



Chrome-books are key to most student work in the classroom

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The Quill

Mon., Aug. 31, 2026 Ninth Grade Orientation

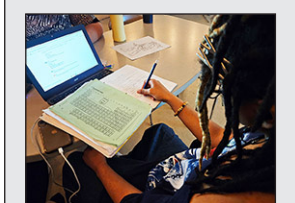
Student musicians have multiple ways to get involved at Cooper

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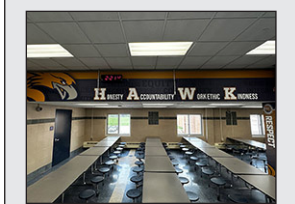


Tips can lead to success in school

While the transition from middle school to high school can be challenging, following some straightforward advice can make it easier

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HAWK acronym guides behavior

The school's motto encourages all students to demonstrate honesty, accountability, work ethic, kindness during the day

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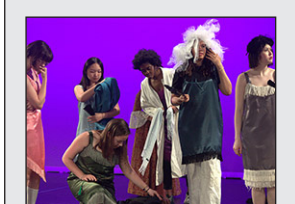


Media Center is hub for print, tech

Located on the second floor, the Media Center is available as a place for students to study, access classroom materials

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Variety

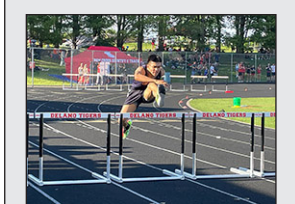


Theater program preps for '26-'27

Students in all four grades have the chance to get involved with the on-stage, behind-the-scenes aspects of putting on a show

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Sports



Teams seek new members to join

All Cooper programs are looking to add incoming freshmen to continue the school's winning ways across dozens of sports

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FORMER HAWK PRINCIPAL WELCOMES CLASS OF '30



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Shaunece Smith worked with countless freshmen during her nine years as a head principal and assistant principal at Cooper.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

Cooper's outgoing Head Principal Shaunece Smith welcomes members of the Class of 2030 to their first year of high school.

Heading into this year, Smith became the new head principal at Robbinsdale Academy Highview and

Robbinsdale Virtual Academy. However, prior to that, she served as Cooper's head principal for four years and an assistant principal at the school for five years. In that time, she said she has had the honor of watching many classes of ninth graders reach the eventual goal of walking across the stage at graduation. "I was able to hand them

their diplomas and then just see their sense of pride," Smith said.

According to Smith, a key thing that makes Cooper unique for incoming students is the school's diversity.

"We have so many different cultures and people with different backgrounds. That is what makes Cooper so special," Smith said.

Smith encouraged incoming students to take advantage of the many academic and extracurricular opportunities the school offers during their four-year journey toward graduation.

"We have extremely good opportunities that some students may not recognize when they're here until they leave and go somewhere else.

Before joining Robbinsdale Academy, Shaunece Smith offered advice to the newest Hawks

Then, they see that it was special," Smith said.

One aspect of Cooper that Smith said ninth graders should utilize is the availability of staff members who care and can provide academic and social support.

"We have a family atmosphere where students are able to find adults in the building that they know love and care about them. Being able to make those connections is what is important," she said.

In addition to receiving support from the adults in the building, Smith said it is important for ninth graders to step up and take responsibility for their own learning and behavior now that they are in high school.

"Attendance matters and credits matter. I have had some students tell me that, when they were in eighth grade, they didn't go to class and they still passed. That changes when students get to high school. If students do not get the credits that they need, then they will not get their diploma. Every class matters and every credit matters," Smith said.

A personal motto that Smith said she would like all ninth graders to keep in mind is "keep going."

"If you fall down and make a mistake, just keep going," Smith said.

Incoming students will learn to navigate building

With its three floors, multiple circles, stray hallways and assorted staircases, getting used to Cooper can take students some time

By BEN KENYON
Quill staff writer

Ninth graders coming from middle school into Cooper can find it hard to locate all their classes as the school year begins. However, with time, new students will eventually get the hang of the building's design and the best way of getting from one class to the next.

Most Cooper students find it easiest to start on the second floor to find their way around the school. The second floor is where most of the important rooms are located, including the lunch room; the Student Services Center; the main office; two circles where academic classes take place; the dance, choir, orchestra and band hallway; and the Media Center.

One easy way to navigate around the second floor is to know that there are high room numbers and low room numbers in each hallway and in each circle. One side always has higher numbers and the other side always has lower numbers, which makes it easy to figure out if your class is in a given hallway or circle. On the second floor, the B2 circle has the English classrooms, while the C2 circle has the Media Center and some social studies classrooms.

The only confusing second-floor area is the dance, choir, orchestra and band hallway. While that hallway has room numbers in the 250s, it is on the other side of the school from the B2 academic circle, which has room numbers in the 230s and 240s. An easy way to remember this hallway is that it is located near the cafeteria.

The third floor is an easier one to navigate because it consists of one long hallway and two academic circles. Depending on whether your classroom number is high or low, that will help you know what circle to go to. The B3 circle has the science rooms, which have lower room numbers, while the C3 circle has the social studies and math rooms, which have high-



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

The second-floor "Y" is a high-traffic spot students will see often during the day.

er numbers.

The first floor is definitely the most confusing floor because it is harder to find certain classrooms. While there is only one circle on this level, which includes the art, business and global language classrooms, there are plenty of other classrooms spread throughout the other long hallways on this floor.

The easiest way to get around on the first floor is to look at the signs

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Focusing on credits, grades key to high school success

One key difference between middle school and high school is the impact one's record has on the ability to graduate

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

Credits and grade point averages (GPA) may seem like just numbers to some freshmen, but those pieces of information can have long-term effects on graduation and future plans after high school.

Student counselor Salinee Hough said one of the biggest problems freshmen face is not fully understanding how important ninth grade is academically.

"I think a lot of freshmen don't recognize or aren't mature enough to recognize the importance of ninth grade and how everything really starts at that point," Hough said.

While middle school grades do not permanently follow students, high school grades become part of a transcript that colleges and employers may eventually see, and that students

may use to access scholarships. As a result, students who get behind on their credits and grades during freshman year often spend the rest of high school struggling to recover.

"The main, long-term problem is that now they're no longer on track to graduate and playing a constant catch-up game," Hough said. "As far as GPA, I have so many students who maybe took a little longer to get themselves in a good academic routine but messed up in ninth grade. It's unfortunate because those students might be losing chances at certain opportunities while in high school and minimizing options for after high school."

Teachers also see freshmen struggle as they adjust to the transition from middle school to high school. Social studies and AVID teacher Chris DiSalvi said many students become overwhelmed by the increased expectations in high school.

"I think they are adapting to a very new environment," DiSalvi said. "They are getting used to

new teachers and new systems. I also think students hear how high school is so much harder than middle school and get psyched out."

However, DiSalvi believes freshmen are often more capable than they think.

"Ninth graders should know that while curriculum is more challenging, their brains are more developed and can and will adapt to new academic challenges," he said. "They should also know that the teachers in high school want to see students succeed just as much as all the other previous teachers."

According to DiSalvi, earning credits early is extremely important because graduation requirements begin immediately in ninth grade. Students at Cooper need 43 credits to graduate and falling behind can create additional stress later.

"It is important for students to earn their cred-

CREDITS, GRADES continues on page 2

Being on time is important part of doing well in class

Arriving late is directly related to the likelihood a student will fall behind in their work

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

One of the biggest habits administrators and teachers say ninth graders need to develop right away is arriving to class on time. Staff members across the building agree that punctuality is about more than simply beating the bell. According to Assistant Principal Ned Nelson, arriving on time helps students succeed academically, avoid disciplinary consequences and show respect for classmates and teachers.

One issue ninth graders often struggle with is the different expectations surrounding punctuality that exist at the high school level versus the middle school level.

“It is important for all students to be on time, but it is especially important for freshmen to be on time to their classes,” Nelson said. “Being a good student starts with building good habits. High school is a different game than middle school. The stakes are higher and each class directly impacts your ability to graduate on time.”

Given the limited amount of instructional time during each class period, Nelson said that even a few minutes of missed class time can quickly add up over the course of a school year.

“There are only 38-42 minutes of learning that can happen in each class,” Nelson said. “That is an average of 225 minutes of math or English per week. If a student is five minutes late every day, they would miss around 15 hours of class time every school year.”

Missing that amount of instruction can create academic problems for ninth graders, who are still learning how to manage homework, tests and classroom expectations.

“When a student misses class, they put themselves at a disadvantage to learn course content and ultimately to earn credit for the course,” Nelson said.

Teachers also notice the impact tardiness has inside the classroom. Social studies and AVID teacher Chris DiSalvi said students who arrive late often struggle to understand assignments and directions.

“Arriving on time is important so that you are able to get all of the instructions and directions for the day,” DiSalvi said. “You will avoid feeling lost or behind.”

According to DiSalvi, students who miss the beginning of class frequently need additional help catching up, which can slow down both their own progress and the pace of the classroom.

“Being late makes it harder to grasp what is happening in the class and what you should be doing,” he said. “You don’t have to waste time getting caught up or asking questions that have already been covered and will have more time to work and progress.”

Hallway security educational assistant Sean O’Toole said that punctuality also reflects respect for others in the school community. It is often the case that teachers have to stop instruction when late students enter the classroom. What is more, the students who are on time and already working may become distracted by those late class arrivals.

“Being late is simply disrespectful,” O’Toole said. “It’s a disruption to your classmates if you arrive late.”

According to O’Toole, chronic tardiness can eventually lead to larger consequences for the late students.

“The consequences that come with being late extend beyond just missing information,” he said. “Repeated tardiness can lead to

BEING ON TIME
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Three tips can lead to academic success

While the transition to high school can be challenging, following some straightforward advice can make it easier

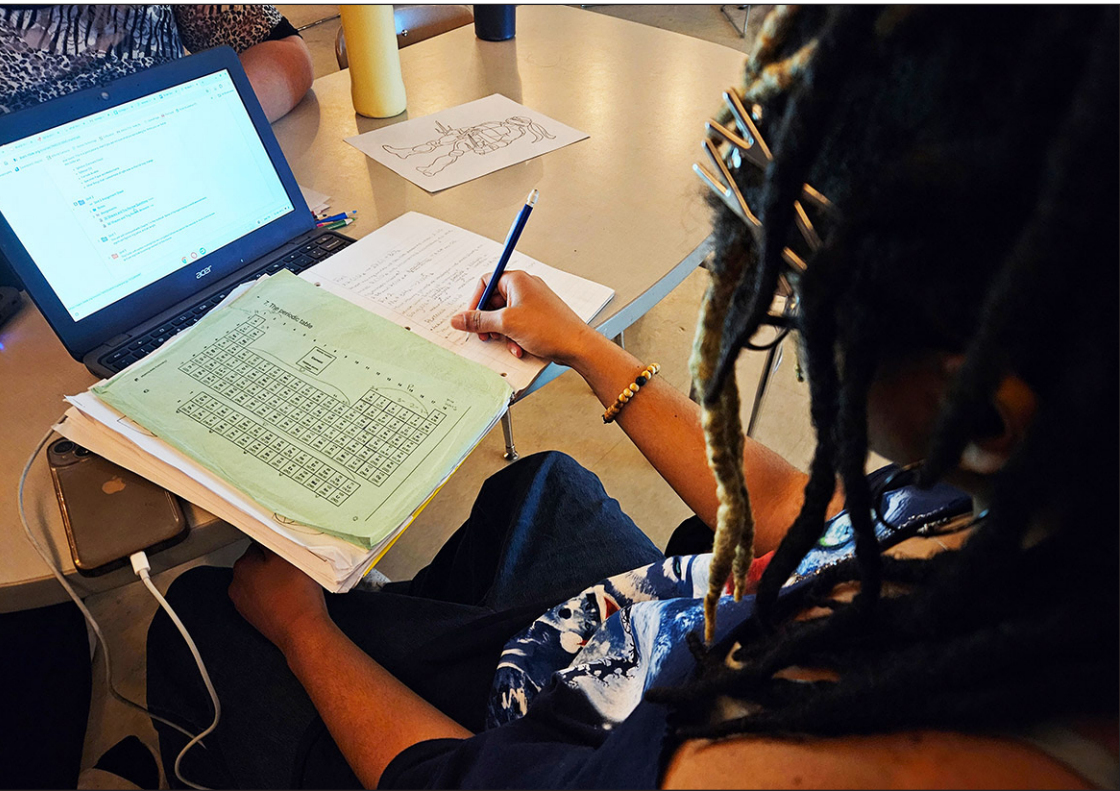


Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Study skills you develop during the first year of high school will be of benefit through your academic career.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

Incoming ninth graders are starting an academic journey that will eventually pay off in four years with graduation. Another potential payoff can come through academic scholarships to college based on a student’s performance during high school. A key part of that performance relates to a student’s ability to earn credits and a high grade point average (GPA) in their classes. While this may seem like a hard process, there are ways to stay on track for academic success.

1. Attend class daily and on time

It is important that students get to class on time so they can get all the instructions and work they need for each day of class. If students are not in class on time, they may miss a good chunk of note-taking time, lessons for an upcoming test and updates on

assignments. Moreover, students who get into the habit of coming to class late may start pushing it to the point where they will skip the class as a whole.

Being late or absent from class can mess up a student’s academic success. Missing formative and summative work can result in a student ending up with a bad grade or low GPA that they might not be able to fix in time for graduation. Once students get stuck in that situation, they may be tempted to give up completely.

“It is important for students to be on time just because it shows you’re prepared for class and that you’re ready to understand the material that is about to be given to you,” 2026 graduate Jazmin Tlaseca said.

2. Learn proper studying techniques

When it comes to studying, students need to find the methods that work best for them. Although not all methods fit what a

student needs depending on their learning style and situation, the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences reports that one approach which tends to work universally is the SQ3R method. The acronym stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review, and evidence suggests that using this approach helps students engage with texts, increase retention of information and reduce study time. Other methods one can learn more about online include Retrieval Practice, Spaced Practice, The Feynman Technique and the Leitner System.

According to 2026 graduate Pha-A-Thit Vongsoury, one study approach he has found helpful is teaching the material to someone else. Additionally, he said he tries to study at the same time every day.

“I think finding the right study method will be the most beneficial for each individual,”

Vongsoury said. “Try everything first and find out which one study method works for you the best.”

3. Take care of your health

Mental health is something that people tend to forget has an impact on students’ academic performances. According to the World Health Organization, “it is estimated that one in seven 10–19 year olds experience mental health conditions, yet these remain largely unrecognized and untreated.” In light of this, it is critical that students try their best to take care of their mental health.

“Your mental health and your general well-being has to come first. You have to be okay in order to focus on your academics, so that should be the priority,” English teacher Rachel Fettig said.

Meridian HealthCare has a number of mental health tips for students. The first tip is to get at least eight hours of sleep each day. A lack of sleep can severely impact mood, memory and focus, which can contribute to mental health issues.

Related to this is their second tip: stay physically active. Exercise releases endorphins, which is a natural mood booster.

The third Meridian HealthCare suggestion is to eat a balanced diet. What people eat affects how they feel mentally and physically.

Finally, Meridian HealthCare advises students to practice mindfulness. By doing so, one can manage stress and build emotional resilience.

Final thoughts

By following these tips, incoming ninth graders can thrive during their first year of high school. Establishing this foundation in year one will lead to greater success during high school and beyond.

Chromebooks central to most work done during high school

The district-issued devices allow students to work on assignments, monitor grades, communicate with their teachers

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

Chromebooks have become a big part of the learning and teaching experience for both students and teachers. Every student is expected to have a Chromebook for completing work, taking tests and keeping track of Schoology assignments.

Helping oversee the distribution and maintenance of Chromebooks is media clerk Emily Lange. She said that students usually get their Chromebooks at the start of the year in English class.

“Students are expected to use them for schoolwork and follow the school rules for technology,” Lange said.

According to Lange, there are some guidelines students can follow to make sure their devices stay in good shape.

“Students should take care of them by using the case, carrying them with two hands and not

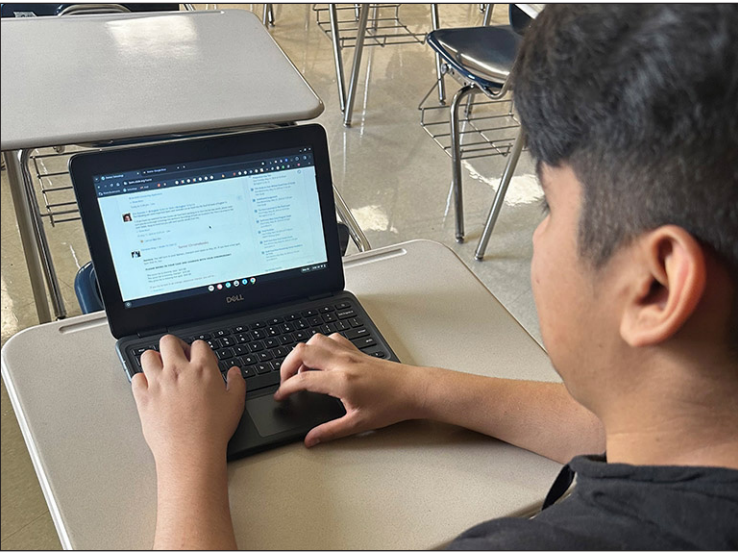


Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Responsible use of the Chromebooks can aid student learning.

eating or drinking around them,” she said.

If something goes wrong with a student’s Chromebook, they can seek help in the Media Center.

“We can typically help students with their Chromebook issues or find a Chromebook re-

placement,” Lange said.

When it comes to the usefulness of Chromebooks, most students acknowledge how convenient it is to have a device provided by the school. According to 2026 graduate Pha-A-Thit Vongsoury, Chromebooks are helpful in a variety of ways.

“Chromebooks are essential for properly doing work,” he said. “They can also be useful for students who miss school due to illness. Having access to a device allows them to keep up with assignments from home.”

Also citing the benefits of Chromebooks are Cooper teachers. According to art teacher Claire Mielke, the devices can be useful across a wide variety of classes.

“Chromebooks are effective when they are used for Schoology and classwork during instruction time,” she said. “Sometimes in art class, a student might use their device to listen to music while working on a project.”

At the end of the school year, ninth, tenth and eleventh graders are typically asked to hold onto their Chromebooks for the next school year. Meanwhile, Lange said seniors are asked to turn in their Chromebook, charger and case during their English class before the day of graduation.

FOCUSING ON CREDITS, GRADES KEY TO HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS continued from page 1

its because students are required to earn 43 credits to graduate,” DiSalvi said. “If students miss credits their ninth grade year, they will fall behind and run the risk of having to retake classes in summer school or ABC Lab, neither of which is ideal for most students.”

When students begin falling behind academically, staff members work to provide support and interventions before problems become permanent. DiSalvi said programs such as Cooper intervention time allow students to receive extra help during the school day.

“I like to use intervention time to help students that need to catch up with their peers,” DiSalvi said. “In the past, I worked in BARR meetings with other ninth grade teachers and administrators

to identify students that need that extra support.”

Students requiring support are encouraged to seek it out before the problem grows. According to Hough, ninth graders should work with counselors and take advantage of school resources as soon as they notice problems with grades or missing assignments.

“Freshmen should make a plan with their counselor now to make a plan to get back on track,” Hough said. “Also, utilize your resources. There are so many opportunities to get extra help at Cooper. Take advantage of those, whether it’s after-school tutoring, Math Lounge or just asking a teacher.”

Both Hough and DiSalvi said balancing academics with social life, sports, jobs and activities can

be difficult for ninth graders who are learning how to manage their time independently. Hough believes learning balance is one of the most important skills students can develop.

“Students should remember that school should be a priority,” Hough said. “Of course, other parts of life are important, but learning balance is a great life skill. It’s okay to have fun with friends, have a job and participate in activities, but school and academics should not fall by the wayside.”

Hough also explained that students can improve their GPA over time if they stay committed to making progress.

“In order to get a GPA up, students just have to do better than the last time and continue to make im-

provements,” Hough said.

Last year’s ninth graders understand firsthand how important freshman grades can be. According to Elise Bentson (10), developing good study habits helped her stay focused and maintain strong grades as a freshman.

“When I need to get work done, I put my phone and other devices in a different room so that it’s easier to focus,” Bentson said.

Like many students who have completed freshman year, Bentson believes ninth grade creates the foundation for the rest of high school.

“Earning your credits in ninth grade is very important for many

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HAWK acronym guides expectations

The school's motto encourages all students to demonstrate honesty, accountability, work ethic, kindness during the day



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Walls throughout the school include images reminding students about the four HAWK values.

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

The HAWK acronym helps guide student behavior and learning throughout Cooper. HAWK stands for honesty, accountability, work ethic and kindness. Teachers and staff say these values help students succeed both academically and socially. Overall, the HAWK expectations are meant to create a respectful and supportive learning environment for everyone in the school community.

According to social studies and AVID teacher Chris DiSalvi, the HAWK motto gives students a simple and memorable way to understand what behaviors are expected at school. He said the values are important because they help students work better with teachers and classmates while also supporting academic success. According to DiSalvi, the expectations are easy for students to recognize and apply in their daily routines, whether they are working on assignments, participating in class discussions or interacting with others in the hallways.

“I think the HAWK acronym

is a very handy way to remember what student learning and behavior should look like in any school environment. We all want honesty, accountability, work ethic and kindness when working with others. Since most people can generally visualize what that looks like, it is easy to expect it from others and ourselves,” he said.

DiSalvi explained that ninth graders can meet these expectations in many different ways throughout the school day. He said students can demonstrate accountability by arriving prepared for class and staying on top of assignments. He also explained that kindness can be shown through respectful language and positive interactions with classmates and teachers. According to DiSalvi, small actions each day can help students show the HAWK values consistently.

“Ninth graders can do this several ways. They can be honest about why assignments are not completed. They can be accountable by showing up prepared and on-time. They can work hard by using electronic devices for academic purposes while keeping all other devices out of sight and out of

mind. Finally, they can be kind to others by using school-appropriate language and treating others with kindness,” he said.

DiSalvi also said students who follow the HAWK expectations often benefit socially and academically. He explained that students who constantly demonstrate these behaviors usually build stronger relationships with peers and teachers, which can help make high school a more enjoyable experience overall.

“Students tend to make better connections with peers and with teachers. They will also have a more satisfying high school experience,” he said.

English teacher Kristen Prillwitz shared a similar perspective about the importance of the HAWK values at Cooper. She explained that the expectations focus on character traits that are important not only in school, but also in everyday life. According to Prillwitz, honesty, accountability, work ethic and kindness all help students become stronger learners while improving the way they interact with people around them.

“Being honest, accountable,

having a good work ethic and being kind to others are foundational character traits that support learning and interacting with people,” she said.

Prillwitz also explained that ninth graders can show HAWK values through simple daily actions in class. She said students can demonstrate work ethic by taking notes and studying, while kindness can be shown by helping classmates who may need support. She believes these small behaviors help create a more welcoming and respectful classroom environment for everyone.

“Honesty includes doing your own work and citing your sources. Being accountable can apply to meeting deadlines for assignments. Taking notes and studying can demonstrate work ethic, and helping classmates in ways such as loaning them a pencil or letting them know what they missed when they were absent shows kindness,” she said.

In addition, Prillwitz emphasized that the HAWK expectations are not only for students. She said teachers and staff members are also expected to model these behaviors every day. By following the same standards, she believes the school community becomes stronger and more connected.

“I like that, at Cooper, the HAWK expectations apply to all of us, staff included. As a teacher, I think about how I can model academic honesty for my students by citing my sources and giving credit to others. I try to be accountable by being true to my word and following through when I say I will do something, whether that is completing a task for a teaching team or getting work back to students in a timely manner. I want to demonstrate a good work ethic by giving my best every day, and I try to be kind and authentically welcome everyone into my classroom. I am, however, far from perfect, and I think that when we as teachers try to hold ourselves to the same standards as we do our students, we realize that we all need grace, and that is an essential part of being in a community together,” she said.

Managing stress a necessity when attending school

Following some advice can help freshmen stay healthy during their years at Cooper

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

School can be a source of stress and anxiety for many students for various reasons. On many occasions, these feelings can be difficult for students to deal with. However, there are several ways to reduce stress and make school a more positive and manageable experience.

1. Prioritize sleep

Having long and restful nights of sleep helps the brain to recover properly, improving focus and the regulation of emotions. Studies have shown that high school and college students who prioritize sleep often see improvements in their academic performance. When you are well-rested, you tend to be more productive, more attentive to details and better able to concentrate during class or while studying. Getting enough sleep can also help students manage the stress and pressure that often come with a busy school life.

“I have found that prioritizing going to bed early has brought a more positive experience when it comes to my mornings, as well as my impact on the people around me throughout the day,” 2026 graduate Mathilde Klausen said.

2. Get active

Regular exercise is a great way to relieve stress, as it boosts feel-good endorphins and helps take your mind off daily worries. After practicing a physical activity, you may find that you have forgotten all the day’s frustrations. Exercise can also improve focus and clarity of thought, while enhancing imagination and problem-solving skills. Practicing physical activity a few times a week can increase self-confidence, improve mood, promote relaxation and reduce symptoms of mild depression and anxiety.

“Every time I’m stressed or there are a lot of things going on and I just want to release them, I go to the gym or for a nice walk to disconnect from reality for some time,” 2026 graduate Elena Sastre Sobrecueva said.

3. Talk it out

Talking about your problems and feelings with a friend, family member or school counselor can be an effective way to reduce stress. First, it provides a fresh perspective, helping students see situations more clearly and consider solutions they may not have thought of before. Additionally, expressing worries can release built-up emotional and physical tension, making you feel lighter. Finally, sharing one’s concerns reminds students that they are not alone and helps them normalize the pressure and challenges they may experience.

“Sharing feelings about something can really help relieve some kind of tension you may have stored in your brain,” 2026 graduate Richard Baysah said.

4. Stay organized

Staying organized helps students manage stress by reducing last-minute rushes and preventing the feeling of being overwhelmed by a packed schedule. Having a clear plan for your week allows you to approach your classes with a calmer, more focused mindset. When it comes to large projects, good organization helps you break them down into smaller, more manageable steps. This makes difficult tasks feel much more achievable and can significantly reduce procrastination.

“I have come to find that the more organized I am in my day for my classes, the less stressed I am,” 2026 graduate Pha-A-Thit Vongsoury said.

College and Career Center provides future planning resources

In addition to hosting visits from college, military and career recruiters, the center also helps individual students look toward tomorrow

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

The College and Career Center is a resource room that provides students with services related to the post-high school search for colleges and careers.

Coordinating the center is Mark Rosenblum. As part of his work in the center, Rosenblum helps arrange visits from outside entities, such as colleges and the military; guides students through the process of figuring out how to plan for and navigate post-high school opportunities; assists with standardized test administration, including the ACT; and supports any other events or opportunities for students considering what comes next after high school, such as FAFSA applications, college applications and scholarship administration.

Students can access the room and its resources through-



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Mark Rosenblum helps students using the center get the help that they need.

out the school day. Once at the center, students can review materials about colleges and universities, especially those in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Rosenblum assists visiting students with finding the contacts for various

colleges.

In addition to the college search, Rosenblum can also connect students with trades and trade schools. If students need help looking for information related to things like flight school,

internships and the district’s Pathways Program, Rosenblum can also be of assistance.

“My office is almost always quiet and available and I’m happy to help students research programs or schools,” he said.

The times to visit the office are flexible and students have the opportunity to stop by or schedule a visit, usually during a study hall. In addition, Rosenblum can meet with students before or after school if needed. With the room being such an accessible resource, Rosenblum is hopeful it can give students a place to find assistance in their process of making decisions about the future.

“I’m here to help when they need support or help. I call myself a liaison and that’s truly what I am. I connect students with people and organizations they want to connect with,” Rosenblum said.

FOCUSING ON CREDITS, GRADES KEY TO HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS continued from page 2

reasons,” she said. “It’s hard to get caught up if you fall behind early on. You can get ahead if you take another elective instead of study hall and your ninth grade grades kind of set you up for the rest of high school.”

Another student who enjoyed success as a ninth grader by developing good academic habits to secure her credits and grades is Polly Omwoyo (10).

“Strategies that I’ve incorporated throughout the school year would include utilizing my study hall, completing classwork in school while minimizing distractions, asking teachers and my coun-

selors questions and using free time in class, during the weekend and after practice to complete work,” she said.

According to Omwoyo, a focus on earning her credits and getting good grades as a high school student is important because of the benefits it will have in her future.

“I don’t want to look back at my past self and ask: ‘Why didn’t I do that?’ ‘What could I have done differently?’ ‘Why did I quit something because I thought it was hard?’ Questions like these motivate me to put my best effort in all my classes, which ultimately paid off throughout the school year,” she said.

The transition into high school can be intimidating, but students like Benton and Omwoyo demonstrate how to start the high school journey effectively. One strategy both students shared is communicating with their teachers and their grade-level counselor, which Hough said is key to the success of all ninth graders. According to Hough, teachers, counselors, intervention programs and classmates are all available to help students succeed. What matters most is taking responsibility early and staying consistent.

“Please keep in mind that ninth grade is when everything really starts becoming permanent,”

Hough said. “Credits are required to graduate. GPA starts getting tracked and it could impact your options after high school.”

At the same time, Hough said students do not need to have their entire future figured out in ninth grade. However, they should recognize that the decisions they make now can open or close opportunities later.

“You don’t need to know what you want to do as an adult when you’re in ninth grade, but you definitely want to give yourself as many options as possible,” Hough said. “Do your best and work your hardest.”

Seniors provide advice to newest Cooper Hawks

Members of the Class of 2026 share insights that may be of help to the Class of 2030

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Cooper’s Class of 2026 graduated at the Minneapolis Convention Center on May 29, 2026. Before they walked across the stage to get their diplomas, many seniors decided to give some valuable advice to incoming freshmen. Speaking from their own experiences, they offered guidance to help new students navigate high school with ease.

Keven Recarte Santos: “Don’t become fond of the idea of perfection.”

Ryanne Dutton: “Believe in yourself and your hard work will pay off.”

Melody Xiong: “Don’t be afraid to try something new.”

Gladys Arasa: “Take risks and get out of your comfort zone. You’ll receive amazing rewards.”

Amari Davison: “Get involved. You never know who you could meet or how it could affect your life.”

Mariana Heggstad: “Use [intervention time] often if you are behind or need concepts explained to you.”

Richard Baysah: “Don’t try to fit in by doing things that could lead to terrible consequences. Stay focused and dedicated throughout all four years.”

Cecilia Nguyen: “Be unique, stand out and have fun.”

Chialiag Vang: “Graduating high school is the bare minimum in life.”

Debra Gbidi: “Go to your classes, get to know your teachers and try everything.”

Folake Olusesi: “Take easier classes but also take advanced ones. They prepare you well.”

Hamdi Abshir: “Live, love, laugh, learn.”

Muna Omar: “Don’t procrastinate if you want to graduate.”

Lakiriah Smith: “Go to your classes on time and do your work.”

Chikita Gaiter: “Choose your friends wisely and stay on top of your classes. It can take you a long way.”

Vision Wonken: “Imagine where you want to be in life, whether it’s making money, finding a good job or whatever. Remember that education is just the first step to get there.”

Valeria Lule Herrera: “Put yourself out there. Try sports, clubs or anything else, and don’t overthink

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Media Center is hub for print, tech

Located on the second floor, the Media Center is available as a place for students to study, access classroom materials

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

The Media Center is a helpful space for students during and outside of school hours. Students can use the Media Center to check out novels, nonfiction books, textbooks and even read the daily newspaper.

“If students are looking for a specific book, it can even be requested from another school,” Media Center clerk Emily Lange said.

There are also online resources like e-books, audiobooks, databases and research articles students can access through the Media Center website.

“The website has study resources, test prep materials, research databases and tools to help students find books,” Lange said.

The Media Center can also be useful for students and classes working on research projects.

“We can help students find sources, search for proper keywords online and locate information for assignments,” Lange said.

According to Lange, ninth graders can benefit from using the Media Center as a place to build strong study and reading habits.

“The Media Center can be a great, quiet space to work on projects or homework during study hall with a teacher pass,” Lange said. “Students also visit the Media Center before school to read, study or spend time with friends.”

There is a set of rules and ex-



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Students taking PSEO courses or study hall can opt to work in the Media Center by signing up in advance.

pectations students are expected to follow when they are using the Media Center. Students are asked to remain seated at a desk or table the entire hour with a maximum of four students at a table. Once at the center, students should sign in using the QR code at their seat or on the computers located at the entry to the room.

Students are asked to remain inside the center’s doors until the bell rings and get a pass to leave the room for any reason. However, the Media Center staff cannot write

passes for the first 10 minutes or last 10 minutes of the hour, or the last 20 minutes of eighth hour.

Once the period begins, students are asked to keep their volume level down in the Group Study area to avoid disrupting others. Likewise, students are not allowed to talk in Silent Study and must sit one person at a desk.

Eating is not permitted in the Media Center. The one exception to this is during first hour.

While using the Media Center,

students are asked to use headphones for all audio, including phone calls. Students are also asked to avoid singing and dancing in the center.

When it comes to the furniture, students are not permitted to roll from place to place on the rolling chairs. Additionally, they are not allowed to lie down on the furniture or on the floor.

“Students should be respectful, stay on task and take care of the space while using the Media Center,” Lange said.

Head nurse suggests ways to stay healthy at school

Keeping illness at bay is an important aspect of having consistent attendance, achieving more in the classroom

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Staying healthy is important for incoming ninth graders as they begin a year of keeping up with classes, sports and activities. From getting enough sleep to preventing the spread of illness, Cooper’s school health office has advice on how students can take care of themselves during the year.

One of the biggest recommendations from the health staff is focusing on healthy daily habits. Many students become busy with assignments, extracurricular activities and social events, which can sometimes cause them to ignore basic health needs. However, building good habits can help students feel more energized, focused and prepared for the school day. According to school nurse Nichole Ronich, there are three simple steps that can help students thrive.



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

The Nurse's Office is located in the larger Student Services Office.

“I recommend eating well, staying hydrated and getting enough sleep,” she said.

Ronich also encouraged students to take simple precautions to avoid spreading germs at school.

Since students are constantly sharing classrooms, hallways and lunch spaces, illnesses can easily pass from one person to another. Practicing good hygiene and being mindful of personal health can

help protect both students and staff during the year.

“Wash your hands, cover your cough and avoid touching your face until you have washed your hands or used hand sanitizer,” Ronich said.

Another issue with staying healthy relates to the transition into the winter months. According to Ronich, student health at this time of the year can be helped through several strategies.

“Getting enough sunshine for vitamin D or taking vitamin D during the winter months is important. When you feel a cold, starting taking zinc and vitamin C can help lessen the cold,” she said.

Although the health office cannot fully treat sick students, Ronich said they will still try to help students feel more comfort-

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Student counselors guide Hawks through Cooper journey

Each student is assigned to a grade-level counselor who will aid them with course registration, planning for the future

By CAMILARODRIGUEZ LAZCANO
Quill staff writer

One of the biggest support systems students will have throughout high school is their grade-level counselor. Counselors are there to help students academically and emotionally as they attend Cooper.

Freshmen are assigned a grade-level counselor who will stay with them throughout all four years of high school. This allows counselors and students to build

stronger relationships and helps students feel more comfortable reaching out for support when needed.

While many students think counselors only help with schedules or classes, they actually offer support in many different areas. According to grade-level counselor Salinee Hough, school counselors focus on three main areas: academics; social and emotional support; and planning for college and careers.

“Counselors help students

make sure they are in the correct classes, stay on track for graduation and help plan for their futures after high school,” Hough said. “We can also support students who may be struggling with stress, friendships or adjusting to high school.”

One challenge counselors often see freshmen experience is realizing the importance of ninth grade. Unlike middle school, grades earned in high school become permanent and affect a student’s grade point average and

transcript.

“They don’t realize the grades they’re earning in ninth grade go on their transcript and are there to stay,” Hough said.

In light of this, Hough encourages freshman to “stay focused” by attending class every day and taking advantage of the resources available to them.

“Show up and don’t fall behind,” Hough said. “Take advan-

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Music programs seek new students

Incoming ninth graders have the ability to get involved in a variety of groups spread out over three music disciplines



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The band program gives students the opportunity to play at various indoor and outdoor athletic events.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Incoming freshmen who have an interest in band, choir or orchestra are encouraged to get involved in all of the music classes that interest them, regardless of their current skill level. Cooper’s music classes welcome all students, whether they are newcomers to learning music or experts in the field. Thanks to the teachers of the classes and the students currently involved in the three programs, ninth graders will find a welcoming and supportive music community at Cooper. Whether new students chose to try out all three programs or just one, they will be introduced to a network of dedicated musicians and directors.

Band

Students interested in joining the Cooper band should speak with the director, Markus Hahn, who is excited to help new students find their place in the program.

“Freshmen always demonstrate a lot of learning because they are now having band every day instead of every other day. Seeing that growth is always super cool,” he said.

According to Hahn, joining band is an opportunity to meet new people and find new experiences in high school.

“Being in a music class helps you become friends with upperclassmen, it gets you involved in the school through activities like Pep Band and it helps with self-expression. All freshmen would benefit from a music class,” he said.

The typical band class begins with warmups, which consist of lip slurs and long tones. Students then move to scales, then rhythm, then a technique exercise. This takes 10-15 minutes. After that, musicians start working on the three tunes they have programmed for the upcoming concert.

“Sign up for band. It’s worth the risk and will be a lot of fun,”

Hahn said.

Choir

Jen Rowan is the director of all choir programs at Cooper, leading singers through groups that range from Bella Voce to Drop the Octave.

“When you’re coming into high school, it’s always helpful to feel like a part of a team. Choir, or any music, can give you that support and community that’s integral to feeling a part of something,” Rowan said.

For any student on the fence about choir, Rowan encourages you to try it out no matter your reservations.

“Every high schooler is nervous about messing up or being embarrassed. It’s natural. But you’ll come to learn that those mistakes turn into successes and you’ll be proud of your accomplishments,” Rowan said.

Choir students perform at numerous concerts throughout the

year, with some auditioned choirs like the Chamber Singers caroling for the winter holidays and for the Valentine’s Day season.

Orchestra

Students who are interested in Cooper’s orchestra, whether returning or just starting, are encouraged to join by the orchestra’s director, KC Thompson.

“All incoming freshmen are able to enroll in the Freshman Orchestra. This ensures that you can get comfortable with other students that you’ve already been playing with since middle school,” she said.

Thompson said she enjoys the process of learning with her students and seeing the growth that blossoms through orchestra.

“This is where the start of your high school career begins. It’s so fun getting to know students and helping them continue to build their skills. Getting to see how each student grows throughout the year is super rewarding,” she said.

The orchestra starts each day with tuning and warming up with scales. The singers then dive into the pieces they are working on for the next concert.

“The first concert for Freshman Orchestra is the Halloween concert, so look forward to some spooky music,” Thompson said.

Thompson said she hopes orchestra is a home base for students just entering high school and a safe place to find their self-expression.

“Music makes you a better human. You’re allowed to make mistakes, figure out who you are and make lifelong connections with the people around you. It truly is a one-of-a-kind experience. Music is truly a space where everyone belongs. We have phenomenal staff at Cooper who will not only push you to be your best, but provide you with experiences you won’t find anywhere else. You belong in music,” Thompson said.

Elective courses help ninth graders learn to perform

Cooper offers Acting, Dance, Introduction to Theater for class credit

By MARIAH WASHINGTON
Quill staff writer

Ninth graders who are interested in taking an elective class for second semester or later in their high school careers are encouraged to think about picking a performance-based course like Dance, Acting or Introduction to Theater.

The Dance class is open to anyone of any experience level, whether they are used to getting on stage or they have never danced a day in their lives. During the class, students go through the structure of different dances, the creativity involved in dance and the multitude of genres in dance.

According to Rachel Fettig, who taught Dance in the 2025-2026 school year, the class has styles from ballet to jazz.

“The class is a fun environment where students can come and showcase all their dancing abilities,” Fettig said. “Students are encouraged to join even if they have little-to-no dance experience.”

Along with the Dance class, Cooper offers Acting, which is focused on performing. In this class, students learn all the elements that go into acting, including character work, voice work and scene work.

“We even work on the basics of stage fighting,” Fettig said.

The projects for Acting look a little different than those in Dance. According to Fettig, there will be various performances and the creation of one-act productions.

“Students are graded on their understanding of the work and effort through the units,” Fettig said.

The third performance-based elective is Introduction to Theatre. This course focuses on many aspects of the theatrical experience, including the history of theater, how to tell a story theatrically and how the technical aspects of theater operate.

“The class speaks about the many components of theater, from acting to stage know-how,” Fettig said. “There are larger, final projects that are performance-based to showcase the creativity of the individual and the group.”

Incoming freshmen who are interested in learning more about the performance electives are encouraged to see their grade-level counselor.

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things because, at the end of the day, everyone is minding their own business.”

Faith Johnson: “Be smart about the people you choose as your friends.”

Alpha Combay: “Don’t be afraid of change.”

Kana Vang: “Be mindful of others.”

Paolo Desouza: “Invest in believing in yourself.”

Adrianna Her: “Allow yourself to be everything that you wish and more.”

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tage of your resources. There are so many opportunities for students to get help in classes”

Grade-level counselors also help ninth graders become involved in school activities to make the transition into high school easier and more enjoyable. Hough said joining sports, clubs, leadership groups or performance activities can help students meet new people and enjoy school more.

“Cooper is great place to try something for the first time at school,” Hough said.

Cooper theater preps for 2026-2027 school year

Students of all grades can get involved with the on-stage, behind-the-scenes aspects of putting on a show

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Cooper’s theater program gives students the opportunity to share their creative side on stage during the school year. Through acting and backstage work, students in the Cooper theater program build confidence, teamwork and lasting friendships.

The theater department typically produces three major shows each year, each offering different experiences. According to theater director Alondra Alamilla, the season begins with the fall play, which rehearses in October and November before performances in early December.

“The first production of the season is the fall play,” Alamilla said. “This is a medium-sized production with around 25 students.”

The second production of the year is the winter musical. Rehearsals begin in late December right after the fall show, with performances held in February. The musical typically includes between 30 and 50 students participating on stage and behind the scenes.

The final production is a smaller spring show, which is historically created and led by students themselves as a way to



Photo by RACHEL FETTIG

The theater program put on *A Time to Remember* as its spring 2026 show.

showcase their creative freedom.

“This is typically a smaller production with 12–20 students,” Alamilla said.

The chances for students to get involved in Cooper theater are not limited to acting. The program also offers backstage opportunities for students with all types of interests and skills. Some of these positions include stage manager, lighting board operator, sound board operator, stagehand, costume crew and makeup crew.

“There are many ways to get

involved and no prior theater experience is necessary,” Alamilla said.

According to Alamilla, there have been many recent Cooper productions of which she is proud.

“*Sleepy Hollow* has a special place in my heart. That play was a very fun mix of comedic moments and intense, spooky moments as well,” she said.

Alamilla also shared some praise for former program director Gretchen Wurzer’s 2024 winter musical *42nd Street*.

“I remember being blown

away in the audience and completely in awe of the hard work that was being shown by the dancing students on stage,” she said.

A student who has been part of Cooper’s theater program is Chaokhang Vang (12). He said one of his favorite parts of theater is the sense of community that forms.

“I enjoyed the people I’ve met,” Vang said. “Every now and then, you see familiar faces on every new show or sometimes even new ones.”

According to Vang, performing in front of an audience can be nerve-racking yet also quite exciting.

“The nervousness and excitement that runs throughout your entire body before stepping onto stage, despite rehearsing so many times, is still common within every actor,” he said.

According to Vang, theater gives students opportunities to discover talents and skills they may not have known they had before joining.

“Ninth graders will be able to gain confidence performing or even speaking in front of hundreds of people,” Vang said. “They will also meet amazing people within their time of acting and they might even find out they have hidden talents.”

HEAD NURSE SUGGESTS WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY AT SCHOOL

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able while they wait to return to class or be picked up by a parent or guardian. The health office mainly focuses on checking symptoms, allowing students time to rest and checking whether parents should be contacted.

“There is not much I can do here to help, but I can check temperatures and call parents to see if they can come pick up their student. I have salt water to gargle with for sore throats. I can offer to have them lay down and rest for a little while before returning to class. We

do not have medicine to give to students when they are sick and I cannot diagnose any illness,” she said.

The school also follows policies that help prevent illnesses from spreading throughout the building. Students who come to school while sick may unintentionally spread illnesses to classmates, teachers and staff members. Because of this, Ronich encourages students to stay home when they have certain symptoms or contagious illnesses.

“Students should stay home

from school when they have a fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, vomiting or diarrhea, or a rash or infection requiring antibiotics. Students can return to school when they have no fever for 24 hours without the use of medication and are well enough to participate in school; no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours after the last episode and the ability to keep food down; and no question of contagious illness 24 hours after the first antibiotic dose or as directed by a physician,” she said.

According to Ronich, the health staff has noticed changes in how students and families respond to illness since the COVID-19 pandemic. More people now seem aware of the importance of staying home when sick and taking steps to prevent illnesses from spreading to others. However, she said seasonal sicknesses are still common every year during colder weather.

“As for trends, there will always be cold and flu seasons when the temperatures get cold and people are inside more,” Ronich said.

Activities Office supports students in Cooper sports

Office secretary Sara Thurston is a key resource for freshmen getting involved in athletics

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

The Activities Office is located on the first floor next to the weight room and is managed by educational assistant Sara Thurston. The office plays an important role in organizing student activities and athletics.

“This is where students come to pick up paperwork for sports physicals, drop off completed sports physicals, pay their activity fees and check on registration dates for activities,” Thurston said.

To join a sport, students need to follow a specific process. The first step to take is to get a sports physical. Students can obtain one now or during the summer for the 2026-2027 school year. Sports physicals are valid for 36 months and they must be active throughout the entire season you take part in.

“The last thing you want to happen is have your sports physical expire two weeks into a basketball season, for example,” Thurston said.

It is also important to know that athletes cannot take part in tryouts or practices unless a valid sports physical is on file with the Activities Office.

According to Thurston, students must register for all activities online. This not only applies to sports, but fine arts activities like theater, debate and extracurricular music groups as well.

“For the ‘26-’27 school year, we are transitioning to a new registration system called BOUND. It is a web-based product,” Thurston said.

Through the new system, registration will be done by parents or guardians using one shared family account that includes all siblings, even if they go to different schools.

“More information will be coming out on the Cooper website about the registration site directions. Registration opened for fall 2026 in late July,” Thurston said.

Fall sports started their official practices in the middle of August, before the beginning of the school year. However, Thurston said incoming ninth graders can still go through the registration process and join sports now that school has started.

Students are encouraged to come to the Activities Office during passing time or lunch. It is open almost every day, except when the office staff is attending off-site meetings.

According to Thurston, working in the Activities Office is an enjoyable and fast-paced experience.

“Every day in the Activities Office is different. That is what makes it so fun,” Thurston said.

Before each season begins, the Activities Office makes sure all schedules are accurate and that officials and game workers are assigned for every home event. Thurston and the coaches also organize transportation for away games. In addition, they collect activity fees from students.

Once the season begins, they check weather conditions to decide whether outdoor events need to be postponed due to lighting or bad weather.

“Then there is the process of ordering equipment, paying bills, managing budgets and depositing activity fee payments,” Thurston said.

In addition, Thurston processes participation and letter certificates for teams at the end of each season.

The office is busy, with each day bringing different responsibilities. However, Thurston said working with students and supporting their success in extracurricular activities remains the most rewarding part of the job.

Overall, Thurston thinks that every student should take part in a Cooper sport or activity.

“You are only in high school once for only four years. Experience and try everything you can. You’ll find your thing. Play the sport, go to the games, be in the stands in the student section, support your friends and participate. You’ll never get this chance again,” she said.

Sports options abound for ninth grade athletes

All Cooper programs are looking to add incoming freshmen to continue the school's winning ways across dozens of sports



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The girls and boys track team has enjoyed recent success at the conference, section and state levels.

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Participating in sports is a way to learn life skills and build relationships with athletes and coaches that can sustain you through high school. Fortunately for incoming Cooper ninth graders, there is a wide variety of sports to choose from during each athletic season.

Fall

The fall sports offered at Cooper include: adapted soccer, girls and boys cross country, football, girls and boys soccer, girls swimming, girls tennis, girls volleyball and cheerleading.

One fall sport coach, Chris DiSalvi, said that ninth graders play an important role not only on his girls cross country team, but across all fall Cooper teams.

“Ninth graders need to be a big part of any athletic program. During a ninth grade year, many student-athletes learn the foundations of a sport so they can improve in a safe and efficient way,” DiSalvi said.

According to DiSalvi, a successful freshman year can benefit students and programs all four years of high school.

“As coaches, we hope students join in ninth grade so we can develop them into well-rounded student-athletes over the four years they spend in high school,” he said.

Agreeing with DiSalvi is David Connors, who is an assistant coach with the football team. He said it is important for freshmen to participate in sports at the beginning of their high school experience.

“Freshmen are our future. Without freshman, our program doesn’t grow. It is important that freshmen are involved so when they become juniors and seniors, they know how events are run, they know the accountability and work ethic that needs to be given, and they have the ability to lead by example. They’re basically the keys

to our program,” Connors said.

Connors cited the health improvements, both physical and mental, that freshmen will experience while participating in a fall sport as a key reason to join a team.

“They’ll become stronger and healthier and their level of accountability will go up as well. Sports develop them mentally, emotionally and physically, so sports can make them more well-rounded overall,” he said.

A 2026 Cooper graduate who experienced the benefits of joining fall sports in ninth grade is Caleb Cummings.

“Joining in ninth grade allows one to connect to a community within their first year of high school pretty quickly. Learning and growing alongside others through a sport is extremely rewarding, mentally and physically. Not only will this allow them to feel like a part of the school, but it will also allow them to further their involvement in other sports or groups more easily in the following years of their high school career,” he said.

Winter

As the weather gets colder, the collection of sports options for ninth graders heats up. The winter seasons features an assortment of teams looking for freshmen, including adapted floor hockey, girls and boys alpine skiing, girls and boys basketball, girls and boys hockey, girls and boys Nordic skiing, girls and boys wrestling, boys swimming, cheerleading and dance.

Neel Allen, head coach of the girls and boys wrestling team, emphasized the importance of freshmen to his and other winter teams, especially as it pertains to the long-term success of the programs.

“Freshmen are so important to a program because, without having the youth come in, it’s hard to withstand the test of time. It is imperative that we have younger athletes to meet the older athletes

and take their place when they leave,” Allen said.

Allen said the new ninth graders add to the community aspect of the wrestling team.

“One of the biggest benefits that freshmen receive from sports is definitely a sense of community. No matter what goes on in your household, when you’re at practice, for those two-to-three hours, you can really let go. When you’re with your brothers and sisters fighting for a common goal, it helps build accountability, it helps build work ethic and it helps build life lessons that will help you overcome challenges in life,” Allen said.

Also witnessing the impact ninth graders can have on a winter team is Ebony Rich, the head coach of the girls basketball squad. She said that capable underclassmen are a critical part of winter programs.

“I think ninth graders bring youth to the program, depending on what the sport is and what their actual role is. They kind of shape what the program turns out to be. For those that do choose to stick with it after freshman year, your experience will definitely give you an advantage over people who are just trying sports out for the first time. You’ll be able to carry that with you as you get older,” Rich said.

Much like Allen, Rich said new players help form a family with the older veterans.

“As a ninth grader, sports give you the opportunity to get involved with something. It’s a good opportunity for them to get their feet wet and find something that they’re interested in. I think here at Cooper, we do a really good job of creating a sense of family, so some kids that are looking for a little bit more, and want to be a part of a community, should join sports because it’s a great opportunity for them,” Rich said.

One of last year’s graduating seniors, Folake Olusesi, was a member of the girls wrestling team during her time at Cooper. She encouraged freshmen to participate

in winter sports.

“Freshmen get a lot of benefits from playing sports. They get to be a part of a community and make friends. You also learn how to be competitive. I think this mindset will help later in life as well. Sports help make you a better person,” Olusesi said.

Spring

The final sports season for the year falls in the spring. The sports Cooper features during this last phase of school are adapted softball, baseball, girls and boys golf, girls and boys lacrosse, softball, boys tennis, girls and boys track, boys volleyball and trap and skeet.

David Connors, who is head coach of the boys track team, cited the benefits that come over time when students join spring sports during their first year of high school.

“The success of the program weighs heavily on the ninth grade group. Over the four years of high school, they build a culture and community that is tight knit. Ninth graders will learn and add to the high standards together and begin to mold and shape each other into better athletes,” Connors said.

Another benefit to starting as freshmen is the fact that ninth grade athletes get a chance to work with a team’s outgoing seniors.

“They carry on the legacy of those before them, which is created in the team’s traditions, and leave a legacy of their own in the process,” Connors said.

Another spring coach who works with ninth graders is Rob Eberle of the boys baseball team. He encouraged freshmen who are passionate about sports to get involved, regardless of their talent or experience at the time they join.

“While ability is great, the interest and desire to play is number one. If we can get that and start to build the culture we know we can establish, it will create a family environment. Ultimately, that’s what we’re working towards with those young players,” Eberle said.

Another benefit of spring sports is the friendships it helps young players create.

“As a freshman, finding your niche, your group, is pretty important. There’s a chance you’ll be friends with those people for the rest of your life. You just have to get out there and be part of the ant-hill so to speak,” Eberle said.

One longtime spring athlete who reaped the benefits of his many years in sports is 2026 graduate Leland Johnson. As a member of the boys golf team, Johnson said he experienced unexpected upsides to being a freshman athlete.

“Athletes should get involved in sports in their freshman year because it gives them a chance to do new things with friends and meet new people. It also can give them a reason to stay involved with their schoolwork if they like doing the sport. The most important one is that colleges look for sports in your record, which gives students a better shot at getting into a college,” he said.

BEING ON TIME IS IMPORTANT PART OF DOING WELL IN CLASS continued from page 2

disciplinary actions. If they’re marked tardy or absent enough, then they can get reported to the county.”

Nelson said Cooper uses a progressive disciplinary system to address chronic tardiness. Students who continue arriving late may face increasing consequences until their attendance habits improve.

“Students that are chronical-

ly tardy to school will face disciplinary action,” Nelson said. “We use a progressive disciplinary action system at Cooper High School, which means that students that have a hard time changing their behaviors will have harsher consequences until they ultimately change their behavior.”

Nelson added that the school’s goal is not simply punishment, but helping students build habits

that will benefit them during high school and in life after graduation.

“This process is done to help motivate students to attend classes and not be tempted to hang out in the hallway,” he said.

Staff members have some practical advice to help ninth graders stay on schedule when changing classes throughout the school day. Nelson encouraged students to move immediately once the bell

rings and avoid distractions during passing time.

“Make a habit of moving to your next class when you hear the bell to dismiss you from class,” Nelson said. “You will hear a two-minute warning bell before your next class to help remind students to move along to their class. Don’t get distracted by your peers and friends and keep moving to your next class.”

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on the walls and follow their instructions. However, even with these guides, some first-floor classrooms are still hard to find. For example, the room for the clay class is hidden around a corner on the opposite side of the building from where the other art classes are held, so you cannot actually see the room until you walk down the long hall to find it.

Similarly, the weight room is tucked away on the first floor behind the main gym near the back entrance to the school. Tracking down this room might be confusing to some incoming freshmen.

Also on the first floor is the hallway with the family and consumer science classrooms and the AVID classroom. This area can be hard to find because the hallway is

right next to the main gym and it always looks empty, which makes it easy to pass by.

Another location that people always struggle to find is the community gym. This gym, which is located on the far north side of the building on the first floor, is connected to the main building of Cooper by only one hallway and there are few signs indicating

where it is.

The best advice for ninth graders who get lost is to ask for help. Seeking help will allow you to get to your class instead of wasting time in the hallways not knowing where to go. It also helps if you get to know the hallway security staff because they can walk you to class or just tell you how to get there.