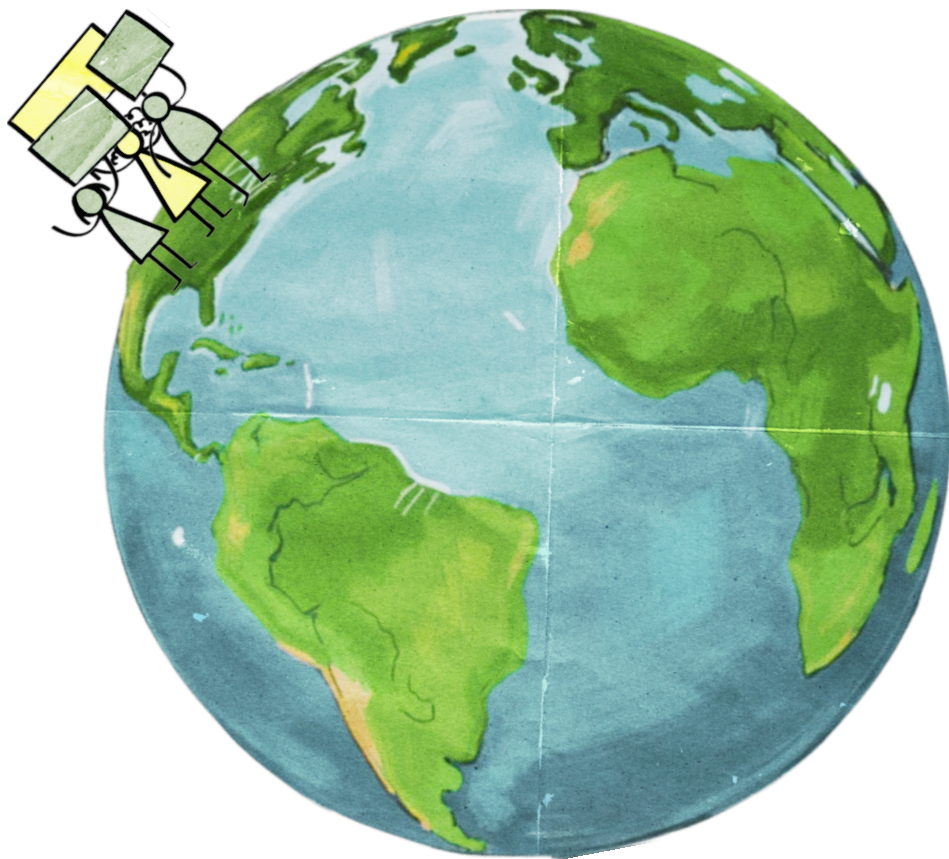




# ACTION



by THE WARD  
MELVILLE  
KALEIDOSCOPE

A month into the new year, change is in the air. On January 1, Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as New York City's youngest and most progressive mayor in decades. Two days later, Nicolas Maduro's long reign over Venezuela came to an end as he was captured by the United States. And large-scale protests convulsed everywhere from Iran to Minnesota.

Reporting on these events isn't our job as a school newspaper, but that doesn't mean our district has remained static. From a rare bond referendum about building repairs to a new state-mandated cell phone ban, to say nothing of

the long-awaited restructuring, Three Village has both advanced and contended with transformation. It will continue to do so: debates about armed guards and starting times will only intensify as we move into budget season, and the reckoning with A.I. is not over.

In such dynamic times, it is our duty to not only remain informed but to take action, no matter what opinions or concerns we have. Therefore, this winter edition looks beyond changes affecting our community to how some of us have managed, or even caused, them. Whether you're reading about local protests or alumni of Ward Melville who've returned to teach and give back, that's our broader theme. We hope you're inspired by these examples to act.

## Citizens Protest Stalled Stony Brook Reconstruction

by CAROLINE  
QIAN, ARTS AND  
ENTERTAINMENT  
EDITOR

On August 19, 2024, a flash flood destroyed the Harbor Road dam that supported Stony Brook's Mill Pond, draining the beloved landmark and cutting off a major route between the village center and Head of the Harbor. Nearly 18 months later, the area remains untouched.

After a 14-month-long legal battle with the Village of the Head of the Harbor and the Town of Brookhaven over ownership of Harbor Road, the non-profit Ward Melville Heritage Organization (WMHO) ultimately claimed the road and submitted an application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This development was presented to the public as a milestone in the reconstruction process, one that would allow the WMHO, the Town of Brookhaven, and the Village of the Head of the Harbor to begin working together.

However, months after WMHO's application, citizens

pointed out that little progress had been made by the Town of Brookhaven on several important next steps. These included drafting cost-sharing arrangements with other municipalities and entering into local design services agreements with engineering firms.

Due to the continued standstill, chants such as "More than one year, not one shovel!" began to fill the air. On October 11, 2025, community members gathered for another organized protest. Named the "Firetrucks Can't Fly" rally, the demonstration drew attention to the difficulty of emergency vehicle access to houses beyond the pond, with protesters calling for a temporary bridge to be constructed over the broken road. Beth Zweig, one of the protest's organizers, explained that the rally's purpose was to "raise awareness. We are not going to let up. We want to keep

the pressure on and ensure that this moves along in a way where the first step doesn't take a year and a half, and step two doesn't take another year."

Many rallygoers shared that the pond's destruction also carried emotional significance for them. Dr. Ferdusi Shilpee, who generously allowed her property to be used as a meeting point for the rally, stated "this pond has memories of generations. I think it is our responsibility to fix this pond."

In early December 2025, WMHO's application for FEMA aid was denied because dam repairs were deemed ineligible for reimbursement. In response, the Town of Brookhaven, the Village of the Head of the Harbor, and Suffolk County developed a plan to rebuild Harbor Road first in the interest of public safety.

Under this proposal, a temporary

tunnel-like structure underneath the road would allow some water to begin flowing back into the pond. Fully restoring the pond back to its original condition, however, would require the WMHO to independently manage the construction of a new dam at a later date. WMHO's agreement with the new plan is essential, though its position has not yet been made public.

Despite the slow pace of action and continual setbacks, local advocates are not giving up. Most prominently, a Facebook group called "Rebuild Harbor Road, Restore Our Pond!" moderated by Zweig frequently posts updates and organizes opportunities for residents to speak with town officials, most recently on January 29 at Brookhaven Town Hall. Together, these civic actions demonstrate the community's continued commitment to repairing the dam and restoring the pond.

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## Interview with Amitava Das

by SAMUEL MITRANI,  
STAFF WRITER

Amitava Das was elected to the Three Village School District Board of Education in May 2025. He has lived in the district since 2007 and has been an Engineering Leader at Google Cloud since 2018. He also has substantial experience in education, having taught at Stony Brook University for seven years and at Dowling College for 16.

Below are some excerpts from *Kaleidoscope's* interview with Das: the full interview can be found at [bit.ly/kscope-das](http://bit.ly/kscope-das), or by scanning the QR code below.

***Kaleidoscope:* You were elected to the board on your second attempt. Which issues within the district have driven your persistence?**

Amitava Das: I'm actually not focused on one core issue versus another. That's not the reason I came onto the board. My goal is to be a member who brings my views as a parent, my views as a taxpayer, and my work experience managing financial projects altogether in sort of a governance structure. Because for most issues I've seen in the district, there are enough people usually who might have an opposing view to it. The role of the board is to behave as an entity and provide a sense of direction to the administration of the district. I felt like my experience could help that, so that's sort of why I kept on going. And I'm very passionate about education in general.

**How has your experience teaching at Stony Brook University and Dowling College impacted your philosophy of education and how does that affect your decision-making on the board?**

There's a couple of different things. One is that people come with different strengths, different weaknesses, different learning styles. Still, you want to achieve the same level of excellence. You don't want to lower the bar, but your way to go around it may have to be modified and be flexible. When you go into class, you get a new set of students, and you have to adapt.

That's how I work with my peers and administration. You have to learn how education works. You have to learn how this board works. That adaptation is, I think, key. More broadly in the school district, you want to be able to take and serve students of different abilities and help each one of them find

the absolute excellence that they can achieve individually. There's a standard you want to maintain. Over and above that, you want to be able to take every student and say, "What can you do? What makes you shine?" and then help them do that.

**Districts across the country are figuring out in real time how to tackle the issues raised by cell phones and artificial intelligence. Without proposing any policies, how do you think administrators and educators should approach these technologies?**

Obviously, this is an area where there's a huge amount of development going on. When it first came on, the big challenge was how to detect it. Then the next challenge became, "How do we incorporate it into the curriculum?" The next phase of it is going to be, "Should we?" That's a philosophical decision. So there's a good amount of conversations that have yet to happen.

I think the way we are going to be good at this is by learning more about it and just by keeping up with the field. I don't think it helps us if we stick our necks into the sand and say it's not there. I also don't think it helps us if we turn around and say, "Let's just use A.I. for everything."

There is a lot of impact that A.I. can have on education, good and bad. So I'm not saying that it should be done. I also fear that if we over-rely on it, if we get the answer and don't wrestle with the problem, somewhere along the way we're going to lose the ability to think for ourselves. But I don't have an answer for you in terms of what we should do or shouldn't do. I think the most we can hope for is that we all continuously learn about what's happening right now in the field and what's emerging.

**You have publicly stated that the secondary school start times were a priority for you and expressed disappointment that the budget constraints prevented a later start. Now that you are on the board, what specific trade-offs would you be willing to make in the budget to finally implement the change?**

I was deeply disappointed before I was a board member that we didn't implement this. I still am even as a board member that we haven't implemented it. But again, the moment you step into this role you start to realize the balancing issues.

In our fixed budget system, there are going to be costs that keep rising, but we'll have a couple of different options. One is to continue looking for



Photo courtesy of Amitava Das

efficiencies within transportation, and the district is doing a really good job at that. Then at some point, hopefully the pressures from increasing healthcare costs ease. Also, because of the change in the employment composition in terms of retirements and things like that, more room may open up in the budgets.

Finally, at the December board meeting, there was some mention made of possibly breaching the tax cap. I don't know how much of an appetite there is for that, but if there are a whole number of things that the community wants funded in the face of increasing costs, that may be an option. This is not to say I'm in support of any of it or not because, as an individual, my opinion doesn't matter. The board as a whole makes decisions. But those are the options.

**Regarding the debate over armed security guards, you have a background in both business management and education. What specific metrics or red lines are you looking for before you would feel comfortable voting on such a high-stakes safety proposal?**

We have to think about the impact on the students, the teaching, and the learning environment. We can observe what has been done at other schools. The next piece of it is going to be the budget. There is going to be a financial impact from this if we implement it. So then it goes back to the original story. What are you willing to give up in order to make this happen? I would need to see a lot of that information before I voted one way or another on it.

Student safety is a huge concern. This is where there's a lot of division, because there's just as many people who think that having armed guards will increase the safety stance of the school as

people who think that it'll reduce the safety of students. I don't think there is any conclusive evidence that points one way or the other. But the board and the school district are doing a great job of taking information like this and posting it on the website.

**Have your six months on the board changed your expectations for trustees and local governance, and if so, how and why?**

One hundred percent. The first of it is, as I said, that nothing is obvious. The board is there to represent the will of the entire community while using its experience and rational thinking. Certainly, within that group there may be people who are perfectly willing to just pay more because education is such a cornerstone of what we need to grow as a society. There may be other parents for whom every dollar matters, and it's not as easy for them to say, "Let's just pay more." So nothing is that black and white. Certainly being here has shown me that piece of it.

But also, things that the board does impact policies. The board's policy on cell phones, for example, was ahead of its time. Eventually it became a state policy. I was super happy with the way it came through because it gives people rational access when they need it, but you're not going through a huge implementation cost. There's a real impact you can have in the community with the work that's done both through policy and governance.



## Voters Reject Bond Proposals

by CAROLINE QIAN, ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

On January 20, residents voted down two bonds put forward by the Three Village Central School District to fund certain capital projects. Proposition One, which the district said contained urgent projects relating to safety and structural integrity, failed by a vote of 992 to 1,379. Proposition Two, which included reportedly less urgent but still important jobs and whose passage was contingent on Proposition One's success, was voted down by a margin of 828 to 1,498.

The district's initial decision to place this bond on the ballot was made at a Board of Education meeting on November 5 after a unanimous recommendation from the Bond Committee. Interim Deputy Superintendent Jeffrey Carlson explained that the panel "was made up of parents, community members and district staff that toured the [school] buildings."

However, there had been conflicting views on the bond, its necessity, and the transparency behind costs. Proponents, including many school administrators, emphasized how the construction efforts funded by the bond would have improved the Three Village community. Critics raised concerns about responsible spending and planning.

A bond is a sum of money loaned to a municipality by private investors. Since the school maintenance projects listed on this bond could not have generated revenue, local governments would have to pay off the loan and its interest through property taxes. Even so, residents would not have been fully responsible for the expense, with New York State reimbursing the district for 66% of the costs over a 15-year period. When asked about how this process, which is known as Building Aid, influenced the decision to pursue the referendum, Carlson stated that "if the community [had] approve[d] our bond on January 20, the 66% aid ratio [would have been] locked in for the life of the bond."

Notably, the Three Village School District is still currently paying off two previous bonds from 2007 and 2014. One "repayment period" will end in 2030, and the other repayment period will end in 2032. Before the vote, Carlson explained, "This new bond will be phased in over three or four years, depending on how long it takes to complete all of the

projects. There will be some overlap, but the 2007 bond will end soon after this new one is phased in." Information provided on the district's website indicated that when the repayment periods are over, total tax collection will be reduced by around \$4.6 million and \$1.5 million, respectively.

However, prominent critics of the bond effort pointed out concerns about the district's financial responsibility. David McKinnon—a local resident for over thirty years, a former Three Village Board of Education trustee, and a professor at Stony Brook University—has spoken extensively on district spending. On his website [BadBond.org](http://BadBond.org), McKinnon wrote that "the bond proposal represents yet another large financial commitment for the community" amidst multiple rounds of layoffs and cuts to programs. Many residents also wondered how existing financial commitments would be balanced with new large-scale projects. In response, Carlson had stated that "capital projects and bond payments are exclusions from the tax cap. This means that we do not need to find room in the budget for these payments, so educational programs would not be adversely impacted by the bond."

Both supporters and critics of the bond recognized that it would have raised taxes. Proposition One would have cost the average taxpayer an extra \$195 annually, and both propositions together would have cost \$250. Nevertheless, the district stressed that it was the less expensive option, with Superintendent Kevin Scanlon saying, "It would have been cheaper if the bond passed than it would be to include this in the budget." In fact, administrators' estimates have suggested that \$10 to \$12 million will need to be added annually to the budget, leading to a projected increase in taxes by between \$275 and \$400. Notably, this figure factors in projects listed in both propositions, despite the district stating that only the first contained urgent issues.

Whether they are being funded by the bond or by the budget, most of the proposed projects will need to be completed. The district has defended these costs as a necessity, stating that the majority of this construction is "related to building integrity, including bathroom renovations, roof replacements, cupola replacements, and adding air conditioning to meet state heat regulations." Carlson explained how project importance was evaluated, saying, "Building integrity, heating, roofing, plumbing, electrical systems, safety, and the current condition of the system being replaced or refurbished are



all considered when determining which are the most urgent."

One type of project that frequently appeared in Proposition One was air conditioning maintenance, especially for areas such as cafeterias or gyms. The district justified this expense by pointing to a New York State law that regulates temperatures in schools. Other projects listed as urgent included door, boiler, and cupola replacements or repairs. Cupolas are small, decorative structures on the tops of roofs that can also greatly improve ventilation. Fixing these structures may be difficult, with the district stating that they "require highly specialized restoration due to their age, craftsmanship, and unique materials." Repairing them will lower the risk of water intrusion, protect the roof's integrity, and preserve a part of the school's architectural history. However, given that the renovation is a complex process that will be at least partially paid for by taxpayers, many have called for a deeper explanation on the importance of the cupolas as opposed to a more accessible, modern, and lower-maintenance roof replacement. The district has already made clear that if the issue is not addressed in a timely manner, the cupolas may require even more costly repairs in the future. Many other projects proposed for all schools centered on extensive security upgrades such as increasing the number and quality of cameras.

For Ward Melville High School specifically, many upgrades or restorations of athletic facilities were listed under Proposition One. These included track and field renovations, tennis and basketball court repairs, scoreboard replacement, and stadium locker room renovations. Kevin Finnerty, the Executive Director of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Athletics, expressed that these proposed athletic construction projects were for the benefit of not only Ward Melville athletes but

also for the entire Three Village community. He used the football field renovations as an example, stating that beyond clearly improving the football team's experience, it would have also helped the "marching band, cheer[leading], and the track and field team, along with other teams such as field hockey and soccer. That affects the community as a whole."

The district has not yet released a plan on how to proceed after the failure of the two propositions, and the Board of Education is still considering several options. During a board meeting on January 21, Scanlon cautioned against simply "put[ting] up the bond vote again without changing any numbers." Instead, he suggested that a reduced version could be proposed to taxpayers in either May or October with the hope of avoiding the inclusion of capital projects in the annual budget. It is also possible that the administration will ask for feedback from the community as it seeks to determine which provisions were most unpopular.

Despite not relating to the bond itself, the broader issue of low turnout in district elections gained attention over the last several weeks. In fact, McKinnon's opposition to the propositions was partially based on the date of the referendum. He alleged that the district was seeking to depress turnout by scheduling the vote on a workday in the middle of winter, thereby allowing them to approve unpopular proposals without community support. However, little evidence supports this claim, as many communications were sent to residents that included information about when and where to vote. Furthermore, Scanlon highlighted the low turnout rate of 6.2% at the January board meeting, saying, "It is tremendously disappointing. There are communist countries that get more people to vote than we did in this district. ... We have to work on reaching out to a larger segment of the community."

## Statewide Phone Ban Takes Effect

by LEWIS WU and PRANAV MUKHI, STAFF WRITERS

In May 2025, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul signed an amendment that broadly restricted personal technologies throughout the state's schools. According to Hochul's official website, the new policy states that there will be "no unsanctioned use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices on school grounds in K-12 schools for the entire school day." However, the state did not mandate any specific implementation, leaving school districts to develop their own systems of enforcement. In July, The Three Village Central School District adopted Policy 5695, following the state's general guidelines without resorting to expensive options such as magnetic locking pouches.

The introduction of these strict new rules has received mixed reactions from students. Several in Ward Melville have reported that the ban has helped them stay more focused during class, primarily by reducing distractions caused by notifications and social media platforms. Others have argued that phones serve as important tools

for communication, organization, and stress management throughout the day. Israel Gedeon, a junior, expressed concerns about the limited ability for students to communicate with parents, saying, "You have to be able to text your parents. Many people have varsity sports and tight schedules." However, he also admitted that his grades have gone up significantly since last year due to the phone ban. He suggested there needs to be a "balance" where "you can still use a phone and learn a lot."

Staff throughout the district have shared generally positive reactions to the phone ban. Many teachers at Ward Melville have noted that students appear more engaged and focused in learning when the temptation to check their phone is removed. Math teacher Donald Ambrose said that classrooms seem "more focused than in years past, especially for those who are abiding by the policy." Nevertheless, he acknowledged the difficulties for some in adjusting to the phone ban. "It's hard to abruptly transition from using it to absolutely not using it," he said. Although he does sometimes need to remind students of the policy, he feels that they have generally refrained from using their phones.

TinaMarie Friscia, a French teacher, said she hasn't seen many violations in her classroom, and

that there has been an improvement in attention and social atmosphere. When asked about the difficulty of enforcing the phone ban, Friscia said that "students have been very cooperative." However, she thinks that it needs to be "stricter in the hallways," noting that individuals becoming more relaxed about the policy has a negative effect that extends into the classroom.

Ward Melville Principal John Holownia reinforced the idea that phones had been a major concern in classrooms, stating that "removing that distraction allows students to better focus on their education." Not only did he stress that "the use in classrooms is way down," but he also observed an increase in student interaction throughout the building, adding that "teachers have reported that conversations are more common in the classroom and beyond." He also shared feedback he has received from students, with most reporting that they "felt that it's been positive for them." However, like Friscia, Holownia acknowledged that the policy isn't perfect, saying that "we need to tighten things up in the hallways and the cafeteria."

That concern is shared by many staff and administrators. Superintendent Kevin Scanlon has said that lax enforcement outside the classroom remains problematic. He went further during the January

21 Board of Education meeting, saying that the ban "is a policy with no teeth" given the state's prohibition on student suspensions for cell phone usage. At the same meeting, Board Trustee Stanley Bak suggested that the issue could be more pervasive, noting that administrators' absence from classrooms makes it difficult to assess the policy's effectiveness.

Bak's worries may not be easy to dismiss. According to one senior who asked to remain anonymous, "You figure out pretty quickly which teachers don't care, and then you can use your phone in those classrooms. I've never gotten in trouble, and neither have my friends." Echoing this sentiment, one staff member said, "I hear people saying it's working. I want to know where, because it's not working here."

Despite these challenges, the phone ban has brought noticeable changes to Ward Melville and the entire district. From increased classroom engagement to more face-to-face conversations, the policy has reshaped every part of the school day. As the school year continues, students and staff will continue to observe the phone ban's effect on learning, focus, and daily interactions, helping to determine the policy's overall effectiveness.

## Bloomberg Terminals to Arrive at Ward Melville

by ALEXANDRA POTEKHIN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Next fall, some students at Ward Melville will find themselves navigating the same financial tools as Wall Street brokers.

Bloomberg Terminals are inclusive computer systems that offer a distinct black interface, specialized monitor array, and a unique keyboard. Most important, however, is their comprehensive software designed for financial analysis and trade execution. The Ward Melville Business Department is launching a state-of-the-art Bloomberg Terminal lab in the library, equipped with identical software and hardware to equipment at hedge funds worldwide. The addition promises to transform business education at Ward Melville, offering students unprecedented access to real-world finance resources and enhancing their career readiness even before high school graduation.

"The motivation originated

from learning of another district that was utilizing it," explained Ward Melville business teacher Ilene Littman who also serves as the advisor to the DECA and Industry Advisory Board clubs. The project proposal gained momentum through an unexpected connection: the school's technology director is married to a JPMorgan Chase employee who advocated for Three Village to company leadership. Ultimately, the company donated all the furniture and equipment for the lab. "They provided us with legitimate corporate office equipment," acknowledged Littman.

The installation will offer students an immersive environment that replicates sitting in a real analyst's chair. "The terminals are the exact terminals that professionals use in the industry. They're not an educational version or watered down," Littman stressed. This authenticity sets the lab apart from typical classroom simulations, providing genuine exposure to financial analysis tools.

Construction of the Bloomberg lab will begin immediately once students leave for summer break, with plans to be fully operational by the start of the school year. It will occupy what is currently the fiction section of the library and will be enclosed in

glass to create a distinct learning environment. Dr. April Hatcher, Ward Melville's librarian, confirmed that a new location for the affected books has not yet been determined.

The space will house twelve Bloomberg terminals arranged in a college-style computer lab format, with two students sharing each station. As such, capacity will be limited by the number of available seats, and access will primarily be reserved for business classes, including Career and Financial Management, Wall Street Finance, and the newly-offered AP Business Finance course.

While no standalone training will be offered, the terminals will be integrated as an exciting addition into existing syllabi. The Wall Street Finance course is being updated specifically to incorporate hands-on Bloomberg work, and students taking the class will be eligible to earn the Bloomberg certification, a valuable credential recognized throughout the finance industry. "That's a really good thing to have," Littman emphasized, anticipating the program's positive contribution to students' resumes.

For those planning to pursue finance-related majors, the lab will offer significant advantages.

"Some colleges have Bloomberg Terminals. If they do, our students will already know how to use the technology," Littman pointed out. From a teaching perspective, educational quality will also be significantly upgraded. "The professional feel and authenticity will greatly enhance the learning experience," she said, adding that while there will be a learning curve with the technology, it will be "in a fun way, not in a bad way."

This innovation is part of the district's broader educational trend towards concrete technical training, a shift especially notable in the business department. The school is also developing a proposal for an Accounting and Finance Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway, offering an opportunity for students to obtain additional credentials on their diplomas. Those who complete this pathway will receive recognition for advanced education completed during high school, further boosting competitiveness in college admissions and future job markets.

With hands-on access to Wall Street-caliber tools, students will graduate with practical skills and certifications that distinguish them in an increasingly competitive landscape, ready to excel in higher education and beyond.

## Ward Melville Gains New Assistant Principal

by SARAH CHERLIN,  
COPY EDITOR and  
ALEXANDRA COTLET,  
CHIEF FINANCIAL  
OFFICER

This school year has marked the beginning of several shifts within Ward Melville. From a new state-wide cell phone ban to the introduction of an additional grade level in the building, both teachers and students have had their fair share of changes to adapt to. But perhaps no one has faced a greater transition than Dr. Alison Herrschaft, Ward Melville's new assistant principal as of July. With seven years of experience working in Three Village, both as a social worker and as a drug and alcohol counselor, she has found several continuities between her positions, along with some key differences.

A typical day for Herrschaft varies widely depending on what's going on in the building, but she has come to greatly appreciate the job's aspect of unpredictability. "Sometimes I come in and I think I know exactly what my day is going to look like, and then it turns out it looks nothing like I thought it would. That's part of what makes it really fun. No two days look alike." While she has been navigating a wider range of responsibilities in her new role, most of them revolve around supporting all of the school's operations. On a daily basis, she works to support everyone in the district. She explained, "Sometimes it's parent meetings, or sometimes it's meetings with staff members. Sometimes it's being available for students or events that are going on throughout the building."

Herrschaft also emphasized the importance of planning ahead as one of her major tasks. "Believe it or not, we are already getting ready to build the schedule for the next school year. A lot of the work I'm doing right now has to do with the master schedule for our students next year," she explained. Along with the other assistant principals, Vincent Cereola and Stacey Zeidman, she is constantly preparing for the future. From the start of a new school year, she's already tasked with determining what's to come in the following one.

While being an assistant principal carries an increased level of responsibility and its own unique challenges, Herrschaft has found that one important aspect of

her work has remained constant as she has shifted positions: the value of maintaining supportive relationships with the staff members she works alongside every day. She believes some of the greatest benefits of having years' worth of experience in the district are her already-existing connections. "If I don't have the answer to something, I at least know who to ask," she added, explaining how helpful others have been during the transition. From Principal John Holownia to her fellow assistant principals, from the guidance staff to experienced teachers, Herrschaft has built a wide support system to turn to as she continues to learn all the intricacies involved in her new job.

She has also remained able to connect with students, explaining that "in certain ways, I still have the opportunity to support them, just the way I did when I was a social worker and when I was a drug and alcohol counselor. It just looks a little bit different." In maintaining her primary focus on doing what is best for students and the building as a whole, she has also brought her skill set from her previous career. With a doctorate from Stony Brook University in social welfare and two social work licenses, Herrschaft has experienced an enormous variety of theoretical and practical situations. As a result, her current leadership style is heavily centered on being able to approach all situations from a place of compassion and understanding. She emphasized the importance of "trying to understand 'the why' of something that's happening." Instead of simply taking the issues she is confronted with at face value, she searches for a deeper root cause and works to address that problem instead.

Despite building numerous connections which have helped her adjust to all the new demands of being an assistant principal, she noted that one of the most challenging aspects of this transition has been admitting what she doesn't know. "Anyone who cares about what they do wants to know what to do all the time, and part of being humble and being human is admitting that you don't always know," she explained. Returning to the importance of being surrounded by the supportive staff at Ward Melville, she said, "I think one thing that I'm really aware of as a new person in this position is that while I may not know the answers, I certainly know who to go to for help."

For Herrschaft, one of the most fulfilling parts of becoming an assistant principal has been observing all the positive things constantly going on in Ward Melville.



Photo courtesy of Alison Herrschaft

Reflecting on her past experiences compared to her current position, she drew attention to the contrast between them, "I think as a social worker, sometimes you're dealing with people's toughest moments. I loved that job, but it's been such an awesome, refreshing reminder for me that most of what goes on here is so positive and so healthy." She also highlighted being able to see students fully taking advantage of opportunities as another rewarding feature of her job. Watching them flourish and thrive in Ward Melville has undoubtedly been one of the most positive outcomes of her promotion.

As for her immediate goals as a new assistant principal, Herrschaft is focusing on becoming the best at her job she possibly can be. "I can't decide what I want to do differently until I fully understand what I'm doing," she explained. However, in terms of the bigger picture and the long-term impact she wants to have on Ward Melville, she made clear that "anything that is going to make being here better for everyone is always part of the goal. In particular, I want to allow each student to find

something that is meaningful for them." Once again, helping others is at the forefront of her mind when navigating her current duties.

Over the years, one of the most prominent lessons she's learned from working with students, whether in Ward Melville as an assistant principal or as a social worker in schools across the district, is that each individual is completely unique. Even so, there is still "something for everyone" in Three Village. In advising students, she often encourages them to embrace their personal interests even if they're accompanied by uncertainty, emphasizing that although it often feels as if there is much pressure to have everything figured out by the time they graduate, it's completely normal not to. She stressed the value of learning about yourself as you go and continuing to follow your curiosity throughout one's entire life: "I joke that I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up, and that's okay. There's the idea that we're all growing and that this is a really critical four years of your life, but it's also just the beginning of a lot of things for students here."



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## Athletic Traditions at Ward Melville

by ARIEL BASSIS,  
SPORTS EDITOR

Wins are eventually forgotten, records will be broken, and seasons come to an end. But for many student-athletes, what defines their experience is not a final score, stat line, or record. Instead, it's the shared customs that shaped how these teams really bonded throughout their time together. From gridiron to diamond, from pitch to hardwood, athletic traditions play an integral part in facilitating teamwork, camaraderie, and all-around connectedness. Some are rooted in discipline and presentation, others around superstition and humor, but they all serve a similar purpose in building unity and identity. Passed down from seniors to underclassmen every year, these traditions turn groups of athletes into unified teams and off-court moments into lasting memories.

For Ward Melville's baseball players, the conclusion of the regular season means Program Day, an event designed to acknowledge the baseball program as a whole rather than individual accomplishments. The final weekend brings together members of the varsity and junior varsity teams for a school-wide tournament. According to junior Grady Ghiz, "The seniors draft players from the junior varsity and varsity teams and play a two-day, four-team tournament on the Saturday and Sunday after the season. The prize money can then be distributed amongst the winning team, or it's used for things like the team dinner." For many players, Program Day becomes one of the most memorable moments in their Ward Melville baseball lives, serving as a final reminder that the program is

built around more than just wins or losses. The communal yet competitive event reinforces the idea that everyone—regardless of position or grade—contributes to the team's success and identity.

The postseason also hosts many traditions for the field hockey team. "We trash our coach's house before our first round of playoffs," described senior Alexandra Cotlet. "We sleepover at someone's house and we go out in the seniors' cars looking for 'trash,' which is just a bunch of random things we find on the side of people's houses. Once we've gathered enough, we all run up to her front yard, scatter the 'trash' everywhere, wait for her to wake up and then the next morning we clean it all up." The tradition, which fundamentally revolves around humor and superstition, also serves the purpose of reinforcing responsibility, strengthening player-coach relationships and releasing nerves before the first playoff game. Cotlet shared, "Someone started this as a joke about eighteen years ago, and we do it every year for good luck before we play our first playoff game."

Other teams, however, take a more grounded approach. For the girls lacrosse team, their traditions are centered around team synergy, support and respect. Junior Aliya Leonard explained, "We put tape with words on the bottom of our sticks with bracelets. Before our first playoff game, we write something about each player and our coach prints them out for us to read right before we play." These uplifting messages from and about teammates motivate players to enter games with a clearer understanding of their shared bond.

The men's basketball team fosters unity with traditions driven by presentation. Players wear business casual attire the day before games, donning button shirts, ties and quarter-zips — the latter being added after the apparel's



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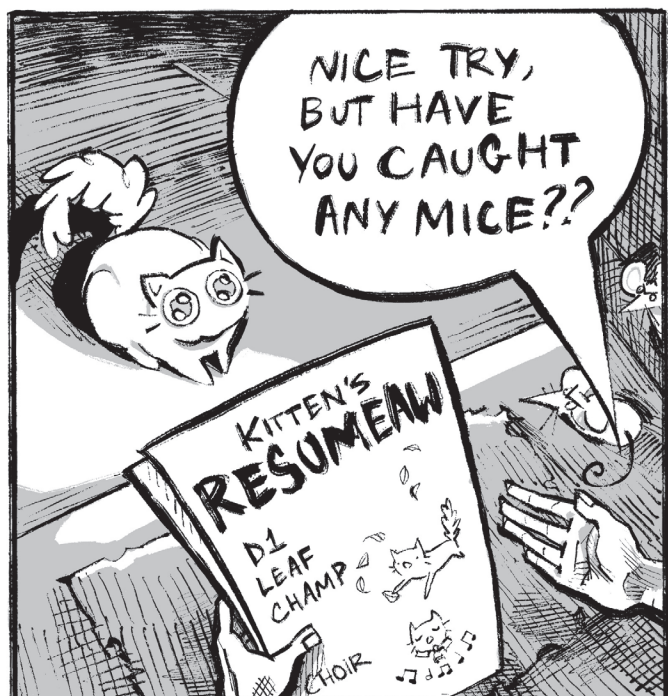
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recent virality. The choice emphasizes maturity, professionalism and respect for the game. "We wear [quarter-zips] because we want to bring class back to the game," said junior Avery Ananou. "It makes us stand out among our peers and shows that we mean business." For much of the team, dressing the part establishes identity within the program and conveys the importance of discipline and preparation.

Many players will eventually forget exact scores or records, but they'll create lasting memories that are vital to the success of the team—Program Day, trashing coaches' houses, taping bracelets, wearing quarter-zips and more. And despite having their own

unique rituals, the different sports teams at Ward Melville prioritize similar principles: mutual support, respect, discipline, and tradition. With seniors leaving meaningful legacies by passing down rituals and underclassmen becoming culturally integrated into the team's distinctive identity, it is these often unseen moments that truly define sports at Ward Melville, even as rosters change and seasons end.



by Maria Gavrilov

"EXPURRIENCE"

by ISABEL DE BEI,  
STAFF WRITER

## Elliot Burgueno

**Where are you committed to and for which sport?**

I am committed to Stony Brook University for soccer.

**Why did you choose Stony Brook?**

It's the perfect combination of strong academics and athletics. Stony Brook is very strong in the health sciences, which correlates with my goal of becoming a physician. To get to play soccer alongside that fact is incredible.

**How has playing soccer at Ward Melville helped prepare you for competing at the college level?**

I've been able to develop my game in different ways than I could have at the club level. I experienced what it is like to represent your school, and see what that means to both myself and my community.

## Lily Higgins

**Where are you committed to and for which sport?**

I am committed to La Salle University for Division I Acrobatics & Tumbling.

**What are you planning on studying in college?**

Business, graphic design, and publication design were my favorite and most intriguing classes. I plan to study marketing since it incorporates aspects of all of these topics.

**Why did you choose La Salle?**

I wanted a good acrobatics and tumbling program where I could progress and make lifelong friendships. More importantly, I wanted to find somewhere where I knew I could learn and grow as a person.

## Kiera Pirozzi

**Where are you committed to and for which sport?**

I'm committed to Marist University for lacrosse.

**What are you planning on studying in college and why?**

I don't know exactly, but I want to do something in business. I find it interesting and I've taken many business classes at Ward Melville.

**Why did you choose Marist?**

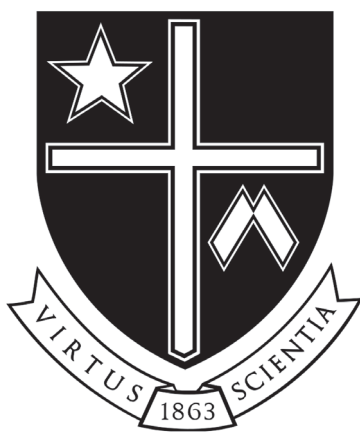
It's a school with great academics, the lacrosse team is like a family, and the school is perfect for me. The size and distance is exactly what I wanted from a college.

**What has been your favorite sports-related memory from high school?**



**What advice would you give to younger athletes who hope to play soccer in college one day?**

I would tell them to continue to dedicate themselves not only to their own goals but also to their teammates and coaches. Those are the people that will push you along the way and ultimately allow you to achieve amazing things. The hard work will accumulate, and while it is important to have an end goal in mind, don't take the journey for granted.



**Why do you enjoy gymnastics?**

I've grown to love it not only because of the sport itself, but also the community, relationships, and experiences that I have gained from it. That's why I am so excited to be part of the Acrobatics and Tumbling program. It incorporates only certain aspects of gymnastics, but I know that the experiences and memories will be special.



**school?**

There was a game against Northport that was just different. We knew going into it that Northport was a really tough team. The energy was insane, and it was the best I've ever played. It was so exciting and was the most fun I've had on the field. The game reminded me that I wouldn't be who I am today without lacrosse.

## Anthony Anatol

**Where are you committed to and for which sport?**

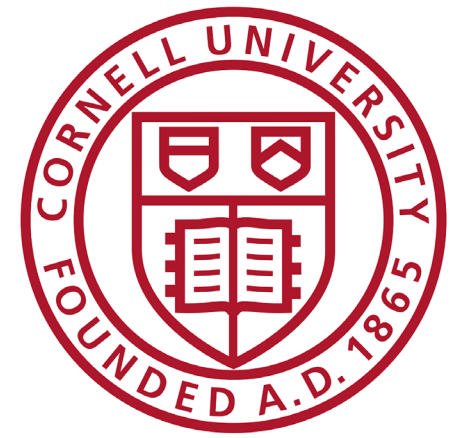
I am committed to Cornell University for track and field and for cross country.

**What does it mean to you to be committed to an Ivy League school like Cornell?**

It's definitely exciting to be able to pursue a high level of academics and athletics. That being said, it'll be tough to keep up with both at times. Still, I can't wait for the challenge and the opportunity to attend such a prestigious university.

**How did cross country and track become your sports?**

I played soccer up until sophomore year. I joined spring track my freshman year to get in shape for soccer, but I ended up loving the coaches and the team. After a few tough decisions, I eventually decid-



ed to make the switch and go all in on track and cross country.

**How do you balance academics and a demanding training schedule?**

It's been tough, but by organizing my time better, making sacrifices, and prioritizing when necessary, I am able to stay disciplined and perform well in both. With those strategies, I'll be able to adapt to the greater athletic and academic demands of a Division I school and of Cornell.

## Mia Modica

**Where are you committed to and for which sport?**

I am committed to Hofstra University for lacrosse.

**What are you planning on studying in college and why?**

I want to study finance because Hofstra has a great business school with a lot of opportunities. I am also very interested in pursuing a math-related career.

**Why did you choose Hofstra?**

Some of the main reasons I decided to commit to Hofstra was the team culture and the amazing group of girls on the team I met on my visit. The atmosphere was great, and I'm super excited to compete at the Division I level.



**What has been your favorite sports-related memory from high school?**

In my junior year, my lacrosse team won the semifinal game against Commack. Nobody expected us to win. It felt so good to prove everyone wrong, and it's always an amazing feeling to get the opportunity to compete for a County Championship.

## Jack Rella

**Where are you committed to and for which sport?**

I'm committed to Salve Regina University to play lacrosse.

**What are you planning on studying in college and why?**

I'm not 100% sure, but I'm leaning towards majoring in business. There are a good amount of job opportunities in that field in the Boston and New York areas.

**Why did you choose Salve Regina?**

The location and campus were definitely important factors. Also, I was drawn to the coach, and I will be rooming with two of my good friends.



**What has been your favorite sports-related memory from high school, and why do you love the sport?**

One of my favorite sports memories is rushing the field after we scored a game-winning goal in the playoffs. I love lacrosse because I have played it ever since I was a kid and I have made so many friends along the way.

## The Cast Interview: “The Little Mermaid”

by **HOLLAND PERALTA**  
and **NORA LOZEAU**,  
STAFF WRITERS

Long before the curtain rose or the pit began to tune, Ward Melville’s production of “The Little Mermaid” was already telling two distinct stories. One unfolded on stage, following the journey of a mermaid, Ariel, as she forges her own path in the unfamiliar human world. Backstage, however, a different narrative emerged: one of collaboration among the crew, careful orchestration of the pit, and deep interpersonal friendships developing between the cast—all while overcoming new and unexpected obstacles.

Perhaps the biggest change for the theatre company, as for many other clubs, was the introduction of a new grade into the high school. With ninth graders no longer leading two shows at Gelinas and Murphy, the number of interested students drastically increased. This affected all sectors of the production, from the cast to the crew to the pit. Naturally, the sheer magnitude of participation had an impact on rehearsal management and work allotment.

This year also marked the second Ward Melville musical directed by Hannah Pawluk, following last year’s successful production of Frank Loesser’s “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying.” Written nearly 45 years later by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman, “The Little Mermaid” represented a departure from the older shows that recently dominated the school’s stage. Some cast members suggested that the selection had to do with its broad popularity, noting the company’s less-than-ideal financial situation. However, Pawluk offered a simpler reason:

**Ms. Pawluk:** I chose “The Little Mermaid” because it’s a very fun, magical story that I believe our whole community can connect with.

While Pawluk directed the cast in bringing the show to life on stage, a large part of the magic happened away from the spotlight. TinaMarie Friscia, who manages the crew while not teaching French or leading the Gelinas Theatre Company, expressed similar sentiments about the benefits of this specific musical:

**Ms. Friscia:** I think there were a

lot of kids that came and saw the show, and they were just in awe of all the high schoolers.

Backstage, great precision went into guaranteeing a smooth show and a less stressful performance for the cast and pit. Even before the lights came on, the crew had to prepare and move everything to its proper place. This is where Friscia came in, guiding her team of student stage managers, leaders, and a prop master to marshal the crew and ensure every cue was hit consistently and accurately:

**Ms. Friscia:** What I oversaw and organized is what came on when, what came off when, who did what, and where did [a prop] go.

Supporting the stage action was the pit orchestra directed by James Hein, Ward Melville’s orchestra teacher. A frequent theme that the



Photo courtesy of Pondview Media

cast and crew expressed was their excitement and eagerness to see the production come together. While this feeling was also relevant for Hein and the entire pit, it expressed itself differently. Up until tech week and the actual performances, the pit was not able to see the way their music frames the show and brings it to life:

**Mr. Hein:** We knew what we were trying to convey, but we didn’t really get to see it all happen until pretty late. When the night of the show finally came and we were actually in the pit performing and collaborating with the actors on stage, it’s just a lot of fun.

Despite the importance of the crew and pit, it is the cast that is by far the most visible. This is especially true of the lead performers: Lily Meschi (Ariel), Shannon Orr (Flounder), Tommy Poor (Prince Eric), Ariella Mossey (Sebastian),

Kaylin Zeidler (Ursula), and Julien Maurer (King Triton).

Several of them expressed happiness with the community-focused nature of this production and its efforts to reach a wider audience. Most exciting were the local children eager to see their favorite princess on stage and at special events:

**Lily Meschi:** My favorite part was meeting all the kids. We had a character brunch on our matinee show, and we got to have brunch with them and meet them and take photos and everything!

Despite the challenges of a larger cast, the integration of different age groups had an extremely positive impact. Whereas one might assume that the large cast size negatively impacted the quality of rehearsals, especially by overwhelming older and more experienced students, the

cast was able to develop strategies to balance their academics and their involvement in the musical:

**Kaylin Zeidler:** With this particular character, I didn’t have to be in a lot of the scenes and big dance numbers that most people are in. So, I liked to do most of my homework during downtime, such as at rehearsal when I’m not being used.

**Julien Maurer:** It was a question of taking the available time to be fully present for homework and then be fully present at rehearsal, and just repeat.

Dedicating your time to the production while you are already balancing your academics and personal commitments may seem daunting, but it is a challenge that can be extremely rewarding. The musical serves as an opportunity to build community, step out of your comfort zone, and try something new. In fact, the cast all highlighted the dynamic friendships that they built and their various experiences with change. For those who are unsure if they want to participate next year, the cast offered some advice:

**Tommy Poor:** Definitely join the musical. For me, I think that it can really show you a sense of what you can really do and what that sense of accomplishment is like. Just try something new, get out of your comfort zone, and see where it takes you.

**Shannon Orr:** I think it gives an opportunity to create bonds that are going to last forever. The end result is so worth what you have to go through to get there because of the sense of accomplishment you feel after a show. And you’ll make terrific friends: you just feel so comforted and safe around these people.

Ultimately, there is no greater satisfaction than seeing your hard work pay off on stage. As the production reached its final phases, the hard work of the cast, crew, and pit was assembled at last, blending into one seamless, unforgettable experience.

**Ms. Pawluk:** My favorite part was just watching it all come together. After finishing blocking, we were focused on putting the pieces of the puzzle together. When we had tech week and had the costumes, makeup, and pit, we truly saw the magic come together.

cast expressed the opposite sentiment:

**Tommy Poor:** I feel like with the addition of the ninth graders, they were so excited to be somewhere new. They were always just so excited throughout the day, and that attitude’s wonderfully contagious.

**Ariella Mossey:** It’s a lot of people because there were so many ninth graders who were so excited to be there, which is awesome. But they did a really great job of spacing us out so it doesn’t look too crowded.

However, the time commitment for such a large show inevitably came with some difficulties. Every year, seniors have to contend with college application deadlines. More unusually, the shift from prior years’ December performance dates to February forced all of the students involved to reckon with upcoming midterms as they rehearsed. Nevertheless, this year’s

## Review: “The Little Mermaid”

by LILY HUANG, COPY EDITOR and VIVIAN BLATT, STAFF WRITER

On a frigid February evening, *Kaleidoscope* attended the first technical rehearsal of Ward Melville’s production of “The Little Mermaid”—a timeless tale of unbound love, unshakeable friendship, and inexhaustible aspiration. Arriving early in an auditorium alive long past the final bell, we had the privilege of witnessing an onstage act that few outside the theatrical world have seen firsthand: actors cramming lines in half-costume and crew members rushing props to their places, scuttling behind the curtains just as darkness and quiet blanketed the once-bustling hall.

Unlike the electrically-energetic buzz familiar to audiences on performance nights, whispered determination hung in the air as Hannah Pawluk and Lilly Maher—lead director and student-director, respectively—sembled cast, crew, and pit for the first time to piece together the production of this year’s school musical. This short-lived silence was broken as a velvety drumroll reverberated

through the room, cueing spotlights to illuminate our starry-eyed protagonist Ariel (Lily Meschi) perched atop a sea-stranded rock on center stage.

She was joined by a talented leading cast that brought the vibrant characters of “The Little Mermaid” to life: the short-tempered and overprotective King Triton (Julien Maurer); the unyieldingly loyal Flounder (Shannon Orr); the sassy and high-strung Sebastian (Ariella Mossey); the endearingly eccentric Scuttle (Gianna Prinzevalli); the villainous and vengeful Ursula (Kaylin Zeidler); and the charming Eric (Tommy Poor), prince of Ariel’s dreams.

In a story shaped by both the allure of our heroine’s vocals and the stark contrast between oppressive ocean and liberating land, no aspect of this musical performance, cast nor crew, fell short.

The cast of accomplished student actors was able to satisfyingly capture both the individuality of each unique character and the bonds they share amongst each other. Perhaps most impressive was the dynamic between Ariel and her friends Flounder, Sebastian and Scuttle. Orr skillfully encapsulated the wholesome loyalty of the cartoon clownfish, establishing unconditional

love as a prevailing theme of the show. Mossey masterfully explored Sebastian’s complex character and allegiances through her comedic timing and spot-on delivery of the crustacean’s lines. Bringing the trio together, Prinzevalli emulated Scuttle’s scatterbrained, blissful unawareness through cartoonish animation even as she led a high-spirited tap dance in the highlight “Positovity.”

As for the star actors, Meschi passionately belted Ariel’s desire to traverse the surface in the iconic solo “Part of Your World,” although—or perhaps, because—she is expressly forbidden from doing so by her father. Zeidler cemented the sea witch Ursula as a fan-favorite through a dryly humorous characterization and an unforgettable hairdo. And Poor impressively executed choreography and winning appeal, establishing his chemistry with Meschi as a memorable cornerstone of the show. Their growing love shined brightest in the duo numbers “One Step Closer” and “Kiss the Girl,” where the young prince and princess get to know each other beyond spoken words.

The cast’s incredible performance was only one factor in the equation of theatrical success. Though not the star of

the show, the pit is undeniably a key component of any musical, and “The Little Mermaid” was no exception. Led by James Hein, the orchestra did justice to iconic numbers and soared through instrumental sections. And, though built to be seen and not heard, the props and sets further contributed to the wow-factor. Despite their landlocked constraints, the Theatre Department found ways to bring the sea to the stage. Towering ships, seashell thrones and stone lagoons vividly conjured a salty ocean breeze and the opulence of Triton’s underwater kingdom. To accommodate the sheer size and number of props in the show, the stage crew and directors constantly communicated to strategize positioning and prop assignments.

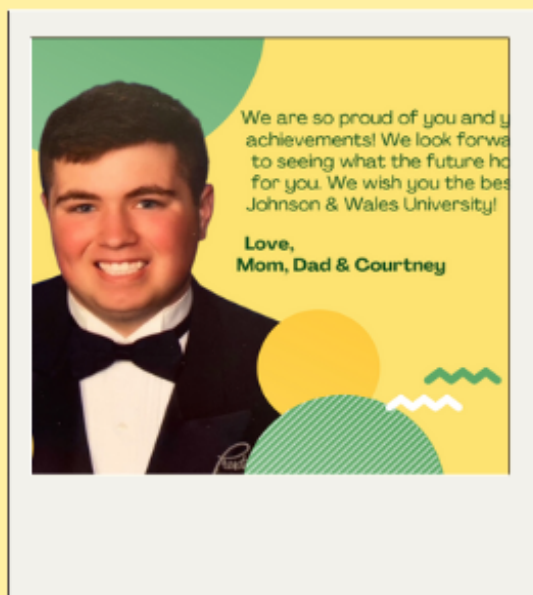
Spectating these behind-the-scenes efforts by peers to craft an immersive production of friendship, love, heartbreak, and magic made it easy to appreciate the consistently phenomenal performances gifted by the Theatre Department year after year. Working together as a well-oiled machine, the cast and crew of Ward Melville’s “The Little Mermaid” created an above-and-underwater world that audiences were eager to leap or dive into however they see fit.

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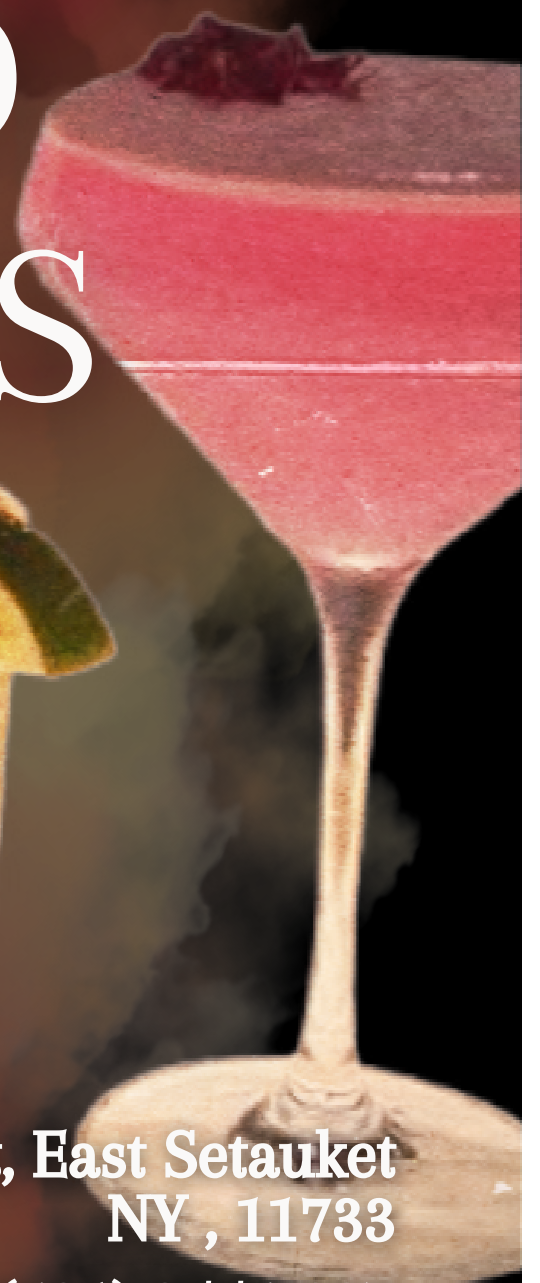
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## Student Job Market Tightens

by ALLIE HARRISON,  
OP-ED EDITOR

Getting a job is something many teens look forward to as a rite of passage into adulthood, and for good reason: earning and managing your own money gives you a sweet taste of the freedom adults possess. However, finding a part-time job—especially without previous experience—has become significantly more challenging over the past two years. Not only is automation replacing workers, but low hiring rates and increasing layoffs make the situation for hopeful applicants even worse. Despite all of this, teens are determined to find work.

One case exemplifying the competitiveness of the current job market is that of Coryn Rizzo, a junior at Ward Melville High School. Throughout November and December, she applied to roughly twenty different jobs and received no responses. She noted that being only sixteen years old makes it especially difficult to find work, as many institutions will not hire minors. Rizzo stated, “It’s really hard, because a lot of people in my grade specifically are looking for jobs, and we’re still not at that age [of eighteen].”

On the other hand, Ward Melville junior Paulina Tsybysheva had a stroke of luck over the summer. After several years in a junior

lifeguarding camp, she was able to secure a job as a pool lifeguard. She said, “The people running [the camp] are also in charge of hiring lifeguards for Suffolk County, so I got all of my certifications and recommendations through them.”

Lifeguarding is often seen as an ideal summer job for high school students, with teenagers making up the vast majority of applicants. According to Tsybysheva, even college-aged lifeguards don’t cause much competition for working at pools, as they are more drawn to beaches. Additionally, becoming a lifeguard requires no prior work experience besides training. Since other establishments are more inclined to hire someone who has been employed in the past, an opportunity for a first job like this can also help new workers find positions in the future.

Although Tsybysheva may have had luck with employment, many teens this summer did not. In July, the youth unemployment rate was 10.8%, according to the United States Department of Labor. It was 9.8% in July 2024 and 8.7% in July 2023, indicating a 24% increase over the last two years. A primary reason for this rising youth unemployment is the broad low-hiring, low-firing state of the economy. Despite providing security for those already employed, low hiring rates hurt job-seekers by providing limited opportunities. As adults then turn to formerly teen-dominated positions, high school students face more

was vastly different. Free periods were times to enjoy the open campus, and the front lawn was often peppered with friends eating lunch and sitting in the sun. Many simply left the premises, grabbing lunch at the Deli or McDonald’s. Even classrooms were far more relaxed: students who finished a test would “put it on the teacher’s desk and take off,” going to the Commons, library, or cafeteria.

Miller credits his time as a student for becoming the teacher he is today. Remembering the constant pressures of his own commitments lets him understand his students more deeply, and it guides what he describes as a “humanistic” approach to education.

Health teacher Kristina Rudiger graduated in the same class as Miller, but she took a much different path after graduation. After completing her education at Boston University and Goucher College, Rudiger worked at the National Center for Health Education and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, managing a \$5 million grant and traveling to 15 cities across the country. At age 27, Rudiger returned to Three



competition.

Making matters worse, layoffs have recently surged, signaling a potential end to the stability of the low-firing economy. In October alone, the World Economic Forum reported job losses of over 153,000, the highest fourth-quarter reduction since the 2008 financial crisis. As jobs are slashed, the market becomes a game of musical chairs: some people get lucky, while others are left behind—and teens are the first group to lose out.

For those with work experience, getting hired is immensely easier. For instance, Ward Melville senior Paige Roeser got her first job two years ago at Carnival Pizza, at a time when teens benefited from post-pandemic growth. In fact, when asked how long it took for her to first get hired, she said, “It didn’t take me long. They

actually just asked if I wanted a job when I walked in the door.” Now, Roeser has two different jobs in the restaurant industry, and she reflected that “it was definitely easier finding a job after I had solid experience. ... More places were willing to hire me since I knew a lot of the systems they use.”

Tsybysheva and Roeser each shared words of wisdom for those still searching for their first job. Tsybysheva said, “Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there and meet people. ... Start actually building a relationship, even if it’s a surface-level one.” Roeser added, “Be confident when you go into interviews, and definitely show up in person to ask.” And once you get your foot in the door and land your first job, the rest will be that much easier.

## Alumni Spotlight: Teachers at Ward Melville

by REBECCA MALZ,  
CHIEF FINANCIAL  
OFFICER

For many students, graduation is a long-awaited celebration: it marks the day they never have to return to their high school. However, for some Three Village alumni, their hometown was exactly where they wanted to stay. Four even found their way back to Ward Melville, exchanging student desks for teachers’ podiums.

After graduating in 1992, Social Studies teacher Bryan Miller spent one year at Stony Brook University before transferring to Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore. While he enjoyed his time away from Three Village, Miller wanted to return as a lacrosse coach, drawn in by the storied history of the program.

Miller speaks fondly of his time as a student, although he emphasizes that the environment

Village because she realized that there is “truly no place like home.”

For Rudiger, the biggest change since her time as a student has been the introduction of electronic devices into classrooms. Rudiger wishes “we still used textbooks” and could “get rid of Chromebooks,” as she believes the laptops interfere with learning and instruction. Additionally, she argues that returning to textbooks would allow for less screen time and greater socialization.

Art teacher Camryn Caggiano’s student experience was unique—her father was the principal. Graduating in 2011, she already knew that she would return to the district. In fact, she never truly left, working at Three Village Summer Recreation between years at St. Joseph’s University.

Caggiano initially wanted to teach art at the elementary level, but circumstances led her to return to the high school. Despite the “unexpected” nature of the job, she quickly became “so happy that it worked out that way.” Caggiano says that being a Ward Melville alumna helps her relate to students because she has endured the “exact

same situation,” or in some cases, the “exact same class.” Moreover, she feels that teaching is “in her blood,” with most of her extended family consisting of educators.

When Social Studies teacher Samantha Parrella graduated in 2016, she remained in the Three Village area and studied at Stony Brook University. As she began looking for jobs, Parrella was reminded of her mentors at Ward Melville, many of whom had “made [her] want to be a teacher.”

Her career began at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a difficult time for even her most experienced colleagues. Five years later, she still feels that the environment is less social than when she was a student, but that “we are getting back to where we were.” In fact, she emphasizes the continued strength of student-staff relationships, with her classmates “still remember[ing] teachers” not just for their content but also for their personal impact. Those memories constantly inspire her to help students beyond the classroom, advising them to focus not on “what you have to accomplish” but rather on doing “what you want” at any age.

## Ward Melville Senior Named Regeneron Scholar

by ZAINA KHAN,  
NEWS EDITOR

On January 7, 2026, Ward Melville senior Tina Xing was recognized for her outstanding research in the Regeneron Science Talent Search (STS). The Regeneron STS is among the most prestigious science research competitions at the high school level, and it serves as the culmination of Ward Melville's years-long InSTAR program. Xing's research project, in which she tackled areas in carbon emissions and graphics processing units (GPUs), was selected as one of the top 300 in the nation.

Xing's journey began as a junior when she reached out to mentors to guide her through the rigorous research process. She eventually struck up a collaboration with a professor from the Department of Applied Mathematics and Statistics at Stony Brook University, officially starting her research in May 2025.

She began by reading about topics revolving around the environment, carbon emissions, and carbon-aware algorithms. Upon joining her mentor's lab, Xing

looked into his work on algorithms for GPU reserve allocation and quickly became invested in the topic. Graphics processing units are highly-specialized technologies that handle visuals, complete numerous tasks simultaneously, and even solve complex mathematical problems.

When searching for a topic, she noted, "I was thinking about how popular climate change has been [for such projects]. ... Within the field, it's kind of common knowledge that as GPU usage increases, there's more carbon emissions. Because there are many databases online discussing carbon, it was a perfect area to research with the already limited amount of resources available." Xing soon began contributing to her mentor's unpublished study, building upon existing algorithms throughout September and collecting the majority of her data in October.

"My project aims to reduce the amount of carbon emissions used by GPUs. To do this we need to look deep into GPU reserves and add carbon-aware components," Xing explained. After gathering hundreds of data points to see hourly estimates of carbon intensity in various regions, she thoroughly researched her topic through coding and complex mathematical functions. In the end, she was able to find the abstract cost of carbon through her analysis of GPUs.

Xing believes that at some

She added that these skills "will transcend any science course even into the humanities, giving students the ability to think critically."

The program follows a multi-year structure, with each year building on the previous one and expectations gradually increasing. In 10th grade, research skills are introduced in a generalized way, and exploration of personal interests is emphasized. Kula explained that the sophomore year "allows students to study topics they are curious about. For example, someone who enjoys computer science can focus their work in that field."

During both the sophomore and junior years, students participate in group projects. According to Kula, students work "in small groups to do an in-house research project in 10th grade," and their results can be entered into regional competitions such as the Long Island Science Congress and the New York State Andromeda Fair. The following year, "the level of group work increases in intensity" as students begin participating in national-level competitions.

A major focus of junior year is the Toshiba ExploraVision competition, a nationwide, innovation-based challenge sponsored by the National Science



Xing with Science Chairperson Dr. Marnie Kula and Principal John Holownia; photo courtesy of Three Village Central School District

point in the future, researchers will no longer be able to simply apply basic artificial intelligence to their research. Instead, they will have to deeply examine A.I. frameworks and functions, basing their application on their findings. Consequently, it is imperative for researchers to have an extensive understanding of these modern technologies, especially if it is deeply embedded in their research topic.

She advises those interested in applying to the InSTAR program to start early, emphasizing that such projects require a considerable amount of time and effort. In fact, Xing dedicated more than half a year to her study, and her recognition as a Regeneron STS Scholar did not come without many grueling hours and constant perseverance through the many challenges she faced. Nevertheless, she does not regret putting so much time

Teachers Association. For this contest, students are asked to "solve a real-world problem and develop a prototype solution." These group experiences help prepare students for later independent research, building confidence and collaborative skills along the way.

That independent research typically starts during the summer between junior and senior year. At this stage, the goal is for students to "produce a research paper for submission to the Regeneron Science Talent Search," Kula explained. From there, students present their work at additional competitions such as the Long Island Science and Engineering Fair (LISEF) and the New York State Science and Engineering Fair (NYSSEF), with hopes of advancing to the international level.

While competitions are a large part of InSTAR, Kula emphasized that recognition is not its main focus. "Whether or not they win does not matter," she said. "What matters most is that students take on this demanding elective, commit significant time outside the classroom, and see a research project through from start to finish. That itself is a huge process."

Since InSTAR is a focused and challenging course, the

into her research, and she feels it was a valuable learning experience.

Most importantly, she stresses that students should be happy with their research whether or not they win awards, saying, "You should not let someone else decide if your work is worth pursuing, as long as you're proud of yourself." Xing also highlighted that there will be challenges for every student conducting research and that answers can take months to find. Even so, these roadblocks should be embraced and used as a learning experience.

Xing hopes to expand her research on this topic in the future. As she continues her academic journey, she leaves behind a legacy of inspiration for future student researchers to follow.

application process is selective. Students are required to submit an application form, an academic transcript, a statement from a parent or guardian, and teacher recommendations. They must also write an essay in-person based on a prompt, although the question is provided in advance. (The in-person restriction ensures that the response is written independently.)

Many freshmen apply to InSTAR for the opportunity to pursue various scientific topics and be introduced to the world of research. One junior shared, "I decided to take InSTAR to better understand scientific research, as this class gives me the time to focus on specific projects that interest me and the resources to improve my laboratory skills." Another student added, "InSTAR offers opportunities to expand my science knowledge and gain experience, which is especially valuable since I am interested in STEM fields."

By the time students complete the InSTAR program, the goal is for them to have built proficiency in scientific communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. As Kula explained, research skills ultimately come down to "problem-solving skills that benefit students across the board."

## A Close Look at Ward Melville's InSTAR Program

by SARAH WU,  
SCIENCE EDITOR

At Ward Melville High School, students interested in scientific research have the opportunity to explore how science works beyond the standard curriculum. Open to those in grades 10 through 12, the InSTAR program introduces research skills not typically emphasized in traditional science classes.

According to Ward Melville's Science Department Chairperson and InSTAR director Dr. Marnie Kula, InSTAR primarily differs from a typical science course in that it is "more student-centered and student-driven." In fact, "there is no set curriculum focused on learning a single discipline like biology, chemistry, or physics."

In doing so, InSTAR focuses on developing competencies that apply across all scientific fields, with Kula explaining that the program concentrates on "problem solving, writing to express ideas, and asking meaningful questions."

## STEM Clubs Face Large Cuts

by LUCIANA HAYES  
and JULIETTA MCKEE,  
STAFF WRITERS

From the Computer Science Club to Math Team to the Robotics Club, STEM clubs are essential pieces of the Ward Melville and district communities. However, this school year, a steep reduction in funds jeopardized their ability to attend the competitions and events that they rely on. Advisors and club leaders were forced to find other ways to succeed, holding their own fundraisers and obtaining money from outside sources to stay afloat.

Most of the clubs' annual funding comes from the Three Village STEM Foundation, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help promote science, technology, engineering, and math in the community. Every autumn, it holds a meeting where each STEM club presents a detailed funding request. Soon after, the executive board determines how to best distribute the money among the clubs based on their current budget.

The foundation was inspired by booster clubs that support

athletic funding. Dr. Catherine Masrou, the foundation's president, stated, "It's a really good way to keep the money within the district rather than paying to an outside organization where the money doesn't come back." However, participation in their programs, most notably the STEM summer camp, has recently plummeted, leaving Masrou and others to contend with significant fiscal shortfall. As a result, this year's club demands didn't align with what the foundation could afford to provide.

Although the Computer Science Club gathers some donations to assist with funding, they depend on the district to cover most costs. Michael Smit, the advisor, noted that transportation to events is particularly expensive. Thankfully, they were able to receive all of the money that they had asked for this year, albeit because one of their competitions is not running this year.

Senior Aditya Kumar is deeply involved in the STEM community, as he is a board member of the STEM foundation, the co-president of the Computer Science Club, and the co-captain of the Robotics Team. He painted a darker picture about club funding than Smit did, highlighting drastic

cuts to the latter commitment.

The steep reduction, from an expected \$12,000 to only \$2,000, was highly stressful for Kumar and the entire Ward Melville Iron Patriots team. Beyond expensive competitions, they must also purchase materials to construct the robot. Growing club membership, along with tariffs on steel and aluminum, pushed necessary costs higher than in previous years. Kumar noted that even if they reused old parts instead of purchasing new ones, the provided funding simply wasn't enough to build the robot and attend competitions.

Fortunately, hope was renewed when the club received a \$3,000 grant from the Gene Haas Foundation and \$5,000 from a family on the board of the Three Village STEM Foundation. Their situation remains less than ideal, with Kumar still forced to repurpose last year's equipment and spend time on fundraising. Nevertheless, these outside contributions have allowed the club to move forward much more smoothly.

The Math Team expressed similar feelings about the budget cuts. Michael Retakh, the club's co-president, explained in an interview that the club estimated a need of \$1,250, largely for competition

registration and to organize the annual Integration Bee. However, the team only received about \$800.

Retakh noted that while members may individually cover competition expenses, this burden may discourage participation in these events. This could lead to a broader crisis: given its low membership, the club's success in these competitions often determines their annual reapproval. "These cuts have been difficult for us. It's not much money in the broad scheme of things, but it really is fundamental to our club," Retakh explained.

Ward Melville Principal John Holownia has said, "We'll certainly continue to fund and run these clubs." Despite this, several club leaders expressed frustrations with the district's allocation of funds, highlighting what they see as a gap between rhetoric and action. In fact, Kumar explained that administrators, including Holownia and Superintendent Kevin Scanlon, had requested further details from the Iron Patriots, but that "our breakdown [of costs] couldn't get much clearer." Kumar proceeded to summarize the broad mood of his peers, saying, "The district being very reluctant to help out is pretty unideal for the entire STEM community at Three Village."

## New York State Updates Physics and Chemistry Curricula

by ISABELLA DEVITO,  
STAFF WRITER

In the 2025-2026 academic year, New York State Regents science curricula have undergone significant changes, with new material in both chemistry and physics being tested for the first time in June. This shift marks the culmination of a long-term effort to align state exams with the P-12 Science Learning Standards that were first introduced in 2016.

Broadly speaking, the two Regents exams have become more focused on critical thinking, conceptual understanding, and general science literacy, as opposed to rote memorization. The changes to the curricula largely come from the New York State Science Literacy Learning Standards (NYSSLS), which is a part of the broader Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) framework.

Jennifer Serigano, a physics teacher at Ward Melville, explained that there is a new focus on interdisciplinary linking. Learning standards now seek to connect different scientific subjects, showing how

biology can be seen in chemistry and how chemistry can be seen in physics. Furthermore, expectations for students' scientific performance now emphasize recognizing patterns such as cause and effect, said Ward Melville chemistry teacher James Dornicik.

The reference tables for both courses have also changed. To the dismay of students, the chemistry one has been shortened. However, it now shares some additional information with the physics table, demonstrating the overlap of subjects in the new curriculum. For example, both tables include the electromagnetic spectrum because, as Serigano explained, both subjects want to emphasize the "connections between practical uses of chemistry and physics, along with their applications to medical science and communication."

The type of exam questions will change as well. For example, students will no longer be given many questions that require "direct memorization," making questions such as "Where is a proton located in the atom?" obsolete. According to Dornicik, "test questions will be in clusters where students will read a passage, look at data, and be expected to process the information and draw conclusions." The new questions are based on a model called Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER). Dornicik stated that "a claim is a statement about



the results of an investigation. Evidence supports your claim by citing data from the investigation, and reasoning uses scientific principles to draw together the claim and the evidence." The shortening of reference tables and new style of questioning complement each other, as information once given on the reference table may now be given in a specific question cluster.

Required lab activities and reports have also been completely transformed, with the state promoting organic, student-led discovery. As a result, it is now standard procedure for Serigano to assign a lab before students learn the relevant material. Dornicik explained that labs are given in the form of questions, and students are responsible for developing procedures and creating appropriate data tables to answer the questions. Practically, this has made labs more time consuming, causing each one to take up nearly twice as many periods.

As for student impact, Serigano said that students are often uncomfortable with the new lab

assignments, largely because of the amount of trial and error necessary. In her experience, many students wonder during labs, "Am I doing this right?" Unfortunately, they often lack the content knowledge to firmly answer that question.

Teachers have also had mixed feelings about the new curricula. "The change is supposed to make students become better thinkers, which is a great idea," said Dornicik. However, he also mentioned that the implementation is "challenging" given the "shift from the way students have been taught in the past." Serigano shared similar beliefs, noting that she "sees value in the relevance and practicality." While she believes that this will have a long-term benefit by preparing students for future scientific exploration, she also expressed concerns about the potential for short-term confusion and discouragement. In fact, Serigano said that it's a struggle to allow students to be confused, as her "mentality as a teacher is to avoid confusion whenever possible."

## Return the English Regents to January

by ZAHRA VESAMIA,  
STAFF WRITER

The English Language Arts Regents Exam has long been a January tradition for many Ward Melville juniors. Students in Honors and AP classes spend the first half of 11th grade reviewing essay formats, practicing critical reading skills, and writing endlessly, all leading up to the midyear assessment. However, the Three Village English Department has now required all levels to take the exam in June.

While the idea of taking the English Regents later might sound appealing to those who want extra preparation time, the reality is that this shift will likely create more stress and confusion. For years, Ward Melville’s curriculum has been structured around a January exam date. Teachers design lessons and pace calendars to ensure that students master the necessary skills by midyear. Students have come to expect that schedule as well. Moving the test to June will not only disrupt this structure, but it would also pile yet another high-stakes exam onto an already chaotic end-of-year schedule.

## When A.I. Is Useful in Education

by EMILY LOY and  
SABRINA FUNG,  
STAFF WRITERS

Think, for a moment, about how often students use artificial intelligence each and every day. The variety of tasks it can accomplish seems to be endless, ranging from fast, helpful answers about a topic of personal interest to the rapid, harmful creation of essays to be submitted as school “work.” Teachers staunchly condemn the latter, but what about when they apply similar tools themselves? Problematic or not, it raises the question: to what extent should A.I. be used in an academic setting in general?

A Gallup poll from July 2025 found that six in ten teachers involve A.I. tools in their work, with about 33% saying that they use A.I. to create worksheets for their class. And as previously reported in *Kaleidoscope*, many Ward Melville students have noticed their instructors taking advantage of A.I. to create, grade, and answer questions as well as major assignments.

Junior year is often considered one of the most academically demanding periods in high school. Between AP exams, the SAT and ACT, final projects, and other Regents exams, adding the English Regents to the spring lineup would undoubtedly overwhelm students. Many juniors take several AP classes—in fact, some take as many as seven. Each of these courses requires extensive preparation and multiple assessments before the AP exams in May, not to mention the Regents exams that follow in June. By that time, students are already dealing with significant amounts of stress.

“The English Regents should definitely take place in January,” said junior Stella Garafalo, demonstrating student criticism of the shift. “Although I’m not completely opposed to it being switched to June, January would just be more productive for students.” Garafalo noted that the January exam would relieve stress later in the year when students are already juggling multiple exams. “Many students already have a busy schedule during finals week, and having this exam on top of that feels like an added unnecessary stressor when we could just get it over with earlier,” she said.

That argument highlights the most critical flaw in the proposal: while moving the test to

Teacher use of artificial intelligence has evoked mixed emotions. Some would argue that A.I. makes their work more efficient, giving them more time to focus on struggling individuals. However, the fact remains that if the students who use it are cheating, then teachers who implement it are “cheating” too. Although platforms such as Brisk and SchoolAI can be closely tailored to rubrics for a myriad of classes, grading assignments with them is still immoral—it prevents educators from meeting specific classroom needs and limits the extent to which an effective student-teacher relationship can develop. Teachers need to read through an essay and make their own evaluations to fully understand crucial strengths and weaknesses. When they put in that effort, it allows for true constructive criticism and academic growth.

Furthermore, the conversation also encompasses overuse of A.I. by students in an academic setting. From digital home assistants to web searches to social media algorithms, A.I. is virtually inescapable. Therefore, defining the boundaries of its usage is essential. Although teachers forbid the usage of A.I. to write essays and complete assignments,

June may give students more time on paper, it doesn’t necessarily mean better performance. The English Regents does not test new or specialized material taught only in 11th grade. Instead, it evaluates reading comprehension, literary analysis, and essay writing skills—abilities that have been developed consistently throughout sophomore year and before.

Nora Lozeau, another Ward Melville junior, echoed Garafalo’s sentiments. “Taking the Regents in January would reduce stress for students in June because it’s one less exam to study for,” she said. While admitting that June would offer more preparation, she insisted that it wouldn’t make much difference in terms of readiness, stating, “I would still rather take the Regents in January because it would reduce the stress for June.”

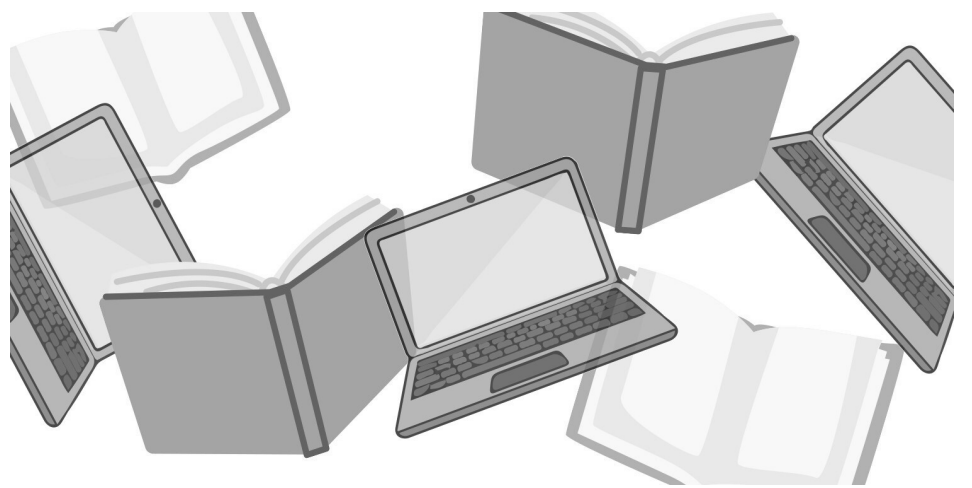
Furthermore, the January exam allows teachers to shift their instruction after midyear toward more advanced and engaging coursework. Many English teachers use the post-Regents period to prepare for the AP English Language and Composition exam. Others explore novels, creative writing, and projects that don’t fit into the tightly structured Regents curriculum. Moving the test to June would eliminate that extra time, turning the second half of the year into a constant cycle of test

prep and stress.

Opponents of the January exam often argue that the midyear timing disadvantages students who need extra support, as the school year’s first months may not be enough to refine certain skills. While that concern is understandable, earlier curricula already lay the foundation for the exam’s expectations. Teachers in 11th grade focus primarily on refining analysis, essay structure, and critical thinking, areas most students have been practicing for years.

In truth, the English Regents is not a test that benefits from delay. The skills it measures are fundamental components of a high school education. By the middle of junior year, advanced Honors and AP students have already developed the ability to meet those standards. Postponing the exam does not increase knowledge. It only increases anxiety.

In the end, the debate comes down to timing, and for many students, earlier is better. The English Regents is meant to assess long-term skills, not the ability to cram last-minute material. Taking it in January lets students demonstrate what they’ve learned so far, while still allowing time later in the year to focus on higher level academics and important standardized tests.



generative A.I. platforms may be used as tools to help with difficult concepts. ChatGPT can break down dense mathematical equations or nonintuitive scientific concepts in easy-to-understand language. Better yet, students are able to ask however many questions they have, going beyond the limits of a classroom where time must be divided between twenty-five individuals. On top of that, teachers are only available during class time and the occasional extra help, while A.I. is always at the ready. It cannot and should not entirely replace human instruction, as this would also hinder instructors from understanding where students are struggling. However, when no one is available to help, various generative technologies can certainly be adequate substitutes.

Nonetheless, there are

many scenarios where the use of A.I. is not appropriate, with the creation of written pieces or brainstorming of ideas using large language models being a clear example. Using A.I. as a supplement for originality reduces a student’s ability to think for themselves and takes away from their academic credibility. As one anonymous Ward Melville student puts it, “I find myself using A.I. for even my easy assignments, just because I know if I use it, I don’t have to think.”

Ultimately, these new technologies are capable of being used ethically. More often than not, however, it chips away at human creativity. We should all be more mindful of our own A.I. usage, keeping in mind the irreplaceable value that comes from human experience and connection.

## Restore the Writing Center

by ALAN MAO,  
STAFF WRITER

Writing has always been at the heart of education. From drafting essays in English class to concluding findings in science labs, it's arguably the most important skill for well-rounded academic success. Oftentimes, help outside the classroom is essential to improve. Ward Melville's Writing Center provides this very assistance: students can schedule one-on-one appointments with teachers to discuss and revise written projects of all kinds. In previous years, support had been available throughout the entire school day and even after. However, this essential resource has now been restricted to periods four through eight, to the dismay of both the students seeking guidance and the teachers offering it.

According to Jessica DiIorio, an English teacher who has worked in the Writing Center for over fifteen years, the new schedule makes it "hard for kids to come and make appointments." This is especially true for high-achieving students who simply do not have free periods. With the elimination of the after-school "tenth period" slot, the responsibility of writing support has fallen back onto

classroom teachers, a shift DiIorio described as both "hard for [students]" and "hard for us." While teachers are doing their best to help, this additional burden just adds more weight to an already overwhelmed system.

This change came at an especially critical time for seniors as they began work on their college applications. Forcing years of experiences into a few short pages, trying to exhibit their true personality, and hoping to leave an impression on admissions officers, many were suddenly confronted with their inability to access the Writing Center. One student noted, "Not everyone has a lunch period. ... Now I have to arrange meetings with my teacher, and it's not easy." With schedules already crammed with classes, extracurricular activities, and often unguided essay-writing, seniors struggled to find time to seek out independent help.

Furthermore, DiIorio pointed out that the Writing Center is not used exclusively for college essays. Many juniors taking AP English Language and Composition also find themselves in the Writing Center more and more often, especially as the AP exam approaches. DiIorio, who teaches the course, has found that her students have needed to schedule appointments with her individually rather than use the Writing Center.

on for five days. The excitement around coming to school in pajamas or wearing a certain color diminishes along with its novelty, leading participation to decrease as well.

Another reason for a lack of spirit is an overwhelming focus on academics. To many students, the sole purpose of Ward Melville is to sit in class, complete assignments, and learn the information needed to do well on exams. Why should we "waste" time on dances, football games, and spirit days when we already have a never-ending list of things to do? School spirit can feel like pointless frivolity when you only consider its long-term academic and occupational effects, but that's because its value lies elsewhere.

Although we do attend school for classroom education, it also teaches us how to navigate many other aspects of our future. We learn how to support one another, cheer for others' accomplishments, deal with failure, and express our opinions. We make lasting friendships and countless memories. And we remember the football games and after-school activities we attended with friends, not our grade on a calculus test. The memories created through



"They're struggling to find time and support in school, as well as having guidance in their revisions."

Even without reinstating all-day availability, the school can implement several policies to better support students. Creating a rotating schedule of open periods would be a great solution, allowing for students who are not available during the current slots to go at different times. Another possibility is the expansion of the Writing Center to be student-led, a common solution in high schools around the world. However, DiIorio expressed concerns about a fully student-run peer review system, particularly for college essays. Not only are they often deeply personal, but there is also a risk of unintentional plagiarism. When students read one another's essays, they may subconsciously adopt similar ideas, statements, or structures in their own writing. While peer review could work for some assignments,

it cannot fully replace the role of the teacher-led Writing Center.

With college essays, English assignments, and even writing for different classes, restricted hours at the Writing Center affect students across all grade levels. When access is limited, students not only struggle more with writing but also with finding support at Ward Melville. Halving appointments at the Writing Center has made it more difficult for students to finish their work on time, and it has burdened English teachers.

This system cannot remain in place, as both students and teachers alike have felt its negative effects. Even school administrators recognize this, with Ward Melville Principal John Holownia saying, "I would love to see [the Writing Center] restored. ... I want it back." However, he did not commit to increasing access in the 2026-27 academic year. He should.

## The Benefits of School Spirit

by BELLA LI,  
STAFF WRITER

Participating in Pajama Day or Jersey Day the week before winter break, wearing green and gold to a sporting event, or supporting a club are just some of the ways in which you can demonstrate Patriot Pride—and benefit from it. Research from Varsity Brands, a youth apparel company, shows that students with "higher levels of school spirit perform better academically, are more civically engaged, and are happier in general than their less-spirited peers." If this is the case, then why do so many students pay so little attention to their school community?

A study conducted by Education Week attributes the declining enthusiasm in school spirit to a concept called habituation, or the psychological tendency to respond less to a continuously repeated stimulus. For instance, while some students may be excited to participate in Monday's theme, enthusiasm fades by Friday. By then, spirit opportunities have continued

spirit activities are carried by many students long after graduation, motivating and encouraging them to excel in their future endeavors.

Thankfully, many at Ward Melville still have an abundance of Patriot Pride. Sophomore Lauren Swierupski confidently stated in an interview that school spirit "hasn't been declining. We had a very good turnout on our spirit days before winter break ... I think students are proud to be a part of the Three Village community!"

Swierupski also emphasized the resulting creation of a positive environment, saying, "I think it creates a sense of community and brings some fun to school days, especially before events and breaks." Establishing a fun and positive atmosphere increases students' and educators' enthusiasm for engaging in studies and activities. School spirit naturally makes our time at Ward Melville feel more lighthearted and less tedious or obligatory.

Even some who don't participate in spirit days agree with their positive impact. An anonymous student emphasized that the casual events "create a sense of unity among us and strengthen our connection."

A positive educational

environment is effective not only for boosting academic motivation, but it is even beneficial for students' mental health. According to Varsity Brands, "those with a great deal of school spirit are more confident (91%), are more likely to be leaders (90%), are happier (88%), are more active in their communities (87%), and are more fulfilled (73%)." Students can use opportunities such as attending sports games, celebrating traditions, and taking part in fundraisers to relieve the stress that accompanies the more serious aspects of school.

A strong collective identity also affects the broader local community, impacting alumni and parents. When students are proud of their school, parents tend to get more involved in their children's activities, and the district receives more support from the community as a whole. This in turn opens up more resources and parental volunteers at events and activities, enhancing the experience for everyone.

The effects of school spirit are far-reaching and immensely beneficial. By establishing pride and positivity, everyone can be offered a positive and engaging experience.

# Crossword Puzzle

by **MICHAEL RETAKH,**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## ACROSS

1. Japanese spy
6. Acidic hallucinogen, abbr.
9. Long-lasting hairstyle
13. Oregon or Appalachian
14. Statement of debt, abbr.
15. Sooner or \_\_\_\_
16. Hayek of “Frida” and “Puss in Boots” fame
17. Spanish question starter
18. Russian mountains
19. Captain’s Kirk command
22. Modern carpe diem
23. Chinese aunt
24. Month before Rosh Hashanah
27. Medieval torture device, or heavy metal band
33. California wine region
34. Horse controller
35. Chess rating system
36. Feudal privilege of the first night
41. HIV treatment goal, abbr.
42. Presidential primary kickoff state
43. Wagner’s Earth goddess
44. Large lumberjack accompanied by blue ox
48. Prepared for a golf shot
49. Electrical scan of brain, abbr.
50. \_\_\_\_ is more
52. French queen’s quote
59. Mediterranean island country
60. Norse god of war
61. Bird that gets the worm
62. Mary-Kate or Ashley
63. Phone service provider
64. Test for newborns
65. One of two South African wars
66. Before the equals sign, abbr.
67. Sierra \_\_\_\_

## DOWN

1. Accident investigator, abbr.
2. With Dies, oft-quoted chant
3. Simba’s consort
4. Hong Kong dissident and media tycoon

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13					14			15				
16					17			18				
19					20			21				
			22					23				
24	25	26			27		28	29		30	31	32
33							34			35		
36				37	38	39				40		
41				42						43		
44			45				46	47		48		
			49				50		51			
	52	53				54	55			56	57	58
59						60				61		
62						63				64		
65						66				67		

5. With “The”, what Texans remember
6. Potent potable
7. “\_\_\_\_ or salad?”
8. Membership payments
9. Sequel identifier, most famously for the Corleones
10. “L’\_\_\_\_”: What Louis XIV claimed to be
11. Count on
12. Dalloway’s title
15. Ancient Chinese capital in Henan
20. Cried twice by Jesus on the cross
21. Turkish mosque
24. Reach a final state
25. Insect life stage
26. Most populous Samoan island
28. Musée d’\_\_\_\_
29. May precede maiden name
30. Makes green tractors with John
31. Evade discovery
32. Bi-national military org. that tracks Santa, abbr.
37. Hailing from Chinese plateau
38. It rises with yeast
39. Media outlet focused on higher education, abbr.
40. Once-dominant web browser
45. In literature, scarlet or purloined
46. Amber notifications
47. Largest American labor union, abbr.
51. What Jesse James or Robin Hood might do
52. “Symphonie espagnole” composer
53. Paired by programmers with if
54. And others, in academia
55. Legend, or a clue for 19-, 27-, 36-, 44-, and 52-Across
56. Jason’s ship
57. Hate group with pointed hoods
58. Brontë’s Jane
59. Mafia

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