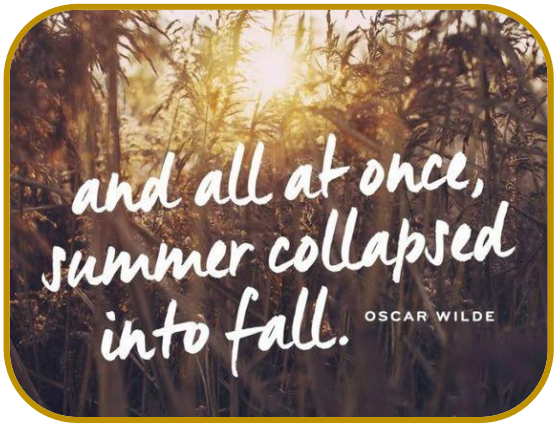
Haddam Killingworth High School
Sept | Oct 2025 Newsletter



From the Principal:

We are off to a fantastic start to the 2025–26 school year! There's something special about the energy that comes with turning the page to a new year - reuniting with familiar friends and classmates and extending a warm Cougar welcome to those joining our community for the first time. Each September reminds us that schools are places of renewal, and it's exciting to watch students and staff settle in and bring our campus to life once again. In classrooms and clubs, on the fields, and in the hallways - I see the Cougar spirit shining through. The excitement, effort, and sense of belonging that define HKHS are already visible, and they remind me what a privilege it is to lead this school.

As you read this first edition of our newsletter, I hope you get a sense of the same positive energy that fills our building each day. Whether you've joined us for Open House, attended an after-school event, or are catching up here, I invite you to share in the enthusiasm and pride that make HKHS such a remarkable place to learn and grow.

The best part of this welcome back newsletter is the introduction of our new staff members…



We are thrilled to welcome the following wonderful additions to the HKHS team!



Nichole Brigger [English]: A National Board-certified teacher with 22 years of experience, Nichole is thrilled to be joining the HK team. After serving in the United States Air Force, she spent some time in corporate America before fulfilling her lifelong goal of becoming a teacher. Nichole has taught in several states and is happy to settle back on the coast with her adult daughter. She believes that literature builds empathy and language empowers. In her free time, Nichole enjoys spending time around the water with her adorable beagle mix, Coco, teaching herself handcrafts like needlepoint, and reading everything she can get her hands on. She is also a certified SCUBA diver and has a September date for her first skydive. Nichole looks forward to becoming an enthusiastic member of the community. The mission of Haddam Killingworth High School is to provide a personalized and collective experience through which students are challenged to develop the knowledge, skills, and work ethic to contribute to a global society.

Molly Freeman [World Language]: Molly earned her Bachelor's degree in Spanish Language Education and her Master's degree in Curriculum & Instruction with a concentration in World Language Education from UConn's Neag School of Education. During her time there, Molly had the opportunity to broaden her teaching experience through internships in Peru and Costa Rica, where she gained insight into language learning and diverse cultural perspectives. She also completed her student teaching at Rockville High School in Vernon, where she developed student-centered lessons to support language acquisition and cultural appreciation. Most recently, she taught Spanish at HKIMS at the end of the academic year, and she is now looking forward to continuing her work with students at the high school level. Molly is passionate about world languages and education, and is eager to share her love of languages with students. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, painting, and spending quality time with family and friends. Molly is looking forward to the upcoming year at HKHS!





Christina Coppola [Library Media Specialist]: As a former 8th grade English teacher, Christina is excited to make the transition to high school librarian this year in our Media Center. Her lifelong love of reading led her to pursue a career as a school library media specialist, where she can share that passion and so much more with students and staff alike. As the librarian at HKHS, she looks forward to supporting students in becoming responsible technology users and critical thinkers, while also partnering with teachers to bring relevant resources and technology into the classroom. Coming up on 10 years as a Killingworth resident, Christina is especially proud to now be working in her home district. She and her husband have two daughters—one entering 7th grade at HK Middle School and one starting 4th grade at the Intermediate School—and she's eager to spread a little library joy throughout the HK community.



Jameson Corey [School Counselor]: Jameson will be sitting in for Alex Stone in our Counseling Department as a long-term substitute through November. A recent graduate from the University of Connecticut with a master's degree in Educational Psychology, Jameson completed his school counseling internship this past year at Farmington High School. Prior to that, he served as an AmeriCorps member for two years, first leading health education workshops with high school students at a non-profit in Hartford and then serving as a college and career adviser at Bristol Eastern High School. In his free time, he enjoys going on hikes, reading, playing tennis, and watching UConn basketball.



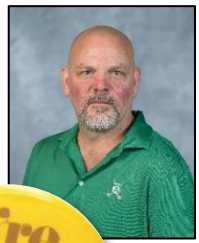
Brianna Cardillo [Mathematics]: Brianna attended Eastern Connecticut State University with a major in Mathematics and a concentration in Math for Teaching. Passionate about being a teacher, she is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Teacher Leadership to enhance her teaching skills. Brianna grew up in Rocky Hill and spent twelve years as a competitive dancer, an experience that brought her creativity and perseverance. She shares her love of dance by teaching classes at her former studio and in her free time, she enjoys staying active by practicing yoga, exercising outdoors, and spending time with her friends and family. Brianna is excited to join the HK family this school year!



Anthony DeLuco [Special Education]: Anthony attended Western Connecticut State University and holds a B.S. in Music Education with a focus in classical voice. Since graduating, Anthony has worked at HKHS for the last three years; first as the long-term choral substitute, and most recently as a paraprofessional. It was this work within the special education department that has motivated him to become a better educator and has given him the confidence to enthusiastically step into this new position at HK! Anthony also works as a cantor and church musician throughout Fairfield County and teaches private voice lessons. Outside of music and teaching Anthony enjoys nature, traveling, and jumps at any opportunity to go to the theater.



Erinn Tefel [Math Interventionist]: Erinn joins us from Baltimore, Maryland, though she grew up in upstate New York. With over 20 years of experience, she has taught mathematics in a range of settings, including public secondary schools, an international private school in Nicaragua, and community college. Most recently, she has worked with pre-service teachers as a clinical instructor at Towson University. Erinn is passionate about building supportive, engaging math classrooms that promote student confidence and growth. With her three children now grown, she enjoys spending her free time traveling and playing pickleball.



Jason "Jay" Tetrault [Security]: Jay is joining the HKHS community after retiring from the city of Middletown police department after 21 years of service. Prior to that, he worked for the town of Wallingford as a police officer and also served as a school resource officer in Middletown schools. Jay also served in the United States Marine Corps where he reached the rank of Sergeant. He enjoys time with his wife and two children in addition to spending time outdoors, cooking, and golf - along with other activities.



We're serving up a big welcome to our newest cafeteria staff member, **Sue Decarli**, who makes every lunch hour deliciously delightful! We also want to give a very warm welcome to our new, invaluable paraprofessionals – **Pam Gersz**, **Sara Nuzzo**, & **Hailey Riveria**! **WELCOME TO THE HKHS FAMILY!**

PROGRESS REPORTS!



We have just passed the half way point of the 1st quarter! Progress reports were made available via PowerSchool on the afternoon of Friday, September 26th. Please log into PowerSchool to check your student's grades and reach out to their teachers if you have any questions. The format for teacher email addresses is firstinitiallastname@rsd17.org.

***REMINDER**: If you do not have a Parent Portal account through PowerSchool, please reach out to counseling secretary Amy Giarnella at agiarnella@rsd17.org for instructions on how to set one up!*

Conferences are Around the Corner!

HKHS utilizes **pick◦A◦time** to schedule conferences between parents/guardians and teachers twice per year, both virtually and in-person. The next set of conferences will take place on **Wed, October 22nd** from **5pm to 8pm** and **Thurs, October 23rd** from **12:35pm to 4:05pm**. Both days are ½ days for students.

To sign up, you will need to create an account on the pick◦A◦time website or login if you've previously created one. You will need your student's six-digit district ID number to sign up for conferences. Each student knows this number as it is used as their school email address.

The pick◦A◦time scheduling portal will only be open from **Sat, October 11th at 8am until Sat, October 18th at 8pm.** Further instructions, including a fall conference-specific link, will be sent out next week to all parent/guardian email addresses on file.

→ → → Please note that the pick◦A◦time system will not allow multiple sets of parents/ guardians to schedule separate conferences with the same teachers for the same student. If multiple conferences are needed, please reach out to your child's teacher(s). ← ← ←

SCHOOL PSAT DAY: Wed, October 22nd



Students in grades 9-11 will be taking the official College Board practice SAT. Freshmen will complete the PSAT 8/9, while sophomores and juniors will complete the PSAT NMSQT. All students will need to bring their **fully charged** school-issued Chromebook, as well as their computer charger, on this day. Lunch will be served after testing and then students will be dismissed for buses at 11:55am.

Students in 12th grade will remain home to work on post-secondary planning but can sign up for college essay writing workshops with HKHS English teachers. If your student is not sure what they need to do on October 22nd, they should go to https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/ and explore the career, college, and/or scholarship opportunities available there. CollegeBoard has revamped this resource to provide excellent resources for students pursuing both the workforce or college after high school.

Annual Co-Curricular Fair Inspires Student Involvement!

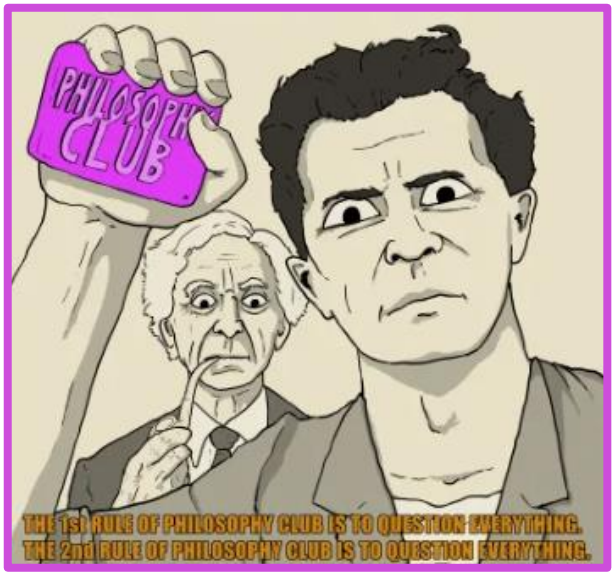
HKHS is proud to offer a total of **FORTY co-curricular clubs** for the 2025-26 school year. Students gathered in the fieldhouse on September 24th for our annual co-curricular fair where students learned about the various clubs & organizations available for them to join.



Upperclassmen hosted tables for the Cougar Chronicle, Peer Advocates, Current Events Club, Film Society Club, Math League, Environmental Club, Human Relations Club, Science Olympiad, Cougar Chords, Financial Club, High School Bowl, the IGNITE student coalition club through HK Youth & Family Services, and many more!



We'd specifically like to highlight the following three clubs that are new this year…



PHILOSOPHY CLUB

The founding members of the HKHS Philosophy Club are Zi Abbott, Christopher Sanders-Roberts, and Norah Ridgeway. They are accompanied by English teacher, Mrs. Shatraw as their advisor. Zi, Christopher, and Norah started this club to provide a space where they could explore major philosophical questions such as…

"What is justice?"
"What makes a good life?"
"DO WE HAVE FREE WILL?"



They are excited to explore these topics and introduce fellow members to key philosophers, schools of thought, and traditions across cultures. Through meetings and discussion, they want to connect philosophy to everyday life, literature, science, and current events.

Morgan's Message is a national organization created in the honor of Morgan Rodgers, a Duke Women's lacrosse player who lost her life in 2019 by suicide. This organization strives to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health within the student-athlete community and equalize the treatment of physical **and** mental health in athletics.



The club president is Mia Lomuntad who is junior that plays both volleyball and lacrosse. She became an official ambassador for Morgan's Message during her sophomore year and wanted to bring Morgan's Message to HKHS because, "As a student athlete, I have seen and experienced the struggles in this community every day and have always wished there was more awareness around this topic. Morgan Rodgers is tragically not the only victim of depression and bringing this platform to HK is important to me because even just a simple conversation or "How are you?" can make the biggest difference to a person who is struggling. Having Morgan's Message here creates an even bigger environment to end the stigma and spread awareness." Ava Geissler is a junior who plays basketball and volleyball and serves as the vice president of the club. She was recently accepted into the ambassador program as well! Brody Ferguson is also a junior who plays basketball and he rounds out the leadership team by serving as secretary. Guidance counselor Mr. Myers serves as the advisor and Ms. Stone will join him as co-advisor once she returns from maternity leave.

TAKING A SHOT AT MENTAL HEALTH

Click HERE to find out more about this amazing organization and follow them on Instagram at @hkhsMorgansMessage!

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

The Habitat for Humanity Club is new to HKHS this year and was founded by senior Daniel McCourt. The goal of the club is to provide students with the opportunity to gain community service hours by getting hands-on experience while learning practical skills that will benefit members in our community.

Volunteering with Habitat can provide members with long-lasting skills that they can take with them for the rest of their lives. Anyone who is looking for community service opportunities, to gain real-world experience and connections, or just looking for something to do during the weekend should consider joining! *Don't have time to volunteer but still want to support the Habitat for Humanity mission?* Consider shopping at the Habitat ReStore in Cromwell! Find out more about their mission and how to volunteer at https://www.habitatmiddlesex.org/restore/.





YEARBOOKS + PICTURE RETAKES

Picture day make-ups will take place on **Mon, October 6th** during the Lunch/Activity block. Steady Photography will be on site **Wed, October 8th** as well for team athletic photos!

Yearbook sales are open and there are a LIMITED number of discounted books still available! When ordering, users will be prompted with a code for $10 off until they run out. **Please note:** ALL students who want a yearbook must order one as senior dues do not include a yearbook. Senior families can also buy the popular "Senior Recognition Ads" which vary in price based on size.

To order a yearbook or senior ad, please click the link below:

Jostens ~ HKHS Yearbook Orders





ATTENTION SENIORS!

Cap & gown measurements will be taken on Wed, October 8th along with the Class of 2026 group photo! **Senior QUOTES are due *no later* than Friday, October 10th!** Please see the Class of 2026 Google Classroom for all details regarding senior submissions for the yearbook.

HKTV is Looking for their 37th annual Holiday Telethon…



Each December, Haddam Killingworth High School students host our annual **Holiday Telethon**, a live broadcast that raises funds to support a deserving cause. Now in its **37th year**, this signature event has become a hallmark of generosity and community spirit, offering both meaningful financial assistance and a powerful reminder of what we can achieve together. **We are now accepting nominations for this year's beneficiary!** The recipient may be an individual, a family, or a nonprofit organization within the greater RSD17 community who would benefit from financial support. The beneficiary will serve as the centerpiece of the telethon, sharing their story and inspiring our students, families, and neighbors to unite around a common purpose. The selection process includes a short application and an interview. We plan to identify and contact potential beneficiaries by early to mid-October to allow ample time for review and preparation. To nominate yourself, someone you know, or a local organization, please contact Kasha Topa-Finberg for details at ktopa-finberg@rsd17.org or (860) 345-8541.

Thank you for helping us carry forward this cherished tradition of giving. Together, we can extend hope and make a lasting difference in our community.



Warmly,
the HKHS Holiday Telethon Team

Click HERE to complete the 2025 Beneficiary Application Form!

Please note: It will prompt you to make a copy of the form which you can then complete.

SNOW DAYS *and* GRADUATION DAY!

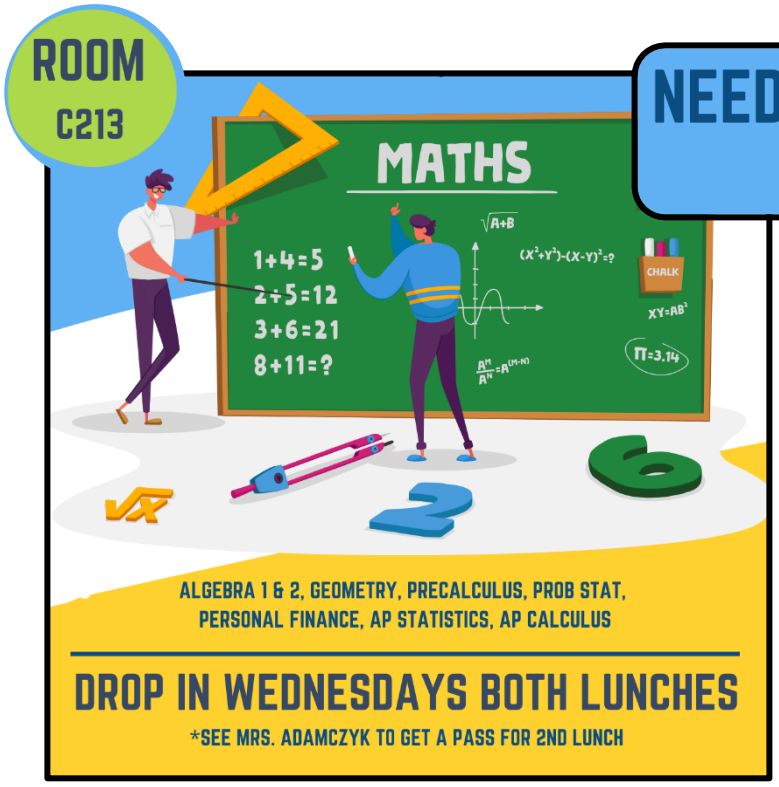


Our final day of school is **tentatively** scheduled for Thursday, June 11th but only if we do **not** have any snow days *(which, this being New England, is extremely unlikely)*. Please be mindful when booking vacations that our final exam schedule, final day of school, and the date of graduation are **likely** to change.



Please note that the entirety of graduation day should be reserved for the ceremony. The Board of Education will solidify the actual date in late spring but the ceremony itself may be held at any point between 10am to 6pm – dependent on the weather. Administration reserves the right to adjust the timing of graduation through the final week of school. A last-minute change in timing may mean the ceremony could be held outside in the morning for example, instead of having to be moved indoors.

Please keep this in mind when planning traveling arrangements for friends & family!



NEED HELP WITH MATH?

The **Peer Tutor Club** offers extra help on Wednesdays, during both periods of the Lunch/ Activity block, for students from Algebra 1 up through AP Calculus. There are amazing tutors who excel in math and enjoy teaching it to others who are eager to help their classmates! Peer-student pairs can also coordinate other days/times to meet as needed.

Students are encouraged to swing by Mrs. Adamczyk's room (C213) for help with homework, to prepare for an upcoming assessment, or just to ask a question!

Mu Alpha Theta

National High School and Two-Year College Mathematics Honor Society

The HKHS chapter of the ***Mu Alpha Theta*** National Math Honor Society inducted its 2nd class of students on Friday, September 19th. The founding ten members of the club welcomed the following 14 new members, more than doubling their numbers!

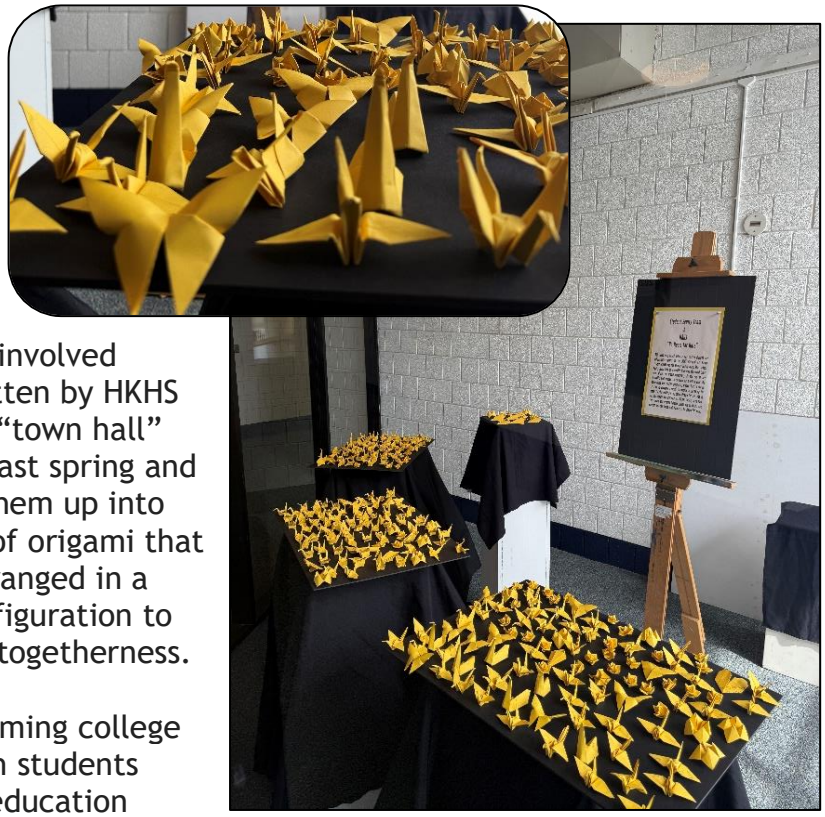


2025-26 Inductees: *Chloe Abarientos, Charlotte Behnke, Brody Ferguson, Safina Hussain, Maizie Irons, Adam Livingston, Audrey Macy, Daniel McCourt, Finnegan O'Hanlon, Freida Petersen, Aaron Richwine, Riley Stephens, Wyatt Voegtli, and Owen Voegtli.*

National Math Honor Society plans for this year include outreach to younger students in the district, increasing participation in VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), the annual Pi-Day/Pi-K, and many other activities! The NMHS was also thrilled to welcome Alex Engler, class of 2023, and current student at Drexler University, who joined them on September 17th to discuss his work with physicists at Fermilab (Chicago) and SNOLAB (Antarctica) developing devices to detect dark matter. Community members who are willing to come guest speak about the ways they use math in their job are encouraged to contact Wendy Adamcyzk, math department head, at wadamczyk@rsd17.org



Currently "on display at HK" is a collaborative art installation created by the Student Equity Team and the National Art Honor Society (NAHS) titled **"NO ROOM FOR HATE"**. The work involved taking pledges written by HKHS students during a "town hall" meeting this past spring and folding them up into pieces of origami that were arranged in a tight configuration to represent unity and togetherness.

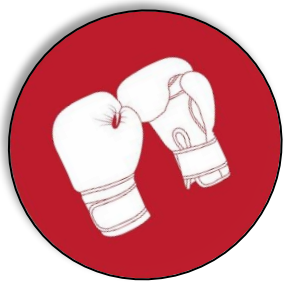


The Fine Arts Department is also welcoming college representatives to specifically talk with students interested in pursuing post-secondary education related to the arts. The University of Hartford visited HKHS on September 30th and a representative from Montserrat College of Art will be joining us on October 21st. ***Interested students should reach out to Mr. Cannan to get signed up to attend!***

Mrs. Miller: HK TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

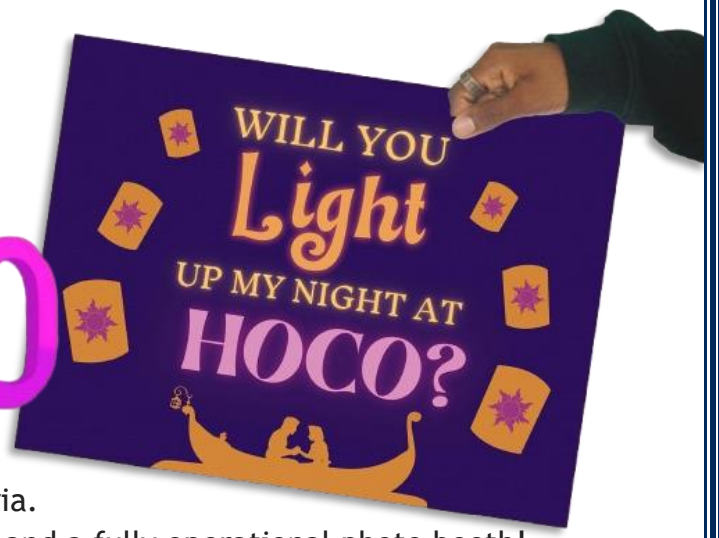


With 37 years of math teaching experience, Mrs. Angela Miller has shown that her passion for education is anything but ***average*** 😉. Did you know that outside of the classroom, ***she enjoys kickboxing (WHO KNEW???)***, where she finds both balance and strength in every punch and high kick!



For her, it is the perfect way to ***subtract*** stress, ***multiply*** energy, and ***add*** some fun to her routine. After all, Mrs. Miller knows life is all about finding the right ***equation*** for work, health, and happiness, and she has definitely ***solved for x***!

Tangled HOCO



This year's **HOMECOMING** dance is scheduled for **October 9th from 7pm-10pm** in the HKHS cafeteria. Tickets are $10 per person and there will be a DJ and a fully operational photo booth!

(NEW this year! Students will be able to take printed photos home for free!)

Guest forms **must** be filled out for all non-HKHS guests and turned in no later than Friday, October 3rd. The form itself lists a deadline of October 2nd but due to there being no school that day, they will be accepted through Friday. **As a reminder, students must be present at school for *_at least_* 5 hours in order to attend after school activities such as this.** Students who do not meet this attendance guideline will be turned away and not allowed to enter.

Student Council WANTS YOUR BLOOD



The members of the Haddam Killingworth High School Student Council will be holding their first blood drive of the year on **Halloween** – Friday, October 31st. This event is not open to the public but is open to all students who are at least 16 *(please note: 16-year old students can participate **with** parent/guardian permission, students who are 17-years old+ do not need a permission slip)*. Students can sign up by checking in with Mr. Hagewood in C201.

The American Red Cross has a critical need for blood donors and patients need you this fall! Visit www.redcrossblood.org/ to find a blood drive near you.

American Red Cross

Anyone who gives blood between September 22nd to October 19th will receive their thanks from the American Red Cross with a $10 Amazon.com gift card sent by email!



HKHS is CookIn'!

Our beginner culinary students have officially made their way into the kitchen and are busy learning new techniques, such as the creaming process and the differences between yeast breads and quick breads. Meanwhile, our advanced students have started a global journey, beginning with Italy, as they research and prepare foods from around the world!



We are excited to share that on October 24th, Mrs. Siciliano will be taking a group of students to Channel 8 to appear on ***Good Morning Connecticut's*** kitchen segment, where they'll showcase some delicious fall treats. *Stay tuned for more updates from our talented young chefs!*

Project Lead the Way College Credit!

Did your student take a Project Lead the Way (PLTW) engineering class last year? If so, there is a good chance that they earned college credit! Credit and course grades are awarded based on a combination of their "End of Course" score on the EoC exam and their HKHS course grade. Score sheets and packets were provided to all current students in mid-September. Student scores can also be obtained through the guidance department or by emailing rkish@rsd17.org.

In order to "receive" the college credit, students along with their parents/guardians are solely responsible for applying for it through either:

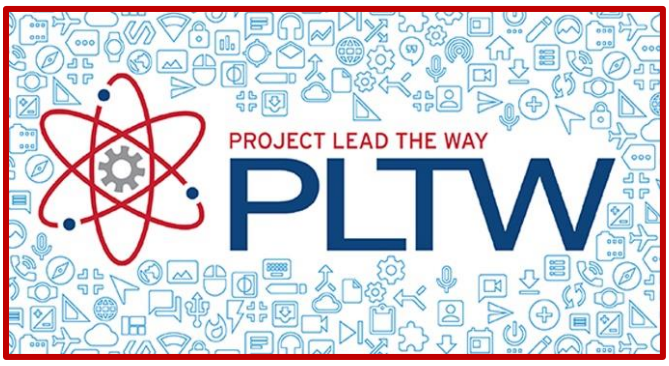
- Rochester Institute of Technology *(Deadline: November 2nd, 2025)*

OR

- University of New Haven *(Deadline: December 30th, 2025)*

The links above will bring you to the respective university pages where you will find all forms and information needed for applying and paying for college credits.

Click HERE for more information on this process from the HKHS technology education department!



Every Tradition Starts Somewhere! JOIN US TONIGHT for the inaugural…

KINDERGARTEN & SENIOR LEGACY WALK 2025

Please join us in a meaningful moment as seniors prepare to graduate and Kindergartners begin their educational journey.

When: Friday, October 3rd, 2025

Time: Arrive @ HKHS 5:30pm, 5:45pm Line up on track endzones, walk beginning promptly at 6:00pm

Where: HKHS Football Field
(before the HKFB v NB Football game.)

Kindergarten students accompanied by a parent from BURR/KES, and HK Seniors will walk toward one another, meeting at the 50 yard line. Seniors will welcome Kinders to the district and pass along a small gift, wishing them success on their educational journey.

Kinder & Senior students encouraged to wear school colors or HK attire.

Kinder students and Seniors students *only* will receive 1 free hot dog ticket to be used at the concession stand during the football game that night.

Kindergarten parents contact awilcox@rsd17.org with any questions.
Senior students contact twilcox@rsd17.org with any questions.

Tyler Wilcox (HKHS special education teacher) & his wife, Anna Wilcox (BES art teacher) are excited to announce a new tradition here in RSD17! HKHS, BES, and KES will be participating in the first ever **HK Legacy Walk on Friday, October 3rd @ 6pm**!

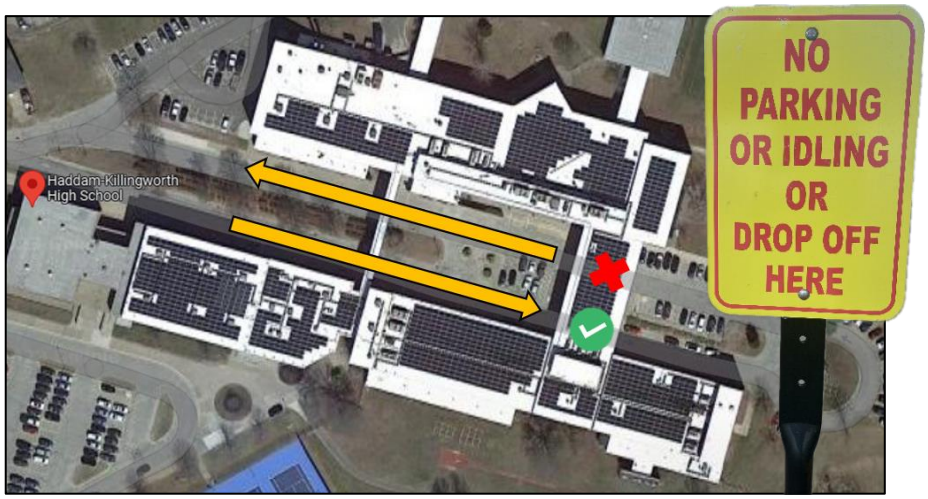
A Legacy Walk is a cherished school tradition where graduating high school seniors walk through their elementary and/or middle school campuses, or meet kindergarteners, to inspire younger students and symbolize a "**passing of the torch**". This event allows seniors to reflect on their journey, create a lasting positive impact, and wish success to the next generation of students.

Kindergarteners and seniors are encouraged to wear HK attire or school colors! A photo opportunity will take place on the 50 before everyone is ushered off the field for kick off.

SAFETY FIRST!

REMINDER: students should **only** be dropped off from the right driveway, as you pull in and are closest to the fieldhouse - as indicated with a green checkmark.

Neither adults nor students should stop on the auditorium side of the driveway – as indicated with a red X.





Our Internship Coordinator is on the Clock!



Please help us welcome our new Internship Coordinator, Mr. Sean Gallagher who has taken over after Dr. Borzain's retirement! Coming from the Technology Education Department, **Mr. Gallagher knows all about the value of hands-on experience and is excited to support the next generation of professionals!**

HK's Internship Program is always looking to connect students with real-world experiences but ***we need the community's help***! We have bright, motivated students hoping to explore careers in a wide variety of fields, including manufacturing, education, financial planning, veterinary medicine, and criminal law – to name just a few. If you, or someone you know, works in these fields and would be open to hosting a high school intern for a few hours a week, it would make a huge difference to our students. **If you are interested, please reach out to Sean Gallagher at sgallagher@rsd17.org.**

It's All About Perspective…

Photography students have been experimenting with taking photos using different points of view while walking through our campus.







Students were challenged to find various objects and plants that they could shoot from a worm's eye view, a bird's eye view, and at eye level. Given the great weather, students thoroughly enjoyed getting fresh air and taking a walk while exploring the joys of photography! *A pixel perfect activity!*

La Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica – ¡Primera Reunión!

On Thursday, September 11th, the HKHS chapter of the **Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica** held its first meeting of the year. Members gathered to:

- welcome new and returning students to the society
- review the purpose of SHH which is to promote academic excellence in Spanish and to celebrate the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world
- outline expectations for the year, including service opportunities, tutoring, cultural events, and community outreach
- begin brainstorming ideas for upcoming projects





The meeting also included fun icebreakers in Spanish to help members get to know each other better. Students left with excitement for the year ahead and are looking forward to making a positive impact in our school and community through language and culture! In addition to the full club photo, Spanish Honor Society officers are pictured [left to right]: Daniel McCourt, Julia Downing, Dina Kilroy, Catherine Nguyen, Chloe Felder, & Gabriel Blair.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE…



Olivia "Olly" Panzella practices her clarinet to prepare for the upcoming **Shoreline Music Festival**. This event includes band and choir students from all 12 schools in the Shoreline Conference and culminates with a concert at Valley Regional High School on October 15th at 7pm.

Click HERE to find out more!



CLICK HERE to watch our promo video!

FALL DRAMA SHOW LOADING!

Haddam Killingworth High School Drama Club is pleased to announce its fall drama production will be…



Performances will take place on Thurs, November 6th and Sat, November 8th, both at 7pm in the HKHS auditorium.

This classic comedy, written by Joseph Kesselring, follows the outrageous antics of the Brewster family, blending witty dialogue with laugh-out-loud moments and a touch of mystery.

Come support our talented student cast and crew for an evening of live theater that promises to entertain! **Tickets are available for sale at the door or through this LINK!**

Breakfast Brings Students Together!

The HKHS music department was thrilled to welcome more than 50 students to a special breakfast held on September 5th before the school day began. The event brought together musicians from grades 9th – 12th who are enrolled in a performing ensemble the opportunity to connect, build friendships, and celebrate their shared love of music.







The department hosts gatherings like this throughout the year to strengthen teamwork, encourage musicianship, and create lifelong memories. ***Stay tuned for more information about upcoming group activities!***

Congratulations are in Order!

NATIONAL MERIT SCOLARSHIP CORPORATION COMMENDED STUDENTS

HKHS is proud to announce three of our senior students have been named as **Commended Students** in the **2026 National Merit Scholarship Program**!



Amelia Riggs

The mission of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) is to recognize and honor the academically talented students of the United States. NMSC accomplishes its mission by conducting nationwide academic scholarship programs. The enduring goals of NMSC's scholarship programs are:

- *To promote a wider and deeper respect for learning in general and for exceptionally talented individuals in particular*
- *To shine a spotlight on brilliant students and encourage the pursuit of academic excellence at all levels of education*
- *To stimulate increased support from individuals and organizations that wish to sponsor scholarships for outstanding scholastic talent*



Tetsuya Imai

Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 students in the country who entered the 2026 competition by taking the PSAT/NMSQT exam. "*Those being named Commended Students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success*," commented a spokesperson for NMSC. "*These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments, as well as the key role their schools play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broaden their educational opportunities and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success.*"



Mikayla Ruggiero

CONGRATULATIONS TO TETSUYA, AMELIA, & MIKAYLA!



Fall Décor? We've Got You Covered!

The HKHS boys' soccer team will be holding our annual **Pumpkin, Mum & Bake Sale** on **Saturday, October 4th**! The sale will be held at Jack's Country Restaurant in Higganum and the Killingworth Transfer Station from 8am to 11am (rain or shine!). Please come get your fall decorations and show your support for the boys' soccer team!

Click HERE to view the event flyer!

HKHS is *RUNNING* the Show!



Both the boys and girls cross-country teams have achieved great success so far this season!

On September 13th, the HKHS boys' and girls' cross-country teams traveled to Somers, NY to compete in the **Somers Big Red Invitational** against over 40 teams from New York and Connecticut. Not only did the boys' and girls' team win the team title in their respective races, but the program also captured the best combined boys' and girls' combined team championship out of all the schools competing at the meet! Pictured above is the boys' & girls' team with their championship team plaques and championship cup for top overall combined boys' and girls' team.

Next up, both teams traveled to Manchester, NH on September 20th to compete in the **Manchester Invitational** against over 100 teams from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The girls' team once again had a great day on the challenging and hilly 3.1 mile course to place **1st overall as a team** (out of 40 teams) in the "Small Schools" varsity race with 117 points.





The boys' team, missing one of their top runners due to illness, also had a solid race as they placed **3rd out of 42 teams** in the "Small School" varsity race scoring 177 points. The Cougars finished as a tight pack with the top 5 runners all finishing all within 18 seconds of each other! (a*ll photos above courtesy of Kristie Kaminski)*



On September 22nd, both cross-country teams competed in their only league meet of the season as they traveled to East Hampton to compete in the **Shoreline Large School League Meet** against Valley Regional, Morgan, North Branford, East Hampton, and Cromwell.

The boys' team went undefeated to have their dual meet record at 5-0 for the season and are now 126-0 in dual meets dating back to 2014! The girls' team also went up against the same five league teams and ended with a 5-0 record and are now 106-2 in dual meets since 2015. *(photo courtesy of Nancy McCourt)*

Last, but certainly not least, both teams traveled to Wappingers Falls, NY on September 27th to compete in the **Bowdoin Park Classic** against some of the top teams in the Northeast Region from New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. The girls' team raced well on the challenging 5,000 meter course to place **4th overall** as a team in the varsity 2 race with 143 points. The boys' team, racing without one of their captains and top runners who was out with injury, still competed well against some of the top teams and placed **12th as a team** in the varsity 2 race scoring 330 points.





Charlotte Behnke leading the way up the hill!

The cross-country teams will next compete this Saturday, October 4th as they travel to Thetford, VT to compete in the **Woods Trail Run**.
(photos courtesy of Sean & Nancy McCourt)

Wyatt Voegtli finishing strong down the final straightaway!

Girls Soccer Media Day!

Athletic media days are events where student-athletes, coaches, and team staff have organized photo and video sessions to create content for promotional purposes throughout the season. Most recently, our girls' soccer team had their media day which produced the amazing photo below!





- **Kindergarten & Senior Legacy Walk!** | Friday, Oct 3rd @ 6pm
- **SATs** | Saturday, Oct 4th
- **School Picture Retake Day** | Wednesday, Oct 6th
- **Cap & Gown Measurements + Senior Group Photo** | Wednesday, Oct 8th [*in Advisory*]
- **Project Graduation Planning Meeting** | Wednesday, Oct 8th @ 7pm [*in Lower Media*]
  - ***Volunteers are needed! Please consider joining!***
- **Homecoming!** | Thursday, Oct 9th @ 7pm – *HKHS Cafeteria*
- **Professional Development Day** | Thursday, Oct 9th – ***Early dismissal for students!***
- **Professional Development Day** | Friday, Oct 10th - ***No school!***
- **Indigenous Peoples' Day / Columbus Day** | Monday, Oct 13th – ***No school!***
- **Shoreline Music Festival** | Wednesday, Oct 15th @ 7pm – *Valley Regional High School*
- **ACTs** | Saturday, Oct 18th [*non-HKHS event*]
- **School Day PSATs** | Wednesday, Oct 22nd **– *Early dismissal for students!***
- **Pick◦A◦Time Parent/Teacher Conferences**
  - Wednesday, Oct 22nd from 5pm to 8pm **– *Early dismissal for students!***
  - Thursday, Oct 23rd from 12:35pm to 4:05pm **– *Early dismissal for students!***
- **Quarter 1 Ends** | Wednesday, Oct 29th
- **Student Council Blood Drive** | Friday, October 31st
- **Election Day + Professional Development Day** | Tuesday, November 4th – ***No school!***
- **Fall Drama Show "Arsenic & Old Lace"** | Thursday, Nov 6th & Saturday, Nov 8th at 7pm
- **SATs** | Saturday, Nov 8th [*non-HKHS event*]
- **Veterans Day** | Monday, Nov 11th – ***No school!***
- **Southern Region Music Auditions** | Saturday, Nov 22nd @ *Foran High School*
- **Principal's Cup** | Tuesday, Nov 25th @ 6:30pm *[Valley Regional hosting]*
- **Thanksgiving Break** | ½ day on Wed, Nov 26th + no school on Nov 27th & 28th

We look forward to seeing you at our school events and around campus.
Thank you so much for all you do to support our students and the Cougar family.

Respectfully,

Donna L. Hayward,
Principal

• Guidance Counseling Dept Update •

HKHS has transitioned from Naviance to SchooLinks as our post-secondary planning platform. Naviance will no longer be used as of this year. The class of 2026 began working with SchooLinks last spring, and will be using it to manage the college application process this fall. Counselors will be meeting with students in grades 9th - 11th throughout the year to orient them to SchooLinks and deliver lessons. SchooLinks provides resources for career exploration, college searches, virtual reality college campus tours, local and national scholarship information, financial aid resources, resume building resources, and more. As parents and guardians, you will have the opportunity to join SchooLinks through your own account which will allow you to view career interest and personality assessments your student has completed, see what colleges your student has favorited, and complete your own research on colleges and careers. We are rolling out SchooLinks with all students this year and will be sharing more information with families in the near future.

Post-Secondary Planning In Progress

High school counselors are currently working with our seniors on post-secondary planning. We met with students in Advisory over the first two weeks of the school year and followed up the student presentation with a **Senior Planning Night** on September 15th which was geared towards families. That presentation can be found here. School counselors have also begun individual meetings with our seniors. Each student will meet with their school counselor over the coming weeks, and we are always available for drop-in questions.

Seniors with early application deadlines (10/15, 11/1, or 11/15) should be actively working on their applications, including their personal essay. They should have already communicated with any teacher(s) from whom they would like a letter of recommendation. Please note that students must complete their Candidate Biography Form Google Doc that is posted in the Class of 2026 Google Classroom and share with the teacher(s) who are writing a letter of recommendation and their school counselor. **This should be done at least one month before their earliest application due date.**

College Reps Are In The House

HKHS is hosting college representatives nearly every day during first lunch through mid-November. This is a great opportunity for seniors to connect with people who work at the colleges they are applying to or are interested in. It's also a great way for juniors to find out more about colleges they are considering. Students can sign up visits on their homepage in SchooLinks or just drop in. Rep visits reminders are also included on morning announcements every day and announced on the overhead speaker at the beginning of the Lunch/Activity block.

FAFSA Completion Graduation Requirement

The RSD17 Board of Education requires completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as a graduation requirement. All members of the Class of 2026 are **required** to either complete the FAFSA **or** complete a waiver exempting them from completing the FAFSA in order to graduate from HKHS. For additional information about the FAFSA, please watch this What Is FAFSA®? video or visit studentaid.gov/resources.

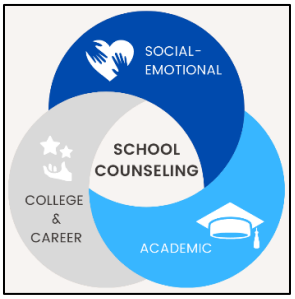
Advanced Courses at HKHS

University of Connecticut's enrollment window for Early College Experience (ECE) courses is open - now through 11:59 pm on October 16th, 2025. Students enrolled in one or more UConn ECE at HKHS can enroll through UConn at uconn.dualenroll.com for college credit for their courses. Please reach out to Emily Baerlein, school counselor & UConn ECE Site Representative at ebaerlein@rsd17.org with any questions.

If your child is enrolled in one or more Advanced Placement (AP) courses, please look out for information from the school counseling office soon!

*** Please remember that if your student qualifies for the Free & Reduced Lunch Program, you are eligible to have AP & ECE course fees waived (as well as SAT fees, college application fees, and other charges)! If you are not sure if your student is on the list or would like additional information, please contact counseling secretary Amy Giarnella at agiarnella@rsd17.org or 860-554-5750. You can also find information on the Free & Reduced Price Lunch Program here.

Health 1 Class Visits



School counselors visited Health 1 classes on Friday, September 19th and Monday, September 22nd for a **"Meet Your School Counselors"** lesson. We explained what the school counseling office has to offer to our students and shared information on school policies. We also had our ninth-grade students log in to SchooLinks and complete the "Find Your Path" onboarding lesson. We look forward to seeing our ninth-grade students in Advisory later this year!

College Board Accounts

Some students have been experiencing issues logging into their College Board accounts. Please note that HKHS does not have any access to student login details for this website and cannot reset passwords or unlock accounts as we can with PowerSchool. **Students should first try to reset their password from home** as College Board password reset emails do not always go through on school wi-fi and some students cannot access their personal email accounts on their Chromebooks. If students are unable to reset their password, they **must** call College Board's customer service line at 866-630-9305 or visit the Account Help section of the website which can be found here.

Senior Digital Portfolios



All HKHS students are required to create and present a Senior Digital Portfolio in the spring of their senior year in order to graduate from HKHS. This will serve as the Mastery Based Diploma Assessment (worth one credit) noted in the "Credit Distribution & Requirements for Graduation" section (pages 7-8) of our 2025-2026 Opportunities Book. In order to complete the Portfolio, seniors must be able to demonstrate mastery of the five HKHS Learning Expectations (page 10 of the Opportunities Book). Students will have multiple opportunities in each course they take at HKHS to demonstrate their progress in meeting learning expectations. Learning Expectations Progress Reports will be provided to students and families regularly. Advisory time will be dedicated every year for students to work on their portfolios.

Please visit the Counseling Department website for more information!

Community Service | Guidelines & Opportunities



All HKHS students must earn 30 hours of community service to graduate. The only exception to this requirement is transfer students, for whom the requirement is prorated.

Students can pick up copies of our Community Service Documentation Form in the counseling office, and can also download it from both the school's website and the counseling website. **It is preferred that students hand in completed forms directly to the counseling office in person.** Occasionally we receive multiple copies of the same documentation (for example, the student turns a copy in in-person AND a copy is sent to Mrs. G by the organization for which the student completed the hours AND a parent/guardian emails a copy directly to the counselor) which can make tracking hours more difficult. To prevent this, it is preferred that students turn hours into our office directly.

Please note that starting with the class of 2025, students are now required to earn **ALL 30 hours** in order to apply for a **parking permit or participate in senior privileges** such as senior prom, senior outing, etc**.** If your student needs ideas of where to volunteer they can visit the HK Youth & Family Services website that has a regularly updated list of local volunteer opportunities. Many opportunities are date specific but there are quite a few options listed that are ongoing with flexible hours available.

YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES OF HADDAM-KILLINGWORTH INC.

Class Rank Reminder



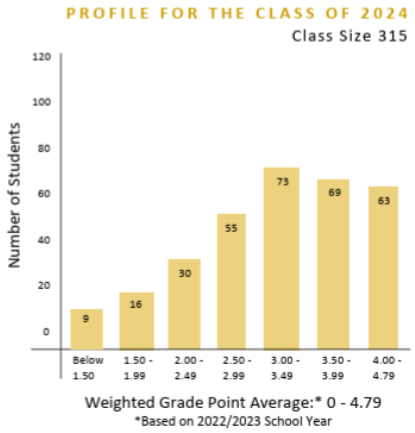
We also wanted to ensure that all HKHS families were aware that the Class of 2026 is the last cohort for which we will provide class rank as a component of students' college applications. This decision involved much thought and research and was not made lightly. Research supports our belief that class rank is not helpful information to include as a component of college applications. In order to explore this topic, we consulted with area high schools and spoke to dozens of college representatives. We found that the trend away from class rank was reflected across the board: fewer high schools provide class rank and fewer colleges use it meaningfully in college admissions. College admissions offices understand that rank is an arbitrary measure, dependent entirely on the make-up of a student's graduating class in a given year. A student with a given academic profile (for example, a 4.0 GPA) would find that their rank would vary not only between high schools but also across graduating classes. Colleges, including the most selective institutions, state that the single most important measure in admissions is the student's overall academic performance, understood through a close reading of their transcript.

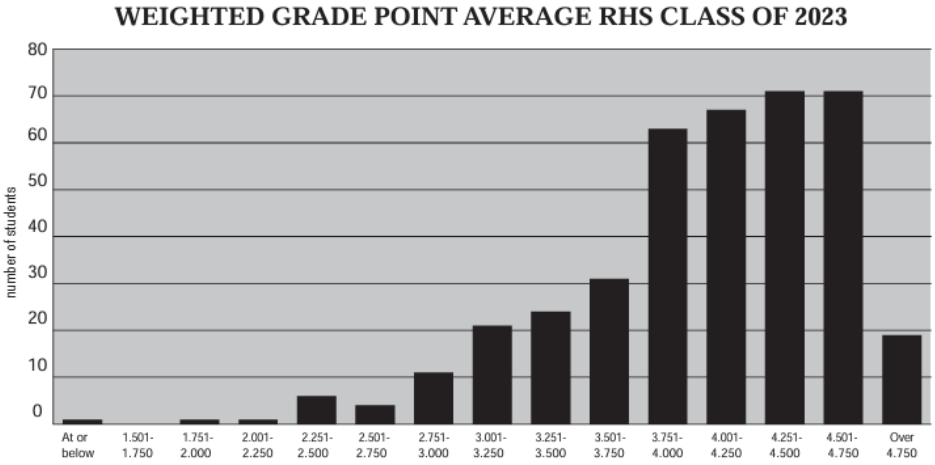
In addition, we considered the human factors in our decision to eliminate class rank. First, we want our students to focus less on competing with their peers and more on their own growth as a student. We feel that class rank provides an unnecessary competitive aspect within the learning environment and want to encourage our students to take academic risks, work through challenges, and choose classes or experiences that have meaning for them. As school counselors, we have also seen students place enormous pressure on themselves to reach a specific rank or become embarrassed and "beat themselves up" when they learn their rank. Ultimately, we came to the decision that using class rank provides more negatives than positives to our student body.

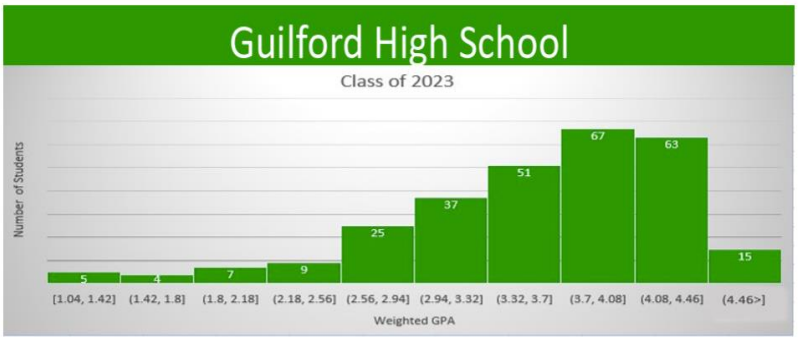
To learn more about this trend, please consider reading the following articles:

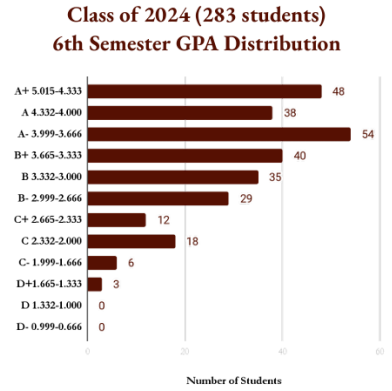
- NASSP.org - Class Rank, GPA, and Grading
- EdWeek.org - Why Some Schools Are Ditching Class Rank and Weighted GPAs
- CAS.casciac.org - Connecticut Association of Schools Legal Mailbag
- IvyCoach.com - Does High School Class Rank Matter in College Admissions?
- LATimes.com - Opinion: Class rank system does more harm than good

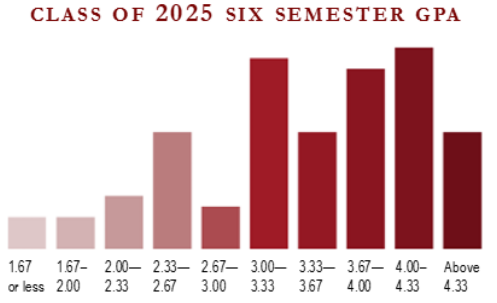
To replace class rank for college admissions, HKHS will provide a GPA distribution chart within our school profile, showing how student GPAs are spread across the student body. The chart will be divided at intervals of 0.25 GPA points and will be used to communicate to colleges the relative strength of a student's academic performance without assigning students direct numerical ranks. GPA distribution charts are very common at many high schools, including many across Connecticut. The next page includes several examples from area high schools that have also switched to using distribution charts.





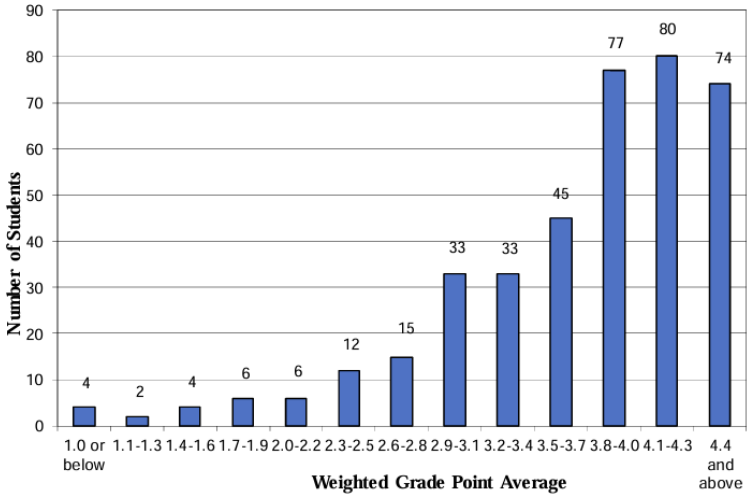






WEIGHTED SCALE: QUALITY POINTS						CLASS OF 2025	
A+	4.33	B+	3.33	C+	2.33	D+	1.33	High	4.64
A	4.0	B	3.0	C	2.0	D	1.0	Median	3.45
A–	3.67	B–	2.67	C–	1.67	D–	.67	Low	1.10

AP= +1 point H= +.5 point





2025-26

NEWSLETTER

HK CLASS OF 2026

WE ARE ONE MONTH CLOSER TO GRADUATION!

For those of you who are new to the HKHS Family, Project Graduation is an all-night celebration for students held the night of graduation. This event is hosted by many high schools across the nation to provide graduates with a safe place to celebrate in a substance free environment. In the 34 years that this event has occurred at HK, there have been ZERO fatalities involving our new high school graduates on graduation night. Help us get to 35 - 0.

There is tons of food, games and entertainment. Everyone leaves with a prize – even some with a TV! The celebration gives students one last night to be together as a class and create lifetime memories.

We are a committee of volunteers from the community. Most of us have kids in high school, but all members of the HK community are welcome. Whether you are great at decorating, fundraising, or any type of planning, there is a way for you to help. For committee descriptions visit this link or use the QR code below. Join our mailing list to stay informed on items such as yard signs for graduates, etc.

Any level of commitment is always welcome…even if you miss a few meetings feel free to hop back in when you can. If you have questions or ideas send an email to hkprojectgraduation@gmail.com.

Thank you for any support you can provide,

Keryn Felder
2026 Project Graduation Chair

PROJECT GRAD IS NOT JUST FOR PARENTS OF SENIORS...

As students graduate, parents often move off the committee, so there is constant turnover. Please consider joining as an underclassmen parent so you can familiarize yourself with our activities and help plan something great for several classes of students – including yours. As an underclassman parent it is especially appreciated to volunteer on graduation night so parents of graduates have time to celebrate with their families.

NEXT MEETING:
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8
7:00 PM
LOWER MEDIA CENTER

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!
Stay in the loop with upcoming events and planning opportunities.

CLICK HERE OR USE THIS QR CODE:

FOLLOW OUR SOCIALS:

Web Site: Project Graduation

Facebook: HKHS Project Graduation

Instagram: hkhsprojectgrad









HK CLASS | OF 2025









JUNE 11, 2025

Over 100 students in the class of 2025 attended their celebration and had a **safe** and memorable final night together at HKHS.

TEACH
CONNECTICUT.ORG

What's next after high school?

Discover how teaching can open doors to a meaningful and impactful career

Saturday
October 18 – 11am EST

Tunxis Community College

At this event, you'll

- Meet representatives from colleges, universities, and educator preparation programs
- Learn about admissions, financial aid, and scholarships
- Explore the steps it takes to become a teacher

This is your opportunity to gather information, ask questions about applying to prep programs, and how to find and utilize scholarships for future teachers.



What will be there:

- A college essay writing workshop!
- In-person financial aid advice!
- Opportunities to connect directly with several CT colleges/universities!

Free tickets are available starting September 1st.
Oh! And there will be light refreshments and a raffle.
Gain resources, connections, and get inspired!

Visit: **ontch.org/FutureTeachCT**