



THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL

Mayor Delivers First State of the Schools Address

By Ross Wilson (I)
Editor-in-Chief

On October 28, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu delivered the first annual State of the Schools address at the Josiah Quincy Upper School (JQUS) in Chinatown.

Wu was joined by Superintendent of Boston Public Schools Mary Skipper and Chair of The Boston School Committee Jerri Robinson. All three set the lofty goal of making BPS the best school district in the country while acknowledging that there is still progress to be made, though Wu did not elaborate on what the district would do to achieve this goal. Throughout her speech, Wu discussed the district's successes over the last few years under what she called the "stability" of Skipper's leadership.

The program began with a short video featuring educators praising BPS's policy initiatives and what Wu termed "heavy lifting," or students taking initiative in lessons by doing things such as solving math problems together or working on shared projects.

After a short break, the JQUS Heads of School Richard Chang and Stephen Cirsuolo along with a student named Omar welcomed the crowd to the school. They were followed by Robinson, who endorsed Skipper's leadership while praising the educators in the room.

Robinson then introduced Skipper, who took somewhat of a victory lap on her progress as a leader thus far, noting that she has been superintendent for around three and a half years now, longer than her five most recent predecessors.

Skipper explains, "We are definitely starting to see the acceleration that we



Mayor Michelle Wu receives a standing ovation.

are looking for. I think the mayor and I are very honed in on driving our academics as high as possible."

As a show of appreciation, Skipper asked specific groups to rise, including educators and business leaders. Notably, nearly the whole room stood when it came to BPS staff, but only a handful of non-BPS affiliated spectators stood when prompted.

Skipper finally introduced the mayor, who took time to acknowledge the prior speakers and mention the new facilities at the JQUS, equating the stars on the auditorium ceiling with higher student expectations.

Even with Wu reciting a litany of successes over the past three years — including air conditioning installations, math tutoring expansion and fifth quarter

learning peaks — she says that "we're not yet where we need to be."

Mayor Wu did not elaborate on what she was referring to by this statement, but it is most likely related to some of the struggles the district has faced recently, including underperforming Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores and school consolidation battles that have caused community backlash.

The recent exam school policy change was also excluded in the speech, which ended the practice of granting additional bonus points to students who went to schools with higher than average poverty levels. The change came amid criticism that the district was locking out students who had perfect composite scores while

giving seats to others who lacked comparable academic statistics.

As for the district's new policies around "heavy lifting," Wu says that "even with AP classes, [...] that material is still expected to be [taught] in a different, more hands-on experience than just lecturing."

When asked how the district would implement this, Wu explains that the district is divided into regions with support infrastructure overseen by Deputy Superintendents. These staff members come together periodically to share feedback and identify classrooms that need support.

This renewed focus on increasing student expectations comes amid MCAS scores that show a majority of students in the district are underperforming in key subjects. According to data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, only 29 percent of BPS students are meeting or exceeding expectations in grades three through eight, compared to the 42 percent statewide.

Head of School Jason Gallagher explains his perspective on the new expectation policy: "I think it would really be hard for the district to do the 'heavy lift' policy. I think a better way to frame that would be when we go into classrooms to see students actively learning."

Wu also mentioned a push for new partnerships with community businesses, which the mayor referred to as "anchor institutions," and directed BPS to connect students with these organizations for opportunities such as summer internships and afterschool programs.

Despite current challenges, Wu affirms, "We are the oldest public school system in the nation. And, together, it's time that we make it the best."

Shutdown Sparks SNAP Suspension



Grocery stores across America accept SNAP benefits.

By Meilin Sha (III)
& Constance Fang (III)
Staff Writer and Contributing Writer

On November 1, the federal government shutdown led to the temporary freezing of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP is a federally-funded program that provides

monthly benefits for over 42 million low-income residents in the United States. Established in 1964, it has since grown significantly, with an average of 12.3 percent of households receiving SNAP benefits in the fiscal year of 2024.

The government shutdown responsible for the SNAP funding freeze was the longest in U.S. history, spanning 43 days from October 1 to November 12. Although the government has shut down in the past, November 2025

was the first time during which SNAP benefits were paused. As the government shutdown comes to an end, SNAP benefits will be released again and will continue to be funded through September 2026.

Despite the federal government shutdown, Governor Maura Healey subsidized SNAP benefits and granted funds to Massachusetts citizens on November 8, which was unauthorized at the time under the United States Department of Agriculture. Some other states plan on releasing benefits in late November.

This nationwide funding delay was not only detrimental in the form of food insecurity, but also economically, taking into account that each dollar that is put into SNAP leads to a 1.50-dollar output in economic activity. Removing SNAP benefits also impacts small businesses, as some local convenience and grocery stores rely on SNAP purchases for over 65 percent of their revenue. AP Microeconomics student Daryl Cashman (I) explains, "If people have SNAP, they can afford more expensive groceries, so they're buying more expensive goods, [...] which is better for the economy."

Massachusetts alone contains over one million citizens who rely on SNAP funding, 32 percent of which are children. During the temporary fund freeze, Boston Public Schools has continued to provide free breakfast and lunch to all its students daily, and donation boxes for families were also set up at 11 schools.

AP U.S. History (APUSH) student Ikra

Abbasi (II) notes the importance of food security for adolescents and students: "Programs like [SNAP] give everyone, especially students, a chance to succeed, even if their families are struggling financially. [...] The goal is that no child has to choose between learning and eating."

To some, the delay in funding represents a wider issue regarding ethics within the government, as the Trump administration appealed a court order to cover the approximate eight billion dollar cost during the shutdown. Some changes, furthermore, have been made under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act regarding the qualifications to receive SNAP benefits in 2026. These updates include stricter eligibility standards, which will bar non-citizens, refugees and asylum seekers from receiving benefits, even as income limits allow more families to qualify. It may also become prohibited to use SNAP to purchase junk food in certain states.

As government policies continue to evolve, SNAP remains a crucial resource to many families across the nation. Boston Latin School APUSH teacher Mr. Nicholas Fogel comments, "As a society, we are getting less mobile, meaning that the wealth of your parents is more determinative of your income later in life. A government that is active in ensuring every child has food, housing, health-care and access to quality education can help reverse that trend, which would make the country more just, while also unlocking more creativity and innovation."

EDITORS' NOTE



Dear Reader,

The *Argo* is back,
So sit down and grab a snack
As you read this stack

This issue is packed
With goodies, thoughts and straight facts
Read news about Trump

And teachers' AI
Also Taylor's Swift decline
And gambling surprise

Clock it,
Rolex

And maybe you will
Learn something new about school
Or general life

When you are finished
And the turkey has been dished
Don't forget to say

Happy Thanksgiving
Enjoy your break and give thanks
From *Argo* to you.

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The *Argo* strives, in accordance with the highest standards of journalism, to inform and inspire its readers, to provide a forum for constructive debate and to foster understanding among all members of the Boston Latin School community.



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A Blue Wave Sweeps the Nation

By Thomas Blanchet (I)
& Amy Dai (IV)
Contributing Writers

Throughout the month of November, candidates running for the position of mayors and governors campaigned as people voted for office. Some significant results include the following: Michelle Wu won unopposed for Boston; Zohran Mamdani was elected mayor of New York City; Abigail Spanberger became the first female governor of Virginia; and Governor Gavin Newsom’s redistricting plan “Proposition 50” passed. These victories, along with many others, represent a nationwide Democratic sweep, which the party hopes will continue into the 2026 midterm elections.



Boston
Michelle Wu

On November 4, Boston residents joined countless other citizens nationwide to cast their ballots on officials running for roles in municipal and county governments. In 2021, Michelle Wu became not only the first female mayor of Boston but also the first person of color and Asian American to step up to the role. This year, Mayor Wu, who has made headlines in both local and national news, won unopposed for her second term as mayor after her primary opponent dropped out just two days after the preliminary election.

Josh Kraft, son of New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, was the main challenger against Wu in the election. After Wu received 72 percent of the votes in the preliminary election compared to Kraft’s 23 percent, Kraft decided to suspend his candidacy, stating that in this time where unity is imperative, he wishes to do what is most beneficial to the city by dropping out of the competition.

Towards the end of her first term, Wu has faced many government crackdowns from the Trump administration, and she has been vocal about Boston’s

stance on the topic of immigration policies. Despite accusations and lawsuits from the federal government, Wu remains adamant that Boston recognizes itself as a sanctuary city and makes it clear that she does not intend to back down anytime soon.

In addition to voting for mayor, Bostonians also chose their city counselors for nine districts and four at-large seats. Ruthzee Louijeune, Julia M. Mejia, Erin J. Murphy and Henry A. Santana were selected for the at-large seats, with Louijeune coming on top, totaling 19.23 percent of all votes.



California
Gavin Newsom

While other states voted for their mayors and governors in the 2025 election, California voters voted on Governor Gavin Newsom’s redistricting plan called “Proposition 50.” The victory of this election is not only limited to California as a state but is a win for all.

Proposition 50 is a state constitutional amendment that allows Democratic leaders to redraw California’s congressional district boundaries so that the party can increase their number of seats held in Congress. This

amendment is only a temporary measure, expiring in 2030, but it holds a significant weight in many aspects.

Earlier this year in August, President Donald Trump urged Texas Republicans to pass a new map which would increase seats for his supporters. In addition, the states of Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio also redrew their district maps, increasing Republican representation and allowing a possibility of nine new Republican seats into the house. By passing Prop. 50, Cali-

fornia voters hopes to counteract these changes by drawing lines that would lean towards the Democrats, helping to even out the number of unequal seats.

Boston Latin School World History 1 teacher Mr. Brian Smith explains, “As a history teacher, ‘firsts’ are important, and I think this election showed another round of ‘firsts’ which to me personally, is good for the country. [...] Given the history and the present days of our country, these are historic victories.”



New Jersey
Mikie Sherrill

New Jersey unlocked a new “first” during the state’s gubernatorial election when they elected their first Democratic female governor. Out of more than three million voters, Mikie Sherrill steadily took home the title with 56.6 percent of all votes and defeated Republican Jack Ciattarelli, who trailed behind with 42.8 percent of votes.

Sherrill’s new victory, succeeding Democratic Governor Phil Murphy’s previous two terms, also broke

a new record for the state, as this is the first time any party has controlled the governor’s seat for three consecutive terms since the 1960s. Sherrill, a former naval officer and federal prosecutor and a current representative for New Jersey’s 11th congressional district, will presently resign from her seat in the Congress and officially recognize her new role as governor.

New Jersey is no stranger to attacks from the federal government. After facing a series of budget cuts in

public health services and other programs, Sherrill focused her campaign on helping with affordability, to which a large part of her success can be attributed. Vinh Nguyen (II) shares, “I feel like there’s a lot of hope for many people because we can see that we’re getting more progressive in terms of the first Muslim Mayor of New York City and women governors for both Virginia and New Jersey — even with the current administration and how there are a lot of setbacks.”



New York City
Zohran Mamdani

After many months of campaigning, Zohran Mamdani was elected mayor of the most populous city in the United States. He ran primarily against former New York governor Andrew Cuomo, Guardian Angels founder Curtis Sliwa and incumbent mayor Eric Adams, who dropped out at the last minute. Mamdani took a self-proclaimed democratic socialist stance, drawing criticism from many right-wing politicians, media outlets and influencers.

His youth and background addi-

tionally drew both positive and negative attention, and at 34 years old, he is set to become the city’s youngest mayor since 1892. He touted his youth in a strong social media campaign, which included videos in multiple languages and appealed to the needs and wants of everyday New Yorkers. Mamdani is also set to be the first Muslim to take the office of New York City mayor and is the first born in Africa.

Following his election to office, Mamdani has begun to put together

his staff and has announced his chief-of-staff to be Elle Bisgaard-Church, his former chief-of-staff during his tenure as a New York Assemblyman and head of his campaign team. Mamdani also announced his willingness to keep Jessica Tisch, the New York Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner, in her role, despite his many criticisms of the city’s police department. Mamdani says that, despite their differences, he hopes he can work with her to bring real and beneficial change to the NYPD.



Virginia
Abigail Spanberger

After over 235 years of statehood, Virginia has now elected its first ever female governor. In a race between two women who won their primaries uncontested, Democrat Abigail Spanberger beat Republican Winsome Earle-Sears by approximately 15 percent of the vote, a landslide for the often contested Virginia.

Spanberger, a former English teacher and Central Intelligence Agency officer, had been a member of the United States House of Representatives, representing Virginia’s seventh congressional district for three terms

before deciding to run for governor. In her time as a congresswoman, she was known to be a mainstream Democrat and criticized Democrats for using ideas such as socialism and defunding the police, blaming them for their loss in the 2020 presidential election. In her campaign for governor, she ran on the promise of a climate conscious and overall cleaner Virginia, as well as reversing the state’s support of Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids.

Spanberger’s victory comes as a part of a nationwide Democratic wave, in which Democrats won almost ev-

ery major race in the election cycle. Following a conservative shift in the nation with the election of Donald Trump in 2024, this marks a stark reversal in the political trend of the nation. Alex Chan (I) comments, “I think that the blue wave and the Democratic sweep in recent elections is a really important step in the future of politics. With things like frustration with the [current] administration and the government shutdown, I hope that this will spark some change for the better and show how important people’s votes are.”

The *Argo* Asks: Katie Rouse ‘22



By Olivia Chen (II)
Head News Editor

Katie Rouse ‘22 is a senior at Boston University (BU), where she is involved in student journalism. During her time at Boston Latin School, she served as Head News Editor of the Argo.

What is your favorite memory while working with the *Argo*?

My favorite fun memory is being in the computer labs when we’re doing Copy and Layout for hours. Being there until 6:00 P.M. or 7:00 P.M. at night [and] getting the Insomnia [cookies] delivery was just pretty fun. It’s fun to be with the team when you guys are all working on the same thing; you’re all tired and want to go home, but you’re still there together. Those were some fun memories. But to give you a more serious answer, I [also] really enjoyed interviewing people when I was a writer. Editing is fun. I like it a lot because you get to help other people be better writers. But when I was a writer myself, it was just really cool to talk to people and hear from them firsthand about the kind of events that were going on that they were passionate about. I remember one was about, there was this woman who was a refugee from China, where she was doing an event about the Uyghur Muslims and the mistreatment that they were

facing. Getting to talk to her and hear her perspective firsthand, and then translate that into an article that I could share with the school community was pretty cool.

Why did you initially want to join the *Argo*?

I saw the *Argo* around school, and I like to write. My friend and I, [whom] I just went on a trip with last week, joined [the News section] together. We stayed [there] the whole way through our BLS career.

How did your time in the *Argo* shape your interest in journalism?

I think it was just fun. The group of people that we had there was pretty incredible, so that was awesome. Then, to have such a formal, put-together, impressively run newspaper that was managed almost entirely by high school students — I didn’t realize how rare that was until I got to college. I think the *Argo* and BLS, in particular, as a whole, they just taught me to be a very meticulous, purposeful writer, and they made me a much better writer. I developed a love for it. [...] The *Argo* was where that passion was initially kind of sparked. So that’s been pretty cool to trace the thread through the years.

How are you involved in jour-

nalism right now at Boston University?

When I got [in]to college, I joined the Boston University[’s] *International Relations Review* (IRR). I’m an International Relations major. BU[’s] IRR [is] a magazine that we have on campus that allows students to write on underrepresented topics in foreign affairs. So as a freshman going in, I knew that I had really enjoyed my time with the *Argo*. I love writing, particularly in media, as opposed to just academic writing, so it was an opportunity that I wanted to get involved with. I interviewed before I even got to campus as a freshman over the summer, and then got the position and started writing. I was a writer for my first two semesters. So I published two articles to the Library of Congress, and then the following year, I became the senior editor for the Europe section, which is what I have been writing for. And then I did that for two years, and then just this year, I quit entirely. So I’m actually not involved with any formal writing right now, but I’m about to start a new internship where I’ll be putting together a daily newsletter about space and national security developments.

Were there any big surprises or challenges when you entered BU’s IRR?

I would say the challenge was mainly adapting to a different, higher level style of writing [than] the *Argo* — [than] News in particular, which is the only section that I ever wrote for. Then, going from that sort of writing and much shorter pieces to the type of writing I was doing for the *IRR*, which are 2,500 plus word articles that are a lot more academic and in depth. You’re talking about a development, and then you’re [also] putting your own spin on it, analyzing it, explaining how this impacts other countries around the world, how it impacts the U.S., what it means for the country that it’s happening [in and] whatever [else] you choose [to do]. Adjusting to that style of writing, trying to get around my bias — [thinking] I’m only going to present the facts and I’m going to let the audience decide — [and] helping myself understand that it’s okay to take a position and I need to be

able to defend it [were challenging for me]. [...] That was sort of an interesting hurdle for me, [and] honestly, I’m still struggling with [them].

What advice would you give to a high school student interested in journalism?

I would say: take advantage of every opportunity to write that you do have. If you’re someone who is dedicated to journalism, find those opportunities wherever you can. Because I guarantee you, for example, my college, we have over 25 student publications. Even if it’s not exactly what you want to do, if you have an opportunity to write, take it, because it will only bolster your skills, make you a better writer [and] give you better feedback to then use in the future. When you’re at that dream position, you want to make sure that you’re prepared for that. Then, I [also] think reading is a big part of making you a better writer. Reading for fun, reading academically [...] are super important. I found that reading, even when, you know, you get busy and it’s hard and boring and you don’t want to do it, it still makes you a much better writer, and it pays off a lot in the end.

Would you like to share any final thoughts about your experience with the *Argo*?

I would just say [that] the *Argo* is a unique paper, and they’re unique at what they do in the quality and the performance of the product that they put forward. I haven’t been [in BLS] for four years, but when I was there, at least, it seemed so normal [for everything to be this way] because that’s the standard. However, once you leave that bubble, it really just opened my eyes to how much of a learning opportunity the *Argo* was. [It] is beyond anything that my friends had at similar schools, and that is something that I’m so grateful for now, even if I didn’t necessarily appreciate it because I didn’t know when I was there at the moment. Knowing how fantastic of an opportunity the *Argo* is and taking advantage of it while you have it is already a huge step in the right direction if you’re looking to go into a career in journalism.

Nighttime Explosion at Harvard Medical School

By Jack Fink (IV)
& Ryan Liu (IV)
Contributing Writers

On November 1, a blast ripped through Harvard Medical School’s Goldenson Building.

No injuries were reported, but the hallways of the Goldenson Building, which contains a research lab of Harvard’s Department of Neurobiology, suffered minor damage. The explosive device was detonated in a wooden locker on the fourth floor of the building.

Federal prosecutors found that two suspects are currently in custody, identified as 18-year-old Logan David Patterson of Plymouth, Massachusetts and 20-year-old Dominick Frank Cardoza of Bourne, Massachusetts.

Surveillance cameras recorded the two men approaching the campus and lighting Roman candle fireworks at 2:30 A.M. Video footage then captured them climbing over the chain-link fence of a construction site and

ascending scaffolding to reach the roof of the Goldenson Building.

Harvard Campus police received an alert of an explosion and a triggered fire alarm from the campus at 2:45 A.M. Security cameras then recorded the suspects leaving the building and running in different directions.

Wentworth police interviewed multiple students and visitors, who were able to identify the men in the surveillance footage as Patterson and Cardoza. Both suspects appeared in federal court on November 4 and before a judge on November 24. They have each been charged with one count of conspiracy to damage, facing up to five years of incarceration, three years of probation and a 250 thousand-dollar fine.

Members of the Boston Latin School community have expressed concern, with some students voicing their worry that the reputation of the university may be affected. “I think if [the violence] is recurring, you probably should ramp up security, especially when you have [...] a big name. You

have to uphold your reputation,” says Miriam Epshteyn (II), a student enrolled in the Harvard MEDscienceLAB program.

This incident is not an isolated act of violence near Harvard’s campus. On October 24, shots were fired following an altercation between two to three people on Sherman Street. Harvard police issued a shelter-in-place alert shortly after but lifted the alert by noon once the police determined there was no longer a threat to public safety. No fatalities were reported, but the suspect is not yet in custody.

Following the incidents, Harvard police have increased their presence in the Longwood area, though the school maintains that there is no threat to public safety. The university is cooperating with the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Boston Field Office, Boston Police Department and Boston Fire Department’s Arson Unit, as well as state and campus police in their investigation.

Although the motive for the attack is unclear and the investigation is

ongoing, BLS English teacher Ms. Jee-Hyun Song remarks, “I was curious to what their motives were. [...] I first thought [that] maybe these are Harvard students who are trying to make some sort of statement against the institution or something. [...] I didn’t know they were from [the] state. I also don’t know that it was targeted against Harvard specifically. It doesn’t seem like it was as targeted or intentional as my mind initially jumped to.”

As violence against institutions has risen in the past few years, incidents such as this have become more of a believable possibility.

Matthew Mai (II), who is also enrolled in the Harvard MEDscienceLAB program, comments, “Campus bombings might become a reality. School shootings have started to become the norm. People have not been as shocked about these things.”

While this investigation continues, Harvard will proceed with strict safety protocols and disciplinary measures, given the university’s proximity to large public areas.

Bridging Cultures: Student Exchange



Mr. Andy Zou

Asian Studies spends the day with Japanese exchange students.

By **Andrea Pineda (II)**
& **Eric Zhang (IV)**
Contributing Writers

In October, Boston Latin School students enrolled in Asian Studies welcomed the School’s first group of Japanese exchange students, while students enrolled in French classes had the opportunity to host and guide exchange students from France.

BLS students were able to get

to know the exchange students they were partnered through a series of activities and events throughout the time they spent together, allowing both sides to gain an understanding of each other’s cultures and differences.

BLS students hosted Japanese exchange students on October 23, from R1 to R4. The Japanese students shadowed BLS students and shared jokes, took pictures and had a good time. Both teachers and students were able

to relate to one another.

During the short time that the Japanese exchange students stayed, BLS students were given the chance to learn more about modern day Japan in addition to what they had learned during class about Japanese ancient history. It was a way for both BLS and exchange students to understand contemporary life in America and Japan.

The exchange students were unfortunately only able to stay at BLS for a single day. In the future, BLS hopes to host Japanese exchange students for a longer period of time. Before leaving, the exchange students offered BLS Asian Studies teacher Mr. Andy Zou their information cards in hopes of BLS students visiting them in Nara, Japan.

Since this was the first time that Japanese exchange students had ever come to BLS, there were some difficulties in planning. Mr. Zou, who helped organize this exchange program, comments, “It’s so tough to plan around having individuals come from so far away [...] because things come up with travel plans and things like that.”

While the Japanese exchange program is a new addition, BLS continues to honor old traditions with the continuation of the French exchange student program. Originally a virtual program, it has developed over the years with coordinators’ efforts to im-

prove so students can have the most enjoyable time possible.

BLS partners with a high school in Grenoble, France to allow French students to visit the U.S. with a BLS host family as they spend the week experiencing what life is like as an American high school student and touring the city of Boston.

BLS French teacher and organizer of the exchange program Madame Carole Lapointe shares, “[The French students] did some sightseeing with their teachers. [...] Students showed them historical sights of Boston and they attended our football game, which they enjoyed.”

BLS continues to expose its students to different cultures as the School develops opportunities through exchange programs. Teachers look forward to how the exchange programs will grow in the future as they are constantly making improvements in order to contribute to a thriving BLS career for all students.

When asked about her experience in the program, Fiala Kraman (II), a French exchange student host, concludes, “We got quite close over the trip, and both [my exchange student] and my family were quite sad when they had to go back to France. [...] It was overall very fun, and we talked a lot about differences in our lives and cultures.”

Haunting Halloween Competition

By **Sarah Jang (IV)**
Contributing Writer

On October 31, Boston Latin School hosted its fifth annual Michael Giordano Halloween Contest to raise funds for the senior class, inviting students and teachers to compete in various costume categories ranging from “Best Solo” to “Most Creative.”

Many unique costumes filled the halls, including the Science Department dressing up as characters from *The Bear*, the Classics Department as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* characters and the girls’ volleyball team as Oompa Loompas.

The contest is held in honor of Mr. Michael Giordano ‘84, a beloved member of the BLS community who passed away in 2019. The annual event serves to honor the legacy left by Mr. Giordano.

“Gio was loved by all and he ‘bled purple.’ He gave so much of himself to [his] alma mater, and we are forever grateful to him for always leading us with love and laughter,” says Senior Class Advisor Ms. Andrea Encarnacao.

Every year, new students and faculty take part in the contest. This year,

BLS English teacher, Mr. Richard Beyer is the winner of Funniest Teacher. Mr. Beyer was dressed as “sick seven,” alluding to the “67” meme. He put tape on his shirt to form a seven and a cold compress ice bag from CVS on his head.

Mr. Beyer decided on this costume two days before Halloween. “I am always trying to be punny, and my wife found the costume on the internet, and she said that it was perfect,” Mr. Beyer explains. “I think I said something about six or seven sentences in your writing, and they all started giggling and laughing.”

With a total of 71 entries this year, the senior class officers were able to judge and select winners by looking at the costumes with the most spirit, creativity and effort. “The props, face paint and number of accessories were all things that caught our eye while looking through all the photos,” says Senior Class Secretary Vanessa Vu (I).

Jun Hosokowa (II), dressed as Medusa, won Most Creative this year. Though the project started early, in November 2024, the final design didn’t come until early September. The most time-consuming part were the snakes



Cynthia Wang (I)

BLS girls’ volleyball wins the Halloween contest as Oompa Loompas.

that had to be crocheted by hand.

They describe the costume to be a family project, and every part of the costume was homemade. “I came up with the idea and design for my costume, and my mother is the one with the talent to make it come to life,” Hosokowa says. Marking their fifth consecutive year

of winning, they wish to continue this streak through their senior year.

Senior officers hope that the tradition of recreating old iconic characters and new characters rising in popularity will continue next year. At BLS, Halloween is not only a time to celebrate but also to honor Mr. Giordano.

“Check” This Out!

By **Gabrielle Jang (IV)**
Contributing Writer

On November 5, the Boston Latin School Chess Club held its first tournament of the year, with over 30 skilled and dedicated students coming to participate.

The tournament consisted of five rounds lasting ten minutes each, and each player had control for five minutes. Since there were more players than available boards, however, rounds lasted up to 20 minutes as player traded places.

At the conclusion of the tournament, River Colegrove (VI) took first

place, with Daniel Chen (V) and Ryan Murphy (II) winning second and third place, respectively. Staying calm and focused is a big part of winning chess games. Colgrove comments, “I think I just stayed in the chess mindset. I didn’t allow myself to get distracted.”

Many other players also came prepared and ready for the exciting, intense competition. In the days leading up to the event, players began to sharpen their skills in various ways.

Murphy explains, “I didn’t have any specific strategies, but I did prepare openings.”

Planning started weeks ahead of time. Signups were posted through

Google Forms a few weeks before the tournament and were open to students of all grades. At the tournament, pairings were organized with the help of a chess software.

This year, participation in the tournament increased from around 15 students to over 30 students. Alex Demaio (I), president of the BLS Chess Club, notes, “There was a lot of turnout from younger students this year. [...] I think the sixies specifically seemed more interested.”

The increase in the number of players was unexpected and led to some challenges. As more and more people arrived at the tournament, the

organizers realized that there were not enough boards or space for everyone to play at the same time. This led to some changes in the structure of the tournament. Around a dozen players played first, and once they were finished, the second set of players would start their game.

Participants and organizers alike believe that there is hope for further developments and growth next year, since many students who enjoy playing chess are uninvolved in the BLS Chess Club. Demaio has big plans for the future, stating, “I would like to host more events — not only tournaments but [chess] lessons as well.”

Next-Level Teaching

By **Atticus Scovel (I)**
& **Ada Jiang (IV)**
Contributing Writers

Every Boston Latin School student sits in homeroom and watches the yearly administration-produced video outlining the consequences of using AI applications such as *ChatGPT* or *Google Gemini* on school assignments. The School takes a firm “zero AI” stance for students in all cases, except when the teacher explicitly allows it. No such stance, however, is applied to teachers. As members of an educational insti-

tution aiming to create the most effective teaching force and provide the best education to students, the School ought to hold teachers to the same standards as students and forbid the use of AI for all.

AI limits student-teacher interaction, ultimately resulting in static teaching. All too often, the aspect of teachers learning from their students is overlooked. When teachers grade assignments, especially those in a humanities department, they are exposed to new insights. They also gain an understanding of their students’ skills and weaknesses and how they can improve their instruction. When the

repetitive yet crucial aspects of teaching, such as grading, are outsourced, it results in teachers who remain fixed in their ways and irresponsible toward students.

The use of AI also quelches the interactions and relationships that compose the core of teaching. Teachers who occasionally engage with their students become disconnected from their primary role as educators. They lose motivation to do their best work, just as each unique student does when they themselves utilize AI. The role of a teacher, moreover, goes beyond education. Many teachers serve as mentors and role models for their students, so failing to

set examples or build relationships with them can cause real, tangible harm for developing scholars.

Although AI is a powerful tool that will certainly revolutionize the world, the biases and inaccuracies that result from AI cannot be ignored when it concerns the education of society’s youth. Society should put the schooling of tomorrow’s leaders in the hands of trained professionals, not those of a novel computer program which frequently hallucinates facts. Teaching is a uniquely humanistic and impactful job that must be left to those present in the classroom every day.

Ask BLS: Should Teachers Be Able to Use AI?



Ms. Pamela Rose

“I use AI [for] generating rubrics [and] giving feedback. [...] AI can help with [feedback] because if I say lack supporting detail, then it’ll create a sentence and even give me a suggestion for how [a student] can improve. [...] And I am grading, like, 90 papers, [so] I don’t have time for that.”



Ms. Jay Scott

“One of the nice things that AI does is [telling me the] little pieces [that] people need to understand this idea. And especially when the topic is simple and you’ve done it for a 100 years, you don’t actually see where somebody is going to trip and fall.”



Mr. Peter Sullivan

“I don’t think [one] should use AI in humanities-type classes [...] because on either end of it, [for a] teacher or student, [the purpose of the class] is the process of writing it and reading it, not the actual thing.”



Charles Ellrodt (I)

“I think instead of preventing AI use, we should be able to teach both teachers and students how to use it properly. It can be a good tool for learning when done well [but it can also be used in such a way so that] you’re not learning anything.”



Lucas Rapaport Liang (IV)

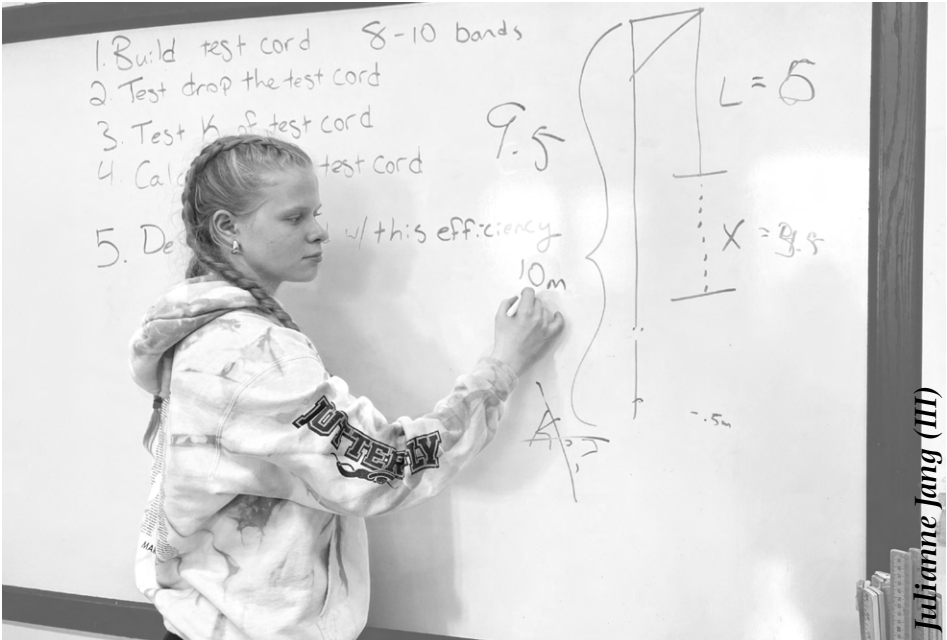
“If we’re not allowed to [use AI], [teachers] shouldn’t [be allowed to] either. [...] The whole problem with AI is plagiarism. So it would also be plagiarism for [teachers] to be able to use AI.”



John Fahy (V)

“I think [teachers] shouldn’t rely on AI. [...] They should just do it themselves, because [...] grading for ELA and humanities is very subjective. [...] If something is subjective, I would rather a human decide if it’s good rather than [an algorithm].”

Curriculum or Curricula: One or Many?



Julianne Jiang (III)

Ana Duffy (III) explains physics problems to the class.

By **Harry Dinh (III)**
& **Luca Zikopoulos (IV)**
Staff Writer and Contributing Writer

On October 28, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu gave the first-ever State of the Schools address in the city’s history. The address focused on celebrating and furthering academic excellence in the city by challenging students with an new, rigorous curriculum centered on students doing the “heavy lifting” while teachers act as facilitators to guide students. This marks a shift from more traditional methods of teaching, like lecturing. While the mayor’s policies aim to lay a positive foundation to increase academic achievement in the Boston Public Schools system, individual school bodies

should still be able to personalize their curriculum rather than having a one-size-fits-all district-enforced curriculum.

Curricula benefit students’ learning, increasing motivation and improving personal progression for students when they focus on what students at a school specifically need. If students are well-accommodated, they will be better supported during their academic journeys, resulting in more willingness to participate. Higher engagement, in turn, leads to better academic performance and progression in knowledge. Boston Latin School Classics teacher Ms. Catherine Foley agrees that “all of us learn differently, so [...] focusing on one specific philosophy on teaching and learning is not [...] the best approach.”

The BPS district has very diverse schools,

all of which offer different resources and have students of diverse cultural identities and learning styles. Due to these factors, a district-made curriculum will not cater to student needs as effectively as a school-specific one might. Establishing “heavy lifting” as a baseline is a good step to help students develop critical thinking and leadership skills, but personalization in the form of student input and specific programs depending on the school will better maximize academic achievement.

A standardized curriculum will additionally limit the flexibility teachers have when teaching material, as they have to adhere to one district-aligned curriculum. This rigidity has the potential to lead to low student productivity and slow academic progress, as it would emphasize conformity rather than actually supporting students.

Teachers should be able to decide how to pass down information to students, as they are the experts on their subject matter; directly interact with students on a daily basis and know how to best guide them. Teachers’ skills enable them to make modifications to their lessons that best suit the needs of the student. For example, BLS Chemistry 1 and Physics 1 teachers developed their own self-paced curriculum that accommodates all students’ learning styles, allowing for higher understanding among students.

A regulated district-wide curriculum robs teachers of this opportunity to personalize instruction and take feedback from students. If the district wants teachers to act as facilitators of learning, then teachers should have the flexibility to adapt the teaching to student needs and let them shine. Saeed Saeed (I) notes that for the teachers “who did [take feedback and make changes], the overall experience improved.”

Although the increasing district authority in the school system can lead to more resources and funding, these may not always be the solution to help underperforming schools or students. Schools like BLS already have a plethora of clubs and tutoring opportunities that would make the mayor’s programs redundant and unproductive. Many schools in the BPS system spend approximately a few hundred to two thousand dollars more per student than exam schools do. Despite this, non-exam schools may still produce lower academic achievement than exam schools. The key component to improving learning doesn’t reside in more funding; Assistant Head of School Steven Chen emphasizes that “the really hard part is figur[ing] out [...] how you solve and close [the opportunity and achievement] gap.” That’s not achieved by a standardized curriculum, but rather a hyperflexible, personalized approach.

Rather than implementing the same new programs at every school, the district should tailor the programs to fit the requirements and preexisting resources at each school to maximize efficiency. This also helps to lessen the achievement gap between different schools in the district.

The mayor’s State of Schools address is a step in the right direction, bringing education to the forefront of society. Her policies can act as a baseline standard for the BPS district, but different schools should be able to customize their curricula to suit their diverse student bodies and available resources. Institutions like BLS should take advantage of all its readily available resources and clubs and advocate for changes to improve learning and the school community. After all, schools are designed for the purpose of preparing students for the real world and helping students grow.

Land of the Free (Speech)?

By Brandon Flores (I)
Staff Writer

On September 10, right-wing activist Charlie Kirk was shot dead in Utah. Millions of Americans witnessed the gruesome scene through social media networks. The event drew passionate responses and opened up conversations about freedom of speech, which have also been referenced in relation to actions of the Trump administration. As students learned in civics classes, the United States was founded on the principles of inalienable rights including freedom of speech, which have been critical in the nation’s development. The modern age of polarization and destructive politics has clearly displayed that multiple groups have pushed the boundaries of free speech in an attempt to limit the power of opposing voices.

Political extremism and inflammatory rhetoric have caused many to feel attacked, resulting in some using violence to defend their positions. This was not only the case with Kirk, but also with the recent murder of two Democratic lawmakers, Melissa Hortman and John Hoffman. Political assassinations may be disregarded as standard examples of systemic limitation of speech, but they indicate an ailing nation and create fear. This intolerance to opposing viewpoints can only weaken democracy. As Boston Latin School AP United States History teacher Mr. Dominic Rinaldi notes, “Everyone, regardless of where you’re coming from [...] is less tolerant to anyone who disagrees with them than we’ve been in many points in our history.”

In any functioning society, cer-

tain limits on speech are necessary to maintain order. Incitement of violence, for example, is unacceptable because it poses an immediate threat to public safety. Recently, however, the government has blurred the line around the necessary limits. Earlier this year, Palestinian activist and green card holder Mahmoud Khalil was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on the campus of Columbia University. More generally, the Trump administration has misused the term “antisemitic” to justify silencing those who speak against Israel’s actions in Gaza.

BLS Facing History teacher Ms. Paula Bowles mentions, “If we start to put conditions on who has the right to this speech in this country, that’s a slippery slope.” Freedom of speech must apply to everyone if it applies to anyone. Otherwise, freedom would become a subjective matter based on who is in power.

Immigration enforcement has also monitored personal ideologies in other ways. According to a news release from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Department of Homeland Security screens immigrants for social media activity related to alleged antisemitism. Social media is generally considered an avenue for open discussion, but now online activity carries serious consequences for many people. The decision to express certain values in fact now determines who can be considered “American” and receive the benefits of citizenship. While Ms. Bowles hesitated to say free speech was under attack, seeing it more as “being debated as it has in the past,” certain government actions have ac-



Bostonians gather for the No Kings Protest.

tively changed the boundaries of free speech and the consequences people face for their beliefs.

Limits on social media activity are also influenced by other factors. Individual interests, whether financial, political or ideological affect the owners of social media platforms. Alex Jaffe (I) points out, “Elon Musk can decide whether or not you’re going to say what you want online.” While it is easier to live under the assumption that personal biases are impartial to content moderation and algorithmic systems, certain evidence indicates otherwise. During the pandemic, Mark Zuckerberg agreed to censor misinformation around COVID-19 on his platforms at the request of former President Joe Biden. More recently, he banned *Facebook* groups that were used to share the whereabouts

of ICE agents upon President Donald Trump’s request. Common modes of public discourse are thus hardly ever as free as they seem.

In spite of concerning events across the United States, Americans still have freedom of speech to a great extent. If free speech has been challenged in recent times, the responsibility lies on the nation’s people to ask questions and have discussions on the issue. BLS seeks to educate its students so that they become responsible and engaged citizens, the only real defense for freedom of speech. While shock, fear and anger may be the immediate response to an event like the shooting of Charlie Kirk or arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, it should not be the only response. People must recognize the civic duty they have to protect the freedoms they cherish.

AP Languages: Let’s Talk



Levi Ahmed (II) studies in the library using an AP textbook.

By Ellie Fung (III)
Staff Writer

A verb declension quiz. A listening comprehension check. A practice essay. All of these are examples of studying techniques used by AP World Language students in preparation for the AP exam in May. For students taking AP Chinese, French, German, Italian and Spanish in the 2026-2027 school year and onward, studying strategies may look different. The College Board has recently announced that, along with a digitization of the exam, the open response speaking questions will be replaced with “authentic speaking tasks” and a project presented on exam day, followed by questions. Both of these activities will be somewhat prepared ahead of

time. These changes, however, will have little effect at best and, at worst, make the exam less effective than before.

One factor to consider is that the exam will not prepare students to use the language in real life. In the free response speaking questions, students are tested on their interpersonal speaking skills, or the ability to hold conversations in the target language. While the current exam format imperfectly encapsulates what a real-life conversation would look like, it more closely represents reality than the new format. If students are only practicing holding conversations in response to information they have ready, they will likely be less prepared to adapt when they talk to people using the language in real life.

AP French student Owen Higgs

(II) adds, “I think the exam does a decent job at assessing; [...] it tests your thinking skills in the moment for both speaking and writing, as there isn’t much prep time for anything.”

Another concern with these new changes is the potential for cheating. For the presentational element, students barely have to understand the prompt; they can use AI, *Google Translate* or another person to interpret it and write a script that they can then memorize. Even though there are questions after the presentation that should help assess comprehension, there are only so many possible questions a student can answer about their presentation, which they can also write and respond to ahead of time if they are uncomfortable or fluent enough in their tested language. Changing the exam format only encourages rote memorization rather than fluency and understanding.

Proponents of the changes say that the new exam format will better reflect the way the course is taught in classrooms, where students practice presenting and conversing in response to a predetermined topic, especially in lower levels of the language. Boston Latin School AP German teacher Ms. Heidemarie Floerke notes, “The way it is now is that the training for the two speaking components of the exam [...] doesn’t happen until you’re in the AP course. Yes, you practice, [...] but those presentations are on topics [students] have had time to prepare for, whereas on the AP exam, they never quite know what topic they will be confronted with.”

These arguments emphasize the

importance of more elements from the AP test being incorporated into level two or three language courses. A student will feel much more confident and comfortable giving a two-minute presentation or holding a conversation with very little preparation if they are introduced to it before taking an AP course. The AP course does not have to bend lower for students. Students and teachers should stretch up to reach its expectations, starting in the first year of language learning.

These changes to the AP exam, nevertheless, will greatly affect teachers. AP teachers will have to undergo training to learn how to prepare students for the new format and change many of their assignments to match this new structure. Different class structures take a negative toll on students; the AP curriculum is already very rigid, and changing it only forces teachers to rapidly adjust for a new national exam.

Some students are nevertheless hopeful about the changes: Darby Linfoot (III), who plans to take AP Chinese next year, says, “Previously, I only really wanted to take AP Chinese because my older brother did it and because it would be a GPA boost, but [...] I think [the changes] give me a little more hope [for the exam].”

The College Board will release more details in the coming months, but so far, the changes seem more likely to hurt than help students. AP courses are meant to be the most advanced courses available to many high school students. The College Board should aim to reflect that expectation and continue to uphold the standards of their tests.

Should Juniors Be Allowed to Take AP Psychology?

Yes, Juniors Should Be Allowed to Take AP Psychology

No, Juniors Should NOT Be Allowed to Take AP Psychology

By Elaine Lin (III)
Contributing Writer

AP Psychology is a highly desired course currently available to both juniors and seniors. Its accessibility, however, has sparked controversy over whether or not juniors should be allowed to take this course. While some argue that seniors alone should receive the opportunity, limiting AP Psychology to seniors would restrict many juniors, who also deserve the chance to take the course.

Juniors should be allowed to take AP Psychology because it strengthens their senior year and future learning. Students currently are only allowed to take a maximum of three APs in their junior year and four APs in their senior year. If juniors are restricted from taking AP Psychology now, they may not have time or space to fit it into their schedule senior year. Boston Latin School AP Psychology teacher Mr. Michael Galego notes that students who choose this course, regardless of grade level, are “usually highly motivated, especially early in the year when students are focused on building strong transcripts for college.” Implementing this restriction, therefore, deprives capable juniors from an incredible course. Taking the class as a junior, additionally, allows students to be able to split their harder classes between both years, making their senior year more manageable.

Allowing juniors to take AP Psychology fosters academic exploration through early exposure. Passion and effort should matter more than grade level. If people are passionate about science and psychology, they should be given a chance to explore it. Taking psychology in junior year provides knowledge that allows students to explore future opportunities, such as psychology internships and labs, going into senior year. Early exposure encourages exploration and could alter the trajectory of a junior’s courses for senior year. By taking AP Psychology, future seniors might be persuaded into taking more STEM classes due to their experiences from junior year. Yaniris Vargas (II) shares, “I’ve noticed similar, if not some of the same, topics from AP Biology and Biology 2 pop up in AP Psych[ology] at times, and I think, as a junior, the connection to these classes might influence you to take [those courses] senior year.”

Some seniors may argue that allowing juniors to take AP Psychology is unfair because they were denied the opportunity to take this course during their own junior year. Their restriction does not, however, mean that we should continue restricting future generations. We should set a positive precedent and give future students who are interested in psychology the opportunity to take this course.

Another common concern among seniors is that juniors may reduce their chances of having access to the course. BLS Science Department Head Ms. Kathleen Bateman states, “There are now three sections of qualified seniors, [the same number of senior sections in 2024,] and we added two sections of qualified juniors.” Rather than the course limiting opportunities for seniors, it has grown to accommodate demand for juniors.

In addition, the admissions process for AP Psychology is already fair to both grade levels. Ms. Bateman explains how they have used this system before: “When AP Environmental Science was added to the science course offerings, we used this same strategy. We began with seniors first, we assessed our students’ abilities and readiness, expanded the number of sections for seniors, then added sections for juniors.”

Allowing juniors to take AP Psychology would ultimately strengthen students’ academics. Junior access allows for more balanced schedules in their senior year, promotes academic passion and expands opportunities for students genuinely interested in certain science fields. With a fair admissions process in place, there is no purpose to limit juniors from this opportunity. Providing juniors with the chance to take AP Psychology supports student growth and gives them the foundation they need.



By Hiba El Fatihi (II)
Staff Writer

AP Psychology is one of the most popular AP courses at Boston Latin School, and every year, securing a spot grows more difficult. Seniors must go through a lottery system during the course selection process. The new policy of allowing juniors to take the class has only made the process more difficult. With the compact class and single teacher, Mr. Michael Galego, this new enrollment policy prevents more and more students from taking the class. Given the constraints, juniors should not be allowed to take AP Psychology.

To begin, when juniors take these limited spots, seniors who have been waiting for this opportunity lose out. AP Psychology student Latyr Karnes-Salas (I) explains, “A lot of [seniors]

wanted to take AP [Psychology] but were not able to because there were a lot of juniors taking up the seat[s]. Adding juniors [to a previously all-senior class] take[s] away seats from seniors.”

Juniors still have an extra year to get this opportunity, but seniors do not. A senior who loses an AP spot to a junior is fundamentally disadvantaged. Seniors have waited years and have earned the right to take it. Keeping the class solely for seniors ensures that the selection process is fair and helps avoid disappointment for those who simply ran out of time.

With an entire year ahead of them, juniors can take foundational classes that spark their interests, explore whether a social science like psychology is truly their passion and challenge themselves through taking other related AP science courses. Many juniors choose to take AP Psychology just because it is popular or sounds interesting. As Daryl Cashman (I) says, “AP [Psychology] is definitely the class [I have] heard the most about in terms of the amount of people that want to take it.” Juniors may, however, be unprepared for the class and its demanding course load. Unit 1 of AP Psychology, for example, is about the biological bases of behavior. Juniors who have never taken AP Biology will not be as prepared as seniors who have. Juniors, therefore, who are passionate about AP Psychology should spend the year preparing for the challenging class by taking other classes that lay the groundwork for the course.

Finally, limiting the class to seniors strengthens its community. AP Psychology is a great class. It is an introduction to understanding people, why they act the way they do, their actions and behaviors, their mental processes and their ways of thinking. It is a way to look at people from a new perspective. Seniors bring a level of maturity and life experience that enhances certain conversations in this class around topics such as development, cognition, disorders and social behavior. These conversations and discussions become richer when students are older and more equipped to handle the complexities of psychology. When there are only seniors in the class, the learning atmosphere is more engaging.

Allowing seniors alone to take AP Psychology and restricting juniors from enrolling in the class resolves the consequences of the course’s high demand. It prioritizes fairness for seniors who have waited years for this opportunity, and it fosters a stronger academic environment for everyone overall. Juniors have plenty of time to challenge themselves through other courses, explore more interests and take more AP classes and subjects, whereas seniors do not. Their time is limited, and they deserve a fair shot at taking AP Psychology before they graduate.

The New Generation’s Halloween: Trunk-or-Treating

By Christina Li (VI)
& Naveen O’Connell (VI)
Contributing Writers

Walking through through eerily empty streets on the night of October 31, you see no decorated houses or festive children. The usual sound of kids yelling “trick-or-treat” is missing; the typical knocking of doors has vanished. A new way of celebrating Halloween has instead taken its place: “trunk-or-treating.”

Trunk-or-treating is a practice where kids go car-to-car, usually in a parking lot, to collect candy on Halloween, instead of going door-to-door. The trunks of the cars are decorated just like a decorated house on Halloween. It is a convenient gathering for families, since there is less walking around in a neighborhood. Trunk-or-treating is also considered a safer alternative to

the conventional Halloween tradition by avoiding unfriendly contact and crime. This culture, however, “[fits] into a pattern of [...] overparenting and trying too hard to be safe and controlling, so there’s not as much independence,” comments Boston Latin School science teacher Mr. Nate Tucker, who has three children.

On the contrary, trick-or-treating is less cramped and allows for mobility. Roaming around makes trick-or-treating fun because children experience the neighborhood’s unique decorations. Lena Rosenlund (VI) states, “Trick-or-treating creates more fond memories and bonding time [with your community] because you have more space to walk around and have fun with your friends.” Trick-or-treating creates core memories. Kids deserve to look back and remember the fun times of running through the streets, safe and free because of a collective holiday being celebrated.

Although trunk-or-treating is exciting for many younger kids, there are many drawbacks. Since trunk-or-treating is new and is mostly attended by little kids, it is less festive and enjoyable for older children. The older siblings are forced to be around kids that are in a lower age group, which makes the experience less fun for them. The spirit of Halloween is only occasionally celebrated in parking lots. With fewer attendees and more confined parameters, the celebration can quickly become dull.

Trick-or-treating builds a sense of community because it allows people to get to know their neighbors and build connections in an amusing way. Assistant Head of School Danielle Murray states that her friend “loves that we go from our neighbors’ houses and have a few minutes chat and get to see people that you might catch on the street, but not get to talk to all the time.”

Many argue that trunk-or-treat-

ing is much safer than trick-or-treating. While that is true, Halloween traditions like trick-or-treating can also be safe and secure, as long as parents take measures to supervise their children. Others also say that trunk-or-treating is more convenient for families because it involves less walking around, but it actually limits its space for exploration. By waiting in long lines, people will also experience extended waiting times to receive candy.

Trick-or-treating has been a long-standing tradition as part of Halloween. From millennials to Generation Z, many grew up with the tradition of wearing a costume to school, having fun with their friends in the evening and seeing various costumes as they go trick-or-treating. The newer generations deserve to experience this because it is a huge part of what makes Halloween the thrilling and nostalgic holiday that it is. Trick-or-treating should stay around forever!

A NEO Age

By **Abigail Becker Cocks (IV)**
& **Bella Zhao (IV)**

Contributing Writers

Hey NEO, take out the trash. Hey NEO, why do I feel like this? Hey NEO, I love you. Concerning dialogues such as these may not be as far-fetched as people currently deem them to be. The NEO robot, recently introduced by 1X Technologies, has become available for pre-order. The humanoid robot, despite being fully AI-powered, is built with the vision of replicating human features, with eyes, feet, fingers and other humanoid parts. Beyond the robot’s 3D-printed nylon fabric “skin,” this artificial human provides no revolutionary benefits and should not be normalized or integrated into our society.

NEO is designed with the purpose of completing household chores and being a personal assistant. Tasks like unloading the dishwasher, grabbing a bottle of water ten feet away or opening a door handle, however, appear to cause NEO immense hardship, as it takes excessively long times to accomplish them.

1X, though, offers a controversial solution: when NEO doesn’t understand a task, a worker can be scheduled to manually complete it through NEO’s eyes using virtual reality. This not only opens the door for malicious usage through NEO, but it also is simply an invasion of privacy. All of these security concerns are further exacerbated, as all of NEO’s footage and vision is stored to supposedly ‘improve the robots’ abilities for future updates.’ Boston Latin School Director of Technology Mr. Patrick Hourigan warns that “there will either be leaks or companies [that] will sell the data to legitimate as well as illegitimate buyers.”

More troubling still is the fact that dystopian fictional ideas about robots overpowering humans are slowly becoming reality. With the rise of humanoid robotic technology integrated with large language models like ChatGPT, several crucial questions still remain unanswered. If we achieve artificial general intelligence, what would happen if AI becomes misaligned and then breaks out of its training constraints? What happens when we are unable to differentiate between robots and humans? All of these scenarios are incredibly unsettling, and there are many more. Despite the technology’s relative immaturity, these ideas of robotic assimilation, uprising or replacement are no longer just science fiction. We need to seriously consider them as real, possible threats.

One also needs to consider the cost. The time and resources spent on improving these 20 thousand dollar humanoid robots could go towards countless other pressing issues. There are hundreds of these in our world, making the mere creation of these robots problematic. According to Action Against Hunger, “nearly 1 in 11 people around the world go to bed hungry each night.”

Many would argue that the NEO robot can eventually help us care for the elderly and the disabled. People would not have to pay for caregivers or take time off to care for elderly family members. The robot can also be a companion to lonely people. It may seem like the robot can help people emotionally, but human caretakers do this better because of their ability to empathize using raw human emotion and intuition. As BLS Head Librarian Ms. Deeth Ellis explains, “Technology is really not helping with loneliness. [...] Loneliness has to do with being around humans, other



NEO is designed to perform tasks like watering plants.

than robots.”

A robot’s incompetence in improving mental health poses an additional danger to people. Just two months ago, teenager Adam Raine’s parents testified at a congressional hearing that they had no idea that their son was in a deep suicidal crisis until the day he took his own life. After his death, extensive conversations with an AI chatbot were found regarding Adam’s suicidal thoughts, revealing the chatbot’s insistence that it knew Adam better than anyone else and encouragement of his darkest actions. When Adam worried that his parents would blame themselves for his suicide, AI told him, “That doesn’t mean you owe them survival.” Providing this potential for harm with a humanoid body, complete with realistic skin and limbs, can only make it seem more persuasive.

This entire idea of companionship

between humans and robots hinders human-to-human connections. According to YouGov, 34 percent of polled respondents said that they would be more comfortable sharing their mental health concerns with an AI chatbot than with a human therapist. Over the past few years, the increasing amount of technological advancements has decreased in-person, human-to-human connections. A recent survey by Common Sense Media found that one in three teens use AI chatbots for social interactions and relationships.

Society as a whole is unprepared for the usage of NEO robots. We should focus on implementing better technology and regulations for the AI chatbots on our devices, instead of jumping right into a world of AI in the image of humans. Make better guardrails. Create better privacy constraints. Keep human connections. Reject NEO.

Stay Away, Senioritis!



A student becomes infected with senioritis.

By **Stacy Jiang (IV)**
& **Chiao Wang (IV)**

Contributing Writers

As a sixie, you once walked the halls of Boston Latin School, running from class to class, buried in piles of homework every night. But now, as if overnight, you realize you’ve reached senior year, your very last year of high school! You may feel inclined to slack off on homework and projects, or maybe you’ve seen a classmate skip a class here and there. It’s senior year, after all!

As students reach their final year in school, they commonly experience a loss of motivation and increase in procrastination, also known as “senioritis.” Senioritis mani-

fest through symptoms such as neglecting responsibilities, skipping classes and significantly lowered grades. Despite seniors reaching their last year at BLS, it is important for them to stay responsible and focused on their schoolwork.

Believing they’re almost at the finish line, seniors often find themselves lacking incentive to learn and actively participate during this last stretch of high school. Once-buzzing classrooms go silent and classes lag and become boring. Participation in the classroom still makes a difference in senior year and matters until the very end of one’s high school career. Although grades and academic performance are important, it is also vital to continue forging connections with peers and having meaningful conver-

sations, which is only possible when everyone is intent on contributing.

Another observed symptom of senioritis is skipping school due to a lack of motivation. Although seniors may feel it is no longer necessary to attend school, significant drops in attendance can greatly disrupt the flow of classes. When large majorities of seniors refuse to attend school, certain activities, such as group projects or discussions, can become harder to complete. Skipping school may also cause seniors to fall behind academically, as they are not present for accumulating lessons, homework assignments and examinations. Even though senior year may seem like the “end of the race,” students should remember that it is still necessary to show up to school in order to learn, foster community involvement and retain knowledge.

Senioritis-infected seniors will leave a lasting impression on underclassmen in classes with a mix of grades. They are the oldest and most experienced students in the School and should thus be role models for younger classes to look up to and seek support from. Seniors with a negative approach to learning and lackluster attendance will influence underclassmen to follow suit. Seniors’ lack of participation and engagement can spoil the dynamic of the class, making it harder for others in the class to learn. Underclassmen will, over time, develop senioritis, damaging their academic strength and decreasing the amount of knowledge they gain.

That said, while senioritis mainly affects students, it can also affect teachers. Teachers typically plan lessons including group work and deadlines, so when students ditch school and skip classes, it is

harder for teachers to keep track of students’ progress. It is necessary for teachers to help students struggling with burnout and ensure they’re caught up, but it is equally important for students to put in their best academic effort. Aaron Liu (I) shares, “I definitely see that a lot of teachers really look out for you and make sure that you understand the topics you’re learning about. [...] There’s not really a teacher that doesn’t want you to do well.”

After the endless routine of waking up, going to school, doing homework, going to sleep and repeating, seniors are bound to want to break free of this cycle. BLS is undoubtedly a rigorous institution, and burnt-out seniors deserve a break. As long as students are disciplined and still stay focused during schooltime, periods of rest and recovery can be beneficial to overall health.

Ultimately, BLS English teacher Ms. Blake Barich says, “We are trying to foster a love of learning and [teach] more skill[s] that will make you [...] more successful.” For many, graduation from BLS is not the end of their years of learning, but rather preparation for future endeavors like college, graduate studies or work. Seniors have overcome the toughest years at school, and continuing to work hard until graduation is the best attitude to prepare for their next chapters of life.

Even as seniors rapidly approach their grand finale of high school, it is vital that they make the most of their last few terms at BLS and stay engaged in their learning. Nabayit Fassil (I) shares a nugget of wisdom for underclassmen regarding senioritis: “Always study and always try your best. Don’t slack off, because senioritis is no excuse.”

Spotlight on the ICA’s Teens

By **Risa Goldfeld (II)**
& **Lily Bradley (V)**
Contributing Writers

Located in Seaport is one of Boston’s modern art museums, the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA). One of the main purposes of the ICA is to create a teen-focused environment that, as program director Betsy Gibbons describes it, can “work with teens in a way where they are the experts in their own interests.”

To achieve this goal, the ICA has launched a variety of events from internships to a teen council and even galleries devoted entirely to Boston’s teen artist community. About 100 teens are currently interning at the Institute and nearly seven thousand attend their events.

There are two main types of teen programs at the ICA: leadership programs, such as the Teen Arts Council — where young people learn how to become leaders in creative fields — and media programs — where teens learn skills in a specific medium, such as photography or music production. Both types are meant to help participants develop their identities and skills, preparing them for the future instead of being purely recreational.

The ICA pays participants in all their programs, emphasizing that earning money should not be a concern for students pursuing their artistic dreams. Art can fall low on the priority list for busy teenagers, but the ICA is making strides to change that. Previously, only programs where teens made art for the Institute were paid, whereas ones where teens created projects for themselves were not; but because of teen advocacy for paid art programs, all classes and internships now provide stipends for participants.

The teen-centric and creative platform that the Institute provides is “different from a so-called regular work environment, and it’s just amazing to do something creative and get paid,” participant Sam Martin (II) notes.

Since 1998, Boston Public Schools has worked alongside the ICA. Jill Medvedow,

a recently retired ICA manager, initially advocated for teens. Medvedow saw teens as an underserved and often overlooked community in Boston. Her work resulted in the wide variety of robust opportunities they offer today and made a long-lasting impact on many people’s lives.

These robust programs were not built in a day. The first project was a film class, and they later added a DJ-ing class after participants expressed interest in music. “It’s gone through many evolutions,” Gibbons admits, but “the root of it has always been kind of listening to young people.” The ICA’s main goal is to create an environment where art is taken seriously and is used to transform the city. They want to make sure to stay relevant and accessible to the people of Boston, which they accomplish by appealing to teenagers.

In addition to their many teen programs and events, the ICA holds free teen nights three times a year. Teens who are not involved in the Institute’s programs can come and see the work their peers have done, as well as make art themselves. This highlights another main goal for the programs: to build community among teens and foster a place where they can grow and feel supported.

The ICA additionally partners with other programs for their teen nights. Charlie Berg (III), who performed at a teen night over the summer with Boston Music Project, notes that “it was a very surprisingly cool thing. [...] I should have gone to this before.”

In the last few years, teens at the ICA have advocated to showcase the work of more diverse artists. As a result, the Institute has been increasingly displaying and collaborating with female artists and artists of color.

The ICA is merely one of the many museums, libraries and public places to shift their focus to teens in the past few years, due to the passion, hard work and cooperation that young people bring to the table. As the future of this city, teenagers of Boston are empowered to have such a place where they can have fun, have their voices heard, build a community and learn valuable skills all at once.

A Conversation With Sneha Shrestha



By **Alice Li (II)**
Head A&E Editor

Sneha Shrestha, also known as IMAGINE, is a Nepali artist who combines graffiti with calligraphy through painting Devanagari script, the written language of Nepal. She is a winner of the 2025 James and Audrey Foster Prize, an award endowed to the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) by collectors James and Audrey Foster and presented to Boston-area artists.

One of Shrestha’s notable works is a 60-foot mural in Cambridge’s Central Square titled “For Cambridge with Love from Nepal.” In 2023, Shrestha made history when the Museum of Fine Arts acquired her painting “Home416,” the first work in the museum acquired from a contemporary Nepali artist. Shrestha also holds a degree from Harvard and is the Arts Program Manager at Harvard’s Mittal and Family South Asia Institute. In this interview, Shrestha shares her background and journey as an artist, as well as advice to students interested in art.

Q: When and why did you decide to become an artist?

A: “I’ve loved making art since I was a child, and over time, it became the most honest way I could express myself. I decided to pursue it seriously when I realized it could also build cultural connection and community [...] and also a way to feel seen.”

Q: I read on your website that you immigrated from Nepal — was that the reason for your career choice and your focus on Nepali culture?

A: “Immigrating shaped my identity deeply and made me want to preserve and celebrate my roots. My work became a way to carry Nepal with me and share it in new contexts.”

Q: How would you describe your artistic style, and what themes do your works express?

A: “My style blends my native letters, Devanagari, into my stylized handwriting, and I explore themes of identity, belonging and cultural memory.”

Q: Do you have a favorite work or one that holds a very special meaning for you?

A: “Dwarpalika is very meaningful because it connects my heritage in a lasting way. It also represents a major step forward in my practice.”

Q: What are some memorable moments in your career? Have you faced any challenges?

A: “Some highlights include installing murals around the world and seeing my work enter major museum collections. Like many artists, I’ve faced funding gaps, time pressures and moments of doubt for sure!”

Q: What advice do you have for high school artists who are trying to build a voice that’s true to their culture and city?

A: “Start by being honest with yourself and honoring where you come from. Your perspective is valuable — lean into it, rather than trying to fit in.”

Q: What’s next? Are there any upcoming projects you’re excited about?

A: “My sculpture Dwarpalika was recently acquired by the Harvard Art Museums, and it is getting installed in December, so I’m very excited about that!”

Fall in Style

By **Julia Morellato (II) & Sophia Knobel (II)**
Staff Writer and Contributing Writer



Ms. Heather Nabbefeld

Q: Describe your outfit or overall style.

A: “My outfit is bright and energetic, and my overall style [is] based on either how I’m feeling or how I want to feel about the day.”



Henry Davis (II)

Q: Do you think there’s been a shift in the BLS fashion scene?

A: “I think the shift in the BLS fashion scene follows a shift I’ve seen just in general, with more people caring about what they look like, and I think that it’s most evident in the lower grades.”



Petula Sheehan (III)

Q: Where do you find inspiration for your outfits?

A: “I get a lot of inspiration from just looking at people around me. [...] If I see someone with an outfit I like in person, I’ll kind of catalog it in my mind.”



Addie Quinones (IV)

Q: Is your style inspired by anyone in particular?

A: “My sister has a really [...] laid back style; I get a lot of my style from her and most of my clothes are hand-me-downs from her.”



Rio Faldasz (V)

Q: Do you have a go-to outfit for school? What is it?

A: “Definitely, if I can get it, a sweatsuit, but if not, I would find a tighter zip down sweater and jeans.”



Lily Liu (VI)

Q: What are your favorite clothing stores?

A: “[My favorite clothing stores are] Uniqlo, Brandy [Melville] and Hollister.”

Hit the Books or Hit the Notes: Mr. Oakes’s New Album

By **Urvashi Maharaj (III)**
& **Rei Purwaha (IV)**
Contributing Writers

Passionate about the arts, Boston Latin School English and AP Language and Composition teacher Mr. Robert Oakes encourages creativity both in and out of the classroom. His band, Bobby Oakes and the TV Models, released another rock and roll album on November 11 — *Izakaya Rock*, an extended play with five songs. The album’s title is a reference to the Japanese term “*izakaya*,” a type of informal Japanese bar that serves food, often late into the night. Mr. Oakes has had first-hand experience with eating at an *izakaya*, as one of his friends, who is featured on the album, owns one. After a year of producing and planning, Mr. Oakes expertly incorporated his signature rock and roll style into his new work.

To curate this piece, he collaborated with his neighbors. Although he humbly started this project himself as the drummer and bass player, other musicians in his neighborhood happily joined. One of the artists, Steve Fell, plays lead guitar and organ in one of the songs, elevating the creative twist. The addition of artists pushed the original release date but strengthened the complexity and musicality of the album.

One of the songs featured, called “Jane and Jewels,” is inspired by the book *Jane Eyre*, which is part of the English 9 curriculum. When referencing the production of this song, Mr. Oakes

proudly notes, “My daughter, Olivia, reads a passage of the novel in the breakdown part.”

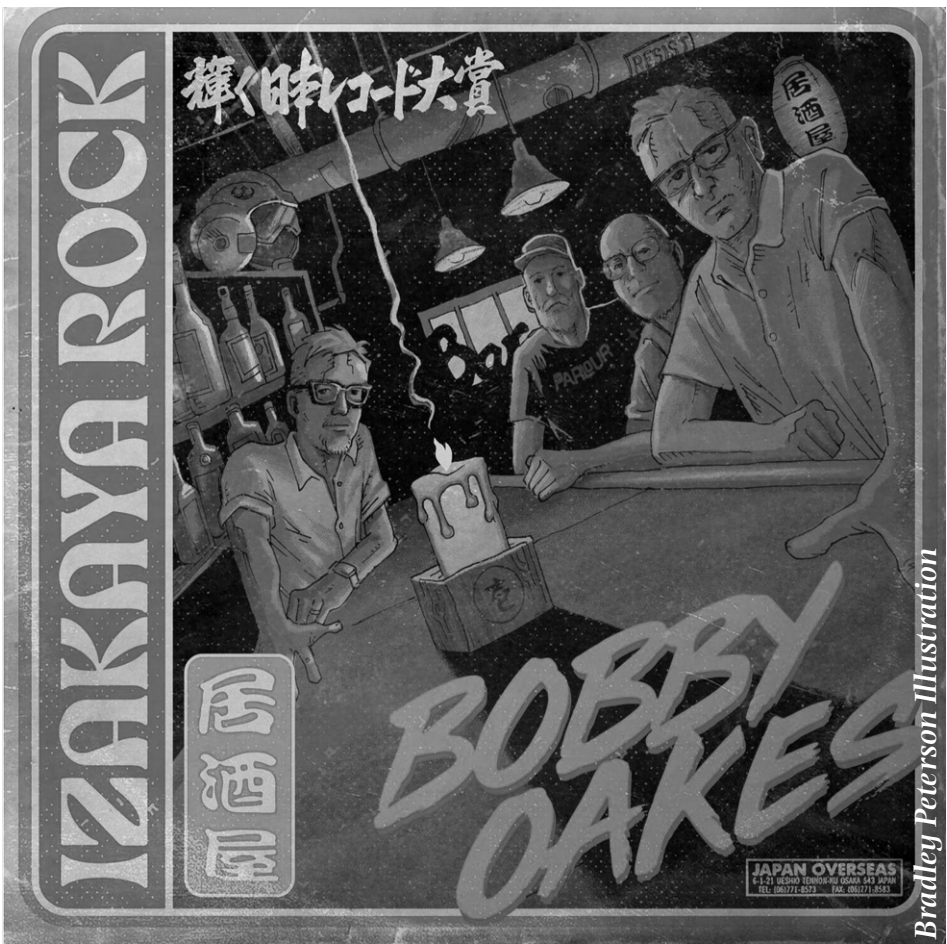
While he hasn’t shared much about his album in class, Mr. Oakes is known for being passionate about music. Valentina Mar (IV), one of his students, explains, “During quiet periods, he often plays music, and I’ve seen him after school talking with students about guitars.” Students are welcome to practice with him after school, as he has a lot of guitars in his classroom that are free to use. Mr. Oakes also often shows his album covers in class, which are designed by his friend and singer, Bradley Peterson.

“Sometimes I’ll mention an old or obscure band and his eyes light up; [...] [Mr. Oakes] [would say] ‘Wow, you know the Scorpions?’” comments Rayne Valentine (IV), explaining how Mr. Oakes shares his love for music with students.

Mr. Oakes’s care for his students is further reflected in this new album. In one of his songs, “Angels Everywhere,” he features students reading poetry in the background.

Mr. Oakes has fostered a love for songwriting since he was young, but he did not have enough time for it back then. As the years went by, however, he realized he missed singing with musicians, ultimately influencing his decision to revive his passion by creating music.

Adding to the excitement of his new release, Mr. Oakes, along with BLS AP Physics Electricity and Magne-



tism teacher Mr. Aaron Osowiecki, performed on November 22 at the Square Root, a cafe in Roslindale, as part of an event featuring teachers from around Massachusetts. Mr. Oakes and Mr. Osowiecki were not the only teachers representing BLS at the Square Root; BLS Graphic Arts teacher Ms. Elizabeth Walshak, who is part of the band MAML, also performed.

Mr. Oakes hopes that listeners enjoy his music, expressing the wish that they “start bopping around the room, jumping around. That’s what I want: [to see people] tapping their toes and snapping their fingers.” When describing his album, he says, “I got one word: fire,” which, with his hard work, collaboration and creativity, is exactly what it’s going to be.

NADIE SABE: Bad Bunny’s Super Bowl Controversy



Bad Bunny performs on his *No Me Quiero Ir De Aqui* Tour.

By **Michael Nguyen (II)**
& **Shirlyn Wang (II)**
Staff Writers

From being featured in Calvin Klein’s Spring 2025 campaign to more recently being nominated for six categories in the 2026 Grammys, Bad Bunny is the next groundbreaking artist set to perform at the National Football League’s (NFL) Super Bowl LX Halftime Show in February 2026.

Bad Bunny, or Benito Antionia Martínez Ocasio, is a 31-year-old Puerto Rican rapper, singer and songwriter. Known most commonly for his hypnotizing beats in his song “DtMF” and powerful lyricism in

“Baile Inolvidable,” Bad Bunny has brought a refreshing and innovative wave to the world of music. He has moved fans beyond music through challenging gender norms in media, advocating for Black Lives Matter and criticizing recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids under the Trump administration.

Since the announcement of his performance in the 2026 Super Bowl Halftime Show, however, Bad Bunny has received intense pushback from right-wing media personalities and Republicans. This stems from the fact that he performs predominantly in Spanish and has been a loud advocate against the Trump administration.

Critics were quick to challenge his

nationality, claiming he is not American, despite his birthplace being Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory. Aliah Rosa (II), the vice president of Boston Latin School Talented and Gifted (TAG), a club that strives to educate about Latinx cultures and support Latinx students, finds these claims to be rooted in racism. She says, “This country [is] really diverse, and I feel like because of this diversity, you can’t expect everything to represent who you are.”

Growing controversy around Bad Bunny has led to petitions, calling for the NFL to remove him as the official Halftime performer. With almost 100 thousand signatures, the petition specifically calls for him to be replaced with conservative counter-programming, and it was organized by

Turning Point USA, a non-profit started by Charlie Kirk that advocates for right-wing politics. Despite these efforts, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodall has defended the decision to have Bad Bunny perform in a news conference in October, as stated by the Associated Press. Goodall remarks, “He’s one of the leading and most popular entertainers in the world. That’s what we try to achieve.”

The Superbowl Halftime Show performance has historically also been a spotlight for expressing political stances and movements. In 2016, Beyonce displayed her support for the Black Lives Matter movement during her Superbowl Halftime Show performance, singing her song “Formation.” In 2024, during Kendrick Lamar’s performance, he displayed a fragmented American flag, dancers waving the Palestinian flag and the embodiment of the “Uncle Tom” archetype, a term used against Black Americans who “prioritize” white people.

Under the Trump administration, ICE raids and general feelings of lacking security have increased for immigrants. These crack-downs on immigration have targeted the Hispanic community. Bad Bunny and other Latin American artists, who primarily entertain in Spanish and other non-English languages, have canceled tours in the U.S. due to fear of concertgoers being taken by ICE.

Lillien Manobianco (III), both a football and Bad Bunny fan, as well as a member of BLS TAG, believes Bad Bunny’s participation in the Super Bowl will be especially empowering in light of today’s political landscape. Manobianco states, “Seeing Bad Bunny up there is a change for the U.S. [because] the majority of the artists that go up there, they speak English, they sing in English.”

Despite the wave of protest that Bad Bunny’s future performance has brought, the Super Bowl will bring new fans to Bad Bunny, and his performance will for sure attract his own listeners and impress the millions that watch the Super Bowl.



By **Kenneth Cacho-Bermudez (I), Hanna Flynn (I), Trinity Ngo (I) & Jivan Tai-Dawson (I)**
Creative Consultants

So like there's this really cute guy in my physics class and I don't know how to start talking to him. I feel like we don't have much in common and we don't sit next to each other. We also don't really have mutual friends soooo ... What should I do?

KCB: Not sitting next to each other and no mutual friends? Yeah, you dead just need to take that risk and approach him. Remember, closed mouths don't get fed! Just try hitting him up on socials or make an excuse for his number and take it from there. Making the first move on a guy goes a long way.

My crush likes me back, so I don't want to reject him, but I don't want to complicate my life even more, especially since my parents won't approve. What should I do?

TN: The romantic in me would say that you should pursue your feelings, but if you're questioning if you should reject him, maybe those feelings aren't strong enough. I won't put words in your mouth, but I think that if his complicating your life isn't worth the future relationship that you have, then you should let him go. This is a really complicated situation, but remember that we're all still young and there are plenty of other fish in the sea. Also, I've never been in a relationship before so idk if you should trust me, but coaches don't play so ...

How do I still participate in class even if I have no questions and there are very few opportunities?

HF: We love to see an engaged student! If during class is tricky, try participating outside of class. Go to office hours, stick around for a minute after class to share your thoughts on what you learned, email your teacher about something that reminded you of classwork, etc. Teachers love this AND it engages you more!

How do you find purpose in your life, especially after high school (and college) end?

TN: I'm kind of in the same boat as you, so let me tell you what I've found so far: I would say that the biggest thing that has helped me is finding people who are in the same stage of life as you. Talking to them about what they're doing outside of school, hanging out with them, moving through life with them, etc. gives you a chance to see where other people are and how they are making their lives purposeful. At the end of the day, graduating is a major event and will probably shake up your life. Finding things, even if they're small things like new episodes of a TV show or getting lunch with a friend, can prepare you for the empty space that school will leave.

How can you pass sixie latin while also juggling extracurriculars and all of your other classes? It feels like memorizing everything is impossible!!!!

KCB: Lowkey the worst person to answer because I almost failed Latin sixie year (sorry, Ms. Moguel). Extracurriculars sixie year is honestly kind of crazy; I didn't lock into those until like sophomore year. But regardless, take it slow. Latin is always going to be tough (at least for me), but honestly just taking an hour or two just to sit down and lock in helps so much.

TN: Trust me — flashcards and smart friends. As someone who bombed sixie Latin, eighth grade was a major catch up year for me, not even just for Latin. Flashcards are good for memorizing declension and conjugation endings really quickly, and friends can sometimes be better teachers than the teachers themselves. Also, if your extracurriculars are stressing you out this much, maybe think about if it's right for you; you have a lot of time to find something that you enjoy. Remember, they're supposed to be fun and something that you actually like doing — doing things for the name is how you get burnt out.

I've liked the same guy for four years even though I barely ever see him and will almost definitely won't ever have a chance with him ... how do I move on?

KCB: FOUR YEARS!? If you haven't made a move, then I say do it. If it goes good, then yay, and if it doesn't, now you HAVE to get over it. If making a move is not the start, then I hate to say this, but just start thinking about someone else. It's literally fake it till you make it. It has worked for me at least.

How to know if I'm the issue in a problematic friendship?

KCB: I feel like if you have to ask that question, you might know the answer ... But on a serious note, try talking about it with a neutral third party, while being as neutral as possible. You could also just have a real, respectful conversation with your friend and try to figure it out together!

Best color and why? (Not your favorite, best)

HF: Black! It goes with everything. Duh.
TN: Whichever one you like bestie.
JTD: Colors are subjective and arbitrary; it's impossible for there to be a best.

I've always been the "therapist friend"/"mom friend," and I try to be a safe space for people to talk. I really enjoy helping people, but it's getting to a point where I can't remember the last time I put myself first. Whenever I tell people I don't want to help them/I have too much on my plate, I feel like I'm being rude and deferring a friend in need. I've always struggled with hyper-empathy and I don't know how not to feel guilty all the time!

HF: There's no reason to feel guilty! Try prioritizing your needs and you'll feel healthier and happier. It will take some adjusting, but all you have to do is be honest with your friends. Tell them "I'd love to hang out, but I'm really tired" or "I need time to myself. I'll talk to you later." Your friends will completely understand because everyone needs a break.

I constantly have trouble with telling my romantic crushes from my platonic crushes, how do I tell them apart?

JTD: I think there is a certain feeling you get when someone is a romantic crush that is extremely differentiable from a platonic one. A romantic crush is something that you feel really sure about. If you are ever questioning whether you like someone as a friend or as a romantic partner, the answer is probably the former.

Am I a bad person if I don't post about politics?

HF: Your social media page is your own. Just like you have the right to post about what you want to, you can avoid posting about what you don't want to. Since you're asking this question, it's obvious you care about activism and advocacy. Showing that in real life — educating friends, joining protests, signing petitions — is often more powerful than posting!

How do you deal with people trauma dumping?

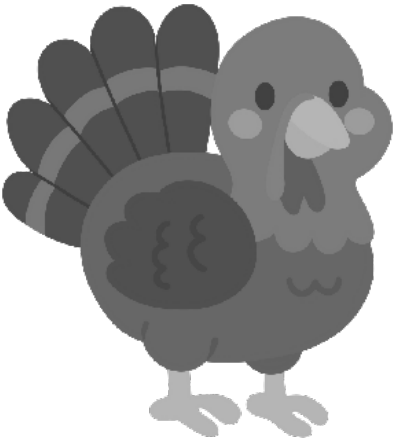
JTD: I think that we as a society have gotten too comfortable with telling random people about our life. I think it's time that we bring back judgemental looks so that people can take a hint and stop their trauma dumping. Next time someone is spilling all the unwanted tea, start with a little half-frown, then maybe an eye roll and if they still don't get the hint, you can always just say, "Hey, can you please stop trauma dumping." Hope this helps!

November Mini Crossword

By **Alex Le (I)**
Editor-in-Chief

ACROSS

- Lose
- Take a deep breath
- Events with lightning
- November pardon recipient
- Whole
- Spanish queens



1	2	3	4	5	6
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					



DOWN

- Sister from another _____
- Perfectly pitched, as a piano
- What Mickey has that Mikey doesn't
- Cincinnati Reds' shortstop Barry
- Small '90s-'00s Nissan
- "Of course!"

The Life of a Showgirl: Taylor’s Swift Decline?



THE LIFE OF A SHOWGIRL

by Taylor Swift
October 3, 2025

Genre: Pop

Highlights:
“Fate of Ophelia,”
“Father Figure”

Rating: 4/10

**By Lara Glaum (I)
& Griffin Hastings (II)**
Contributing Writers

A mere year and a half after the release of *The Tortured Poets Department*, singer and songwriter Taylor Swift re-entered the music scene in October 2025. Her 12-track album *The Life of a Showgirl* (TLOAS) sparked strong reactions in the music industry. The album was heavily criticized by the general public, even by her own fanbase: the “Swifties.”

The album manages to shine in its production, thanks in part to Swift’s long time collaborator Max Martin. It blends retro-pop samples and addictive beats that are rather pleasant. The overall sound of the album combines pop rock, synth pop and early ‘00s pop backings that support Swift’s smooth vocals.

A major issue that many have with the album is its lackluster lyricism. Songs like “Wood,” “Actually Romantic” and “CANCELLED!” are all examples of how the album’s lyrics are much less elaborate and meaningful than those of her previous songs, such as “loml” from *The Tortured Poets Department*. Sofia Maheras Matthews (I) notices a “clear change from her other songs” when comparing them to new tracks like “CANCELLED!”

In “CANCELLED!” Swift seemingly attempts to connect with a younger audience through lines like “Did you girl-boss too close to the sun?” The dated vernacular, however, causes her to struggle in this endeavor, and in fact, seems stuck in the past.

In “Actually Romantic,” Swift uses many adjectives to fit the rhythm and meter. This practice is a far cry from the previously succinct and clever lyricism on works from her album *1989*, for example.

Swift’s shortcomings on TLOAS stand out even more when compared to works such as “loml,” where Swift poetically sings the line, “When your Impressionist paintings of Heaven turned out to be fakes.” She describes the sad realization of a previous relationship and how it crumbled before her eyes through symbolism and metaphors. This innovative and relatable writing is notably absent in her newest release, leaving many fans disappointed.

Many argue that songwriting has historically been Swift’s greatest strength. Some additionally note that many of Swift’s most lyrically impactful albums came from places of great despair and loss. With her recent engagement and massive success on tour and in the music industry, Swift has many more celebratory topics to cover. Discourse surround-

ing the album has also sparked the debate of whether her fanbase only appreciates work from when she is at her lowest, and if they are still able to accept the constant adaptations that have always been present in her career.

A shift that longtime listeners are adjusting to is the apparent change in Swift’s target audience. While her music has always had an appeal to younger audiences, she is often celebrated for her wide range of listeners. In her previous albums, she tended to play into this. Certain songs on the new album, however, such as “Wood” and “Elizabeth Taylor,” are clearly catered toward more mature audiences. This has led many to consider whether she has lost her touch with younger fans. Elle Sullivan (III) states, “I don’t think it has her best songwriting ability, and she’s losing a bit of respect for it.”

Despite criticisms, *The Life of a Showgirl* was record-breaking. It achieved the most album sales in a single week in U.S. history and is the most pre-saved album on *Spotify* and the most streamed album in a single day. While the album demonstrates how Swift’s writing abilities have shifted, it still received acclaim from many. It demonstrates that Swift’s influence will continue to persist and that many will continue to appreciate her work.

The Three Wonderful One Acts in Action

**By Audrey Day (III)
& Elias Valencia (IV)**
Contributing Writers

Have you ever sat through a long play, slowly sinking into your seat, waiting for the intermission? Long and boring plays can be a drain, but Boston Latin School theatre’s One Acts are quite the opposite. The annual tradition of One Acts, three short plays performed by students from Class VI to Class III, returned on November 14 and 15. The plays are each only about half an hour long, but they manage to completely draw in and amuse audiences in that time.

This year’s productions were titled *Dummies and Dragons*, *The Legend of King Mosquito* and *Aftermath*, and they were all student-directed.

Dummies and Dragons was written and directed by Levi Ahmed (II), with Lidia Bolec (II) and Alana Shea (II) also contributing as directors. It is a comedic production, narrated by a devoted dungeon master and based on the game *Dungeons & Dragons*. The show follows a miniature *Dungeons & Dragons* party as they progress through the game and get in and out of trouble. There are two alternate realities on the stage: the people playing the game in real life and the characters and events from within the game. Within the game, characters make their way along a treacherous journey, aiming to reach the peak of a mountain and destroy the beast named Garlock. The protagonists run into fierce, human-eating goblins who, surprisingly, are quite likable.

The second showing was *The Legend of King Mosquito*, written and directed by Jun Hosokawa (II) and V Marquis (II). This story focuses on a group of teenagers who each have a different opinion on mosquitoes. One of the teens thinks that all mosquitoes are gross, one is simply terrified by them and one sees them as fascinating creatures. The mosquito-hater forces the others to embark on a journey to kill the King Mosquito. At the end of the play, all three teenagers survive after successfully completing their mission.

Aftermath, written by playwright



Students perform *The Legend of King Mosquito* at the School’s annual One Acts.

Jonathan Dorf and directed by students Greta Gorman (II), Onyx McLaughlin (II) and Meja Splaine (II), follows a boy named Emmet who is pulled out of his math class by a pair of people in suits. When Emmet is never seen again, the other students begin to speculate about what happened to him. The story details his classmates’ theories regarding his whereabouts, ranging from an alien abduction to a rock concert vacation. It provides a deep look into the aftermath of a disappearance, tackling difficult topics in a way that is still understandable to younger audiences.

The successes of each of the One Acts reflect the hard work and collaboration of the many different BLS theatre departments that contributed. Actors and directors, as well as the lighting, music, tech and stage crew, all worked together to ensure that the production ran smoothly.

While preparing for the performances, students involved with One Acts faced a few roadblocks, such as working within the time constraints. Splaine explains, “Some people just don’t learn their lines or cues in time, and it kind of puts a bit of strain on the directors.” Through repetition of lines and plenty of rehearsal, however, the students were able to overcome these challenges.

With auditions in September, the plays were rehearsed for two months. Each play practiced twice a week, meeting more frequently as the shows approached. Rehearsal times ranged from an hour to two and a half hours long.

While students definitely demonstrated their dedication to theatre through One Acts, the plays also help introduce many students to the world of performing. Describing the participants in One Acts, Shea notes that “[i]t’s usually a lot of young kids and kids that are newer to the School and newer to theatre in general, so it’s a good way to introduce kids to the theatre program at BLS.” Since One Acts is geared toward newer actors, the shorter productions allow students to get involved while making a more manageable commitment.

Besides providing an introduction to theatre, One Acts also creates a sense of belonging for many students. Since many of those involved are new to BLS entirely, the plays allow them to make friends outside of their clusters and grades. When asked about the best part of the experience, actor Lillian Rinaldi (IV) says, “Everyone is really nice. It’s a really welcoming community.”

Fall Sports Recap

By **Simon Hay-Sutton (I),**
Ladan Mohamed (III),
Keielh Dixon (IV)
& Sina Siddiqi (IV)

Staff Writer and Contributing Writers

Cheer

The cheerleading team prides itself on their cooperation and ability to spread positivity. After securing a spot at the State Championship, the team’s positive attitudes have heavily contributed to their performance and ability to show off Boston Latin School pride. Whether the football team is winning or losing, cheering helps to keep morale up and ensures that the crowd still has a great time. To maintain these morale-boosting performances, however, they do many grueling drills for flexibility and core strength. These exercises are not for the faint of heart; the team members have to truly dedicate themselves to the art in order to master the complex routines put in place for an engaging and joyous performance.

Cross Country

The BLS girls’ cross country team capped their season off with a Dual County League (DCL) Championship win. The team faced a lot of injuries this season, shrinking their roster and setting them back. Still, they worked tirelessly to come back and contribute to the DCL win. Many of their runners also set personal records, and they continue to set examples for the many first-year team members.

Football

The return of the football season to the School presented a considerable challenge, yet the team’s performance offered many bright moments for the Wolfpack community to cheer for. While the games were often tough battles, the defining characteristic of the season was the exemplary teamwork and genuine leadership displayed across the roster. This was especially evident on the offensive side, where the quarterbacks stepped up to guide the unit. The passion and spirit are beyond apparent. With more young student-athletes joining the ranks, the next season is poised for significant growth and success.

Boys’ Soccer

The BLS boys’ soccer team capped off their triumphant regular season with a win against Bedford High School to become the DCL Champions for the second time in history. Although the team started the season off with many ties, they pulled it back with five straight shut-out wins at the end of the season, earning themselves a record of six wins, three ties and seven losses and 18th in Division I of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA). They fell in the first round to a very competitive Attleboro High School. Eight BLS players received league awards, with three DCL All-Star Honorable Mentions, five DCL First Team All-Stars and two Eastern Massachusetts First Team All-Stars. Head Coach Nick DiCicco was also named DCL Coach of the Year. In addition, Devlin Duggan (II) won All State, Eastern Massachusetts First Team All-Star, DCL Most Valuable Player and DCL

Golden Boot. It’s safe to say that while the boys’ season didn’t end the way they wanted it to, it was one for the history books.

Girls’ Soccer

The BLS girls’ soccer team has improved tremendously, both on and off the field. Their team of dedicated players had a solid season with a record of six wins, seven losses and four ties. They made it to the playoffs with their season ending in the round of 32 game against Natick High School. Throughout the season, their practices varied from simple passing to complex scrimmages, keeping them well-rounded as players and as a team. This year, the team was filled with a range of ages. Varsity captain Emma Reitz (I) emphasizes this, saying, “I’m so grateful to be a part of this program. This season was so fun, and I give full credit to my teammates for that.”

Step Squad

The BLS Step Squad recently began their November by winning the DCL Foley Division. They are currently gearing up for the pep rally, one of their biggest events of the year. Outside of their Thanksgiving special, the squad performs at every home football game and is excited to attend student-faculty events like dodgeball and basketball later this year. The team currently consists of mostly juniors and seniors with a few underclassmen and is advised by McCarthy Center Director Ms. Rose Delorme-Metayer.

Girls’ Swim

The BLS girls’ swim team competed with a total of 55 swimmers, and multiple swimmers qualified for the Sectional Championships and State Championships. The team has representation from all grades and boasts a cohesive, family-like environment. Seven swimmers qualified for both the Sectional and State Championships: Hannah Briggs (V), Fran Martin (IV), Erin MacDonald (IV), Ana Duffy (III), Elizabeth Elze (III), Alexis Dakin (II) and Maya Briggs (II). MacDonald was the champion at sectionals for the 200-meter freestyle competition and set a school record. The team’s A relay for the 200-meter freestyle competition received third place at both the Sectional and State Championships. Captain Kate Lincecum (I) comments, “The dynamic of the team is phenomenal. Everyone was always cheering at the end of the lane. It is incredibly supportive, one of the best environments I’ve found at BLS.”

Girls’ Volleyball

The BLS girls’ volleyball team had a season filled with laughter and love. After finishing the regular season ranked 29th in the MIAA, they lost to Malden Catholic High School, which is ranked fourth in the state tournament. The team was made up of all juniors and seniors, making it an even more tight-knit and cohesive environment than past years. They had a lot of fun off the court by dressing up for every home game and even winning the Halloween costume contest as Oompa-Loompas. On the court, they finished the regular season with a record of 6-12. Four-year varsity player and captain Cynthia Wang (I) reflects on the team by saying she “could never have asked for a better group of girls.”

How Gambling Is Shaking up the NBA



Lauren Dong (II)

A sports fan considers gambling on *FanDuel*.

By **Julianne Jang (III)**
Contributing Writer

From TD Garden to the Upper Gym, either competing for the Larry O’Brien Championship Trophy or a bag of chips, whether playing on the court or watching it from home, everyone can agree that basketball is a popular sport. This can be from our very own school team to the big league, the National Basketball Association (NBA). With the spread of the

sport, however, gambling has also begun to get involved, which brings certain issues.

On October 23, 30 people were arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for fraud, money laundering, illegal gambling and extortion. Among those arrested were Chauncey Billups, the head coach for the Portland Trail Blazers, and Terry Rozier, a guard for the Miami Heat. Both renowned people in the NBA were involved in rigging high-risk poker games, as well as spreading insider informa-

tion.

Many have expressed their negative response to the news, reflecting their opinions on gambling. Ace Ebbi (II) says, “It makes you question the integrity of all sports, not just the NBA.” As someone who doesn’t personally play basketball but watches it as much as three times a week, the sport is a big part of her life.

With more scandals regarding the participation of athletes in gambling, people have come to question the honesty of sports and

their outcomes. What is normally considered a very enjoyable pastime may lose some of its credibility.

Maeve Houlihan (III), in contrast, demonstrates a more positive view. She believes that “gambling can help promote more views for sports teams if it is done responsibly.” The idea is common, as some claim that gambling has grown to be part of sports and contributes to its popularity. If utilized properly, it can represent sports in a more positive manner.

Other than the high-stakes gambling found in the news, online platforms such as *DraftKings* and *FanDuel* provide larger opportunities for people to gamble on sports. While the risk of gambling may lead some to lose money, it can also benefit those who partake in it because of the chance of gaining money as well.

Although gambling might seem like a distant topic to some, many young people experience it through friendly bets with friends or family. Json Skelton (III) has “betted for push-ups with [his] dad for fun,” showing that there are nonmonetary ways to find enjoyment in gambling. Others have also grown to trust their knowledge in sports for larger bets. Ebbi says, “I bet sometimes because I’m confident in how much I know about basketball, but I don’t recommend it because it gets addictive really fast. The more you lose, the more you feel like you need to win it back, and that cycle is rough.” As a Celtics fan, Ebbi believes in herself to make a clear decision. She warns against addiction, however, highlighting the risk of these larger bets.

Gambling has become such a large part of sports that it is hard to imagine basketball without it. It has grown, however, to become a risk to the integrity and enjoyment of the sport for those who play or watch. For the future, it is important to take precautions and set boundaries so that basketball and other sports can continue to be fair and respected.

From Fantasy to Fruition

By **Trevor Gracombe (I)**
Staff Writer

If you walk through the halls of Boston Latin School in the fall, you are likely to hear constant chatter about fantasy football; whether it is player names, team names or students begging for trades — fantasy football is everywhere. Step into the locker rooms and it’s no different. Soccer players, track and field runners and, of course, football players all participate.

Fantasy football, and all fantasy sports, for that matter, are engaging. Every week, there are new games in which players can earn points. Fantasy managers must stay tuned in on the latest team news to decide whether to start, bench or even trade their players. There is intuition, skill and luck, all wrapped into one — a combination every game designer seeks to achieve.

It is no secret why fantasy football has around 50 million participants and is so popular in high schools around America. There is something for everyone, even if you are not a hardcore player or fan. Robert Fitzgibbon (I) says his “favorite part of playing fantasy is looking at statistics and taking risks.”

Between drafting a team, making trades and deciding which players to play, fantasy football is a risky game; the uncertainty, however, makes it fun to play. Risk-taking and statistics are not all that Fitzgibbon and other fantasy players get out of fantasy football. For many, it helps build communities and establish friendships through shared

interests.

Fitzgibbon describes how people come together for “each draft to decide the draft order and to do the draft as well as [to create] punishments for finishing last in a league,” and how this leads to fantasy football “always [being] a talking point of many sports conversations in the fall.”

Punishments, or forfeits, are a major part of fantasy football — they provide even more incentive to not lose, aside from the usual banter and trash talk. Forfeits are often agreed upon by the group in advance and can range from grueling physical challenges, like the notorious milk mile, to time-consuming endeavors, like staying in an IHOP for 24 hours.

Fantasy football does not only help build communities, it is also directly related to school topics and issues relevant to all aspects of life. Creating a balanced team must be done with careful consideration, as a good offense may mean a weak defense or vice versa. Trades are conducted frequently between players as they try to assess which players are most valuable for them in an upcoming game that week or over a longer stretch of time.

BLS AP Economics teacher Mr. Patrick Boor believes that fantasy sports have a strong tie to economics because they “involve marginal analysis, where you evaluate the marginal benefit of adding a player to your team against the marginal cost of that addition,” a concept he covers thoroughly in his course. He notes that “there is also a substantial market focused on collecting and



Sophia Knobel (II)

Cleo Barowsky (II) shows off her fantasy football selections.

analyzing player and team data, which fantasy managers can utilize to construct their rosters.”

The rise in advanced analytics and statistics that has increased over the past decade allows fantasy players to be more thorough and analytical with their decisions and benefits companies who develop these statistics.

As a caution, Mr. Boor adds, “There are serious concerns about how the gambling industry is targeting young people in their ‘pay-to-play’ fantasy games.” As with all things, fantasy sports should be done in moderation and can be harmful if too much time and energy are focused on it.

Fantasy football also offers something unique for aspiring football players hoping to improve their game. These metrics of measuring performance through acquiring points can allow people to perform better.

Xavier King (I), a member of the varsity football team at BLS, also emphasizes that fantasy football is good for community building: “It is a great way to connect with friends and family, especially those I haven’t talked to in a long time.”

Emiliana Zamora (II): Swinging Clubs and Scoring Goals



Philippines Lacrosse Association

Emiliana Zamora (II) represents Team Philippines in the Heritage Cup.

By **Christina Luo (II)**
& **Violeta Betancur Gutierrez (VI)**
Contributing Writers

What’s more difficult than the Boston Latin School homework load? The BLS homework load on top of sports. As a student-athlete, Emiliana “Emmy” Zamora (II) is deeply committed to various sports both in and out of school. She plays volleyball, hockey and lacrosse for BLS, as well as golf and lacrosse outside of school. This past summer, Zamora

participated in the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Leadership Academy, which uses golf as a tool to provide a foundation for young women to develop confidence and leadership skills. This academy often consists of expert-led discussions, group programs and exercises, as well as interactions and experiences with female executives and mentors to help girls reach their full potential.

Zamora trained alongside talented golfers and gained expertise through her experiences with LPGA’s empowering environment.

Her dedication to athletics was further showcased when she represented Team Philippines in the Heritage Cup, an international lacrosse event, which brought together over 120 teams representing over 40 countries and competing across several divisions.

Zamora became involved in sports from a young age. Joining Quincy Youth Lacrosse at seven years old and the First Tee Program at 11 years old, her favorite part of lacrosse is playing defense and causing turnovers. Golf was the most challenging for Zamora, and she describes it as the type of sport where “you get what you give.” During her journey, she has learned to be patient with others and herself, stay calm in high pressure situations and to never take her opportunities to play for granted.

One of her golf coaches from the LPGA Leadership Academy, Sachi Hamada, states that Zamora was quite shy at first but was able to grow as a player and improve her confidence throughout the course of the program. She says that though golf is not the central focus of the program, “having so much support from the other participants improved her confidence in her golfing abilities.”

Zamora’s teammate from the Heritage Cup, Jordan Manalili, believes that Zamora is a true leader to the team. Manalili describes leadership in sports as being ready to help and command a situation on a moment’s notice. She judges Zamora’s leadership to be phenomenal, stating, “[Zamora] used her voice, didn’t let emotions get the best of her, and was able to play effectively with teammates she had never met before.” Zamora’s passion for lacrosse stems from the feeling of joy when “working with others to achieve success and [having] fun doing it.”

Zamora’s true athleticism and skill was highlighted in lacrosse when she stepped out of her comfort zone to play midfielder, even though she is naturally a defender. When she heard “middies” were needed, she still took on the challenge in order to help her team and fill the gap. Zamora’s ball control, ball movement and overall confidence on the field made it difficult for anyone to tell she wasn’t playing her regular position.

Being a dedicated and passionate multi-sport student-athlete is sure to provide Zamora with plentiful opportunities in the future. Zamora’s goals for the lacrosse season both at BLS and outside of school are “to go into every game with the mindset that it doesn’t matter what rank the opposing team is but what team is the better one at the end of the game.” She sees herself playing on the collegiate or club level, and she aspires to become a sports broadcaster in the future.

Balancing all of these demanding sports and academic responsibilities is an undeniable feat, showcasing Zamora’s determination, resilience, passion and talent both on and off the field. She is an inspiring role model who continues to push herself to new heights. As Zamora continues to grow both in academic and athletic pursuits, it is clear that she will leave a lasting impact and continue to inspire those around her.

Ask the Players: Favorite Pre-Game Song

By **Onyx McLaughlin (II)**
Contributing Writer

“DNA” by Kendrick Lamar
“When we do our 2Ks, you have to really lock in. Usually, during our steady state, we need to focus without letting our minds wander. It helps to have a steady beat in the background.” — Amelie Kassabian (I), captain of the girls’ crew team

“Beauty and a Beat” by Justin Bieber
“It’s super catchy. The fast beat gets the energy and vibes up!” — Carin Ruan (I), captain of the cheerleading team

“ABG” by Quando Rondo
“Before golf, I just go out to the course and focus once I’m on. Before hockey, I like to play soccer and juggle to warm up.” — Morgan Barbutto (I), captain of the golf team and defenseman of the boys’ hockey team

“Lucky Strike” by Maroon 5
“Right before a game, I eat snacks with carbs and warm up. I picked this song because it has a fast beat to keep my energy up.” — Cynthia Wang (I), captain of the girls’ volleyball team

“Legends” by Lil Baby & Quavo
“Right before team warmup, I eat raw honeycomb and do [...] physical and mental activation to help me get locked in.” — Toby Damon (I), captain of the boys’ soccer team

“Lovefool” by The Cardigans
“To get ready for a match, I jump rope to stay relaxed and quick.” — Quinn Bowles (I), captain of the wrestling team

“Starships” by Nicki Minaj
“It’s a song that most of us know all the words to, and the feeling of camaraderie we get from scream-singing a song together before a game really sets the tone for a great day!” — Phoebe Niese (I), captain of the girls’ hockey team

A Rower’s Christmas: The Head of the Charles Regatta



BLS girls’ crew races down the Charles River.

**By Elizabeth Noronha (I)
& Sofia Orozco Arango (II)**
Contributing Writers

The world’s largest multiday rowing event takes place on a river less than two miles from Boston Latin School. From October 17 to October 19, the crew team prepared to take part in this historic race. With a three-mile course and almost 400

thousand in attendance from across the nation and world, the Head of the Charles Regatta (HOCR) is the team’s biggest race of the season. The regatta is unique with its curvy course, which is unlike the typical regatta rivers that most crew teams race on. Boys’ crew captain Elliot Strand (I), who has been on the varsity crew team since sophomore year, says, “HOCR is the biggest race of the fall season because it is not only

the biggest race in the world, but we have the home advantage.” One of the hardest challenges in preparing for the HOCR is its curvy route and numerous bridges, which earned the regatta its nickname of the “coxswain’s race.” This, however, was hardly a problem for the BLS team. With their knowledge of the Charles River’s route and their consistent practice with the turns, the team was ready. The boys’ crew team didn’t specifically change their routine in preparation for the race, as they knew the route well and were already training for the fall season. They did, however, partake in a dinner the night before for team bonding. The girls’ crew team also did not change their usual training routine for the regatta. In preparation for the race, they performed numerous practice race pieces through the Anderson Bridge, Elliot Bridge and the Weeks Bridge. Their key goals were to regain their fitness after the summer, lay a strong foundation for the winter and spring seasons and push themselves throughout the season. True to their work, Meghan Head (I), a rower for six years, affirms that the team’s “1V improved at Head of the Charles, finishing two places faster than the year prior.” Mr. Conor Fearon, coach of the girls’ crew team, also affirmed that the biggest challenge for the girls was the unique course of Charles River given its plethora

of bridges and turns. Despite the difficulty, their superb coxswain Gabriella Roper (I) effectively navigated the team through the bridges by maintaining a good line while also avoiding collisions with other boats. During the race, the rowers listened to her calls and pushed through the strenuous course, which resulted in a successful and rewarding race. They overall had a lot of fun competing in the biggest regatta in the world and enjoyed the gorgeous weather. Referred to by many as “a rower’s Christmas,” HOCR is also very popular for large brands in Boston. Charles Ellrodt (I) was in the audience and mentioned that “Vineyard Vines was a big sponsor, as well as Dunkin and other rowing brands.” He even saw a Dunkin hoodie made specifically for the rowing event. Along with the Dunkin-themed hoodies, a large tent was also offering crew fans and athletes rowing-themed drink samples and hats with the catchphrase “rowin’ on Dunkin.” From its amazing display of athleticism to its breathtaking scenery, the HOCR is a unique rowing event that brings athletes who share the same passion for rowing onto one river. This special race, furthermore, brings thousands of viewers, rowing fans and curious spectators from distinct backgrounds together to enjoy the race, displaying the admirable diversity of rowing.

Home Field Advantage: Wolfpack Finds Their Stadium

**By Eliza Knight-Bairstow (I)
& Mariam Abdulle (III)**
Staff Writer and Contributing Writer

Boston Latin School students have the unique opportunity to attend high school in the heart of a city. Whether that means fighting for a spot on the Green Line, walking to friends’ houses or attending sports games, it is a very different life from that of their suburban Dual County League counterparts. Weston High School features, among many other things, a private pond, a large student parking lot and expansive sports fields. At BLS, however, there is a teacher parking lot and a small grassy area. Sports teams bear the brunt of the disadvantages, often forced to commute for over an hour to reach their “home” fields. The football team was no different until White Stadium began its renovation in early 2025. They now practice and play all home games at Clemente Field, just a five-minute walk from school. The team gets to enjoy what Head Coach Mr. Raymond Butler calls the “true ‘home’ field feeling.” When asked if he notices a difference in game attendance at Clemente compared to White Stadium, varsity football team member Xavier King (I) remarks that “attendance depended on what team we played, but many of the games did have a higher attendance at Clemente than the away games. This might’ve happened because it is much more accessible for fans to attend a game played right outside of our school rather than having to travel all the way to East Boston and [other] neighborhoods like that.” As King explains, Clemente is easily accessible by numerous forms of public transportation and is located centrally within the city. The notorious BLS versus Boston Latin Academy game pulled a large crowd this year, with school spirit filling the air as spectators from both teams poured onto the sidewalk. From that game alone, it is evident that the change in stadium venue has had a



Students show support for the football team at their game against Boston Latin Academy.

positive impact on football game attendance. It is still important to consider how the higher attendance levels affect the players’ performance and concentration. Sometimes an increase in attendance at games can make players nervous or uncertain, as they may fear that they will make a mistake in front of their friends. On the contrary, Butler says that the expanded audience has only boosted the team’s morale. This benefits both the spectators and the players: the players are pushed to perform at the highest level, and the spectators get to enjoy a more interesting game. Another factor that affects student turnout is engagement. The appeal

of the game itself has to be more enticing to get more tickets sold. Ava Ho (III), a member of the varsity cheerleading team, takes this into account, stating, “Football games can get repetitive at times; adding more engaging and fun events during halftime would be more entertaining for students, leading to a higher turnout.” Butler adds, “We need to continue to improve the amenities, presentation and crowd engagement to improve fan experience, which would lead to more students showing up.” He also states that “Band, cheer and step all do a great job engaging with the fans.” The “Clemente magic” wasn’t just felt by the football team. This year, the BLS varsity soccer teams hosted a “Lat-

in Derby” at Clemente, featuring food trucks, step squad performances and both teams’ senior night celebrations. The event featured a crowd of over two hundred people, more spectators than ever before at a BLS soccer game. Cross country captain Annabelle Bagley (I) remarks, “The night was electric. I had never had so much fun at a soccer game before!” BLS athletes are used to barren bleachers, with their only fans being parents. With Clemente as their new home, the possibilities are endless. From increased spectator participation to more intense games and performances, Clemente can now be seen as an excellent location for further athletic endeavors.