



THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL

Capstone Proposal Intends to Reshape Senior Year

By Mary Deng (I)
& Trinity Ngo (I)

Head News Editor and Staff Writer

On December 8, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Pedro Martinez, Superintendent Mary Skipper and Boston Public Schools Committee Vice Chair Michael O'Neill, along with BPS and DESE staff, visited Boston Latin School to observe the Senior Capstone class and discuss Capstone as a future graduation standard.

Then, in early December of this year, Governor Maura Healey and her administration's graduation advisory council released a preliminary statewide graduation framework that includes a proposed set of coursework, end-of-course assessments and a newly required capstone or portfolio.

Capstone projects are cumulative experiences that involve research, a written assignment and a presentation. BLS already offers such a course through the interdisciplinary Senior Capstone course, an elective taught by Ms. Paula Bowles and Ms. Kathleen Bateman for highly motivated seniors to develop advanced research, writing and presentation skills. At the end of the project, seniors develop a TEDx-style talk that they present to the school community.

This new shift in graduation requirements in Massachusetts occurred in response to ongoing anxiety about incorporating real-world skills into schools and ensuring equal opportunity for each student in the state to succeed.

Under the new statewide graduation framework proposed by the Healey administration, the capstone project would include research, written and presentation components. Furthermore, in place of the former Massachusetts Comprehensive As-



BLS students meet with state and local education leaders.

essment System (MCAS), students would be expected to complete a limited number of end-of-course assessments. Passing these assessments would not be a graduation requirement, like the MCAS was; rather, the primary goal would be to assess current students' skills.

When asked about this new proposal, Senior Capstone student Anjuli Patel (I) comments, "They're not the same thing at all. [...] There are a lot of basic skills that you need when taking the MCAS to do Capstone. [...] We write 20 page papers; we're doing insane research [and] making annotated bibliographies; we're going out and doing interviews with people."

The current graduation requirements for Massachusetts high school students graduating in 2026 include earning credits in two years of English Language Arts; either one year of Algebra I and one year of Geometry or two years of Integrated Math I and II;

and one year of Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Technology/Engineering. The graduation requirements for the class of 2027 are the same, with an additional required year of United States History.

With this new framework, one major concern among BLS students in Senior Capstone is the large amount of work that the teachers have to do in order to support their students. Currently, the two teachers, Ms. Bateman and Ms. Bowles, each have a class of 30 students. To have an entire graduating class complete a capstone project would require teachers to dedicate a lot of time teaching, assisting, grading and giving constructive feedback.

Students worry that this influx in student work will cause an unintended decline in the quality evaluations as well as overwhelm teachers. In addition to the guidance of Ms. Bateman and Ms. Bowles, each student has a faculty mentor who receives

a stipend for their support. Some share concerns that having Capstone as a mandated requirement may mean that teachers will have limited time to give adequate attention to their students.

Ms. Bowles remarks, "I consider myself a pretty hardworking person. Ms. Bateman is hardworking. We're hardworking people. We couldn't do this independently. The sheer level of questions and all the things you need to get done — I just couldn't imagine what this is going to look like."

Questions also remain around how the capstone projects would be sufficiently funded. Currently, each student receives a budget of about 700 dollars from the Boston Latin School Association to support their projects, allowing them to create products like print and bound cookbooks or hold stage productions.

Teachers voice concerns that if there is not enough money for each student to receive a sufficient budget to support their project, students would be unable to create the best quality project that they can. The constrained budget would diminish the impact that is currently possible under the interdisciplinary Senior Capstone class BLS offers.

Aside from questions about resources for capstone projects, students also worry that the environment of the class is at risk with this new framework. "One of the big motivating factors for this class is that everyone around me is also motivated and that we're getting feedback from each other. We all have the same level of dedication to what we want to do. If you take that away, it becomes like every other English class," comments Senior Capstone student Latyr Karnes (I).

Details about the new graduation standard are still ongoing, with a final report by the graduation committee expected to come in June.

Fire Strikes Hong Kong High-Rise

By Meilin Sha (III)
Staff Writer

On November 26, Hong Kong experienced its deadliest fire in decades, with a death toll of over 150 people and dozens still missing.

The fire started in the Wang Fuk Court complex located in the Tai Po district, and within three hours, it spread to seven of the eight buildings in the compound. Because each building is 32 stories tall, first responders faced difficulty in reaching all the floors, taking a total of over 40 hours to extinguish the fire. Though the ongoing investigation has not pinpointed the exact start of the fire, it did find that plastic construction netting and polystyrene foam panels on the exterior of the buildings accelerated the spread of the fire.

The buildings have been undergoing renovations since last summer, which is when residents initially brought up complaints about the cheaper netting. Since the netting failed to meet the appropriate fire standards when tested after the fire, the Hong Kong government arrested over 21 people on charges of corruption and negligence, including construction workers and contractors. Along with the cheap netting, further investigation found the deactivation of fire alarms and false statements provided in previous safety records.

The government has since ordered that the flammable netting material be stripped from all other buildings in the city, but some are still concerned about their safety. Isabel Huang (III) shares, "I have an uncle, aunt and baby cousin that live in Hong Kong. No one in my family was directly affected by the fire, but [...] they were pretty shaken. Since they also live in an apartment, they had less confidence in the security of their own building."

Because they were forced to evacuate all two thousand units of the Wang Fuk Court complex, civilians are struggling to navigate displacement and find other temporary housing options. The apartment complex was home to over 4.6 thousand residents, with 40.6 percent being senior citizens. A 2021 census also revealed that the median monthly domestic household income for residents of the Wang Fuk Court was slightly lower than that of the Tai Po district. Because of its urban environment and densely populated nature, it may be difficult for retired residents to find new apartments. As of November 28, each household was promised ten thousand Hong Kong dollars as part of emergency relief funds.

Boston Latin School Asian Studies student Sammi Zheng (I) shares, "I understand why people are upset about this situation, especially since it could've likely been prevented. This won't be an easy recovery for many who



Fire decimates the Wang Fuk Court complex.

lost nearly everything in the fire."

Various donations have been made towards this cause. People from all over the world, including mainland China, corporations and K-pop groups, have donated millions of Hong Kong dollars for housing, supplies and recovery efforts.

As the investigation continues, many believe in spreading awareness in addition

to offering empathy and support toward the victims. BLS Asian Studies teacher Mr. Andy Zou concludes, "It's important for anyone who has not been impacted to realize that this is a human issue. [...] When it impacts one person, no matter how far away, it really does impact all of us. [...] These individuals [...] [have] lost so much. [...] My heart does go out to them, and I hope for the best."

EDITORS' NOTE



Dear Reader,

Happy Holidays and Happy (early) New Year!

Here’s our New Year’s resolutions: produce good articles, sell carnations and run a fire bake sale.

There’s no denying that a new year means another 365 days to start anew. Now is your chance to start fresh, but before we commence, take the next two weeks to kick back, relax and crack open a copy of the *Argo*. Watch some football, sing a carol, spend time with your family or maybe even wash your backpack. Some of you guys should really consider that last suggestion.

- And now, some pieces of advice as we go into the new year:
- To seniors, close out strong.
 - To juniors, lock in.
 - To sophomores, there’s a long time to go.
 - To freshmen, enjoy it while it lasts.
 - To fivesies, just get through it.
 - To sixies, take it all in.

Take advantage of this school’s opportunities and of the new year. This is your chance to bring your best self to everything you do. Forget what happened before and focus on the future ahead. Make your resolutions realistic but think outside of the box. We hope the break is long enough for you to spend time with friends, enjoy hot cocoa, travel or rest.

The world is your oyster,
Rolex

P.S. Alex just got his license, so always make sure to look both ways!



Ad Veritatem Petendam

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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Clubs on the Decline

By **Trinity Ngo (I)**
Staff Writer

Over the past few years, students at Boston Latin School have suspected a decline in club activity.

While discussing their club activity, many club leaders have voiced concerns over funding issues, especially for clubs that operate around competitions. Clubs like BLS Mock Trial and BLS Speech and Debate have had to get creative with their funding management.

BLS Mock Trial receives approximately seven thousand dollars to cover their competition fees, hotels and transportation. Competition fees alone cost about 100 dollars per person, totalling over two thousand dollars including hotel costs and Amtrak tickets. With three competitions per year, the team has had to cut some of their events outside of tournaments, such as a seminar at Harvard. To combat this, Mock Trial organizes multiple bake sales throughout the year, though profit from these seems to have decreased as well. Their profits have nearly halved from prior bake sales.

Likewise, BLS Asian Students in Action (A.S.I.A) is starting to see a potential pattern of sales trouble. A.S.I.A primarily relies on ticket sales for their school-wide events, such as Asian Night. Terance Wang (I), resource manager for A.S.I.A, notes, “I’ve been an officer since 2023, and, personally, I would say that it was really easy, like way easier, to sell tickets back then.”

BLS Speech and Debate faces some financial obstacles as well. Since the debate team travels a lot for tournaments, they have had to cut down on the number of tournaments that they go to each year in order to continue covering the entry fee for each student. In order to maintain ade-



Kaiya Platt (IV)

Camille Whittle (IV) exits a club meeting.

quate funding, the team has turned to the concessions they sell at each tournament, as well as parents to provide rides and items to sell.

When asked about a possible solution, BLS Speech and Debate faculty advisor Mr. Yilmaz Yoruk proposes “an opportunity for clubs to get together again, convention style like [the Extracurricular Fair], and sell some products that they make or food — something social.”

Other than waning funding support, some club leaders have noticed

that the amount of students that join their clubs have begun to dwindle. BLS Mock Trial saw about 30 sign-ups compared to their numbers from previous years leaning closer to 60. Because of their tryout process, however, their retention rate is consistent, unlike BLS Speech and Debate. Compared to their similar numbers of 60 sign-ups in prior years, the debate team is seeing about 30 to 40 sign-ups, which diminishes to about 15 students, mainly made up of those who go to the tournaments, by the end of the year.

When asked about a possible reason for the lower sign-up rate, Mock Trial co-captain Kate O’Riordan (I) comments, “I think that people aren’t just signing up for a million clubs for the sake of it anymore. I think they’re actually picking the ones that they like and are go[ing] to do.”

Despite these recent problems, both Mr. Yoruk and O’Riordan contend that it is still too early in the year to tell if there is any pattern that could indicate an actual decline in club activity at BLS.

Ask BLS: Removal of Vending Machines and Printers

By **Mary Deng (I), Olivia Chen (II), Xintong Guo (I) & Weian Xue (II)**
Head and Assistant News Editors

As Boston Latin School students started the year this September, many noticed that something was missing from the dining hall: the vending machines.

Since the end of last school year, the BLS community has had a printer problem. Several printers, which students often relied on to print assignments, were removed from the library due to technical issues, and although new printers have arrived, the school had experienced issues with connecting them to the *PaperCut* software. Currently, the library has two new black and white printers and one new color printer installed, and they are considering adding a third black and white printer.

On Printers...



Mr. Patrick Hourigan

“I worked with the company that makes *PaperCut* for about two months, and a lot of unexpected difficulties arose on both ends: our end [and] on the other company’s end. Working with [Boston Public Schools] to acquire the proper technology [...] took a lot of time.”



Ms. Sofia Safran Turner

“All of the printers in the library are really old, so it’s not surprising that they started to sort of not work at their max capacity or even at all. Sometimes the issue was really with *PaperCut* for some of them, and for others, it’s just that they didn’t want to print anymore because they were old. [...] We know it’s been really frustrating for students and teachers alike, because printing is such a high demand offering in the library.”



Tiffany Zhu (V)

“I think it was really annoying, and [...] it delayed some stuff because there would be a lot of people at one printer, and some people don’t have access to other printers. There’s just a lot of build up at the printers. [...] I just had to wait a long time to print stuff — like there would be an assignment that is due on one day, and our teachers are really big on due dates, [which requires us] to print on the same day. And then, you wouldn’t make it [be]cause there’s a long line.”

On Vending Machines...



Nathan O’Reilly (I)

“I think the removal of the vending machines was a terrible idea. [...] I don’t like the school lunch, almost all the time, so I used to just get a bag of chips, [...] just [to] have something supplemental.”



Clara Harms (II)

“I think it’s kind of annoying, because it was nice to be able to get a snack from the vending machines when I didn’t like the school lunch. Boston Latin Academy (BLA) also removed their vending machines as well. [...] I think [the removal of the vending machines is] a whole Boston Public School thing, because my sister’s at BLA, and they had vending machines last year, but they don’t have vending machines anymore, either.”



Kady Saint Pierre (III)

“I used to go [to the vending machines] all the time. I didn’t really like the school lunches, so those would be my little snacks to get me through the rest of the day. But without them here, I don’t really have that snack, and I’m still not eating the lunches.”

Day in the Life of Mr. Jelley



Mr. Jelley smiles for a picture!

By **Stephany Zhu (I)**
Staff Writer

On any given day, Boston Latin School students who stay late are likely to see custodian Mr. Robert Jelley around the school, who ensures that students have a clean environment to learn in.

Mr. Jelley is currently the Head of Custodians at BLS. On a day-to-day basis, his responsibilities begin as early as 6:00 A.M., which include ensuring the building is heated properly, checking the boilers and maintaining classrooms. He supervises a team of ten custodians, with three working during the day and seven at night. One of the challenges he has noticed is maintaining the older part of the building, which is harder

to preserve in good condition.

Mr. Jelley is a seasoned tradesman who graduated from Boston Public Schools in 1982, and he started his first job just two weeks after graduation as a union carpenter in Local Union 40. A union job is one where employees are members of a labor union, which collectively bargains with the employer on behalf of its members for better wages. These jobs typically involve trades such as carpenters, construction workers or teachers. Mr. Jelley has worked in union jobs for over 40 years.

Mr. Jelley’s father was a custodian too, which inspired Mr. Jelley to take the civil service exam in 1986, a merit-based exam required to become a public sector employee. Mr. Jelley worked as a custodian for 22 years before transitioning back to the trades in 2009, work-

ing for painters, tapers and glazers for 13 years. He was an officer in the union for many years and eventually became an organizer representing multiple states, including Massachusetts. After retiring from the painters’ union, Mr. Jelley returned to his role as custodian at BLS.

The custodians work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that students are able to learn in a clean environment every day. Jianbin Zhao (I) comments, “The custodians put in a lot of effort to maintain our school. [...] I believe that they aren’t recognized enough for their hard work. [...] I hope more students start to respect those who are cleaning up their messes and taking care of our school.”

While a lot of the work that the custodians do takes place outside of the school day, Mr. Jelley and the other custodians have still been able to connect with students.

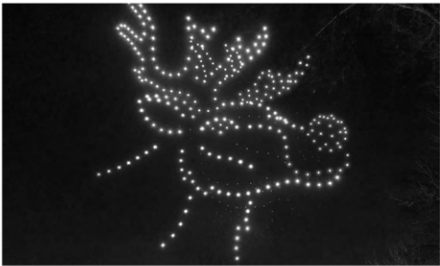
Assistant Head of School Martha Pierce remarks, “Part of the reason [the school is so clean] is the good relationship that the custodians have with most of the students.”

Outside of school, one of Mr. Jelley’s favorite hobbies is sports announcing. He announces sports for the city of Melrose, covering a wide range of events, including boys’ and girls’ basketball, football, soccer, lacrosse and wrestling. He has been involved in sports announcing for about five or six years now, and he particularly enjoys announcing unified basketball, something he is looking forward to do at the TD Garden in mid-January next year.

Mr. Jelley plans to retire in three years, which is when his son will graduate from high school and his daughter will graduate from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. His wife is a kindergarten teacher at David A. Ellis Elementary School and also plans to retire with him. As a part of his retirement plans, he hopes to visit Italy and Greece for a few weeks. Mr. Jelley believes that his greatest life lesson is found in his personal character. He concludes, “I found that the biggest opportunity in life is how you present yourself. If you care, if you listen [and] if you’re sincere, people will see that. People will see things in you that will bring you to them. For me, that’s how it always worked.”

Holiday Events in Boston!

By **Mary Deng (I), Olivia Chen (II), Xintong Guo (I) & Weian Xue (II)**
Head and Assistant News Editors

Now – December 21 Faneuil Hall Marketplace At the heart of downtown Boston, the Faneuil Hall Marketplace hosts various entertainment and live performances, such as the Chanukah Celebration.  Olivia Chen (II)	 SoWa Boston Now – December 28 SoWa Winter Festival The historic SoWa Power Station in Boston’s South End is transformed into a holiday marketplace with more than 125 local vendors, specialty foods, drinks and live music.	Now – December 31 Snowport Winter Market The Seaport becomes a lively winter village filled with more than 125 small businesses offering handmade gifts, crafts and live performances.  Boston Seaport	 Peter Paradise Photography December 13 – 21 The Urban Nutcracker Watch Boston’s modern twist on <i>The Nutcracker</i> at the Shubert Theatre!
December 19 – 30 Boston Winterfest in Charlestown Boston Winterfest returns this holiday season, turning The Yard at Hood Park in Charlestown into a winter wonderland with a winter carnival and light festival.  Boston Uncovered	 Trident Booksellers & Café December 20 Holiday Bingo at Trident Booksellers & Cafe The Newbury Street bookstore-cafe opens its space for a festive evening of bingo, with plenty of chances to win prizes throughout the night.	December 20 Holiday Drone Show in Boston Common Hundreds of LED-lit drones form winter-themed designs across the sky above Boston Common this Saturday, marking the city’s first Boston Frostival.  Meet Boston	 The Skating Club of Boston December 31 Frog Pond Skating Spectacular at First Night Boston The Frog Pond Skating Spectacular returns to Boston Common, offering free ice skating shows featuring national and international competitive figure skaters.

Wrongfully Wrapped

By **Fathia Shodeyi (II)**
Head Forum Editor

It’s the most wonderful time of the year — your *Spotify* Wrapped is out. As you swipe through what *Spotify* has deemed to be your favorite artists and songs, however, you become disappointed. You hardly listen to most of your supposed top musicians anymore, and your top songs are not really your favorites. The artist you overplayed in June is completely different from who you are obsessed with in December, but the statistics overlook this. *Spotify* should target people’s evolving music preferences by providing a more detailed Wrapped that reflects the diverse musical phases people have experienced throughout the year.

Spotify Wrapped is often glamorized as a personalized representation of our year, but the use of artificial intelligence has made these recaps feel like generic data that lack the uniqueness they advertise. Emma Ngo (I) poses a downside to *Spotify* Wrapped: “I feel like they only take songs I listen[ed] to a lot at the beginning of the year and cut [the data] off from there.” AI fails to fully summarize what people are interested in, as it neglects the full context of people’s listening habits. The playlists you accidentally leave on replay, months where you barely use *Spotify* and favorites you only recently began listening to are all major influences that are omitted in these summaries. As a result, Wrapped is often inaccurate.

Wrapped synopses also look increasingly identical each year, as the algorithm is based on limited data. Music interests should portray diversity, but grouping people into categories like “listening clubs” and “listening ages” reduces musical variety. *Spotify* Wrapped should be used to share the range of songs that impact each listener. Sahra Kamara (II) notes that “when [she is] making a playlist, it is based on how the music makes [her] feel and the songs where [she] feels like artists are speaking their truth.” One song can make a variety of people feel completely different ways, as someone may resonate with it more deeply than another person, leading it to become their most liked song during a specific era. These recaps should express people’s unique connection to music; the incorporation of AI to represent human interests has only produced subpar results thus far.

To improve *Spotify* Wrapped, AI should be used to create a more detailed breakdown of each person’s listening habits. To begin, the summaries can break up each person’s most listened to songs by months or seasons for a more accurate summary of one’s music patterns. With each new season, the vibe of each individual changes; some may listen to more pop artists in the summer or wide range R&B, which reflects the highs and lows of their life during the year. Breaking down these patterns spotlights the growth of each person throughout time, thus making it more



Brayden Pandolfi (IV)

A student opens their *Spotify* Wrapped.

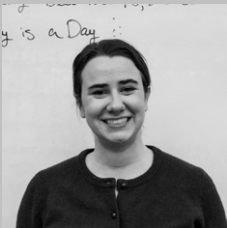
personalized.

Some may argue that *Spotify* Wrapped is just a statistic, and the rundown does not define one’s identity. These recaps, however, are important to many teens. Celena Nguyen (I) highlights, “I listen to it everyday, so I feel like music is very important to who I am as a person.” Many people agree, as these rundowns are often posted on social media platforms to share this unique part of one’s personality. *Spotify*’s idea of taking the

intimacy of music a step further by presenting who we is in terms of music has great potential. The topic of each person’s top artists and songs are frequently sparked among conversations when the *Spotify* overview is released. People from different cultures are able to be connected either through their similar music choices or differing music choices. *Spotify* should therefore prioritize data that is more reflective of individuals to promote community bonding.

Ask the Teachers: What’s your favorite holiday tradition?

Many often say that the holiday season does not feel the same as it did when they were a child. Growing up, the magic of the holidays seemed to fill the air and festive decorations would be at every corner. Eagerly counting down the days until Christmas or guessing the presents under the tree would create a sense of excitement that seemed unshakeable. As responsibilities increase, however, the Christmas tree no longer towers over, New Year’s Day seems typical and even the snow no longer falls.Despite these changes, holiday traditions — recurring customs performed during festive seasons such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah or New Year’s — are a great way to reinvigorate festive spirits. At Boston Latin School, teachers shared their own cherished holiday traditions and how they keep the spirit of the season alive in their homes.Their customs and traditions, such as decorating the tree, lighting holiday candles or making a warm meal together, reflect the same warmth and connectedness that many of us yearn for at this time of year. These traditions serve as a reminder to us that the holiday magic never goes away, it just takes on new forms.



Ms. Katherine Archer

“One of my favorite holiday traditions has always been our Christmas morning breakfast. When my mom was growing up with her siblings, her dad would always make what we call pizza fritte, but I think the proper Italian is *pizzette fritte*. It is basically small pieces of fried pizza dough, and it’s absolutely delicious. So when my siblings and I were growing up, we made it every Christmas, and one of the best parts is that because it’s dough, you can make it into any shape you want. We’d take turns using different cookie cutters to shape the dough into Christmas trees, angels, bells, our initials and whatever else we could think of. My oldest brother now has four kids, so when we get together for Christmas, we still eat pizza fritte, and my niece and nephews join us in making it. I love knowing generations of my family have been making and enjoying the same Christmas breakfast and that it’s still being passed on to the next.”



Ms. Lynn Burke

“When my sisters and I were very young, we woke up every Christmas morning to find presents under the tree, which we quickly bypassed to search for the ‘first note.’ Each year, Santa would leave a note that gave us a clue to where our stockings were hidden ‘with care’ as the old poem goes, a twist that made sense to three little girls with no chimney in their triple decker. When we figured out the first location, we would find another note with a clue to the next spot. Our Christmas treasure hunt eventually led us to our stockings, which were filled with presents long forgotten now. What I remember is the true ‘care’ our Santa — our dad — showed when he created a tradition of magic more important than any gift.”



Mr. Nicholas Fogel

“I’m Jewish, but I was actually named after Santa Claus. I was born in December, and my brother, who is four years older, was really excited for Christmas, so he suggested the name Nick. We celebrate both Hanukkah and Christmas since my Mom grew up Christian and converted to Judaism later in life. I love the communal elements of Christmas — holiday walks, singing carols and going to events like the Boston Common tree lighting. I also love cooking latkes and lighting the Menorah every night. I’m not overly religious, but celebrating the traditions of Hanukkah helps connect me to my heritage and ancestors.”



Mr. Aaron Osowiecki

“My favorite holiday tradition would have to be a turkey soup Friday. In my family, we have Thanksgiving, and when my mom was around, we would always take the carcass and make a turkey soup out of it, then all get together the next day for [the] soup. And now my brothers and I are doing that.”

Does Buying Gifts Teach Consumerism?

Yes, Buying Gifts Does Teach Consumerism

By Harry Dinh (III)

Staff Writer

With snow falling, colorful decorations and the Boston Latin School music department playing “Sleigh Ride,” the holiday season has commenced. The Christmas buzz is in the air at every corner, and students cannot wait until they get their much needed break from school to spend time with loved ones. Hidden in plain sight of the holidays, however, is the rise of consumerism. Corporations begin advertising their seasonal products online, and malls have massive discounts. All this buzz makes people feel pressured to buy gifts for their loved ones. They often spend money buying new versions of preexisting items to get the weight off their shoulders. This, however, fundamentally undermines the purpose of the holiday season: showing genuine appreciation and bonding with loved ones. A premade, store-bought gift combined with pressure cannot show true care for others. Buying gifts teaches consumerism and fosters unhealthy habits during the holiday season. People should instead make gifts to show their love for someone.

Most importantly, making gifts is more genuine and thoughtful. Going through the process of planning out what to make for a specific person and spending hours perfecting it instead of simply giving a present for the sake of holidays demonstrates your authentic bond with them. By setting aside time to craft a gift for someone, one proves to them that they value them deeply. This level of care and value simply cannot be replicated with buying a generic red and green sweater from Walmart that was on sale. Seren Banner-Goodspeed (III) echoes, “[Making gifts] is personal. It’s often more fun in my experience to make something.”

Making gifts is additionally more customizable and unique. Everyone has their own interests and different personalities. Making gifts is tailored to each individual, meaning that each gift carries symbolic and sentimental value. It demonstrates that the giver actually pays attention to their loved one and appreciates them. A handmade gift with so much thought and care put into it for a specific person is unique, which no corporation can replicate. A handmade gift is priceless compared to a limited edition Stanley cup someone bought because it was trendy on *Instagram*.

Gift customizability does not have to be limited to physically crafting an item, but it can also encompass making experiences for others. AP Economics teacher Mr. Patrick Boor notes, “Instead of going to my wallet, [experiences] are awesome gifts, and [they] build relationships.” This adds another layer to gift-giving during the holidays. If you are unable to make a physical gift, experiences like taking that person to a museum or cooking a meal for them are an equally thoughtful present. You give joy in a more direct form, which is the central idea of the holidays.

Buying gifts is not just detrimental to the wallet, but also causes stress during a time that is meant to be joyous. According to a survey by the American Psychological Association, of the 89 percent of adults who stated something causes them stress during the holidays, 58 percent of them said spending too much or not having enough to spend, and 40 percent said finding the right gifts were common stressors. These statistics emphasize how consumerism is so ingrained in the holiday season, creating financial pressure for the majority of people. If someone feels pressured to buy a gift, then that defeats the purpose of appreciating loved ones.

Although people may argue that buying gifts is often more efficient and simple than catering gifts to the needs of everyone, the financial strain and lack of authenticity generated by consumerism during this time outweigh these benefits. Erica Dinh (V) shares, “Sometimes [...] you’re just buying stuff out of habit because it’s trendy on social media and [...] you won’t really have a use for it.” Consumerism creates an unhealthy environment that prioritizes profit for corporations over meaningful gift-giving, leading to impulsive purchases of items that lack sentimental value or use to people. Furthermore, gift-giving should always be voluntary and done to show affection, not for the vibes of the season or societal pressure. Buying generic gifts for everyone fails to prove this genuine connection to loved ones.

Steer yourself away from the ads on *TikTok* and the temptation of holiday shopping for gifts. Spend some time making some kind of gift for loved ones. Chances are they will appreciate the gesture even more. What better deal than saving your wallet, well-being and bolstering bonds with besties with one switch of habit? You’ll be thankful for this later.



No, Buying Gifts Does NOT Teach Consumerism

By Annie Dai (I)

Head Forum Editor

When people think of the holidays, they think of winter wonderlands, festive celebrations and a well-deserved vacation filled with gifts. Gift-giving is a centuries-old, heartwarming tradition that is attached to countless memories. Some might remember the excitement of receiving presents and watching the delighted look of their friend or family member’s face as they open theirs. Labeling it as consumerist is a great disservice to all who participate and enjoy this tradition.

Aaron Liu (I) reflects, “If someone believes that buying gifts is their way to show appreciation and love to someone, then I don’t think it’s necessarily a bad thing that they’re buying gifts.” Gift exchange is about developing meaningful

connections and creating memorable experiences. People put immense consideration into their gifts and select presents as an act of care towards their loved ones. The meaning of a present exceeds its monetary value, because it is embedded with a lasting emotional memory.

During the holiday season, it is common to see people exchanging gifts, making it unsurprising that people wish to connect through compassionate gestures. Gift-giving reinforces social relationships and reflects an individual’s gratitude, which should not be considered transactional.

Furthermore, buying gifts is often useful instead of frivolous. After all, almost nobody is actually collecting iPhones in various colors or Labubus in different styles. Many use the opportunity to purchase necessities, which need to be bought regardless of the time of year or the occasion. Regarding her Christmas list, Joyce Nguyen (I) says, “When I give people Christmas lists, I [ask for] things I can actually use [...] like practical things that I need.” Although homemade gifts offer their own charm, as they represent someone’s hard work and time, it’s undeniable that many goods and appliances can only be bought from professional manufacturers.

Many argue that buying gifts can be materialistic because stores promote wasteful spending during the holidays. It is important to keep in mind that not all aspects of major retail sales events are negative, not all shopping should be considered overconsumption. It is true that people may have increased tendencies to shop during these periods, but their browsing could introduce them to more local artisans, small businesses and sustainable, value-aligned brands, rather than large companies. Boston Latin School English teacher Mx. Dana Amico says, “There’s nothing inherently wrong about gift giving when it’s genuinely coming from the heart. But I do think in our capitalist country, we are encouraged to overconsume, especially during holidays. Those are the biggest days of the year for stores and companies like Black Friday.”

It is also valid to desire a well-deserved treat, and drastically marked-down prices may encourage people to finally buy materials for that new hobby their friend wanted to try or make a useful purchase that will improve the quality of their family member’s daily life. Combining purpose and gift exchange encourages responsibility. As many families set budgets and limit the number of gifts they buy, for most, a good deal can be a significant economic relief and a way to gift responsibly without extra expenses. Buying discounted goods teaches financial management, not overconsumption.

Consumerism is focused on self-gratification, while gift exchanges are centered around relationships. They can contribute to traditions like Secret Santa, which is all about bonding and establishing camaraderie. Through gift-giving, people emphasize sharing and become more empathetic by considering the wants and needs of others, which strengthens their communities. Without a doubt, these intentions fundamentally oppose consumerist thinking.

Holidays Traditions Through Time

By Ross Wilson (I) & Bridget Blair (II)

Editor-in-Chief and Assistant A&E Editor

Hanukkah Gift Exchange



Custom adopted by Jewish Americans based off of Christmas gift giving

Roman Saturnalia



First Holiday to include gift giving as a tradition, with the inclusion of gag gifts or *sigillaria*

St. Nicholas Day



An early December European tradition where well-behaved children could expect a gift under their pillows from St. Nicholas

Victorian Christmas



Popularized the tradition of decorating Christmas trees, eating roast turkey and giving gifts like fruits and handmade crafts

Has Doomscrolling Doomed Humanity?

By Brandon Flores (I)
Staff Writer

An iPad kid sits in his room scrolling *YouTube* Shorts for hours, while his mother thinks he is doing homework. In another room, his sister procrastinates her own work using *Instagram* Reels. In the next room over, their mother spends her evening on *Facebook* Reels, her feed filled with AI content. This image has become more and more common in American households over a relatively short period of time. Many have questioned how it all happened. Was it the pandemic, hyper-efficient media algorithms or just people being lazy? Short form content is both a symptom and catalyst of diminishing attention spans, which, to the benefit of technology companies, encourages people to absorb infinite amounts of content without ever thinking about the information, a dangerous social trend that has taken place over decades.

Doomscrolling did not come out of nowhere. It is a product of the unbridled consumption and adoption of technology driven by an explosive and profitable industry. When the internet was invented, people were taken by the novelty and awe that it inspired. Entrepreneurs were captivated by the new industry with so much potential for growth, and no one ever stopped to consider the consequences. Humanity went from huge immobile desktops and dial-up internet to carrying smartphones in their pockets in just a couple decades.

As people have enthusiastically adopted these technologies, companies have made their algorithms, user agreements and privacy policies even

more confusing and nefarious. But who really reads them anyway? Biometric data is insignificant to the average person who just wants a break from the stress of a long day at work or school. To technology companies, however, data is a path to profit and even more personalized feeds that captivate users. As Silas Rosenberger (III) puts it, “It is mostly the compan[ies] trying to push short-form content on every platform. [...] It makes [...] a lot of money [for them], so they have to if they want to maximize profit.”

Still, one is left to wonder how *TikTok* so rapidly became man’s best friend. Social creatures demand social interaction, so social networking seems like the perfect way to satisfy this urge. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, short-form content gained massive popularity for the first time, but it could not effectively replace the human interactions people missed during quarantine; anxiety and depression spiked during the time and have not come back down since.

Where school-age children might have gone to the park for a game with a group of friends decades ago, they now yell at their screens as they play *Roblox*. According to Boston Latin School history teacher Mr. Eric Cordeiro, “People do not talk to each other as much anymore and do not go out to meet up with friends as much. This is especially true for children and young teens.” Some of the social activities that keep students going are becoming more difficult and less common, which adversely affects their wellbeing.

Short attention spans also have consequences inside classrooms. With everyone having trouble focusing for extended periods of time, students are



Subway Surfers gameplay grabs a student’s attention.

using shortcuts like AI tools with increasing frequency. Ask students how they feel about books and many will tell you they would not bother opening any if they did not have to. Schoolwork and books are not naturally as stimulating as the flashing lights and rapid movement of sped up *Instagram* Reels.

By trying to move through life in double time, however, people skip the parts that make us human. If society celebrates the habit of never stopping to process information, it will lose its ability to do so, which carries serious consequences. According to BLS history teacher Mr. Andy Zou, who owns a verified *Instagram* account and frequently posts stories, a society that is undereducated and poorly equipped to address complex issues is “going to allow those in charge, who might have nefarious goals, to do whatever

they want, because no one is going to question them.” At a time when there are so many major issues going on at the same time, a decreased emphasis on thorough and impactful education can only weaken the ability to combat these issues.

It takes a strong will to avoid falling into the trap of doomscrolling. It might not be necessary to avoid short form content completely, but making sure to always stay in control of one’s time and take breaks from the constant onslaught of content goes a long way. Rosenberger, who admits that he is no stranger to doomscrolling, suggests that students should “try to set a time limit on wherever you are scrolling [...] [and] try to spend more time outside and off your phone.” Moderation is key in many aspects of life, and social media is no exception.

The Angel Tree Trend: Not So Angelic



Giving Trees request shoppers to purchase clothes for children.

By Ellie Fung (III)
Staff Writer

Walking into your local Walmart, you might spot Christmas trees adorned with Angel Tags, each bearing a child’s name, age and wishlist. These tags, part of the Salvation Army’s Angel Tree program, are meant to connect children to donors to ensure they can have a happy holiday season, no matter their family’s financial circumstances. Children write their Christmas lists on tags, which donors can choose and shop based on. While people have made content around their Angel Tree donations since 2023, the majority of large influencers have only joined the trend this year in response to a contro-

versial video of a lackluster donation. Some have praised their often over-the-top shopping sprees as generosity and being the “right type of rich,” but regardless of intentions, influencer participation in the trend ultimately trivializes donation as a social media stunt.

Influencers are not dedicated to fixing the underlying social issues. At face value, helping less fortunate people is undoubtedly good, but it is only putting a band-aid on the issues that create the need for the Angel Tree program in the first place. For influencers worth millions of dollars, participating in the movement is an easy way to look good for the camera without having to confront the harsh realities many are facing. The child they donated to may

be struggling the rest of the year, but the influencer will move on.

Kaya Letizia (III) argues, “Using Angel Trees for content in particular should not be encouraged, because doing an Angel Tree should be anonymous and out of the kindness of your heart, not something you feel the need to post online. Recently, I’ve seen lots of videos of influencers doing it and turning it into a trend, which ignores the point of Angel Trees.”

Many of these influencers are motivated by money. They jump on the latest trend and use specific hashtags, knowing that the algorithm will push their videos farther to receive higher engagement. While each view is only a fraction of a cent, moreover, once someone has established a “personal” connection with the influencer, they are more likely to buy products they promote. Especially in the case of Angel Trees, influencers hope that people will see them in a better light, potentially prompting them to engage more with their content or even buy their products. They use what should be an act of generosity as a way to improve their reputation.

All this is not to say one should not make Angel Tree donations. The program is still an invaluable resource for over one million children across the country. It is only when it is reduced to a reputation boost that it begins to lose the true purpose of giving hope during the holiday season. Emilee Truong (V) describes this sentiment, saying, “I feel like this is a good program, because it’s helping kids [...] even if they don’t have the money for it, and [I feel like]

the people who are doing these things [are] good people, but if they’re influencers just doing it for attention, then I think it’s a bad thing.”

While some argue that this is a beneficial trend as influencers are using their large platforms to spread awareness and promote generosity, a trend, nevertheless, is all it is. Angel Trees have been around for decades, yet the majority of influencers are only talking about them now that it is popular. Fads come and go. Angel Trees will likely be no different, especially since it is confined to the Christmas season. Next year, when most influencers and their audiences will likely have forgotten about the trend, will influencers still be talking about Angel Trees? Probably not. They will have moved on to the next thing.

Giving is good, but its value is reduced when it is distilled to a transaction in exchange for attention. It, nevertheless, should not be restrained to the holiday season. You also do not necessarily need to give money to help your community; you can give time or resources. At Boston Latin School alone, there are countless volunteering opportunities and drives where students can donate books or clothing they may not need anymore. Zihang Zhou (I) explains the importance of donating: “Americans in general consume a lot of things. For example, the average American household has around 71 toys, which is a lot. So if you are feeling generous, donate some of your old toys that you do not use anymore to somebody who wants [them].”

Wake Up Dead Man: The Return of Benoit Blanc



Daniel Craig returns as Benoit Blanc in *Wake Up Dead Man*.

By Weian Xue (II)
Assistant News Editor

Wake up, mystery movie lovers! Three years since the arrival of the previous installment, the *Knives Out* franchise returned with the release of *Wake Up Dead Man* on November 26, which is now streaming on *Netflix*. Following its predecessors *Knives Out* and *Glass Onion*, *Wake Up Dead Man* sees the thrilling return of private investigator Benoit Blanc, played by Daniel Craig, to the big screen.

Set in upstate New York, *Wake Up Dead Man* follows ex-boxer-turned-

priest Father Jud Duplency as he settles into his new life at the Church of Perpetual Fortitude, located in the fictional town of Chimney Rock. As he spends more time interacting with the townspeople, Father Jud learns about the radical leader of the church, Monsignor Wicks, and his eccentric followers, including Martha, the Monsignor’s devoted assistant; Simone, a former cellist who hopes to heal her chronic illness through worship and Cy, an aspiring politician who has turned to religious extremism.

Father Jud finds himself as the prime suspect of a murder when Mon-

signor is spotted dead after retreating to a storage room onstage during a church service, having been stabbed by a devil’s head lamp attachment that Father Jud had previously stolen from the town bar. The town is dumbfounded: no one else was in the storage room when the Monsignor died. Yet, because Father Jud was the only other person onstage at the same time, the townspeople are determined to put him behind bars.

Private investigator Blanc soon arrives at the crime scene, but before investigating, he makes a strange request: he asks Father Jud to assist him in his investigation. Soon, the pair find themselves tangled up in much more than they had expected. During this journey, family secrets are revealed, past squabbles resurface and hidden relationships are uncovered, contributing to a thrilling watch.

Wake Up Dead Man does an excellent job of planting ambiguous clues that could be interpreted in many ways, leaving the audience constantly wondering who the true killer is as they follow the investigation. Aoife Bourke (I) comments, “There are so many little hints that you think lead it to be one person, and then it just completely flips. [...] It’s really hard to guess what’s coming next, which I think is the best part of a [mystery] movie.”

Throughout the film, various pieces of the puzzle are brought to light, including the devil’s head lamp attachment, a jewel box passed down through the Wicks family and a flask that the Monsignor owned. Some of

the evidence is explained and resolved temporarily, but the film weaves together each aspect of the crime into a narrative that is delightful to watch.

Andy Yu (I), who has seen the previous two *Knives Out* films, notes, “[The plot twist] felt refreshingly concealed and the clues are there for a second watch. I think that’s something really distinctive about *Knives Out*, [and] [...] that it’s worth re-watching.”

Compared to its predecessors in the series, this film presents a more interactive experience. In *Glass Onion*, Detective Blanc is directly involved in the case after being thrust into a murder mystery. In both *Knives Out* and *Wake Up Dead Man*, however, Blanc serves as an outsider exploring the case, and the audience is able to solve the crime with Blanc, allowing it to be more immersive and enjoyable.

The film also touches on topics relevant to real life, including both religious extremism and the strength that people find in religion. Director of *Wake Up Dead Man* Rian Johnson, who was inspired by his own experiences with Christianity, comments, “The notion of actually having a real conversation about faith that wasn’t reductive or didactic but was actually [...] talking about it in the context of a big, entertaining, fun murder mystery [...] seemed like a great challenge.”

With its witty humor, carefully crafted storyline and excellent acting, *Wake Up Dead Man* is the perfect whodunnit movie to watch with family and friends this winter.

Winter Concerts Came to Town

By Shirlyn Wang (II)
Staff Writer

Each December, Boston Latin School bustles with preparation for the much anticipated winter concerts. This year, they started on December 10 with orchestra performances. The choirs followed the next night, and the School’s bands and the Pizzazz Show Choir closed out the performances on Friday. All the concerts started at 6:00 P.M., and audiences listened to well-prepared musical acts by performers clad in classic black and white concert attire. Attendees were encouraged to donate to the music program at BLS in order to keep the events running. Volunteers, who are only one part of the expansive community that comes together to support students during concert season, helped this staple event of the school year run smoothly.

Beyond the time they spend on stage, many young performers stay behind with friends, grab food and do their homework on show nights. The dining hall is left open for students to relax and eat prior to the start of their performances. Through this time with friends, the winter concerts have become a student tradition and opportunity for making great memories. BLS Concert Band member Jennifer Okwesa (IV) explains, “[The concerts are] a really fun time to spend with friends and just to hang out.”

As the time for the concerts approached, however, members of the performing groups felt tensions rising higher as expectations for the standard of their performances increased. A number of students felt more was expected of them during their practices, and they spent a greater amount of time outside of school thinking about and preparing for their performances.



BLS Gospel Choir performs at the annual winter concert.

Choir member Cristina Lopez Tran (II) elaborates, “I feel like it’s always just prep, prep, prep or like get it together, get it together. The tension is very high, especially because there’s no time for dilly-dallying.”

Despite this increased pressure, the students delivered a successful and fun set of concerts for both BLS performers and guests. With families in attendance to watch BLS students, memories were made

and parents were proud, as the concerts represented the beautiful culmination of all the students’ work and dedication.

As a chance to showcase the hard work put into their art over the school year, concert nights are a highlight for students to look forward to. “They’re great every single year. I genuinely enjoy them, [and] I have so much fun,” says BLS Symphonic Band member Keigan Wiggins (II).

The winter concerts are a burst of cheer as the weather gets colder and students and teachers alike eagerly await winter break. Festivity for the holiday seasons reaches a peak with holiday songs and the chance for friends and families to reunite and reconnect. The winter concerts are a well-loved tradition of the BLS community and will continue to be a favored annual experience for students, teachers and parents alike.

Stranger Things to Come? (Spoilers!)

By **Julia Morellato (II)**
Staff Writer

On November 26, after three long years of waiting, Volume One — the first four episodes of the fifth season of Netflix’s sci-fi horror show *Stranger Things* — finally debuted. This release, however, has only ignited fans’ thirst for the upcoming three episodes of Volume Two, which will come out on Christmas Day, and the two-hour long finale of Volume Three on New Year’s Eve.

The show’s finale has been an extremely popular subject on social media, though the credibility of its theories is lacking. Cleo Barowsky (II) comments that she’s seen the idea of time traveling in the show on *TikTok*. The theory that the Upside Down is actually a version of Hawkins in the future — a wormhole — is foreshadowed in Season Five, Episode Three, when Erica Sinclair learns about them during class. Barowsky admits, however, “It feels a little too far-fetched to fit [the theory] in[to] four or five more episodes.” Considering the minimal number of episodes left in the saga, many viewers are doubting how realistic these theories are.

Some fans compare the series to other shows or novels to speculate how it will end. Eleanor Scharfenberg (II) draws a connection to the *Harry Potter* series in response to seeing theories about how Will may die when Vecna is defeated. Scharfenberg explains, “Like how Harry was connected to Voldemort, [...] I think Vecna will die, but [Will] won’t fully die, just the Vecna inside of him will.” Another popular connection fans have made is to the novel *A Wrinkle in Time*, which is also referenced and even pictured in the

background of scenes in Season Five.

Most theories revolve around Vecna, who is the main villain highlighted in this season. Some viewers believe that the Broadway play’s adaptation to the series, *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*, is important to understanding the character of Vecna, also known as Henry Creel. For example, the play might reveal some insights as to why Henry was afraid to enter the cave Max Mayfield hides in. Monica Mercuri from *Forbes Magazine* reports, “Henry’s psychic abilities trace back to an incident in his childhood in the Nevada desert, when he wandered into a cave on his eighth birthday.” This poses a question: could Henry still be inherently evil if he fears his memory of gaining the power he has?

Additionally, an important character in *Stranger Things: The First Shadow* is Patty Newby, Henry’s love interest and the only one who cares for Henry prior to his transformation to Vecna. Will Patty make an appearance in Season Five? Is her connection to Bob Newby significant?

Some other theories also stem from commonalities to previous seasons. One example is the comparison between the show’s Season Four and Season Five posters. The characters on the poster with bikes that had lights on in Season Four died, so the theory is that the characters who have their bike lights on, Will and Dustin, in this season’s poster may face the same tragic fate.

One common theme in all of these predictions is that no one wants their beloved characters’ stories to come to an end. Boston Latin School Science Department Director Ms. Kathleen Bateman comments, “The real tragedy is the loss of so many short lived,



well-developed and promising characters. [...] This makes me worry about Derek.” Whether it’s characters like Will and Dustin, who have been key protagonists since the beginning, or brand-new characters that have stolen the hearts of viewers, death may be the only certain theory so far.

Arts & Entertainment Wrapped: The Best of 2025



Kenneth Cacho Bermudez (I)

Favorite movie of the year:
Sinners (Dir. Ryan Coogler)

“This movie is honestly spectacular and gets even better when you are aware of the history it’s set in. It’s an important film to know.”



Dimitra Minasidis (I)

Favorite album of the year:
Stick Season by Noah Kahan

“I listened to a lot of Noah Kahan this year, and this album specifically gets me in the feels.”



Winnie Chen (II)

Favorite book of the year:
Katabasis by R. F. Kuang

“I think it’s [a] very cool [book] because [...] anything that requires a lot of imagination is always really interesting.”



Vinh Nguyen (II)

Favorite movie of the year:
Dead to Rights (Dir. Shen Ao)

“The movie was really profound. It’s related to history, and it unfolds the truth of the Nanjing Massacre. It made me cry.”



Lana Nguyen (III)

Favorite book of the year:
Babel, or the Necessity of Violence by R. F. Kuang

“Kuang is definitely my top author ever, and this was one of my favorite books out of the ones I’ve read so far. I’m into linguistics, and this book is laced with fun linguistics stuff.”



Alayna Tran (III)

Favorite album of the year:
17 Is Right Here by Seventeen

“They have such hype songs. It just makes you feel happy.”

Norris Wins in the Desert



Max Verstappen leads after Turn 1 of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

By **Simon Hay-Sutton (I)**
Staff Writer

The 2025 Formula 1 season has just finished one of the most competitive grids in recent history, reaching its climax in Abu Dhabi on December 7. After beating reigning champion Max Verstappen and teammate Oscar Piastri, Lando Norris was crowned world champion for the first time.

This season, McLaren Formula 1 Team reached new heights after rebuilding its team for over a decade. They won the Constructors' Championship with six races to spare. Their success was a testament to the consistency and talent of their two drivers, Norris and Piastri. Both are drivers who achieved multiple double podiums and outscored rivals even when strong teams like Red Bull and Mercedes claimed race vic-

tories. The culmination of the talent of the driver and the build of the new MCL38 car won McLaren their first Constructors' Championship in 2024 since 1998. CEO Zak Brown's and Team Principal Andrea Stella's achievements validated years of McLaren investment in infrastructure, driver development and technological innovation.

A major headline this past year has been the rivalry between teammates Norris and Piastri. As Norris entered his sixth year in Formula 1, Piastri entered his third, emerging as a fearless competitor. Reginald Hesselbein (I) claims that he prefers Piastri, stating, "I love his poise in the cockpit. There is something fascinating about his composure at such a young age that I really admire." Throughout the season, McLaren stood by both drivers, ensuring that they had the machinery to fight for a championship. Both drivers had the opportunity to win the final race, but ultimately, Norris's lead going into the final race proved worthy enough to earn him a world championship. Their battle confirmed McLaren's strength with not just one star, but two drivers capable of winning it all.

The title-deciding race occurred under the Yas Marina lights in Abu Dhabi in a three way showdown between Norris, Piastri and Verstappen.

Referring to the final race, Louis Dang (I) comments, "The finish to this year's Formula 1 drivers' championship was one of the best in recent years, just behind Max and Lewis in 2021." Verstappen started on pole position, Norris found himself on the front row and Piastri was third. All Norris needed to secure the championship was a podium finish. From lights out, Verstappen sped ahead, while Piastri put pressure on Norris. McLaren was decisive, ensuring that Norris protected his podium position at all costs. Every lap carried tension and immense pressure, as one tiny mistake could mean the end of one of the driver's title dreams. After 58 laps, Verstappen won the race, Piastri finished second and Norris claimed his podium spot.

When asked about Norris, Kate Lincecum (I) says, "I've watched him since 2020 become a better driver year after year, and I do genuinely think he has the skill and has earned the championship." Norris's dream came to fruition as his 423 points were just enough to edge out Verstappen's 421, ending Verstappen's four-year championship streak and crowning the first McLaren driver champion since 2008. Norris's victory secured a commanding 2025 for McLaren, marking a new era in Formula 1.

Discover the Thrill: Unusual Sports That Excite

By **Maya Lanfer (II)**
Staff Writer

BMX

Location: Allston Pump Track
Cost: free if you bring your own bike; 300 to 500 dollars for equipment

Bicycle motocross (BMX) is a high-action sport that utilizes small, single-speed gear bikes in order to do jumps, turns, spins and other extreme freestyle tricks. For people who are looking to get into the sport, BMX can be done in many parks and on streets or dirt paths. It is also growing as a competitive sport in the form of head-to-head races on dirt tracks with obstacles. This sport can encapsulate a wide range of athletes, from amateur biking hobbyists all the way to Olympic professionals.

Cheese Rolling

Location: Gloucestershire, England
Cost: 400 to 800 dollars for plane to England; free admission; 100 to 2,000 dollars for cheese

Are you lacking a nine-pound cheese wheel in your life? Well, look no further because this niche sport has the answer for you! If you travel to England, you and hundreds of others can race down a precipitous 45-degree hill with a round of Double Gloucester Cheese. Once you win, that cheese wheel is all yours to enjoy! This sport dates back to around 600 years ago and takes place each spring in Gloucestershire's Cooper Hill. The prospect of grown adults chucking themselves, rolling and flailing after a wheel of cheese draws thousands of spectators each year. Note that this can also be replicated on any hill upon purchasing a 20-dollar Double Gloucester Cheese Wheel.

Cliff Diving

Location: Gloucester Quarries (15 to 35-foot cliffs)
Cost: upwards of 100 dollars for an organized tour

Cliff diving is an extreme sport that



Contestants chase after a cheese wheel in Gloucestershire, England.

involves intense athleticism along with creativity and precision. The sport was first pioneered in 1770 by Hawaiian chief Kahekili, who developed the competitions for his people. They would jump feet first off a large cliff into the ocean to be judged on how little they could make a splash. This technique was then adapted into modern competitions, including ones like the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, which took place in Boston last September. Red Bull is known for their dangerous athletic challenges, so, although it is a fun sport to try, people should be careful and take the right precautions when they cliff dive next!

Rock Climbing

Location: Rock Spot Climbing (South Boston)
Cost: 35 dollars

Rock climbing is a sport that has increased in popularity in recent years. This has been demonstrated through its 2020 Olympic debut in Tokyo, which exhibited three di-

fferent disciplines of climbing: bouldering, speed climbing and lead climbing. Rock climbing can also be practiced outdoors by ascending natural rock formations which offer more diverse challenges for climbers. Free climbing, which is climbing without harnesses and ropes, has also gained visibility through movies like the critically acclaimed 2018 documentary *Free Solo*. Boston climbing enthusiasts can climb at gyms like Rock Spot Climbing, which has several locations around the Boston area.

Skateboarding

Location: Lynch Family Skatepark
Cost: free if you bring your own board; 150 to 200 dollars for gear and equipment

Whether just as a hobby or in full-blown competitions, skateboarding is a fun and accessible sport that combines athleticism, skill and artistic self-expression. Skateboarding can take many different forms, including park skating (using bowls, ramps and half-pipes),

street skating (using stairs, ledges and rails) or as a mode of transportation. The sport has also found a growing platform online, with skateboarders sharing their skills and companies like Red Bull posting daredevil skateboarding content. Boston residents can find free skate parks around the city that welcome skaters with a variety of skills.

Ultimate Frisbee

Location: Franklin Park Playstead
Cost: 10 dollars for equipment

Ultimate Frisbee takes backyard frisbee up a notch with a full-blown, seven-on-seven game that involves layout/diving catches and fast-paced plays. As a non-contact end-zone sport that takes after football, ultimate frisbee has grown in popularity over recent years. Boston has several pickup teams around the city, most notably from organizations like the Boston Ultimate Disc Alliance, which has teams for all ages and abilities.

Flying on the Ice: Boston’s Skating Scene

By Alice Fragasso (I)
Staff Writer

With the initiation of winter sports, many students have begun to participate in skating-related activities outside of school. Ice skating, for one, is a great example of this. Aside from the hockey team, however, Boston Latin School does not have many in-school opportunities for students to explore their interest in skating. For this reason, many students are a part of figure skating clubs or join public skating rinks.

BLS varsity hockey captain James Sullivan (I) has been playing for the team since his freshman year and has enjoyed “the atmosphere” and the “strong team bond” that the team brings. Sullivan finds that spending time with the team has allowed him to be a part of a “tight knit group that works hard together and has fun in the process.”

Another competitive skating activity that many BLS students partake in during the winter is figure skating. Cynthia Wang (I), a former figure skater, shares that she initially started figure skating when she was three years old and continued for ten years until her sixie year at BLS. Wang ultimately decided to quit figure skating once she began her BLS career because of the demanding time commitment of the sport, as well as her greater interest in other activities, such as volleyball.

Although Wang was truly passionate about her time on the ice, figure skating did not offer the “support from school” and accessibility that school



Abby Wilson (IV)

Bostonians enjoy ice skating at the Frog Pond.

sports provided. “I loved the self expression of the sport and how it almost felt like flying on the ice,” she reminisces.

Outside of organized sports both in school and out of school, many students are able to find the same positive environment that comes with skating as a sport through the use of public rinks, most notably the Frog Pond.

Established in 1996, the Frog Pond Rink is an attraction to many students, children and adults across the city. The rink not only gives patrons the opportunity to take lessons in the scenic

Boston Commons, but it is also a place where many go to stay active and spend time outside during the winter season.

The Frog Pond was founded as a way to create a year-round hub for residents in Boston and to create an opportunity for winter activities, which the city previously lacked. When bringing their idea to life, city planners could not think of a better place than the Boston Commons for an ice rink because of its centrality and because of its central locations, which would hopefully revitalize the downtown area, which had been

declining for some time. After its opening, residents of Boston were not only able to enjoy the splash pool from June to August but could also skate from November to March, providing entertainment all year long.

Almost 30 years later, students are still enjoying the Frog Pond skating rink as a way to spend time with friends and stay active. This alternative to competitive sports, as Sullivan shares, “creates a more relaxed environment for students to develop community and follow their passions.”

Freezing Fenway Hosts College Football



MLB Advanced Media

The University of Connecticut’s football team floods the Fenway Stadium.

By Trevor Gracombe (I)
& Eliza Knight Bairstow (I)
Staff Writers

It is that time of the year when football fans of the Northeast and Midwest bundle up and brave the record-breaking cold, sleet and snow to support their teams. Whether they support the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) or the National Football League (NFL), there is no doubt that fans are incredibly dedicated and eager to encourage their teams, even after their playoff run comes to an end.

One such event fans will flock to this year is the Wasabi Fenway Bowl, set to take place in Fenway Park on December 27 at 2:15 P.M. It will feature teams from the American Conference, formerly the American Athletic Conference, and the Atlantic

Coast Conference, along with a performance from country music star Riley Green. This will be the fifth bowl game played at Fenway, with the first being in 2020. While the teams have not been announced yet, some potential matchups include the Clemson Tigers versus the Army Black Knights and the North Carolina State Wolfpack versus the Navy Midshipmen.

“Fenway is such a special stadium,” says Abigale Burns, Indiana University (IU) freshman and Notre Dame Academy alumna. “It would be so cool to see my team play at Fenway if they were able to, but I love getting to go to home games at IU with all my friends. I never thought I would be such a big football fan, and now, I even host watch parties for away games!” Burns’s excitement is reminiscent of that of many college football fans. It is easy to get caught up in the thrill of the games, especially if they are played at such a historic and iconic venue

as Fenway Park, a century-old stadium with views of Boston’s skyline.

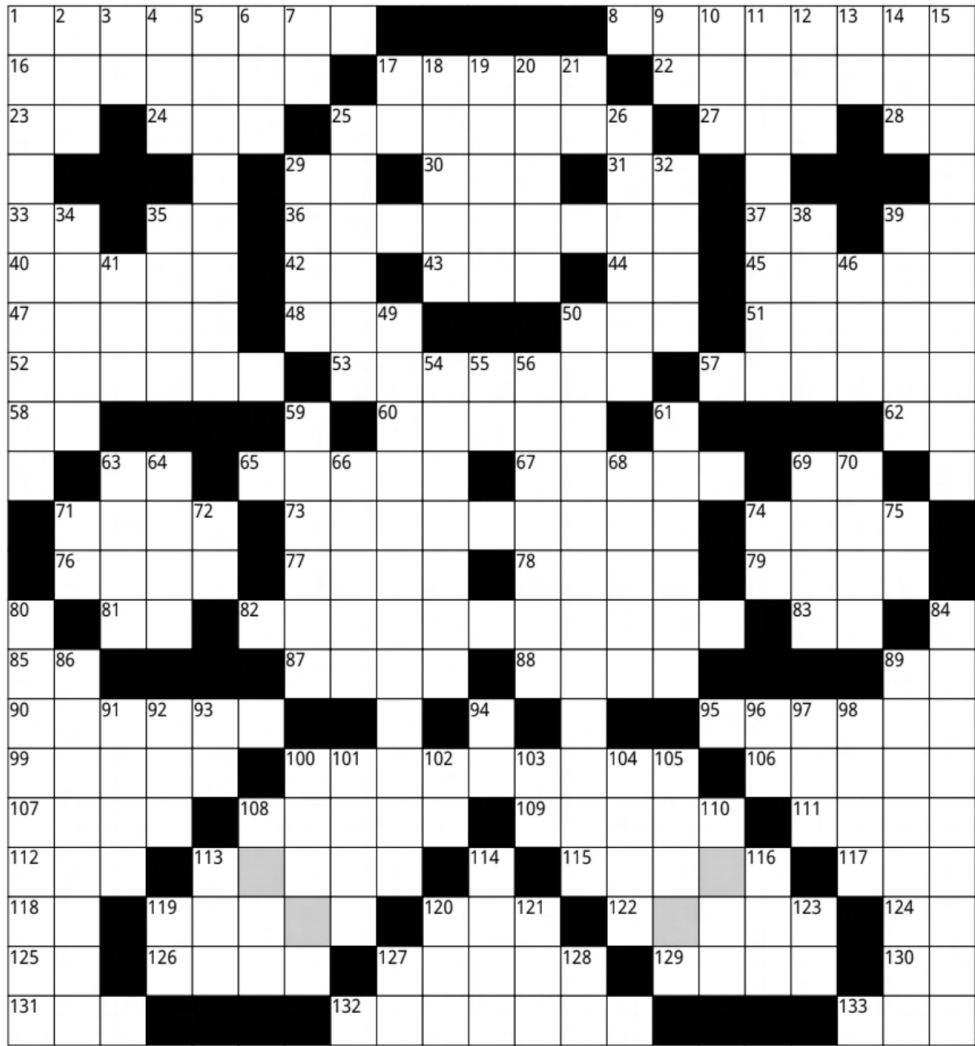
Bowl games have been an aspect of college football for over 90 years and are seen as a time-honored tradition. In order for a team to make it into a bowl game, they must have a winning percentage of 50 percent or above.

Bowls technically don’t count towards regular season rankings, and the Fenway Bowl is being hosted eight days after the culmination of the NCAA Division I football national championship game. Bowl game statistics, however, are included in players’ regular season totals, so teams still take the games seriously. Both players and spectators see these games as a fun event at a unique location and an opportunity to play without the stress of the regular season.

Adrien Mahoney (I), an avid Red Sox fan, comments on the prospect of Fenway hosting the Bowl: “Holding a football game at Fenway seems a little odd, given the dimensions at Fenway aren’t really suited for football. I think the competition generally isn’t as great as other college bowls too, which can diminish the quality of play. In my view, it’s far from a must-watch event.” He adds, however, that Fenway itself is deeply connected to city pride and is over 100 years old. Like many Boston residents, Fenway has played a key role in Mahoney’s life: “Fenway is special to me because of all the memories I’ve made going to games with friends and family. My dad played a baseball game there and my great-grandfather actually ran onto the field and stole home once.” Perhaps Fenway was chosen as the venue for a bowl game for this reason — its renown and charm will easily draw a large crowd despite not having the best conditions for football.

Last year, over 27 thousand people attended the Bowl. This year, the turnout is certainly expected to match, if not exceed, that amount, to reach Fenway Park’s maximum capacity of just over 37 thousand. To further Mahoney’s sentiment, Leo McDonald (I), who has attended many Red Sox games and is a member of the Boston Latin School varsity football team, says, “It has always been my dream to play a game at the historic Fenway Park. [I wish I] could be on [a] team that [plays] at Fenway Park.”

❄️❄️ Holiday 2025 Crossword ❄️❄️



By Alex Le (I)
& Weian Xue (II)
Head Cruciverbalists

ACROSS

1. While eating Thanksgiving dinner
8. Frigid winter, to a pioneer
16. Shakespearean Moor
17. Minhaj who hosted *Netflix's Patriot Act*
22. Less clean, as a chimney
23. Email response
24. Congruency theorem
25. Accelerated
27. Old-school icons, in hip-hop slang
28. When doubled, neither good nor bad
29. First person possessive
30. ____ loss for words
31. Stubbed my toe
33. Hesitant sound
35. ____, myself and I
36. Diagonally
37. AP Physics C: _ & _
39. Down from, about, in Latin
40. Runs like a deer
42. The Granite State
43. Boba brewed base
44. Position for Barry Bonds or Ted Williams: Abbr.
45. Senate staffers
47. Top prize winner at the 2025 Oscars
48. Thus, in Latin
50. Spicy
51. Eye sores
52. Keats and others
53. Capital of Tamil Nadu, India
57. Orange puff
58. Opposite of yes
60. Took back as a prize
62. Senior: Abbr.
63. Laughing sound
65. Of equal size
67. Belly button type

69. L.A.'s home
71. " ____ darn it!"
73. Fuel-transporting ship
74. It means "skin"
76. Sunburn soother
77. Entr' ____
78. Barely makes, with "out"
79. French greeting
81. Article in grammar
82. Homemade
83. In the direction of
85. Overpowered
87. Standardized test for juniors
88. Library admonition
89. Yes, in Spanish
90. ____ it over: ruled
95. Snake sounds
99. *All the Light We Cannot See* author Anthony
100. SoCal team that won the '20 World Series
106. Brown ermine
107. Landon and an extraterrestrial
108. *Paradise Lost* figure
109. Walt Disney's middle name
111. Before, in Latin
112. ____ Vegas
113. "Yum!"
115. Singer Amos and others
117. Like father, like ____
118. Either/____
119. Sheets of glass
120. Copper, in Latin
122. Spock's father in *Star Trek*
124. What we shouldn't use in school
125. Santa ____
126. Accusative plural of *ira, irae*
127. Venture into new territory
129. Caffè ____
130. Opposite of "out"
131. Indent key
132. "Lush Life" singer
133. Crew " ____athon"

DOWN

1. Charles Leclerc
2. On-target earnings
3. Expression of surprise
4. Goddess, in Latin
5. Gives an angry look
6. Lou Gehrig's disease, for short
7. Very
9. " ____ I was saying..."
10. Kanga's kid
11. Dog collar attachment
12. Thoroughfares: Abbr.
13. Informal greeting
14. -y, pluralized
15. Teachers in university
17. Santa saying
18. ____ garde
19. Bristle like parts
20. Turkish city
21. Northeastern University abbr.
25. Legendary
26. *Hoi* ____; the masses
29. ____ best friend
32. Weaving component
34. 1953 John Wayne film
35. French seas
38. Tiny pest
39. Juicy bits of info
41. Polynesian paste
46. Hair coloring
49. Six days before the new year
50. "Money" used during a game of dreidel
54. Common diagnostic for epileptics
55. Northwest
56. Lunchtime errands, e.g.
59. John Irving hero
61. Judd of "Taxi"
63 Hello, in Spanish
64. "Unto us ____ is given"
66. Crunchy salad toppers
68. Canines, e.g.
69. Gael, for one
70. Folksinger Guthrie
71. State home to Atlanta
72. Atomic No. 2
74. Defense attorney
75. *Modus operandi*: Abbr.
80. To hold something in the air
84. The FBI is always ____
86. Where sunbathers sunbathe
89. Like some naval missiles
91. Sports officials
92. OB-GYNs, e.g.
93. Emergency room
94. To, toward, near, in Latin
96. Exists
97. Stand!, in Latin
98. Some heirs
100. Cuts with light
101. Lawyers: Abbr.
102. Light switch position
103. Atomic No. 32
104. Spanish rivers
105. Plastic wrap brand
108. Yemen's capital
110. Royal address
113. NC ____ Heels
114. His and ____
116. To be, in Spanish
119. 3.14159
120. " ____ b?": "Choose one"
121. KLM competitor
123. Ring outcome
127. Do, re, mi, ____
128. When doubled, toy with a string

Gingerbread House



By Ross Wilson
Editor-in-Chef

Gingerbread Ingredients:

- ☐ 1 cup plus 2 tbsp butter
☐ 1 cup sugar
☐ ¾ cup molasses
☐ 1 tbsp grated orange rind
☐ 5 cups sifted flour
☐ 1 and ½ tsp baking soda
☐ 1 and ½ tsp salt
☐ 2 and ¼ tsp ground ginger
☐ 1 and ½ tsp cinnamon
☐ ¾ cloves
☐ ¾ cardamon (optional)

Gingerbread Directions:

1. Beat the butter until creamy. Beat in the sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the molasses and orange rind.
2. Mix dry ingredients together, then stir into wet ingredients, at 1/3 a time, blending well to make stiff dough.
3. Chill several hours or overnight until firm to roll.
4. Roll out the dough between two sheets of wax paper to three-quarters thickness. Cut out house parts.
5. Transfer to a foil covered cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for eight minutes or until firm to the touch. Dough will spread slightly in baking.
6. Put pattern pieces back on each hot baked section of dough; recut quickly while they are still on the foil. (Wear gloves to not burn hands)

Royal Icing Ingredients:

- ☐ 16 oz box of powdered sugar
☐ 3 egg whites
☐ ½ teaspoon cream of tartar

Royal Icing Directions:

1. Beat until egg whites creamy.
2. Add cream of tartar until foamy. Add powdered sugar.
3. Beat frosting stands in stiff peaks
4. Enjoy!

Credit: *Jane Petrie, may she rest in peace.*

Hot Chocolate



By Ross Wilson (I)
Editor-in-Chef

Ingredients:

- ☐ 3 cups milk
☐ 1/3 cup cocoa powder
☐ 2 tbsp brown sugar
☐ 1 tsp vanilla extract
☐ Pinch of salt

Directions:

1. Add 3 cups of milk to a medium saucepan over medium heat.
2. Stir in cocoa powder, sugar, vanilla extract and salt with a whisk.
3. Continue whisking in order to evenly mix all the ingredients and ensure you don't get clump-ing.
4. Serve as soon as it's heated through, just 5-10 minutes.
5. Add desired extras. Mini marsh-mallows and/or whipped cream are always a hit!

Credit: *Jeremy Anderberg (The Art of Manliness)*

Try this <i>NYT</i> -inspired Connections!	ERO	UBER	PAINE	WALKER
	CHEESE	CLIFF	BUTLER	ARCHER
	ADAMS	ULTIMATE	LAYA	ROCK
	VS	HARLEYS	HOOPER	HANCOCK

By Lauren Dong (II)
& Sophia Fortuin (II)

Cruciverbalists

Answer Key: BLS Alumni who signed the Declaration of Independence: Adams, Hancock, Hooper, Paine; BLS Staff: Archer, Butler, Harley's, Laya, Vs
Words of Unusual Sports (pg 10): Cheese, Cliff, Rock, KLM competitor, Ring outcome