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Wellesley Public Schools changes food providers after five years with Whitsons

By Josie Song '26 and Daniel Luo '27
Features Editor and Staff Writer



Photo by Evie Simon

“We are looking to implement a second hot bar station with more vegetarian options as well as greater student choice,” said Mark Fritz, Executive Chef of the district.

This year, Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) changed lunch providers, making the switch

from Whitsons Culinary Group to Chartwells School Dining Services. As a public school

district that contracts its own food services, WPS is required to invite vendors to be its new

food provider every five years, requesting that vendors submit a proposal.

“We put out a wide net and see if anybody’s interested in running our food service program,” said Cindy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations. “We then invited the people who were interested [and] gave them a tour of our district. Those that wanted to do business with Wellesley chose to submit a bid.”

The two companies that submitted bids were Whitsons, the previous food provider, and Chartwells.

After companies submit a bid, the next step in the process is the comparative proposal in which the companies were evaluated in two phases: the Non-Price Proposal stage and the Price Proposal Stage.

During the Non-Price Proposal stage, the companies were as-

sessed by a Request for Proposal (RFP) committee comprised of members of the school committee, principals of the middle and high school, and other administrators within the school district. This comparative evaluation was based on multiple different criteria set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), including proposed menus, financial stability, student debt management, an interview, and more.

However, the district also had other specifications in mind when selecting a new food provider.

“There were other criteria that we felt were really important to the district,” said Mahr. “We, as a community, [feel] strongly about sustainability, and therefore, we asked that the next vendor focus on limiting plastics and non-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Finding balance in curriculum alignment

By Kaya Charoensiddhi '27
News Editor

Walk into any classroom at the high school, and you might see students debating a historical issue, running a chemistry experiment, or drafting an essay. Variety is one of the defining characteristics of the classroom experience.

In the past year, however, the high school has taken steps to better align coursework across subjects. The initiative aims to ensure that students enrolled in the same classes at the same level learn comparable material and are evaluated using similar methods.

This shift, although recent, did not happen suddenly. Beginning last year, teachers have

gradually increased consistency in the skills and content that each course includes, as well as the methods in which students are assessed.

The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, which outline the topics and skills required at each grade level, have played a major role in encouraging greater alignment. The frameworks specify what teachers must cover in state-required courses, such as U.S. History, and in subjects covered by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

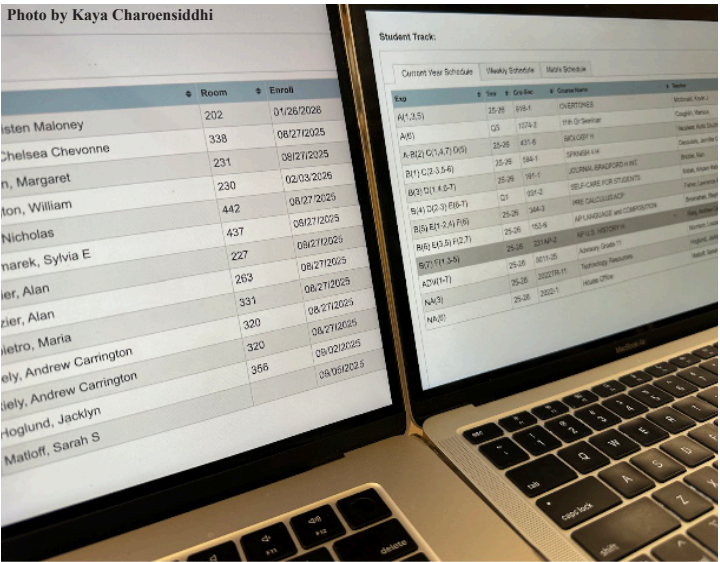
To increase consistency this year, departments are introducing common assessments at multiple

points throughout the year to ensure that all classes have at least one shared project or test in common per quarter.

Mr. Nicholas Miller, a math teacher at the high school, has noticed both the challenges and benefits of course alignment. He believes that it has encouraged greater collaboration between teachers.

“We’re meeting more often and staying on the same page,” Miller said. “It helps us plan ahead and make sure everyone’s students are developing the same key skills.”

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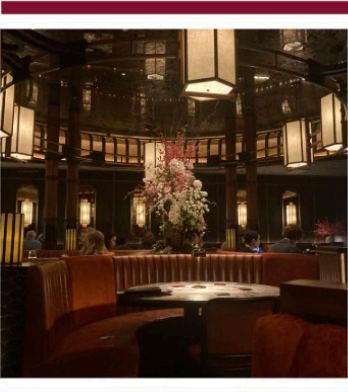


Curriculum alignment initiatives at the high school seek to ensure consistency in student learning from classroom to classroom.

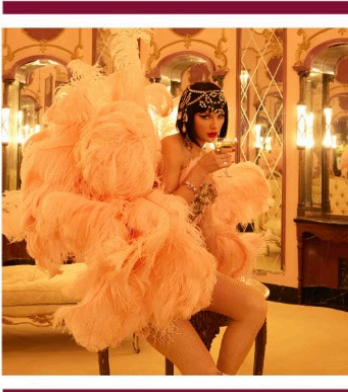
Stories by students for students: a peek of what's in print



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NEWS EDITOR | Kaya Charoensiddhi
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
compostable material.”

Both companies were given ratings with the lowest possible grade on the scale being “unacceptable” and the highest being “highly advantageous.” Only those with a rating of “highly advantageous” are able to move on to the Price Proposal stage.

Whitsons was given an overall rating of “advantageous” and Chartwells was given an overall rating of “highly advantageous,” making it the new food provider for the high school, as Whitsons was unable to move on to the Price Proposal stage.

“Chartwells demonstrated a greater alliance to what our goals were. Our goals were having menu items that demonstrated nutritious cooking from scratch, not prepackaged, and their menu showed that,” said Mahr. “They met, to a greater degree, all of our requirements, which is why they ended up winning the bid.”

The RFP committee also wanted to prioritize student enjoyment and variety among menu items.

“They had a lot of opportunity for feedback from students, from parents, and we felt that was really something that was critical to the health and sustainability of a really high-quality program,” said Mahr.

The next challenge, after Chartwells was named the food provider for the next five years, was to begin making the switch from Whitsons to Chartwells at all ten schools in the district.

“The first thing we did was make sure that Chartwells had a staff that we could start in the fall for school. That was the first order of business,” said Sarah Butler, Director of Finance and Business Operations.

Many cafeteria staff who had worked under Whitsons returned for the 2025-2026 school year despite the switch to Chartwells,

as they wanted to remain within the district.

After ensuring that there were cafeteria staff for the upcoming school year, the next task was making the transition from Whitsons to Chartwells official. This included changing signage, hiring and training a new management group to run the program on a district level, and building up food and material inventory.

Now that the school year has begun, Chartwells is expected to begin implementing systems to obtain feedback from students and parents.

“The challenge is understanding what you all like to eat and making sure that meals are nutritious and exciting, and really meet [your] needs in a fresher way,” said Mahr, speaking directly to students.

There are multiple ways Chartwells will survey students. The primary manner will be through the Student Engagement

and Sustainability Coordinator, a new position that came with the Chartwells as the new food provider. This position works with students, putting out samples and getting feedback from students at all grade levels.

Chartwells has yet to formally collect feedback but students have already started to form their own impressions on the changes to their cafeteria and lunches.

Many feel mixed about the new developments — especially the hot meals.

“I believe that the hot meals need more variety because all we’ve eaten is pasta and the portions are extremely minuscule compared to the old catering company, yet their supply runs scarce before the lunch block is even over,” said Laylah Powell ’27.

“The hot meals are edible, but more effort could be used,” said Greg Topetzes ’26. “The pizza and salads have improved so

much from last year, and I also love how they have condiment pump dispensers—it’s so much better than those little packets we used to have.”

Others praised the variety of the options they were able to choose from.

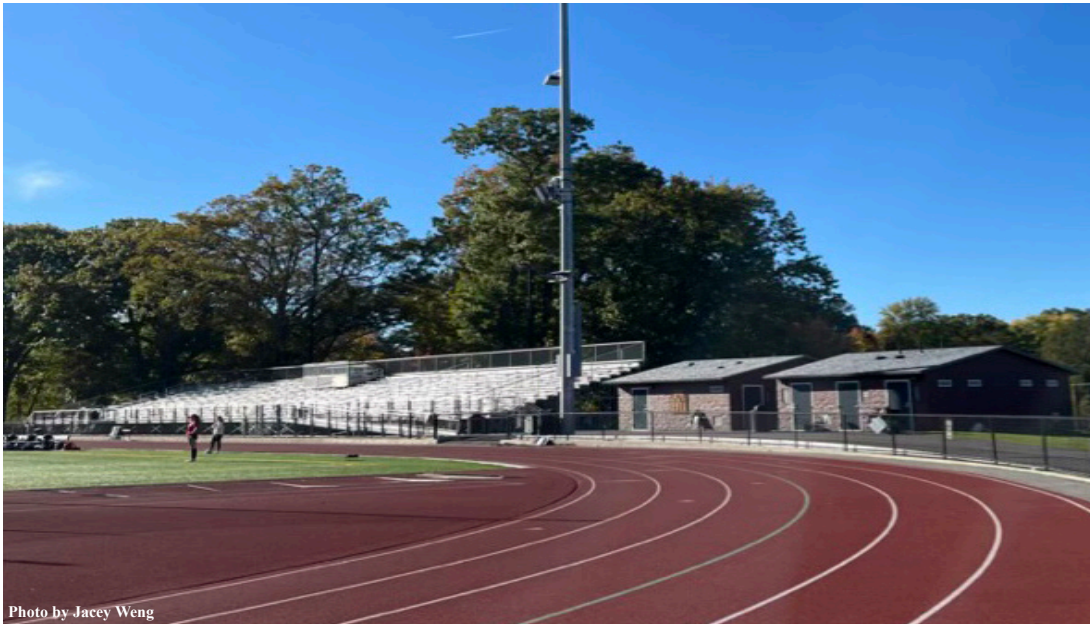
Kate Fallon ’29 said, “I feel like they serve a lot more different kinds of food.”

“I enjoy how we’re still provided with a lot of options for lunch, for example, if the hot meals aren’t something I want to have, I can always have the sandwiches or the pizza. Although I still prefer how more seasoned and unique the hot meals and pizzas were last year,” said Emem Akpan ’28.

Ultimately, Chartwells remains open to change and student feedback. Students can expect further changes over the next five years.

Bathrooms and snack shack: the second phase of a multi-decade project

By Jacey Weng ’27 and Lillian Stephens ’28
Opinions Editor and Staff Writer



The newly-built snack buildings stand strong during the girls’ soccer team practice.

Darcey Field is home ground for many Wellesley athletes and their families. The clean track and smooth turf, used in every season, provide a comfortable environment for the community to train, get steps in, and simply have fun.

But, the field today is drastically different from the one there two decades ago. Before 2003, Darcey Field was used intensively without infrastructure — a viable playing surface or spectator amenities — to support it.

“It was always a grass field but it was pretty beat up. We got to the point where it was almost unplayable,” said the high school’s athletic director John Brown.

The field was used year round by the soccer, field hockey, foot-

ball, cross country, lacrosse, and indoor/outdoor track teams. This current training facility was failing, but the athletes still needed a space to practice. So the town decided to make a change.

“The first thing we wanted to do is make sure that we got new turf and a new track. So, a new track was put in, new fencing was put in, and new ticket booths were put in. That was the first phase of the three-part project,” said Brown.

The first phase took a lot of time and work to complete. Community members worked together to negotiate and design the best athletic space possible, finishing the installation of the new turf with synthetic infill (TPE) and fence in 2017. Then in 2024, the community decided to install lights in support of

night games at the field.

“Once the school got approval to put up lights on the football field, they saw an opportunity to build out the other necessary facilities — bathrooms and a snack shack. A group of parents, the school, and residents got behind the project and pushed it through,” said Amy Paladino, a member of the Wellesley Gridiron Club.

This was the second phase of the project, completed early 2025. In order to get the new snack shack onto the field and not disrupt the ongoing sports, the building designers settled on a modular building process.

“The buildings were delivered and dropped on top of the foundation. They built it at another facility, brought in on a truck, dropped in with

a crane and laid on top of it,” Brown said.

Before the renovations, the wooden press box was rotted and condemned, the cinder block snack shack was rat-infested with plumbing problems, and the bathrooms were nonexistent. In recent years, fans and workers made do with a fold-up table for a snack shack and porta-potties for bathrooms.

“It was just a table next to the bleachers and we just had a lot of random stuff stacked on the tables,” said Angela Zhang ’27, a cross-country athlete and snack shack volunteer.

Volunteers hand out pizza, Chick-fil-a sandwiches, chips, and more, raising money for the sports team represented. This money, in addition to private donations, have been essential in funding the projects. The town and school allocated money to improve these town structures, but it wouldn’t have been adequate without the work of organizations like the Natural Resource Committee who worked to approve the projects, or the Community Investors and Gridiron Club who helped advise and fund the project.

“Building a newer facility ensured food safety and allowed us to provide a larger array of snacks to guests of the football games and other sports,” said Paladino.

On the other hand, although it is undeniable that the field wasn’t the only run-down portion of the field, some students

have had reservations about the necessity of the new buildings. They feel that funds could be better spent making athletics more affordable to all students.

“Our uniforms are eighty dollars. Eighty dollars for a little tank top,” said Zhang. “But, the bathroom is useful. I actually use it when I have practices.”

Overall, the goal of all these renovations was to make the Wellesley Athletic facilities the best they can be and encourage more community engagement in athletics. This seems to have succeeded, as 88 percent of the senior class participates in or has participated in at least one sport throughout their high school career, and almost 1,800 kids districtwide participate in Raider athletics.

“It’s a community meeting place as much as it is a field for teams,” said Brown. “It gives parents a chance to see their kids play, as parents might be working in the afternoon and can’t come. Younger kids in town can also come and enjoy watching the older kids play. It’s great for families.”

In the future, the town hopes to continue improving Wellesley’s athletic spaces, approving a new press box and locker rooms on March 18, 2025.

“It’s been a big project that just keeps on going. And, we want that to be as good a facility as could possibly be,” Brown said.

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FEATURES EDITORS | Josie Song and Grace Zhao
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High school juggles safety and stress with active shooter drills

By Katherine Xu '27
Editor-in-Chief



"The shooting of the blanks [during the faculty drill] is helpful because you can hear what it sounds like...If I heard it now, I would know exactly what it is," said Mr. Zachary Nicol, a social studies teacher at the high school.

On November 5, students at the high school trudged into advisory and were met with "ALICE" spelled out in block letters and posted on Smartboards. For many, this was a familiar sight that signified the safety drill hosted by the Wellesley Police Department each year.

Meant to prepare students for potential threats inside the building, the drill endeavors to teach students the ALICE acronym — and put it into practice. ALICE, which stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate, is one of many strategies that attempts to simplify and standardize the response to active shooters.

Every year, students first watch a video explaining each letter of the acronym and then participate in a lockdown and evacuation drill to simulate a reaction to an active shooter in the building. The school began running these drills in 2014 in response to increased K-12 school shooting incidents.

"The likelihood of an active shooter event happening here is low," said School Resource Officer Matthew Wall. "Over the years, [though], we've seen an uptick across the country of active shooter events. So it is a reality of our world. And like anything else, the more you train for something, the better prepared you are."

Wall, who manages the drill at the high school and is ALICE-certified, runs it every year due to its potential to save lives.

"I've seen how this program works and I know that it has kept people safe, so I believe in it," he said. "Statistically speaking, most active shooter events end before law enforcement can arrive. ALICE is a proven tool to keep the majority of people safe."

For the administration, teaching ALICE is part of a larger plan surrounding active shooter events — one that prioritizes prevention. Dr. Jamie Chisum, principal of the high school, referred to

the house model, advisory, and the counseling department as means of support for struggling students.

"Those [initiatives] blossomed in the period of time between Columbine and what we would think of as our current iteration of safety training," said Chisum. "All of those pieces were part of it and continue to be part of it as we move forward."

Some students find the drill tedious, however, and don't take it seriously. Others are alarmed by this flippancy.

"Nothing has happened in Wellesley that makes people care, so the drill has turned into just this thing we do every year," said Addison Kinney '26. "A lot of people treat it like a fire drill. But it's very different."

Wall echoed the idea that people might be discouraged from participation due to the low likelihood of a shooter event.

"A lot of people think the thought of someone coming into

a school to do that is just unthinkable. They're not wrong. It is unlikely," said Wall.

Nonetheless, Wall finds the drills essential to establishing familiarity with the ALICE procedure, comparing them to fire drills in effect.

"You do [fire drills] twice a year. That doesn't mean you expect a fire to break out the next day. But if there ever were to be a fire, it's muscle memory. Your body knows what to do," he said.

For faculty, the school tries to build this muscle memory even more realistically. While Chisum announces a mock-location where a "shooter" is located during the student training, it lacks the realism of the faculty drill.

On October 16, teachers stayed late after school for their training. They first watched the same ALICE video. Then, Wall and fellow School Resource Officer Kathy Poirier presented each part of the acronym and fielded questions. Lastly, faculty returned to their classrooms for the immersive practice. An officer walked throughout the building, firing blanks in stairwells and common "lobby" areas on each floor.

For the administration, the focus of the faculty drill is to ensure that, in the event of an active shooter, students have leaders to look to.

"It's really important that the adults are really trained and that they get all their questions answered," said Chisum. "The adults really need to know what they're doing."

In this way, the student drill also serves as a second practice for teachers to make crucial decisions based on the shooter's location.

"I usually talk to the police officers ahead of [the student training] and say, where should we go this year? And then it forces the

teachers to do a different calculus," Chisum said.

However, the faculty drill this year was blemished by what Chisum recognized as an administrative mistake: due to the timing of the exercise, the volleyball teams were waiting outside the cafeteria for their bus to an away game when the blanks were fired.

For much of the team, the response to hearing the drill was curiosity — running up to the windows and peering in at the shooter.

For Kinney, though, the reaction was different. Before moving to Wellesley, she lived in St. Louis, where her school experienced multiple gun threats. This previous experience gave Kinney a different outlook on the drill.

"When the first gunshot happened, I had to leave and sit away from the windows because I didn't want to watch," she said. "[Having experience with this] just gives you so much perspective that I think a lot of people in Wellesley don't have. And you can't get that perspective without experiencing it yourself."

Kinney's reaction speaks to one of the reasons the administration does not hold the same depth of drills for students.

"I am protective that you're still kids. And there are triggers that can happen for kids. I don't think [more intense training] is worth it," said Chisum. "I don't want to take the risk of upsetting a kid to the point where they... don't feel as safe coming back here."

Indeed, the school's ultimate goal is safety, both in feeling and in reality.

"How do we keep our kids safe and not ruin an environment where kids...feel happy to come to school and don't feel threatened?" said Chisum. "That's a balance we want to strike — keeping everybody safe, but also having them actually feel safe."

Featured Artist: Quinn White '26

By Saavedra Zwick '26
Staff Writer



Photos courtesy of Quinn White

"Art is a way to express myself," said White.

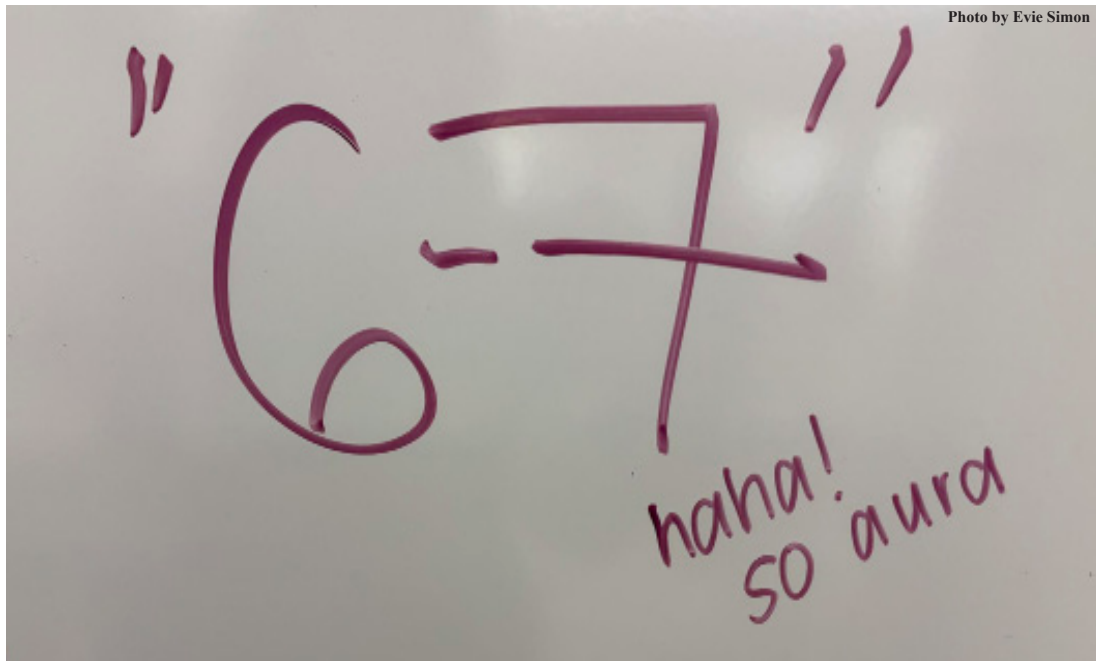
Named October Artist of the Month for ceramics, White has a special way of turning simple ideas into something important. She uses different textures, design, and emotion to tell stories that words can't capture. Whether it's a vibrant painting or a delicate ceramics piece, her art reflects her thoughtful thinking.

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The high school has so much “aura”

By Evie Simon '27

Arts Editor



“I think that part of being a good teacher is trying to be [aware] of what’s important to my kids,” said Brown.

“Six-seven.” “Rizz.” “Sigma.” “Cooked.” “Fire.” “Aura.” These words fly around the hallways like paper airplanes. Yet, despite their pervasiveness around the high school, their power over the classroom is virtually nonexistent.

With students finding hilarity in numeral phrases, math class has become a common location to find a stray snicker or a

held-in laugh at the expense of an answer.

One such numeral phrase is “six-seven,” a social media trend, that is nonsensical in nature but elicits raucous responses.

Despite this behavior, teachers have found that it is easier to acknowledge these trends before continuing onwards in class.

“I don’t ever plan to avoid it anymore. Then just if it happens,

I can look back to see if someone is going to be hilarious. ‘Yes, I know. Can we move on? Yes, we can move on’,” said Mr. Craig Brown, a math teacher at the high school.

While pretending to not hear the joke is an option, Brown has found that responding before redirecting the class has been the best way to create a productive learning environment. Though,

he acknowledges, most grades at the high school have enough emotional maturity to shy away from these jokes during class time anyway.

This sentiment is echoed by English teacher, Ms. Anna Murphy, who notices students only tend to use slang in class when doing smaller group activities.

Though, students will use social media words like “vibe” to connect to a part of diction: tone. In a class activity, when learning about “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald, students listed “red flags” they had seen in characters like Tom Buchanan.

Red flags are distinctive, unpleasant characteristics of a character or person that might deter others from becoming closer to them.

“If we’re accessing our information that way, and it’s making sense to analyze the text, I’m here for it,” said Murphy.

In Spanish 2, there is an entire unit dedicated to teenage trends in the Wellesley community that connect to Spanish-speaking countries. Though slang isn’t the most important aspect of this educational experience, it has had a tendency to come up.

Señora Amanda Holcombe, a Spanish 2 teacher, said, “It’s been my experience so far that most students have been handling the slang well. When things come up they laugh about it as a class and they’re over it as a class.”

While teachers find social media slang to not be present in the classroom, students beg to differ.

Gabby Simon ’29 said, “I think it is distracting. In physics sometimes the numbers turn out to be six-seven, and then the whole class gets derailed.”

For many kids, this slang feels more relevant to their day-to-day life and is more likely to sidetrack them than teachers. Especially considering the long shelf life of trends such as “six-seven” which have been around since early 2025.

“At first it was funny, now it annoys me,” said Inia Altschwager-Perez ’27.

She feels that when slang becomes overused it is no longer funny, but just a waste of time.

While there are certainly differing opinions between the faculty and the student body, the use of slang has become a part of the high school’s culture for better or for worse.

The Swiss exchange program encourages students to branch out

By Katherine Xu ’27 and Camden Chan ’27

Editor-in-Chief and Staff Writer



“It was pretty nerve-racking [to host],” said Reisner. “But, after, you end up having fifteen new best friends from Switzerland.”

This September, fifteen students from Wirtschaftsgymnasium Basel-Stadt (Basel Business School) in Switzerland arrived in Wellesley to spend two weeks living with a host family. Each exchange student was partnered with a student at the high school and attended two days of classes in the building, spending the rest of their time exploring Boston and learning about the local culture and history.

Students visited landmarks around the city, including the Museum of Fine Arts, the Massachusetts State House, and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

“We saw a lot of cool architecture and art in the art museum,” said Luana Gass, one of the Swiss exchange students. “We also vis-

ited Fenway Park, so I now know a lot about the Red Sox, too. [The visit] widened my horizons.”

For their American hosts, the program offers a chance to gain a new perspective on old experiences.

“[Hosting an exchange student] forces you to see the town in a different light,” said Mimi Vella ’26, a host student from the high school. “It’s been really fun bringing him to different school events like football games and different parts of Wellesley that I might not have chosen to go to. Hosting has encouraged me to get him out of the house and take him to new spaces.”

The program isn’t just an escape from the routine of school, but also a way to learn about foreign cultures, something that

most never get to experience in such a personal fashion.

“Truly staying with a family and making a connection with someone from that country is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” said Dr. Sylvia Kaczmarek, a co-coordinator of the exchange. “I think that connection is something you can’t get with tourist travel.”

Gass echoed this sentiment about the program’s personal nature.

“Even though we saw many tourist attractions, I was still able to see actual life in the US. It’s not like you stay at a hotel and then visit places and go back to the hotel,” Gass said. “If I was here with my family, I don’t think I would have realized a lot of the cultural differences I saw.”

The Swiss exchange is one of two exchange programs offered at the high school. The other program — the German exchange — is exclusively available to students taking German. The Swiss program, however, does not have any such prerequisites and differentiates itself from the other student trips at the high school.

“The art trip is awesome, but you don’t get to live with a family,” said Dr. Thomas van Geel, the other co-coordinator of the program. “And [the Swiss exchange] is a cultural exchange, not a language exchange, which makes it open to a wider range of students.”

The exchange’s cultural focus highlighted differences between the two countries for Swiss students, especially those who have not traveled to the United States before.

“[There are] a lot of elective classes here. Most of the classes in Switzerland are mandatory,” said Julian Senn, Vella’s exchange student. “Also, most of our classes are with the same people.”

Outside of school, Swiss students observed much less public transportation in Wellesley compared to their bus and train system.

“At home, we can just get from one place to another without needing to drive,” Gass said.

“But here, without a car, it’s really complicated to get around.”

In April, the host students from the high school will be visiting their counterparts in Basel. Throughout their week-and-a-half in Europe, the exchange students will visit the ‘three countries corner’ in Basel, tour the capital of Bern, and experience the unique landmarks and history of Switzerland.

Though the exchange may be out of some students’ comfort zone, past participants praised it.

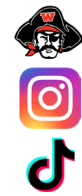
“It’s definitely a very ‘worth it’ experience,” said Cooper Reisner ’26, who took part in the program last year.

For Reisner, seeing his exchange partner in Switzerland was the highlight of the program.

“When we go to them, it’s like revisiting your best friend,” he said. “It really shows how much you’ve bonded with your person.”

Indeed, the Swiss exchange program fosters human connection between young people of different nationalities who would otherwise never cross paths.

“It helps you reflect on your own country and understand others,” said Kaczmarek. “At the end of the day people are not very different. A little more cultural and international understanding broadens our horizons so much.”



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SATIRE: Community destruction in the wake of student drivers

By Evie Simon '27 and Bella Behrend '26

Arts Editor and Staff Writer

The biggest battle for high school drivers is finding a reasonable parking spot.

"I wake up at 2:00 AM to get parking on Pain every day," said Cam bor Gini '27.

Pain, a street near the high school, often fills up by 3:30 AM, making it difficult for students to find parking. Many will choose to sleep in their cars rather than getting to school closer to 7:30 AM, when the school opens.

Those who can't get parking on Pain face the challenge of finding spots on side streets, back yards, and fields. The luckiest of them earn a coveted parking spot at the high school with the exorbitant amount of money they pay to enter the bi-annual parking raffle.

"I paid \$10,000 for my junior parking space, which I have to pay back to my parents," said Astin Martin '27, winner of the junior parking raffle.

Martin got off lightly, with around 84 percent of students reporting that they bought at least six tickets, ranging from \$2,000 to \$25,000.

With only one parking spot to fight over per grade, losers are left with empty pockets and a mission to find parking at any cost.

"Today, I only had to sprint four miles to get to school from where I parked, which is better than my usual 12-mile, 7:00 AM sprint," said Catalina Bentley '26.

Bentley parks across town, having to wade through the Charlie River every morning to make it to school on time. Yet, she claims it's better than walking from her home, which is five minutes from the high school.

Ms. Portia McGee, "Grand Master of Parking", monitors the parking within a fifteen mile radius of the school, paying careful attention to poor driving and violence.

"I'm giving tickets to student drivers every thirty seconds, except when I have to break up



Photo by Bella Behrend

The last parking spot in the senior lot at the high school. Students arrive to park early.

fight over who can park in the last spot," said McGee.

McGee was recently scratched across the face by a student's sharp fake nails in response to not allowing parking on a neighboring house's lawn. As punishment, McGee gave them a \$300 ticket.

Dignity seems like a small price to pay for some students, who feel that finding parking is essential to a good day.

Benjamin Morgan Walter '26 said, "Paying a \$645 ticket for fighting doesn't seem too bad when I need to find a spot and get to class on time."

Complaints from this competitive parking culture have taken over McGee's inbox, with neighbors and local sports teams noticing ruined lawns and less space for practices.

"Students have started to bring white bottles of spray paint to school to make their own, special parking spot. Extremely outlandish," said the high school's Principal Annabell Kia.

With the parking situation becoming more and more desperate, the administration has resorted to slashing the tires of cars parked illegally, urging stu-

dents to make better choices or face the consequences.

But teachers aren't safe either. Administrators have been mistaking faculty cars for students, leaving only slashes in their wake.

With destruction causing community issues, it has become clear that more parking is necessary. Yet it also begs the question: how far is too far for a parking spot? For students, it seems that the answer hasn't been discovered yet.

Unique fusion: Karma's arrival brings Asian blends and classic dishes

By Grace Zhao '27

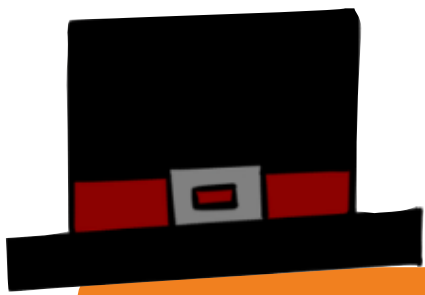
Features Editor

Nestled in a cozy corner of Linden Square, Karma Asian Fusion offers upscale Asian Cuisine, combining flavors from numerous regions to make unique combinations. Inside, hungry

restaurant goers are greeted by Chinese paintings and opulent black, red, and gold decor. The black wood-paneled walls and curved clamshell booths offer a sense of warmth while keep-

ing its interior welcoming. The white and red flower centerpiece, surrounded by more seating and oriental-style paper lanterns, invites people to settle in and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Bradford Fall

from our families

Smoked Turkey

Evie Simon '27

- 1) Purchase a turkey.
- 2) Wet brine the turkey in a mixture of butter, brown sugar, and paprika; then baste the turkey in this same solution overnight.
- 3) Heat the smoker to 250°F and baste every 2 hours in the turkey juices.
- 4) When the turkey has been in for around 4 hours, check the internal temperature. If the internal temperature is around 175°F in the thigh near the bone, it is ready to be taken out.
- 5) It should take around 30 minutes per pound of turkey.



Vanilla-Glazed Scones

Lili Chase '26

- 1) Preheat the oven to 400°F.
- 2) In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients, cold cubed butter and cut until you have small crumbs.
- 3) In a separate mixing bowl, whisk together the wet ingredients. Combine wet and dry ingredients.
- 4) Scoop the mixture out onto a lightly floured surface, gather in a ball, then flatten into a 7-inch circle. Cut into equal-sized pieces and place them on the prepared baking sheet in the freezer for 10 minutes.
- 5) Brush the tops of each scone with a little honey. Bake at 400°F for 18-22 minutes or until the tops are golden browned and cooked through.
- 5) Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely. Brush with the glaze and allow to harden for 10-15 minutes. Enjoy.

Dabo Bread

Ella Asfaw '27

- 1) In a large bowl, mix one cup of lukewarm water, yeast, salt, eggs, and oil. Mix well.
- 2) Add the sugar and bebere spice and mix. Then add the flour in intervals with water. Mix with your hands.
- 3) In a greased bowl, add the dough and cover with plastic wrap. Allow the dough to rise in a cool dry place for about 1-2 hours.
- 4) Uncover the dough and push it down. Allow the dough to rise again for another 1-2 hours.
- 5) Push the dough down again and make a well in the center. Add oil and more bebere spice. Mix really well.
- 6) Preheat the oven to 350°F.
- 7) Divide the dough into 3 aluminum greased pans and bake for 1 hour or until the top of the bread is golden brown. Check the bread with a stick.
- 8) Allow the bread to cool in the pans and transfer it onto wire racks to continue cooling.

Slice and serve with butter and enjoy!



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version of these recipes
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Family Recipes

by to yours...

Glazed

0°F
dry ingredients. Add the
all pea-sized crumbs.
the wet ingredients. Com-
ents.
surface and work it to-
cle. Cut the dough into
pared baking sheet. Place
5-10 minutes.
heavy whipping cream and
s of the scones are lightly
ugh.
ompletely. Top the scones
minutes, then serve, and

Mac-and-Cheese

Daniel Luo '27

- 1) Preheat the oven to 350°F.
- 2) Shred cheeses and toss together in a large bowl. Set half aside for topping.
- 3) Cook pasta in salted water until al dente. Drain and set aside.
Mix seasonings in a small bowl.
- 4) Make the roux and the cheese sauce
- 5) Combine pasta and sauce and stir cooked pasta into cheese sauce until fully coated.
- 6) Layer and bake: Spread half the pasta in a greased 9×13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle 1/3 of the remaining cheese on top.
- 7) Add the rest of the pasta and top with the remaining cheese.
- 8) Bake for 25-30 minutes, then broil 1-2 minutes until bubbly and golden brown.



Mexican Rice

Lila Thornton '28

- 1) Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat and add rice.
- 2) Cook rice, stirring constantly, until puffed and golden. 3) While rice is cooking, sprinkle with garlic salt and cumin.
- 4) Stir in onions and cook until tender.
- 5) Stir in tomato sauce and chicken broth; bring to a boil.
- 6) Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 20-25 minutes. Fluff with a fork.
- 7) Eat and enjoy!

Fried Rice

Jacey Weng '27

- 1) Cook two cups of rice in the rice cooker and let the rice sit over-night.
- 2) Beat 4 eggs in a bowl.
- 3) Pick your protein(s), veggie(s) and chop them into small cubes.
- 4) Heat a Wok pan to hot, and add in around 2 tablespoons of oil.
- 5) Add in the beaten eggs and scramble. Once the eggs are solid, take it and put it back into the bowl.
- 6) Add another spoon of oil to the wok and stir fry the veggie(s) with the protein(s).
- 7) Fluff the cooked rice and add it in the Wok, stirring everything.
- 8) Add back in the scrambled eggs, and salt, sugar, and chicken bouillon to taste. Enjoy!



Graphic created by Ayesha Kapoor



The tuna roll was both crunchy and creamy, and the Kobe roll's truffle aioli added an unexpected depth of flavor.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5
enjoy the environment.

My family and I were served by Joe and Andreas, who were charming and helpful. They were efficient when waiting us, making sure our food arrived quickly, and cracking jokes that brought smiles to our faces.

The spicy tuna maki along with the Kobe roll were the first dishes to arrive. Its presentation was deliberate — the vibrant tuna and the hint of green in the Kobe roll were my favorite parts. The tuna roll was creamy, refreshing, and altogether delightful, and the tuna was tender and fresh. The cucumber and tempura coating added a satisfying crunch and the roll wasn't overwhelmed by rice.

The Kobe roll — a must try, as advertised by the menu — leaned into its mushroom-y side, with an unmistakable truffle flavor coming through with the aioli. Though distinct, it wasn't overpowering. The Kobe was melt-in-your mouth delicious, with a tangy and hearty flavor, and the avocado, fried crispy onion, and crunchy shrimp tempura added a mild sweetness to the roll.

Next was a classic dish from Shanghai: "xiao long bao" or little dragon buns. I was impressed with the skins: they were thin and chewy. I loved that the filling was slightly sweet and meaty, and the soup was fragrant; however, I wished for a little more soup inside, as they felt a little dry and didn't burst in my mouth like a typical xiao long bao.

For entrees, we enjoyed black pepper udon noodles and spicy garlic chicken in a clay pot. The black pepper udon noodles were mildly sweet, smoky, and peppery with a wonderful chewy texture, while the chicken, beef, and shrimp were tender and charred. I enjoyed the snap peas and broccoli, which were crunchy, refreshing, and cut through the oiliness of the dish. The addition of fresh vegetables lightened the dish, contrasting nicely with the sharpness and heaviness of the black pepper sauce.

The spicy garlic chicken in a clay pot came out sizzling and bubbling, with bright colors and the telltale sweetness of garlic. Again, the meat was juicy, with a kick from the dried Sichuan pep-

pers and a little sweet smell from the fresh peppers. The garlic was sweet and mushy, melting easily.

However, I wished the dish was a little less oily — it felt heavier because of the grease and fat.

Of course, dessert wasn't forgotten! We ordered a classic: chocolate cake. It was beautifully presented, and the lightness and creaminess of the layers were surprising, but delicious. It was not too sweet and still carried the character and richness of the chocolate in the cream layers. The sponge was, well, perfectly spongy and not soggy at all. I also enjoyed the berries embedded in the layers of cream, which added a refreshing touch to the dish.

After reviewing these dishes, I've opted to give Karma Asian Fusion a 9.5/10. The service was polite and efficient, and the atmosphere highlighted the well-thought-out design.

The food was well-made and the ingredients were evidently extremely fresh — from fish to meat to vegetables, everything

was either tender and juicy or crisp and crunchy. My favorite dish was the Kobe roll, an option that not only reflected the elegance and opulence of Karma's interior design, but also offered a depth of wonderful and unique flavors.

Karma Asian Fusion's arrival in Wellesley certainly deserved the excitement it received; after all, it has good food, good vibes, and good people, making it an excellent spot for dining out with family and friends.



The ambient atmosphere in Karma Asian Fusion and its classy centerpieces add a high-end feel to its interior.

SATIRE: One, two, three, four, five...?

By Josie Song '26
Features Editor

The phrase "six-seven" has become increasingly popular in schools across the United States over the past year. The slang term and internet meme originated from the song "Doot Doot (6 7)" by Skrilla, which was released in 2024 and has only seen an upward trend in popularity as a result. However, the craze sweeping the nation has received mixed responses from teachers and administrators alike, with some embracing the new trend and others taking drastic measures to combat it.

"Kids began using the term during my lessons at the end of last school year," said Ms. Harriet Wong, a math teacher at the high school. "Every time I said either 'six' or 'seven' there would be incessant shouting and ruckus. I've had multiple breakdowns in class since the school year started."

Wong is one of several teachers at the high school who have taken issue with the number-related terminology. They have even gone as far as to create an opposition group against the slang term: Massachusetts Teachers Against Six Seven (MTASS).

"Since the school committee wasn't taking our complaints seriously, we decided to take matters into our own hands," said Mr. Timothy-Theodore Sahur, co-founder of MTASS and a math teacher at the high school.

The opposition group, founded three months ago, has already held several meetings and organized protests outside of the Massachusetts State House, petitioning to ban the term in public schools across the state because of its disruptive nature.

"It is hard to issue a full ban on a word or phrase," said Sahur.

"We're hoping that we can at least receive the right to expel students for its usage, though."

However, not all teachers are against the use of the slang term. In fact, some have chosen to embrace it.

One such teacher is Mr. Bradley Patapim, a chemistry teacher at the high school. Patapim has taken to incorporating the number, along with other internet memes, into his lessons.

"I've found that it's better to embrace the trends of the youth because this way we find common ground with our students," said Patapim. "In fact, I rather enjoy using some of the terms myself. My current favorite is skibidi toilet rizz."

Patapim even goes as far as to base some of his lesson plans around popular internet memes.

"I've started teaching them

about sigma bonds recently, so I thought I'd try to connect with the students by using the term outside of its scientific context," said Patapim.

Patapim is one of several teachers in the opposition group against MTASS: Super Cool Teachers Against Massachusetts Teachers Against Six Seven (SCTAMTASS).

"It's not very sigma of them," said Patapim. "They shouldn't be infringing upon the kids' and my right to use the term six-seven."

However, members of MTASS claim that the usage of slang terms in the classroom is not only impacting their ability to teach, but also their health.

"I've developed a constant eye twitch," said Wong. "It began after the kids kept saying 'six-seven' in the middle of a lesson and then it never went away. I'm

perpetually winking."

Other teachers have expressed similar concerns.

"I had to up my therapy sessions from twice a month to every week," said Sahur. "[Six-seven] is a vile trend that should be abolished as soon as possible."

The members of SCTAMTASS do not share the same sentiment.

"They're drama queens plain and simple," said Patapim. "They just need to thug it out to be honest, or as the kids say, 'TBH'."

It seems as though this war surrounding teen slang will remain ongoing as the opposing groups are unable to reach common ground.

"Hopefully they can work it out soon because I'm just trying to pass calculus," said Marylou Curtis '26.

SPORTS EDITOR | Solomon Jin
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Field hockey's standout season

By Lila Thornton '28
Staff Writer



The team huddles together before their senior night.

Expertise is not built overnight — it is facilitated through cold practices, intense conditioning, and a drive to win. The high school's girls' field hockey team embodies those principles.

The team is currently ranked number three in the state out of 33 Division One teams

After a loss to Walpole in the beginning of their season, the team picked themselves up and continued grinding toward a better season. They are currently on a twenty-game winning streak spanning from regular season

through the playoffs.

Erin Stickle, head coach of the team, explains that their success is largely due to their unity.

"At the start of the season, we were playing more as individuals, but we've learned to trust one another and play as a cohesive unit," she said.

To encourage team bonding, the team does something called "Secret Psych" before games. Teammates draw names and give their pick a favorite snack with a fun note to pump them up.

Isabel Ofenloch '28 expressed

similar sentiments about team unity.

"Our team is very close," said Ofenloch. "No matter what, we can connect on the field. We work together and we care for each other immensely."

Stickle also adds that due to Wellesley's Youth Field Hockey programs, many young girls have started to play field hockey earlier and earlier, strengthening the overall program. Some girls even play for local clubs from elementary school onward.

The field hockey program is intense, with players practicing every day after school, along with on weekends. They often do conditioning at these practices as well.

"The key to our success this season has been the players' drive to win," said Stickle. "They're motivated to work hard in practice, improve their skills, and maintain a high ranking."

Despite the pressure, Captain Haleigh Bibbo '26 said the team has maintained encouraging attitudes throughout the season. She

credits the bench for being positive and cheering on the starters throughout games.

"As a team we really root for each other in every drill and work hard to push other players to improve their own skills," said Bibbo.

Going into the MIAA tournament season, both Bibbo and Stickle expressed the team's desire to go far in the playoffs. They hope that all of their hard work during the season will pay off in the future.

As for younger players who aspire to be on the team, Bibbo advises being diligent.

"Put in the extra time and effort to improve your skills. It's all about the effort and energy you put into each drill, every practice, and in the off season. Especially on our team, a good attitude and hard work can help you gain a spot on the field and on the team," she said.

With every victory, this team has proven itself.

How the Red Sox can turn a Wild Card exit into a World Series championship

By Freddy Alexander '27
Staff Writer

Boston is a city blessed with tremendous sporting success. We claim 38 championships in hockey, basketball, football, and baseball combined — we are literally one of the winningest cities in America.

2025 was another opportunity for Boston to add to its championship record. Unfortunately, the World Series-contending Red Sox could not go the extra mile. Stymied by the Yankees, this year's first-round playoff exit for the Red Sox marked the end of a season that started with uncertainty and ended with the same. Yet, if the front office plays its cards carefully, there can be much to look forward to in 2026.

First, growth follows the numbers. In 2024, the Red Sox had a cumulative revenue of \$514 million, according to a CNBC report. This year, the Sox had an estimated payroll of just over \$200 million. Thus, the team has a good amount to spend on building a winning squad.

One of the main focuses for the front office needs to be resigning third baseman Alex Bregman. As of the writing of this article, Bregman has become



The Red Sox had the tenth-highest total attendance in the MLB in 2025, according to ESPN.

a free agent following his decision to opt out of his 2026-2027 contract options with the Sox. At this point, Bregman is on the open market for other teams to pursue. So the question is: do the Sox replace Bregman with young shortstop Marcelo Mayer at third base? Do they offer more money

to Bregman? Or should they let him walk and replace him with a slugger of the same caliber?

My first instinct is to say, "Let Bregman go and have Marcelo play third base." However, there are implications to losing Bregman. The Sox would give up a well-rounded player with

above-average defense and hitting skills. He has also been cited as a leader by fellow players and manager Alex Cora. They'd also likely lose Bregman to a big-market rival. There's not enough risk-to-reward in letting a rookie like Mayer take the majority of games at third base, especially as he's a traditionally trained shortstop. In my eyes, \$80 million or more is money well spent on Bregman, especially if he can stay healthy for the next two to five seasons.

The second thing the Sox need for 2026 is solid starting pitching. Garrett Crochet had a Cy Young-caliber season, but outside of Crochet, the team's pitching proved shaky and unreliable. This is where the Sox need to start signing players. Talented starters like righty Dylan Cease — who has a career ERA of 3.88 — would be the perfect signing for the Sox. He's a proven power pitcher, meaning that he would fit in perfectly with a rotation that features another fireballer in Crochet. The Sox should lock him up for five to six years, at \$120 million in total contract value — about \$20 million a year

Fall Sports Scoreboard

Girls Swim & Dive
DII State Champions

Field Hockey
20-2

Boys Golf
17-3

Volleyball
14-6

Girls Soccer
12-3-5

Boys Cross Country
7-2

Boys Soccer
9-5-3

Girls Cross Country
5-4

Football
5-5

Next on the signing block is first baseman slugger Pete Alonso, who is a free agent. Earlier in 2025, first baseman Triston Casas suffered a severe knee injury, rendering him unable to play for the rest of the season and into next year, leaving him only as a trade piece for Boston. The first baseman slot is extremely important; it's a position with a high percentage of players who swing for power, netting high extra-base hit totals. Alonso is entering his age-31 season and has been hitting with excellence.

With the Mets in 2025, Alonso put up a .272 batting average while roping a league-leading 42 doubles. Alonso at first base would provide the Sox a boost in pure power — he also hit 38 home runs in 2025, thirteen more than any hitter on the Red Sox. Finally, the Sox need to make big offseason trades. I wouldn't be opposed to a package deal that involved some of the Sox's outfielders. Outfielder Jarren Duran, who is at his highest value to date, and platoon player Masataka Yoshida should be at the top

of trade considerations, alongside prospects such as Jhostynxon García, who finished 2025 in MLB's top 100 young prospects. While many see Duran as a key clubhouse player, he is the best option for the Sox to trade for a top pitcher. A deal with the Minnesota Twins for top starting pitcher Joe Ryan seems like a must. The Sox would likely have to give up García, Duran, and a pitching prospect for Ryan, who is under team control until 2028, which likely is the full scope of the Sox's World Series conten-

tion window. So, let's review. The Sox desperately need starting pitching — offseason signings of Dylan Cease and a trade with the Twins for Joe Ryan would create an effective three-headed monster in the pitching rotation. Not only that, prospect Connelly Early could fit in well in the No. 4 starting role, giving the Sox extra depth. With pitching out of the way, the Sox can then focus on signing Alex Bregman and Pete Alonso to medium-term deals to help anchor the Sox's relatively

young core. Players like Ced-dane Rafaela, Wilyer Abreu, and Marcelo Mayer — who all had great seasons at their respective positions — need help settling into high-leverage environments like the playoffs. The 2026 season looks like it will shape up to be an exciting year for the Red Sox and Boston sports in general. With the right offseason moves, the Sox have a great chance to make a deep playoff run. The only question now is: what will ownership actually do to help this team?

Wellesley cheerleaders celebrate their seniors on Senior Night

By Daniel Luo '27
Staff Writer



The cheer team's seniors gather alongside their coach, Odessa Sanchez, for a group picture.

The stadium lights blare as parents, students, football players, and cheerleaders brave the cold to gather on Darcy Field. Senior cheerleaders adjust their crowns and exchange quick hugs with their families as they await their names to be called during one of the most beloved traditions in high school sports — senior night. Senior night is a longstanding tradition in high school athletics that celebrates senior athletes during their final season. It is

not an official, school-organized event, but instead is put together by parents of athletes. For the cheerleading team, Odessa Sanchez, the head coach of the varsity cheer team, was given the responsibility to organize the cheer team's senior night with the assistance of lowerclassman cheerleaders. "You have to remember how you want to recognize those seniors," said Sanchez. "I wanted to make sure that each cheerleader left with something that com-

memorated her years at Wellesley High." Cheerleaders were given a banner that Sanchez hopes highlights their journey and acts as a memory of the dedication and time they put into cheering. Sanchez also gifted cheerleaders a personal gift intended to make them feel appreciated and reflect on their years on the team. "I also wanted the gift to recognize that I'm looking ahead to where they may be when they leave here and also that I'm

missing their presence on the sidelines," said Sanchez. It was a touching moment for the senior cheerleaders as the night recognizes the end of their high school career. "I really enjoyed my senior night and being able to see my family and teammates on the same field all celebrating our hard work," said Cortney Smith '26. "After being on the team for four years, it really feels like everything came together." Senior night displays how

sports brings others together — when one of the seniors was accompanied by her teammates and her coach. "One of our cheerleaders was going to walk on her own because her family wasn't able to make it, but I saw the outpouring of support that her teammates had for her so she didn't have to walk by herself and I thought that was a great sense of sisterhood and team camaraderie," Sanchez said. Lowerclassmen took pride in putting together senior night, making posters and bouquets to show appreciation. "Senior night was extremely inspiring for me to watch, especially because other juniors and I helped make their posters and pick up their bouquets," said Janelle Albert '27. "It was also really heartwarming since it was a way of giving back to the senior cheerleaders who really made my cheerleading experience so enjoyable."

For Sanchez, the night was bittersweet — it marked a celebration of the journey that the athletes had gone through — whether they were on the cheer team during their entire high school career or if this was their only year. "I just want them to remember the legacy that they have here," said Sanchez. "You have to make the most of your time here and leave a marker. You gotta live in your moment and leave behind something that will honor you for years to come."

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International Thespian Society recognizes excellence in theater

By Kaya Charoesiddhi '27 and Freddy Alexander '27

News Editor and Staff Writer



Photo courtesy of Skylar Grossman

High school actors rehearsing “Blood in the Water” after school in preparation for the fall musical, “Legally Blonde.”

For students who spend hours rehearsing lines and building sets after school, recognition hasn't always followed their hard work. However, with the launch of the high school's new chapter of the International Thespian Society (ITS), that changes.

Established in 1929, the ITS is the only theater honor society

in the United States, dedicated to helping theater educators cultivate transformative experiences for all students.

The society uses a point-based system to induct students who meet the working criteria. Students must earn ten points to be considered for membership; each point is equivalent to ten hours

of work on a major production.

As a part of his plans to improve upon the performing arts foundations at the high school, Mr. Skylar Grossman, the drama teacher and director, wanted to formally acknowledge the quality work of the hundreds of students who take part in the school-wide performances. Inspired by other

Massachusetts school districts, which saw benefits from the ITS, Grossman introduced a new chapter of the ITS at the high school this fall.

“Given the fact that so many students in the theater program already put in a ton of work as it is, they should be recognized for that,” said Grossman.

With the addition of the ITS, the high school now has three independent honor societies — the National Honor Society, the World Language National Honor Society, and the ITS. Students now have the opportunity to be recognized for their efforts in acting and theater production, honors that will be visible at graduation.

“[Students will get] certain regalia that [they] can wear... Everyone that gets in will get a cord at graduation, which is great,” said Grossman.

Visual honors at graduation are especially unique at the high school — the ITS is one of the only organizations that gives out cords that members wear around their necks at the graduation ceremony.

Grossman hopes that the ITS will create new opportunities and boost engagement for experi-

enced, new, and returning actors alongside theatrical technicians. He'd like all aspects of theater to be honored, and ITS membership offers an incentive for students to become more involved in productions at the high school.

Thea Fischmann '26, president of the Wellesley High School Dramatic Arts Company (WHSDAC), voiced her support for the addition of the ITS to the high school's academic recognitions.

“When Mr. Grossman brought up the idea of implementing this, I was so excited... It's something that is really validating for a lot of theater people,” said Fischmann.

For many, this new chapter of the ITS is more than an award — it is a validation of countless hours dedicated to pursuing a passion for and perfecting the craft of acting. WHSDAC Secretary Oscar Allan '27 expressed his support for the ITS and its purpose at the high school.

“You get points for performances, but most people's points are going to come from rehearsals. They're going to come from the things that people don't see,” he said. “To me, [the ITS] is an acknowledgement of all the hard work that might be unseen.”

Wellesley artists unite the community with electrical box art

By Ayesha Kapoor '26 and Stephanie Pan '28

Editor-in-Chief and Staff Writer

Flowers, sports equipment, birds, police cars, and silhouettes. These designs are scattered throughout Wellesley, painted on electrical boxes along sidewalks and roads. An effort that began during the COVID-19 pandemic, these electrical boxes are decorated annually by different Wellesley artists.

The electrical boxes throughout Wellesley are managed by the town's police department. During the pandemic, former police captain Jack Pilecki decided to pursue an art program. He reached out to many local artists to form the Public Art Committee, which runs the project.

The committee first researched neighboring projects, as Boston and Brookline have comparable programs — Paint-Box and Boxes Around Town, respectively — that allow artists to present their skills locally.

In Wellesley, interested artists must submit an application to the Public Art Committee, which reviews the submissions

and votes to select the winning artists. Along with their proposed design, artists submit a title of the artwork and a description of the reasons or inspiration behind the proposal. Upon approval, they receive a \$1000 stipend for time, transportation, and supplies.

Annie Newman, one of the original members of the committee, said, “We try to avoid anything overly political [when selecting winners], and of course, we are concerned with the craftsmanship or skill of the artist.”

Students at the high school have the opportunity to contribute their work to this service.

Evelyn Harrison '25 was empowered by the opportunity. The electrical box at Whole Foods — created by her favorite artist, Mia Cross — inspired Harrison to apply to the program in eighth grade.

At the beginning of her freshman year, her piece Views From Above was selected for a box at Church Park. Influenced by Harrison's favorite dress from middle school, Views From

Above features an array of colorful parachutes, each with its own patterns and style.

“I wanted to tie in lots of vibrant colors to play with the liveliness of Wellesley Center and bring some whimsy to the drearier winter days,” said Harrison.

To her, public art is more than aesthetics.

“Beyond helping individuals, public art also has the power to instill a sense of community pride in that it represents a shared set of values and a common love of something beautiful,” she said.

Public art brings many benefits to towns. Neighborhoods with public art are perceived as safer than those without it, and thereby attract new residents and businesses. A survey conducted at two public art projects in London's urban space revealed that 84 percent of participants believed that partaking in public art improved their well-being.

“I think public art is incred-

ibly effective at making people live more presently because it is explicitly designed to make you stop and look around,” said Harrison.

In Wellesley, this impact is felt

all around.

“Art enriches our lives. I think our increasing focus on the arts has helped to expand the lived experience in Wellesley,” said Newman.



Photo by Stephanie Pan

“They [the electrical boxes] bring color and life to Wellesley,” said Isabella Bonefeld '28.

From eras to errors: The Life of a Showgirl review

By Ayesha Kapoor '26
Editor-in-Chief



The twelve songs in “The Life of a Showgirl” filled the top twelve spots on the Billboard Hot 100 upon the album’s debut.

The most pre-saved album in Spotify history. A number one debut on the Billboard charts. The largest vinyl salesweek in history. Taylor Swift is able to add these triumphs to her plethora of achievements following the release of “The Life of a Showgirl” (TLOAS). But as a self-proclaimed “Swiftie” (the beloved nickname of Swift’s fanbase), I must disagree.

A pop and soft rock album, TLOAS was first announced on August 12, 2025 on Travis Kelce’s “New Heights” podcast. The actual release date was set for two months later, on October 3. Alongside the announcement, Swift released a series of images promoting the album. They portrayed her amid large burlesque fans, in dressing rooms, hotels, and upon a stage. With each image, the “showgirl” theme was solidified. Many fans, myself included, understood this promotion as a look into the struggles that fame brings — an answer to the question: who is Taylor Swift behind all the publicity and paparazzi? This theme

tracked with previous songs, such as “Nothing New,” “The Lucky One,” “Delicate,” and “Anti-Hero.” They discuss her fears of being trapped in a life of false Hollywood glamour and being left behind as people find a younger, newer artist to obsess about. The “showgirl” facade seemed to finally be receiving its own album after being hinted at for years.

“This album is about what was going on behind the scenes, in my inner life, during this tour [The Eras Tour],” said Swift on her “New Heights” episode.

Besides the podcast advertisement, the album was promoted as productionally and lyrically strong. Swift flaunted how it was being produced by Max Martin and Shellback, the masterminds behind Swift’s iconic “Red,” “1989,” and “Reputation” albums, which shaped her into the household name she is today.

This drummed up excitement for many Swifties. Swift’s last two albums, “Midnights” and “The Tortured Poets Department” were synth-pop. And

while I love those two albums, I, along with others, had begun growing tired of the same sounds and vocal production. Even her most “pop” songs on the two releases were missing diverse instrumentation.

By switching back to old producers, TLOAS signaled a shift away from synthesizers and towards a stronger drum and guitar focus. And if Swift’s developed lyrical complexity was paired with this extremely strong pop production, I knew the album would be amazing.

Or so I had hoped.

On the morning of October 3, I woke up and pressed play on “The Life of a Showgirl.” The first track, “The Fate of Ophelia,” began playing, and I was met once again with the same synth-pop production. Looking past this, I found I did enjoy the song overall — it is very catchy and a classic Swift song that fits right in with the style of her last few albums. She took the ending of Shakespeare’s tale of Ophelia from Hamlet, in which Ophelia commits suicide in response to

her father dying and her lover rejecting her, and spun it.

“You dug me out of my grave and saved my heart from the fate of Ophelia,” she said.

Overall, I think it’s one of the best songs on the album. However, I don’t think it’s strong compared to the rest of her music.

Next came “Elizabeth Taylor,” whose verses were accompanied by a pleasant string instrument in the background. But the chorus took me by surprise with its loud beat drop. Overall, I like the lyrics of the song and the instrumentals of the verses. However, the intensity and cadence of the chorus spoil its lyricism.

Overall, the entire album follows this pattern. Each song either lacks lyrically or productionally, and sometimes both are lackluster. The title track, “The Life of a Showgirl” exemplifies this first deficit. The song starts with “Her name was Kitty // made her money being pretty and witty // they gave her the keys to this city // then they said she didn’t do it legitly.” The cheap rhyme scheme, including using the word “legitly” instead of a better word, ruins the entire beginning of the song for me.

However, when the featured artist, Sabrina Carpenter, starts singing, I am hooked back in. Despite following this same short rhyme scheme as above, her verse has more complex rhymes.

“She was a menace // the baby of the family in Lenox // her father w----- around like all men did // her mother took pills and played tennis,” sings Carpenter. With just her few lines, Carpenter’s voice and words are able to show more emotion than Swift does the entire song.

In a song explaining how the “showgirl” title conceals the struggles people go through, Swift fails to demonstrate any vulnerability.

Instead, even her bridge comes off as smug: “All the headshots on the walls // of the dance hall are of the b----- // who wish I’d hurry up and die // But

I’m immortal now, baby dolls // I couldn’t if I tried.”

As I continued through the album, the cheap lyrics combined with the monotonous production and tone of each song discouraged me from listening. And I wasn’t the only one.

“This album sounds like AI wrote it, and some songs made me really uncomfortable,” said Elyse Albertson ’26, who had been a casual fan of Swift’s previous works.

My last straw was the song “CANCELLED!” which starts off with the lyrics of “Did you girlboss too close to the sun?” — a popular phrase people would comment on TikTok a few years ago. Alongside this outdated, almost stupid lyricism, the song was released at the same time as backlash from Swift’s fans for befriending supporters of President Donald Trump. Even though the song is not a response to Swift’s “cancellation,” its timing is not ideal, especially with lyrics like, “Good thing I like my friends cancelled // I like them cloaked in Gucci and in scandal,” which many fans view as tone deaf.

Overall, I would say this album is nothing but a disappointment. It fails to meet any of my typical Swiftie expectations, lacking in lyricism, production, tone, vulnerability, and vocal range. After Swift’s two-year-long tour that grossed over \$1 billion, my hopes for an album about the behind-the-scenes of that were much higher. After this release, she might have lost a Swiftie or two, including myself.

Margaret Redgate ’26 has been a self-proclaimed “Swiftie” for many years, with Swift landing as one of her top ten most streamed artists for multiple years.

“I was really disappointed in her workmanship, I feel like it didn’t live up to the expectations I had for it — specifically lyrically. It felt like I was listening to a little kid writing songs,” said Redgate.

WSA Art Achievement Recipients

By Katherine Xu '27
Editor-in-Chief

Each year, the Wellesley Society of Artists (WSA) selects one or two rising seniors at the high school “who have demonstrated both merit and commitment to their study and practice of the visual arts.” In June 2025, Dylan Kim ’26 and Ayla Lin ’26 were honored. They are students in the Drawing and Painting Intensive course at the high school, taught by Mr. Brian Reddy. From November 1-29, Kim and Lin’s work will be displayed in the Wellesley Free Library.

Dylan Kim ’26

“Komo and Harabeoji,” Acrylic and oil on canvas.

“I found a piece of stained glass that depicted many themes from Christian theology. My grandparents are very religious, which is why I depicted them as stained glass. However, the patterns in the painting [vary]. In the ‘glass’ sections of their garments, the lines are more rigid and straight... representing their attempts at assimilating into Christian and American culture when they moved to Kansas in the 70s.”



Photo courtesy of Brian Reddy

Ayla Lin ’26

“On a Winter Day”, Water soluble oil paint on stretched canvas.

“This painting was my first time working at such a large scale,” said Lin. Her painting is 36 inches by 48 inches.

“I challenged myself to portray both a complete composition, but also smaller details on the figure, such as the face, dress, and jewelry,” she said. “Elements such as the size of the piece, her jewelry, and her dress all hold emotional significance.”

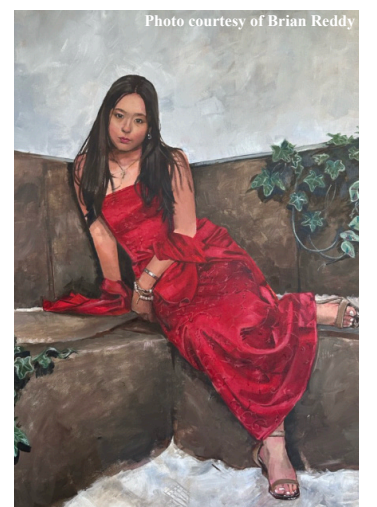


Photo courtesy of Brian Reddy