



## Lunch Money: A Thing of the Past in New York State

By: Evan Morsi

In January of 2025, New York State's Governor Kathy Hochul was able to make breakfast and lunch free to all students in public schools and any private or charter schools that participate in the program. There is no paperwork for parents to fill out, no worrying about meal account balances, and no income limits. This program, which actually went into effect this past September, reaches over 2.7 million students across the State. It gives them access to nutritious meals and saves families the expense of about \$165 a month per child. Snacks are not included, however.

Eating full meals for breakfast and lunch is a proven way to stay focused in the classroom. And so, these free meals have definitely caused the number of students who eat during the school day to increase. This is certainly true at North Shore High School. According to Shari Rosenthal, one of the secretaries in the Food Services Department, for breakfast, North Shore has seen a 300 to 400 percent increase in the number of meals being served. "It used to be forty or fifty, but now we're doing 200." This is great news, seeing that breakfast sets the tone of the day for a student. Being able to have breakfast at school means not having to rush to eat before school or worrying about not eating at all and being hungry the rest of the morning. One of the things that hunger can lead to is a lack of focus, especially in the classroom. "I don't see a negative to it," stated Alan Levin, the Director of

Food Services here at North Shore High School. Lunch has also seen an increase, serving about 50% more meals at about 500 per day.

Even though it's hard to find any negatives to New York State's free student meal program, some North Shore High School pupils feel there are some. When given a survey, many students expressed that they do not like the longer lines this year, as they take about 5-15 minutes, especially during the later lunch periods; this cuts into their eating and socialization time. Plus, they have noticed that the food service employees seem more rushed and overwhelmed, despite doing an outstanding job. Sophomores Stella Cashman and Chase Conzelman have found both to be true. Other students, like junior Alexa Scaffa, thinks otherwise. "No, I haven't seen a difference in length," she said.

Another big change that some students have noticed is that the very popular Caesar Wraps are now pre-prepared, which many say, as a result, have suffered quality-wise. They just do not seem fresh, and they can be a bit soggy, according to junior Lee-Ann Celestin. Alan Levin stated that the reason why the Caesar Wraps are being made ahead of time though is "just for speed of service... the line got really long, so I just wanted to try to figure out a way to get things moving faster." Since this item is so popular, it saves time. He added that the wraps still have the same ingredients and quality, but because they are pre-made, it is a lot easier for the staff to do its job.

Another problem that has come up at North Shore High School regarding the free meals is that students are required by the United States Department of Agriculture to take a fruit, box of juice, side salad or a vegetable with their meal. Yes, that sounds healthy, but quite a bit of these items is being thrown away because so many of the kids do not really want them. Chase Conzelman stated that even though he usually eats the fruit, he is still confused as to "...why we need it." Unlike Conzelman though, many students throw out the fruit, often for trivial reasons. Lee-Ann Celestin says she throws it away because "the fruit options are not ones she likes. She would like to see pineapples and mangoes. So, clearly North Shore High School is abiding by federal law, but is there a better way of disposing of the fruit that students do not want, but are forced to take? A teacher at North Shore High School has already taken matters into her own hands. Michelle Stiffler, a Special Education teacher, as well as the Freshman Class Advisor and Gardening Club Advisor, said that when a number of her students told her they "... did not want to take the fruit or the vegetable, but had to," "I said, well, just give it to me. I'll put it in a composter; so instead of wasting it, we're using it and putting it to good use." And so, Mrs. Stiffler collects unwanted fruit from kids and uses it as compost for the school's garden which is located in the courtyard behind the Main Office. The only issue is that in order for Mrs. Stiffler to compost

the fruit, kids have to find her and give it to her. "I would love to see the school put something in the Cafeteria so that they can just leave the fruit and I can pick it up. That would allow more students to participate and not waste their fruit." Currently, Mrs. Stiffler only has a mini composter that sits on her desk and she paid for it out of pocket. With about 700 meals being served a day, stopping all this food from being thrown out is easier than you think. Stiffler added: "You just need a composter and bins. That's it." It's as simple as putting a bin in the cafeteria where people put the fruit they don't want. Or is it? "It's a tough call," states Alan Levin. He is still in the very early stages of figuring out a solution to this issue. "I've definitely talked to a bunch of people and hopefully a strong solution will happen soon." Another suggestion has been to leave a bowl in the Cafeteria where students can leave unwanted fruit and take a fruit if they get hungry later in the day.

Overall, the free meals for all students has been a great addition to North Shore High School, and the kids who partake definitely want to see this offer stick around. Of course there have been a few kinks in the implementation of the program, but that is to be expected. Knowing how attentive to detail and kids likes and dislikes our kitchen staff is, no one doubts for a second that things will only get better and better as time goes on.

## Phones Are Out; Focus Is In

By: Kate Spieler

Public and charter schools across New York State are currently experiencing one of their biggest changes in policy: no cell phones. Governor Kathy Hochul recently instituted this policy in order to ensure "Distraction-Free Schools" as it builds upon her mission to protect the mental health and classroom learning of children in a world that is constantly bombarded with online content. In fact, New York State United Teachers' President Melinda Person believes the institution of this policy is not "anti-technology", but rather "pro childhood." Hochul's no cell phone policy includes a "bell to bell" ban, including during lunch. Nevertheless, schools must have a process in place that allows students to contact their guardians throughout the day (if necessary), and have a discipline policy in place for students who do not cooperate with the new policy. Also, schools must develop a plan for storing phones during the day.

When I asked some of our high school students how they feel about the new cell phone policy, I discovered that many don't necessarily "agree" with the bell-to-bell phone ban, but they do understand the motivation behind it. Although several students agree that there are benefits and "less distractions" from not having

their phones in class, they do not understand why students cannot use them in non-academic areas such as the lunchroom, courtyard, etc. Furthermore, Jack Correa, a junior, feels that the High School has been doing an efficient job of enforcing the policy, by instituting the "hefty punishment" of confiscating phones if found out in public. Additionally, Physics teacher Tyler Bianco has noticed that since the cell phone ban, students are more engaged in class. In fact, he feels students are the least distracted that he has ever seen "in [his] entire career." Unfortunately though, some students have found a "workaround" to the policy with Iphone Mirroring. Therefore, laptops are no longer permitted in his classroom unless necessary. This has been a difficult adjustment as certain portions of labs that used to be completed efficiently with iphones (e.g. by using the stopwatch app, videotaping, taking photos), can no longer be.

Furthermore, Italian teacher Diana Kesselman has noticed "consistent enforcement" of the no phone policy, and believes students have "adjusted well" as cell phones are now "rarely" an issue in her classroom. She does recognize that there are some concerns about students who have Macbooks and can message through these devices.

Fortunately, her class is "communication-focused", so she does not include many "computer-based activities." She does acknowledge though missing the positive elements of "instructional flexibility" cell phones provided as an "important tool" in language classrooms. This includes using the voice memos app on iPhones to record students' presentational and interpersonal speaking activities and track their progress over the years as foreign language students.

Finally, North Shore High School Assistant Principal Dr. Kevin Kurrus believes the no cell phone policy has "only been beneficial for students" and he is proud of the "efficient and effective" enforcement of it. According to Dr. Kurrus, he has observed only "a fraction of the amount of phones" since the implementation of the regulation, particularly in the hallways and Cafeteria. He also believes the biggest challenge to this policy was the change in "school culture" as North Shore was "relaxed" in its (lack of) cell phone policy before the state law-each teacher had their own. Not surprisingly, Dr. Kurrus knew he would have to remain "on top of this since the first day of school." Moreover, he has continually communicated with the Technology

Department at our high school to monitor approved devices on the dedicated Wi-Fi. He has observed only a "small percentage" of students that have not "checked" their personal devices in with the high school- which results in students being able to iPhone Mirror with Macbooks and access non-school approved platforms. Dr. Kurrus notes that if the percentage increases, he is open to "possibly prohibiting Macbooks" and other personal devices from being brought into the school building.

North Shore High School and all other public or charter schools across New York State are still figuring out the new cell phone ban and its effects on students and staff. But, for now, the effects of the ban seem to be mostly positive.



Photo Taken By: Ellamarie Mitchell

## Hidden in Plain Sight

By: Alexa Scaffa

Artificial intelligence isn't just something out of a science fiction film anymore; it's seen as we scroll through our phones on a daily basis, quietly shaping what we see, think and buy. It's weaved so deeply into everyday life that most of us don't even notice it. And AI continues to advance every single day. There are two questions that linger: how is AI truly changing our society, and what does that mean for our future?

Currently, the biggest place where we see AI in action is on our computer and phone screens. Every time I scroll through social media, algorithms suggest what I will see next and ultimately, my entire feed is taken over. In fact, my "For You" page on TikTok often feels like it knows me better than I know myself. Autocorrect even finishes my typed sentences before I can think of the next word I want to use. Yes, AI can be a useful assistant when it comes to simplifying tasks such as organizing schedules, suggesting grammar fixes, and recommending music. But, at some point, convenience blurs into control. The more I noticed AI, the more invisible

it became. That's the scary thing about AI; it hides in plain sight and quietly adapts to our habits, learns our preferences, and begins to guide our choices. AI isn't just helping us live; it's starting to shape how we live. While artificial intelligence brings efficiency, it also brings misinformation and privacy concerns. These aren't distant, futuristic problems; they are already here.

One of the fast-growing dangers of artificial intelligence is its role in spreading misinformation through deepfakes. Deepfakes are realistic but entirely fake videos, images, or audio clips created by AI. The media is such a big part of society, and so, news spreads in seconds. These fakes can unfortunately blur the line between truth and fabrication, so ultimately fake news is spread, reputations are ruined and public opinion is manipulated. Deepfakes often look so realistic that before the video is even finished streaming, it's been shared with others. Another major concern surrounding AI is the loss of

privacy it causes. Every day, artificial intelligence systems collect and store massive amounts of personal data from our search history regarding what we buy, watch, and even say out loud when we are near our device. This data fuels the algorithms of AI to predict our behavior and target us with ads that almost feel too specific. While this personalization can make life more convenient, it also poses serious ethical questions regarding consent and surveillance. Who really owns our data? And how much do we unknowingly give away about ourselves?

As AI becomes more advanced, the line between useful technology and scary innovation keeps getting thinner. Big Brother is now certainly watching, and is that not what generations before us fought against? Should we change the way we use our devices and AI or just roll the dice and hope for the best?

## Charlie Kirk's Death and the Divide Between Evidence and Conspiracy

By: Lee-Ann Celestin

Charlie Kirk was a well-known conservative political figure and the founder of Turning Point USA, a group that focuses on getting young people involved in politics. He built a tremendous platform through social media, his podcast (*The Charlie Kirk Show*), and speaking at events across the country. He had many people supporting him because of how strongly he stood up for his beliefs. However, just like most people who are outspoken, he also had a large number of critics. People's feelings about Charlie Kirk really came to the forefront on September 10, 2025, when he was assassinated while addressing an audience on the campus of Utah Valley University in Utah. This event left so many people shocked, regardless of how they felt about him or his conservative beliefs.

Unfortunately, very soon after, the situation grew quite messy. Police quickly stated that they caught the man who allegedly pulled the trigger, a 22-year-old named Tyler Robinson, who was arrested near the scene. Authorities said Robinson acted alone and that the motive was still under investigation. But others on social media had other ideas. Posts on X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok spread claims that it couldn't have just been one person. One viral post from an account called @PatriotWatchUSA said, "There's no way this was random, too organized, too clean." People who believed that theory felt like there had to be more to the story. Some users, including a few small political commentators and online influencers, even suggested that the government might have been involved or covering

something up. Once that theory began to spread, it stuck because of how fast misinformation travels online, especially when emotions are high and many already distrust the government. Videos, conspiracy threads, and edited clips from the event began circulating, making it hard for people to tell what was real or fake.

Those who believe the official story trust that the investigation was handled correctly. They point to the arrest of Tyler Robinson, physical evidence that tied him to the scene, and the fact that witnesses saw him near the area. This side believes that the authorities acted quickly to solve the case and that the evidence speaks for itself. To them, the idea of a larger plot does not make sense because there has not been any solid proof of one.

On the other hand, people who believe in the conspiracy side argue that the case was closed too fast. They question why security at such a high-profile event was so weak and why details about the suspect's motive were not shared right away. Some think that if the government or powerful political groups had something to gain from Kirk's death, they might want to make it look like an open and shut case to avoid backlash. This idea grew online because it fits with some people's mistrust of authority and the belief that the truth is often hidden from the public.

The bottom line is that people can speculate or believe whatever they want. But, it would seem that only a few people know what really happened...or, maybe no one truly does. What do you believe?

## Ban or Balance?

By: Elsa Lanne

As students returned to school this year for a fresh start, they not only had a new year ahead of them, but also one that excluded phones from the picture. For the first time, New York State's "bell-to-bell" phone ban, enacted by Governor Kathy Hochul, took effect in schools across the State. North Shore's administration, like many others, was required to enforce these new restrictions. But has this phone ban actually made a difference?

Showing my friend in the Cafeteria this year an inspirational photo for a school project resulted in my phone being confiscated. North Shore's policy states that on the first offense, a student's phone will be confiscated and returned to them at the end of the school day. The second offense requires the student's parent to collect the device at the end of the school day. Since it was my first offense, I went to retrieve my phone ninth period, when I did not have a class. I waited in the Main Office for five minutes, as an administrator called my mother. I found this process of enforcement quite excessive, as the policy for a first offense doesn't mention a phone call home, but it was also fair, considering my carelessness.

As a senior at North Shore, this no phone transition has been drastic. From always being able to listen to music in the Library while doing work, communicating with friends, and using my phone out of boredom, school has now become a completely new environment.

I do agree though, despite my shock of not being able to use one this year, that a phone is a distraction for a student, and the phone ban has been beneficial in classrooms. Students are more attentive, and teachers no longer compete with screens for attention. And, I've also noticed more students playing games outside or socializing face-to-face instead of scrolling through their phones.

At North Shore High School, students are required to place their phones in their lockers at the start of every school day. I personally have not seen a single student open their locker in the entirety of my time at the High School; this trend has pretty much continued so far this school year. This is proof that a part of the policy is well-intentioned, but not entirely realistic at the High School.

Although the locker requirement may seem ineffective, the overall success of the policy has been clear. Students have mostly followed the rules by avoiding phone use during class; the hallways are also no longer filled with people walking and scrolling on their screens. The strict confiscation policy has made students more cautious about taking their phones out at all. As a student with a MacBook however, I can still access my phone through a screen mirroring app, which allows me to check messages or use certain apps for schoolwork. While some students might use this as a loophole, I believe it isn't preventable, and more importantly, I believe it doesn't disrupt learning or distract others.

Overall, the phone ban has helped improve focus and productivity, but it has also taken away small freedoms that make school enjoyable. While I understand the need to limit distractions and that North Shore cannot control the passing of the ban, the New York State policy should find a balance of keeping classrooms phone-free while allowing responsible use during free periods. Sometimes, connection and creativity come from the same devices we're told to put away.

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## All About *The Life of a Showgirl*

By: Ava Varasano

Taylor Swift's 12th studio album (not counting re-recordings), *The Life of a Showgirl*, was released on Friday, October 3rd, and immediately received tons of attention from Swifties and music lovers alike. The album, which is centered around the ups and downs of living a life in the spotlight, has a very different vibe than most of her other albums; it is brighter, louder, and sparklier.

The album's sound is also unique; her vocals are more raw than on her most recent albums, and the recording itself has a different tone. Some of this is due to the shift in production from her friend and frequent producer, Jack Antonoff, to Max Martin and Shellback, whom she worked with in previous eras (*Billboard*).

Max Martin, who worked with Swift on her big pop hits like "Shake It Off" and "Blank Space" from the album *1989*, most likely influenced the pop sounds on *The Life of a Showgirl*, as this album has more pop songs than *The Tortured Poets Department*. Tracks like "Wood" and "Wi\$h Li\$t" channel Swift's classic pop energy, which some Swifties love while others do not.

On social media, Swiftok (the Swiftie corner of Tik Tok) has been blowing up with varied opinions on the album, but the most frequent debate is on Swift's return to the pop arena and her less poetic-sounding songs. Since the sister albums *Folklore* and *Evermore*, Swifties have been hoping for another beautifully slow and heart-wrenching album, but Taylor Swift seems to have left her folk era in the past.

Another criticism of Swift's new album is the lack of her staple lyricalism, or lack of her usual mature lyrics. On some tracks, such as "Wood," Swift hints at the explicit meaning behind her metaphors, which doesn't align with her previously innocent songwriting. Although some are upset about her new music's sexual undertones, others believe that as Swift has aged, she has become more open to writing about subjects that the music industry has previously warned against, as it wanted Swift

to seem pure and youthful. After all, today, Taylor Swift is the music industry.

Her dominance in the music industry is proven by her modern-era record album debut, when she sold over four million equivalent album units (*Billboard*). This record breaking number shows Swift's power in the music industry and society, even after over 19 years of recording.

In addition, Swift's dominance in the entertainment industry extends beyond music; she also released a movie alongside *The Life of a Showgirl*, entitled *The Official Release Party of a Showgirl*. The movie aired in theaters from October 3rd-5th and showcased "The Fate of Ophelia" music video and many visualisers (AMC Theatres). This allowed Swifties to get together to celebrate the release and share their thoughts on the new album. On October 13th (Taylor Day because of her lucky number, 13), Swift announced *The Eras Tour | The Final Show and The End of an Era*, which is a film of *The Tortured Poets Department Eras Tour* set and a six episode docuseries, respectively. In an Instagram post, Taylor Swift wrote that she, and her crew as well, "wanted to remember every moment leading up to the most important and intense chapter of [their] lives, so [they] allowed filmmakers to capture this tour and all the stories woven throughout it." Both the film and the docuseries will be available to watch on Disney Plus starting on December 12th.

While there are mixed opinions on *The Life of a Showgirl*, Taylor Swift's artistry and skill are still visible in all of the small details on the album. From the references on some of her tracks to iconic musicians, to the intricate photo shoots that she did for the alternate versions of the album, Swift demonstrates the effort that showgirls put into their work by giving her whole heart to every album she creates. Listen to *The Life of a Showgirl* on any streaming platform to see for yourself.

## Audrey Hobart: A Breath of Fresh Air to the Pop Music Scene

By: Mae Curiale

Up and coming pop star Audrey Hobart has had a wildly transformative summer, with her first single "Sue Me" skyrocketing to over 23 million streams since its release in May (Dailey). Her debut album *Who's the Clown* was released on August 15th, but it is not the first work of hers that has been so well-loved by the public.

The 26-year-old has co-written songs for singer Gracie Abrams for years, such as "That's So True" and "Risk." Hobart even directed the music video for "I Love You, I'm Sorry," another of Abrams' songs (Sarmiento).

Hobart signed a publishing deal with Universal Music Publishing Group in 2023 to obtain proper royalties for her work on Abrams' album *The Secret of Us*. After deciding to release an album of her own, many labels reached out to her, but she ended up signing with RCA Records early in 2025 (Dailey).

A multi-talented performer, Hobart graduated from NYU with a degree in screenwriting and has experience as a staff writer for the Nickelodeon sitcom *The Really Loud House* (Dailey). Despite her first solo

album only coming out this past summer, she has a lot of experience songwriting for other people. She almost offered the songs on the album to Halsey, but she decided they were too personal, so she wanted to convey the messages herself (Sarmiento).

Hobart promoted her album, *Who's the Clown*, on her TikTok account, posting videos of her dancing and lip syncing to the songs. Before the first single "Sue Me" was even released in May, snippets had gone viral and she had already amassed a large fanbase which was anxiously awaiting its release.

Curating an aesthetic through her music videos and album cover of bright colors and mismatched patterns, Hobart is widely described as "quirky." It reflects the honesty and fearlessness in her lyricism. The whole record is personalized with Hobart either writing or co-writing every song (Lonsdale), as well as directing her own music videos such as for "Sue Me," in which she hyperactively dances in unusual outfits, setting herself apart from the more traditional music video style. Although she has recently been compared to other pop

## Sombr's World of Emotional Storytelling

By: Lucy Jackson

The name "Sombr" has been circulating around social media and the music industry, due to having three songs from his most recent album *I Barely Know Her* on Billboard's Hot 100 (Ledonne). Sombr quickly gained a following on TikTok after his song, "Back to Being Friends", blew up in Spring of 2025. His monthly listeners on Spotify have almost tripled since April, with over 58.5 million people streaming his music worldwide.

Who is Sombr and why did he become popular so quickly? Shane Boose, who is also known as the singer and songwriter Sombr, is only 20 years old and is already one of the most popular artists of 2025. He chose the name Sombr because of his initials, SMB, and his emotional state when producing his first songs (Bebber). He says that he's greatly influenced by artists like Jeff Buckley, Radiohead, Bon Iver and the Beach Boys. This is reflected in his albums which express intense emotion and consist of catchy lyrics. The most common theme in his music is confusing relationships ending poorly and dealing with unanswered questions. People love how vulnerable his songs are and the emotions that are put into every track. Most of his music covers a large spectrum of moods and can't necessarily be put into one genre. Listeners who enjoy bold songs might listen to tracks like "12 to 12" or "We Never Dated", while fans who like more mellow, slow songs might listen to "I Don't Know You Anymore" or "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind".

Sombr, who released his first popular song, "Caroline", at just 16 years old, had record labels hunting him down to sign with them. After receiving countless offers, Boose decided to go with Warner Records. He then met his producer, Tony Berg, who he instantly clicked with. Although Boose has explicitly stated that his music is sensitive and therefore he has had trouble working alongside

different people (Horn), both he and Berg worked together to produce the album that made him one of the most popular artists of 2025.

On social media platforms like TikTok or Instagram videos of fans spotting Sombr in public have been going viral. His reaction to meeting his fans is what differentiates him from other artists. Instead of hiding his face or trying to get away from them, he'll openly greet his listeners and acknowledge them. In fact, during an interview with *Vogue*, Boose said that he is extremely privileged to be recognized on the street and tries to remain super grateful (Ledonne). Berg, his producer, says that when he first met Boose he "was immediately struck by how [arrogant] and funny he was, but ultimately gentle and sincere" (Horn). Sombr tries to remain nonchalant and cool, but it is obvious that he loves being surrounded by crowds of his fans.

Looking back, Sombr's childhood plays a huge role in his music. Boose grew up on the Lower East side of Manhattan, surrounded by different cultures; he spent most of his childhood skateboarding around Chinatown (Rascoe). He attended LaGuardia High School of Music and Art whose former students include Timothee Chalamet, Niki Minaj, and Jennifer Aniston. Although he ended up dropping out of school to pursue his music career, Boose says one of his biggest goals is to come back one day and be recognized by all of the attending LaGuardia students (Rascoe). He also says that one of the most important things he learned in school was the singing techniques that are extremely valuable to his music; they help him hit certain notes, have stamina when performing, and sing classically (Rascoe).

Even if you think you don't know Sombr's music, it is an invasion in current pop culture, and you are bound to recognize his work by the end of the year. Sombr shows how modern artists are able to adapt and develop their style over time, increasing their popularity and leaving their mark on today's music.

stars such as Chappell Roan or Taylor Swift, Hobart comes with a quality of uniqueness that makes her appear more real and human, something that is not always true of many stars.

Through much of her work, she leads with humor, telling embarrassing stories of mistakes and self-consciousness as a young woman who is navigating the world. She also cleverly mixes in pop culture references, mentioning fictional characters such as Phoebe Buffay from *Friends* and alluding to others like Carrie Bradshaw from *Sex and the City* (Lonsdale). The self-deprecating and humor-filled nature of her songs offer a degree of relatability, striking a chord with young people in particular.

In her song "Phoebe," Hobart compares herself to the *Friends* character Phoebe Buffay, lamenting that she is rarely romantically pursued in comparison to her other friends and detailing her experiences with self-image and confidence. In "Chateau" Hobart describes feeling out of place at an industry party, making conversation with people who were pretentiously discussing the latest Michelin-star restaurant they had dined at. Seeing right through them, Hobart disapproves of their failed attempts at looking cultured, repeating a punchy chorus with the line

"I don't care that I'm at the chateau with the whole A-list" as the song descends into guitar riffs and heavy drums.

Despite her popularity, Hobart has faced some criticism, being dubbed a "nepo baby" due to a variety of factors. For one, her brother is established musician Malcolm Told, so there are those who think she likely had help making a name for herself in the industry. Also, her good friend and frequent collaborator, Gracie Abrams, is the daughter of famous filmmaker JJ Abrams, so some assume the two had industry support and were eased into the spotlight in one way or another. However, Hobart's creativity and bold personality have shone through her work, posing the question of whether or not she should be dismissed as a nepo baby.

In spite of the fact that her possible nepo baby status is controversial, Audrey Hobart's multiple talents have begun to make an impact, with her album gaining a lot of traction, especially through its internet promotion. Hobart's brutal honesty, sense of style, and witty punchlines, differentiate her from her fellow pop stars, making her a name to look out for in the future.

# Taylor and Travis' Opalite Engagement

By: Ava Varasano

The news that all Swifties have been waiting for since they first heard "Mary's Song (Oh My My My)" has arrived: Taylor Swift has gotten engaged. On August 26th, 2025, she took to Instagram to announce her engagement, posting pictures of herself and her new fiancé, Travis Kelce.

She captioned the post: "Your English teacher and your gym teacher are getting married."

While Swift has been in many relationships, both short and long, she claims that she could never picture her own wedding until she met Kelce. In an interview with Heart Radio in the UK on October 3rd, Swift said "You would think that I had been the type of person who would have obsessed over the idea of a wedding my whole life, but I actually never thought about what I would ever do or what I would want until I met the person". While Swifties know she teased marriage with British actor and ex Joe Alwyn in a video posted in November 2021, in

which she sang "Champagne Problems" in a wedding dress at the bottom of a grand staircase, their relationship ended before they called each other husband and wife. Swift has certainly played with the idea of marriage in many music videos and songs, so much so that some Swifties (myself included) never thought she would actually get married. Even so, Swift, on her newest album, *The Life Of A Showgirl*, sings about how she didn't "need to catch the bouquet to know a hard rock is on the way".

Swift's engagement was far from the standard experience- Travis Kelce went all out. While the couple was filming a new episode for Kelce's *New Heights* podcast, floral experts were setting up the proposal scene. When the work was done, Kelce's backyard resembled a fairy garden, complete with a rose bush arch. During her interview on October 3rd on *The Graham Norton Show*, Swift even revealed how "one of the things that he put in there, very strategically, was

a wall of hedges that wasn't there before. And inside the hedges was my tour photographer hiding."

Kelce didn't only go above and beyond regarding the setup; he also exceeded everyone's, including Swift's, expectations of a ring. Not only is Taylor Swift's engagement ring stunning, but it is also super personal to Swift, whose favorite jeweler, Kindred Lubreck, created the piece. Swift mentioned her love of the jeweler's work to Kelce long before the proposal, and he remembered to get her ring from there; she loves the handmade and custom items. The vintage, almost rectangular diamond is mine cut, meaning that the style was popular during the 18th and 19th centuries. This gives it a romantic and classic look. During her October 6th interview with *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, Swift expressed how Kelce remembering the jeweler and designing the ring was quite thoughtful. She said, when referring to Travis Kelce, it "was like, 'You really know me.'"

Taylor Swift's engagement ring and marriage era have sparked conversations from Swifties and non-Swifties on social media, with many future brides admiring the ring and even sending it to their boyfriends for inspiration. For the bridal

trends in the years to come, we should expect many antique and rectangular cut engagement rings.

The couple, since announcing its engagement, has expressed excitement for the future. While they claim they don't have many plans for the event yet, Swift said that she "want(s) to do the album stuff first, and the wedding is what happens after in terms of planning". Now that her album *The Life Of A Showgirl* has finally been released, the couple can certainly get started on getting everything in place for its perfect day.

As Taylor Swift's marriage era begins, we will see how her wedding impacts bridal trends and her fanbase. But based on her engagement and the love radiating from the couple, Swift's bridal era is off to a sparkling start.



Photo Courtesy of Vogue

## Campground

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## Time Travelers

By: Jenna Sasso

In an effort to get to know just what makes some North Shore High School students tick, I roamed the hallways and asked some students and teachers a lighthearted, but surprisingly revealing question.

**If you could live in any decade or time period, which one would it be and why?**

**Chloe Connelly** (12th grade):

“The 2000s, because people weren’t as focused on their phones and the shows were great.”

**Christina DeGeorge** (10th grade):

“The 1970s, because they were so colorful and lively, and way different from now.”

**Avery McMahon** (12th grade):

“The 1960s; the fashion was extremely dope, and it’d be cool to grow up with totally new technology.”

**Diego Villacis** (12th grade):

“Somewhere between 2000-2010, because social media wasn’t big and people had fun. Plus, inflation wasn’t huge.”

**Evan Morssi** (10th grade):

“The Wild West, so I can rob banks and trains without getting caught.”

**Gavin Vulpis** (10th grade):

“The 1990s, since that’s when most of my music taste started to come out.”

**Henry Cardoza** (12th grade):

“The 1990s, because I see a lot of movies based in the 90s and it seems really cool and fun. The music and how people dressed were great.”

**Jake Park** (12th grade):

“Ancient China; I’d be a chill Chinese monk because they’re mad calm.”

**Joshlynn Wang** (12th grade):

“The 2000s because of Y2K and nostalgia.”

**Stella Cashman** (10th grade):

“The 2000s; that time seems chill, with its good pop culture and big tech advancements.”

**Arianna Geoghegan** (12th grade):

“The 1990s; everyone was cool and the music was good.”

**Virginia Stanco** (12th grade):

“The 1980s, so I could go to the mall more and not have a phone.”

**Zhiys Shen** (11th grade):

“The 1990s, to experience the golden age of the Xbox.”

**Alexa Scaffa** (11th grade):

“The 2000s, because I like the energy and style.”

**Caroline Benfield** (9th grade):

“The early 2000s because I think it’s very iconic,

the way people during that time dressed and did their makeup; I also like the types of houses; their style and the attention to detail when building them were great. Also, the colors they used were fun.”

**Gianna Famiglietti** (9th grade):

“Right before Apple caught on so I could become rich.”

**Mrs. Jennifer Babb** (Social Studies):

“The Roaring Twenties, for the new technology, cars, planes, movies, and the creation of a shared unique American culture in values.”

**Mr. Emmanuel Blanchard** (Social Studies):

“The Golden Age; it would be so interesting to see how technology shifted so quickly, from horses to trains to cars.”

**Mr. Patrick Cassino** (Science):

“The 1980s, for the hairstyles, roller rinks, fanny packs, and the Mets winning the World Series.”

**Ms. Judy Davis** (Hall Monitor):

“The late 1990s or early 2000s, for the fashion and music.”

**Dr. Kevin Kurrus** (Assistant Principal):

“The 1950s, so I could experience what life was like when my father was growing up.”

**Mr. Jason Millard** (Special Education)

“The 1970s because it was the best time for guitar-driven rock like Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd.”

**Mr. Joshua Knight** (English):

“A long, long time ago, so I could experience intergalactic travel like in *Star Wars*.”

**Ms. Stephanie Piacentino** (World Languages):

“The 1920s; the jazz clubs, fashion, and women’s rights movement would be amazing to see, especially since my Italian relatives came over then.”

**Mrs. Donna Rice** (Librarian):

“The 1990s; we had just the right amount of technology, no smartphones, no A.I., no Roblox. It was perfect.”

**Mr. Eric Contreras** (Principal):

“The 1930s and mid-1940s, because of the architecture and big band music.”

**Mr. Stephen Peroni** (Science):

“The 1980s to jump into tech and computer science sooner.”

**Ms. Sophia Amorgianos** (School Nurse):

“The 1990s; it was the decade I enjoyed growing up in with my brother, whom I miss dearly. It was such a nostalgic time.”

No matter how these North Shorians answered my questions, one thing’s for sure: our school is full of flavor and all of them are in to history.

## Matt’s Deli: A New Sea Cliff Staple

By: Lucia Cagno

Sea Cliff’s classic ‘Arata’s Deli’ has been renamed, rebranded, and reinvented. ‘Matt’s Deli’ has taken Sea Cliff by storm, and is quickly becoming a staple in so many local’s morning routine. Since 2003, the Collura family owned Arata’s (LIHerald.com). However, in 2023, the Collura clan looked to sell the deli and retire. That’s when Matthew Garry, a long-time Sea Cliff resident, stepped in over the summer of 2025.

Matthew (“Matt”) Garry owned ‘Ruland Road Deli’ in Melville for 25 years. He explained that once the Covid pandemic began, his deli business slowed down. He went from serving “thousands of people within a square mile to practically no one overnight,” and the deli never truly recovered. Garry therefore decided to move on, and sold his Melville deli around six months ago. Garry had noticed the “For Sale” sign in Arata’s window, and since he lives in Sea Cliff, Garry was soon encouraged by his family to seize the opportunity and buy the deli.

Once Garry reached out to the Collura family, he sat in the store over the course of a few weeks, observing the foot traffic and customers. It was apparent to him that with good food, an emphasis on a friendly environment, and some upgrades, success could be found. Soon after, a ten-year lease was negotiated between Garry and the previous owners.

And then, a lot happened. Garry had to obtain multiple insurance policies, such as unemployment and liability plans, register and file for a food service license from the Health Department, find vendors and restaurant suppliers, and more. After weeks of working on technicalities, ‘Matt’s Deli’ officially opened on July 7th.

Currently, ‘Matt’s Deli’ offers a wide variety of sandwiches, wraps, bagels, beverages, and other breakfast/lunch items. The deli is looking to expand the breakfast menu though to offer omelets, avocado toast, and more. As the weather begins to cool, Garry plans to offer soups and hot entrees for lunch. ‘Matt’s Deli’ is open every day from 7am to 3pm.

In the future, Garry hopes to have more family members involved with store operations and to “build a steady flow of happy customers”. The latter seems to be evident already. Many Sea Cliff locals now stop in at the deli for breakfast on their way to work to have a relaxing morning with friends, or just to say hello. ‘Matt’s Deli’ has even become a go-to for my family, and my brother says that it is his “new favorite breakfast spot.” It is certainly making a move in the community.

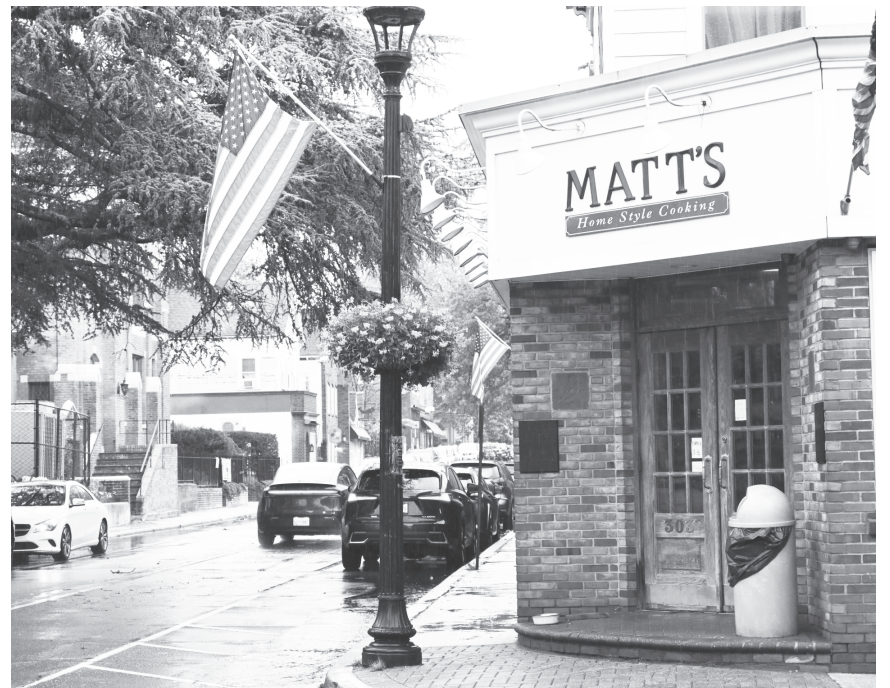


Photo Taken By: Ellamarie Mitchell

## Broadway Adaptations: Amazing or Aggravating?

By: Stella Cashman

When walking through Times Square, a tourist, let alone a New Yorker, can feel overwhelmed. The bright lights, mobs of people and honking taxis make a person want to escape from this extremely busy area. Luckily, there’s 41 easy places to take refuge and they are all Broadway theaters. Seeing a Broadway show is a right of passage for anyone who comes to New York City. And, production teams have started to take advantage of that more than ever.

Recently, there have been more and more adaptations being made for Broadway. In fact, there are only two completely original musicals out of the 24 that are currently running. The other musicals, which include *&Juliet*, *Just In Time*, *MJ*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Outsiders*, *The Lion King*, *Hamilton*, *Six: The Musical*, *Death Becomes Her*, *Mamma Mia*, *Aladdin*, *Hells’ Kitchen*, *Beetlejuice*, *Queen of Versailles*, *Operation Mincemeat*,

*Wicked*, *Moulin Rouge: The Musical*, *Chicago*, *Buena Vista Social Club* and *Hadestown* are all adaptations of some sort, whether the story comes from a movie, a book, or someone’s life. *The Book of Mormon* and *Maybe Happy Ending* are the only two current original Broadway musicals.

Broadway producers are a major reason why there are so many adaptations hitting the stage nowadays. After all, an adaptation can guarantee revenue. When a movie, book, or biography is popular, an adapted show comes with a fanbase. Take for example, *The Outsiders*. It has done quite well at the box office, potentially because many students read the book in middle school and enjoyed it. Present and past students are flocking to the Jacobs Theatre to see it. In addition, a show like *Mamma Mia* is a success; who doesn’t like to belt

out the catchy tunes?

On the other hand, a fanbase can also destroy an adaptation if it is not well executed. Take *The Notebook*, for instance, which came to Broadway in 2024; it did not succeed and it played only 317 performances. Critics and fans felt the show did not do the film justice.

Clearly, there are both pros and cons to adapting a story for Broadway. North Shore High School’s theater teacher and director, Mr. Aaron Brateman, thinks that directors “are challenged by the rules from a source material that maybe don’t translate well to theater.” In other words, often directors enjoy taking creative liberties or their own twists on certain things, but with an adaptation, changes come with risks. If you make a change, people might go in expecting to see the musical

they know and love, but then end up seeing something different than what they came in for. The problem with that is when people do not like what they are viewing, they tell their friends, and often cause ticket sales to go down. Mr. Leonard Schiff, an English teacher at North Shore High School, as well as a writer of musicals, says, “there’s things you can’t do, and then things you can do. So you do the stuff that you can.” Directors and producers need to make people want to see their show.

Many must think that Broadway adaptations are working though, as there are more on the horizon. For instance, *The Queen’s Gambit* and *Karate Kid* are being made into Broadway shows. Will they succeed or fail? We will leave that to the audiences to decide.

# Learning the Ancients' Tongue: The Role of Teaching Classical Languages in a Modern World

By: Anne Kelly

Why do we seek proficiency in another language? Do we desire the means to engage with a different culture, perceive another aspect of human history, or facilitate future interaction and interpersonal connection? Learning a new language opens our eyes and minds to those of societies differing in experience and perception of the societal conditions we share. In understanding and speaking a different language, we gain insight into not only the experience, but also the values of the cultures in which the language is spoken, as we study what was deemed worthy of expression in the society in which the language developed.

In America, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, between the years 2000 and 2019, the percentage of high school graduates in both public and private schools with any number of Spanish credits, the most prevalent language studied by this measure, increased by 9.9% to 70% of graduates. The popularity of enrollment in Spanish is likely due to its widespread presence in our culture and thus its evident usefulness in communication.

However, in a smaller proportion

of schools, Latin is taught as a language. It is the language of the ancient Romans and a pillar of classical development and expression, as well as the language integral to higher education and cross-cultural communication through the 19th century. But as our society increasingly deviates away from interest in classical studies toward a more pragmatic ideology in language offerings, Latin is becoming increasingly rare in public schools despite its connection to ancient culture and allowance for engagement with the ancients' knowledge. Though in the early 2000s, Latin education in public schools was on the rise, with a rebirth of classical interest and a desire to improve SAT scores using knowledge of Latin roots, now, according to North Shore Latin teacher Mr. Roberto Bongiovanni, "the culture is changing...[and] reverence for the past has pretty much disappeared...[so] pedagogical theory has...tried to keep up with the changes in the general culture." Furthermore, with the desire to reappropriate funds to reflect a change in educational emphasis upon STEM instruction, the

unique benefit of learning Latin is frequently lost. And in response to the notion that a language's conversational use determines whether it is deserving of study, questions are commonly asked of its students regarding the reason for their enrollment in a language perceived as "dead."

But, to Mr. Bongiovanni, Latin is far from this fate. Some languages, he argues, "may be extinct," as is the case with Latin. While it is not spoken in its pure form in the majority of our society, it still "survives in the modern languages" in multiple aspects. Firstly, in learning this language, we better understand our own, even as speakers of a non-Romance language; over half of the English vocabulary is derived from Latin influence, and to learn this language, which inherently emphasizes grammatical conventions more so than in the educational framework of languages studied to be spoken, allows for an expanded understanding of "syntax [and] stylistics...[and] that's very transferable". Mr. Bongiovanni notes that he "use[s] Latin every day, not just because [he] teach[es] Latin, but because [he is] a reader and writer."

And while this is evidently a valuable benefit for students, who he believes "become better readers and writers" by taking Latin, direct relevance in our society is also prominent. From the presence of its terms in medicine, law, and science, describing aspects of our lives from anatomy and legal instructions to colloquial phrases, Latin is used in the modern world across diverse fields of study and benefits those familiar with the language.

Though our Latin program is small at North Shore, Mr. Bongiovanni believes that it is supported by a community that realizes its value as "the language that is crucially important for the professions," and while it may also be incorrectly perceived as a language reserved for an elite class, continuing public school programs will aid in changing that narrative. In the coming years, he hopes that another wave of interest in classics will emerge, perhaps spurred on by the growing presence of Roman Stoicism in cultural interest or current archeological discoveries, bringing more Latin students into the classroom and the ancient world back into the public mind.

## Donna Tartt and *The Secret History*

By: Kaia Pollio

Donna Tartt is an American writer who is known for her Pulitzer prize winning novel, *The Goldfinch*. At the age of five, Tartt was already writing poems, and even published a sonnet for the *Mississippi Review* at the age of 13. After attending the University of Mississippi, she transferred to Bennington College, which was known for its emphasis on fostering creativity, at the encouragement of several peers who recognized her talent (Kuiper). Her debut novel, *The Secret History*, quickly earned her the title of a literary star, but despite this, Tartt maintained a reputation of being intensely private. Since then, she has only published two other novels: *The Goldfinch* and *The Little Friend*, about 10 years apart. The combination of her private attitude and her periods of silence deepen her mystique as a writer and only increases the readers' fascination with her.

As a writer, Tartt often explores themes of beauty and knowledge, while also displaying the dangers of the pursuit for intellect. In *The Secret History*, Donna Tartt perfectly encapsulates how the beauty of academia can lead to a spiral of obsession. This novel follows a group of college students that is studying Greek under a charming, yet manipulative professor at Hampden College in Vermont. The students initially show complex levels of pretentiousness and intelligence. Yet this quickly transforms into dangerous obsession, secrecy, and questionable morals. Tartt's time at Bennington strongly influenced this novel, as both Bennington and Hampden College have secluded, intellectual environments, and Bennington was home to its very own elitist group of Greek studying students (Nagy). The parallels that can be drawn between Tartt's own college experience and *The Secret History* give the novel an authentic background that blurs the lines between Tartt's personal experiences and the fictional account that is found in the story. The morally questionable characters, thought-provoking quotes, and dark atmosphere draw in students who can relate to the need for academic achievement and greatness.

Despite being published in 1992, *The*

*Secret History* has suddenly resurfaced on various social media platforms, such as TikTok. This is evident in the over 229 million views of TikTok posts under "#thesecrethistory" that include countless fan edits to quotes that capture Tartt's thought-provoking ideas about morality (Pirovic). As of 2022, over five million copies of this novel have been sold since its release in 1992, with the most recent sales linked to the rise in "BookTok", a community on TikTok where users share their opinions on books (Penguin Books). These astonishing numbers show how the influence of this resonant novel has spread to a newer generation of readers, marking its unexpected resurgence.

The sudden popularity of *The Secret History* could additionally be tied to its "dark academia" aesthetic that is becoming increasingly popular on different social media platforms, as there are 2.8 million posts under "#darkacademia" on Instagram. This aesthetic is identified by the romanticization of classic literature, intellectual pursuit, and academic life, which are all important themes in *The Secret History* (Brinkhof). Younger generations, especially Gen Z students, are drawn to this aesthetic because it helps glorify academics in a world that stresses perfection and greatness.

So many students feel anxiety about academic perfectionism. The need to be the most intelligent, the most educated, and the most well-read are all things students of the current generation relate to, as the pressures of academics increase. Up to 61% of teenagers have been reported to feel significant pressure to earn good grades, which reflects the increasing stress being put on academic achievements (Children's Hope Alliance). This pressure is mirrored through Tartt's characters, who all strive for the highest level of intelligence, but are ultimately led to moral corruption due to this obsession. Overall, *The Secret History* offers GenZ an escape from reality and a chance to romanticize these pressures into something more bearable, and even more beautiful.

## Denim Drama: American Eagle and GAP Go Head-To-Head

By: Irene Vasilatos

Jeans, a clothing item that can be anything- casual, dressy, cute, or grungy. Actress Sydney Sweeney apparently "has great jeans" from American Eagle, but the global girl group KATSEYE's Gap Jeans are supposedly "better than yours". But how did Sweeney ruin her image with one ad; even more interesting of a question is: how did Katseye make it even worse?

Sydney Sweeney did a brand deal with American Eagle that involved releasing a handful of different ads. Each ad ended with the same line, "Sydney Sweeney has great jeans."

One of those commercials, however, went viral-half for the right reason, and half for the wrong reason. In it, Sweeney explains how genes are passed down from generation to generation. The commercial ends, again, with the line "Sydney Sweeney Has Great Jeans" which threw the internet into a divided state. On the one hand, some people think the commercial was just a funny jab at genetics, but others say it was a play at white supremacy, considering Sweeney's skin tone and eye color.

No matter how it was viewed though, the campaign was successful. According to Jay Schottenstein, the CEO of American Eagle Outfitters, "[they] saw record-breaking new customer acquisition and brand awareness cutting across age demographics and genders." And, according to *Fox News Digital* writer Sofia Compton, the brand's stock has jumped up by 25% ever since the campaign's initial release. *Forbes'* writer Doug Melville said that all the controversy is surrounded by "the pun/double entendre of language between genes and jeans, the intersection of visual identity and [visual appeal], and the pretty privilege of 'traditional' beauty."

One of American Eagle's competitors, GAP, has also recently reached a viral level in terms of popularity and sales. Its success can be attributed to its brand deal with KATSEYE, a global popular girl group. The question is: why?

Considering KATSEYE's diversity, appeal to younger consumers, and their attention to beautiful cultural representation through their

music, expressive dance routines, and performance outfits, it was logical for GAP's ad to go "mega viral". The ad had a dance routine to Kelis's "Milkshake", a powerful, catchy song that has become timeless ever since its release in 2003. The dance routine, not only highlighted each member's individual talents, but it was also trendy and has caused people to perform the dance on social media.

The GAP ad's popularity has been record breaking as well, and the ad is even being studied by advertising majors in colleges such as Michigan State, Boston University, and The University of Texas at Austin, making many rethink what it means to have successful advertising. Not only does the song choice complement the promotion of the 2000s low rise jeans by providing a catchy, nostalgic, chorus- but it has also led to classic movie references, like an audio clip from the 2004 movie *Mean Girls*, in which Kylie, Regina George's little sister, dances to "Milkshake"'s original music video in her living room, which was perfect for GAP in the promotion process.

I happened to speak with my good friend, Janaki Matani-Thrun, about her thoughts on whether or not the KATSEYE GAP ad was praiseworthy. "As an Indian, seeing Lara Raj [a member of the group] shine in GAP's ad really makes me feel so awesome," she said. "My mom even loves KATSEYE, just because Lara shares our culture."

It's so interesting to see cultural representation in advertising, and how important it is to have it. In a *CNN* article, writer Lisa Respers France writes about how the American Eagle ad "sparked [conversations online] about cancel culture and what it means to be American", and later says that "The [GAP ad's] diversity, dancing and fashion has helped the ad go viral at a time when there's been debate about how companies are relating to their customer base."

For now, American Eagle and GAP seem to be battling it out by using different marketing strategies. May the best brand win.

## A Look Back At A Wild MLB Season

By: Tyler Harding

Major League Baseball (MLB) always finds a way to surprise people. The 2025 season was full of breakout rookies, teams nobody expected to see in the playoff hunt, and some highly expected teams not even making the playoffs. From rookies exceeding their expectations to World Series potential teams completely falling apart later in the season, here's a look back at the 2025 Major League Baseball regular season.

One of the biggest rookie stories this year was that of Nick Kurtz from the Oakland A's. He showed crazy power all season, hitting 36 home runs and driving in 86 runs while hitting close to .290 as his batting average, which is considered very good for an MLB player, especially a rookie. On July 25th, 2025, he hit four home runs in a single game against the Houston Astros, becoming the first rookie in MLB history to accomplish such a feat. This solidified his spot as one of the best young hitters in baseball.

Jacob Wilson, another rookie who is also with Oakland, impressed in a totally different way. He was not hitting bombs every night, but his .311 batting average and smooth defense made him one of the most consistent shortstops in the League, so much so that he even started in the All-Star Game.

And then there's Jasson Domínguez from the Yankees. He was another star rookie who brought a mix of speed and power, finishing with 10 homers and 23 stolen bases. He had ups and downs, but when he was hot, he looked like the superstar everyone was waiting for.

Along with the standout rookies, a few teams also surprised everyone with their impressive performances this past season. Some examples were the Chicago Cubs,



Seattle Mariners, and Milwaukee Brewers. Many people did not think the Cubs, for instance, were going to make the playoffs, but the team put up a very solid season and headed to the postseason for the first time since 2020. And, the Seattle Mariners won the AL West when many baseball fans thought it would be the Houston Astros or the Texas Rangers. A very solid pitching staff and stars like Cal Raleigh and Julio Rodriguez caused the Mariners to look like a complete team, which helped the players eventually get to the American League Championship Series.

While some teams exceeded the expectations that had been set for them, others just couldn't keep up. The New York Mets was one team for instance, that threw away a good thing. The Mets started the year strong early on and the team was looking like a serious contender, but things fell apart fast. Injuries and inconsistent pitching caught up with the players, and by the end of the season, playoff hopes were gone. For a team with that much talent and high payroll, missing the postseason was a huge disappointment for both players and fans.

In addition, the Houston Astros also had a rough year. After being one of the best teams in baseball for many seasons, the players slowed down in 2025. The team's pitching wasn't as strong, and the hitting just wasn't as consistent as it was in the past. For a team that makes the playoffs almost every year, missing out this past season was a big shock.

The 2025 MLB season was full of surprises. Some rookies and teams went above and beyond expectations, making names for themselves and breaking records, while others let many down. That's the beautiful part of baseball: anything can happen!

creating an identity through what one wears.

The 1920s was the beginning of a major shift in women's fashion. Women were gaining more social freedom and this newfound freedom manifested itself into new forms of self-expression. Flapper dresses, short haircuts like the bob and designs by Coco Chanel represented women's independence and social liberation. American fashion has slowly evolved from following strict societal standards to today's idea that it can highlight a person's identity.

With the introduction of fast fashion, the ability to use your clothes to express your identity has gotten increasingly easier. Fast fashion is the rapid production of inexpensive clothing to meet

## Victory and Frustration Collide During WNBA Post-Season

By: Abby Reisberg

With a Game 4 96-84 win over the Phoenix Mercury, the Las Vegas Aces officially cemented their status as a championship dynasty, claiming their third WNBA title of the decade. In the victory, their star forward, Aja Wilson, dominated with 31 points and nine rebounds, earning Finals MVP honors to go along with her co-Defensive Player of the Year and WNBA MVP awards. While this win wraps up another impressive postseason for the Aces, it also marks the start of what promises to be an interesting off-season. However, even as the Aces celebrate their well-deserved championship, tensions are rising elsewhere in the League.

Commissioner Cathy Engelbert is having a difficult time after a powerful statement was made by Napheesa Collier of the Minnesota Lynx in a post-game press conference following their semifinal elimination by the Phoenix Mercury. She is not only one of the biggest stars in the WNBA, but she is also one of the League's most humble and respected voices. Collier, who is the vice president of the WNBA Players Association (WNBPA), is a key member of the union's leadership, and is particularly involved in the upcoming collective bargaining agreement (CBA) negotiations with the League. As a vice president, she has a significant voice in representing players and advocating for their interests in negotiations with the WNBA. In the opening sentences of that press conference, she went beyond congratulating the opposing team by saying, "This conversation is not about winning or losing. It's about something much bigger. The real threat to our league isn't money. It isn't ratings or even missed calls or even physical play. It's a lack of accountability from the league office."

Collier also stated that in a prior private conversation with the Commissioner, Engelbert ignored concerns about officiating by saying, "only losers complain about the refs." Collier also claimed that when she asked about the low paying rookie contracts of players like Caitlin Clark, Angel Reese, and Paige Bueckers, three athletes who are bringing in massive revenue for the League, Engelbert responded that Caitlin Clark should be "grateful" for her off-court earnings because "Without the platform the WNBA gives her, she wouldn't make anything" (ESPN). In the same conversation, Engelbert even went as far to say, "Players should be on their knees, thanking their lucky stars for the media rights deal that I got them."

Collier later canceled a scheduled meeting with Engelbert after the commissioner publicly denied making those remarks in Collier's post-game press conference. Engelbert stated that she was "disheartened."

Hours after the statement by Napheesa Collier was made, other players were siding with her and speaking out on social media to flood her with love. Angel Reese of the Chicago Sky said, "No notes." Nneka Ogwumike of the Seattle Storm responded by saying: "My initial thoughts were, 'I agree,'" said "And that I was proud to be part of this union and with players like Phee who display their leadership." With this she sent Collier a congratulatory text. In addition, A'ja Wilson, the now three-time WNBA champion, was "disgusted" by Engelbert's alleged comments toward players and backed Collier by stating, "I'm going to ride with Phee always."

The support for Collier and her statements was quite evident after the Aces won the championship because normally when a team wins a championship, the arena erupts with cheering and celebration. However, during this year's ceremony, the excitement was drowned out by boos. Fans loudly booed Commissioner Cathy Engelbert as she delivered the WNBA Championship and Finals MVP trophies to A'ja Wilson. The chanting against her was so loud that it was hard to even hear what she was saying. With this, "Aces players seemed to ignore Engelbert as she stood beside them during the postgame ceremony before she exited the court as celebrations continued" (ESPN).

While chanting against commissioners isn't unusual in sports, as even NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has been booed before, this moment felt different. This wasn't just fan behavior; it was a clear reflection of the players' frustration spilling over to the crowd. The tension between the League office and its athletes has reached a point where fans are now voicing that anger in public arenas. How Commissioner Engelbert and the WNBPA handle the coming months could determine not just next season's tone, but the direction of the League's future. The WNBA certainly needs powerful voices like Collier's to stand up for the world of women's basketball.

## Threads Of Identity

By: Sophie Leigh

In 1964 Coco Chanel stated "Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening."

Nearly a century later, her words prove to be timeless. In 2025, fashion continues to embody the world around us. American fashion trends have been evolving and developing to reflect the constant changes in our culture. From the 1920s and the introduction of flappers to 2025's minimalist streetwear movement, fashion has always mirrored who we are, what we believe and what we love. As society continues to evolve, so does the way every individual person expresses themselves. In 2025 fashion is less about trends and more about self-expression and

ever-changing trends. And, many of these trends have their roots in social media. With easy access to fashion from all over the world the world thanks to social media, we continue to see the influence of many different aesthetics. These aesthetics, like minimalism, retro and coastal are being combined and shared through social media, pushing the idea that outfits no longer need to fit one aesthetic or live under a defining label. In 2025 the lack of these labels has allowed fashion to become more than just fabric. The increasing awareness of personal identity has allowed for fashion to move away from outdated societal standards. Clothes are no longer being made for specific groups, but instead for the

individual, allowing for each and every person to have the opportunity to express themselves.

What we see on social media, on the street and on the runway has its own origin story and are styles that have evolved from the past to reflect the present. Nowadays fashion is not about a single look, but about the combination of eras and values. The clothes we wear are not only a representation of our style or money, but also our identity and values. Fashion will continue to borrow, reinterpret and push boundaries, but the most important part of it is that everyone gets to experience and shape that evolution.

# The Women's Varsity Volleyball Team Serves Aces When It Comes To Teachers

By: Lana Gasparri

On the evening of September 29th, 2025, in North Shore High School's gymnasium, the Varsity Women's Volleyball Team held a very special event. In addition to defeating Locust Valley High School in three sets, the girls took a half hour or so to appreciate the teachers they have built a strong relationship with. Whether that involves helping them learn material, lending an ear to talk to or just creating a warm classroom vibe, each member of the team picked one teacher she wanted to recognize. This special tradition, which unfortunately has not taken place since Covid, has helped build a wonderful connection between athletics and academics, and shines a light on the importance of having a teacher who has a lasting impact on a student's life.

The Women's Varsity Volleyball Coach, Danielle Bleiweiss, a former North Shore student and volleyball player, is in her second year as head coach of the Varsity Volleyball Team and her fourth year of coaching at North Shore. She stated that the prior volleyball coach, Ms. Tracy Iacovelli, "had kept the event going for years, but due to Covid, it stopped." Coach Bleiweiss saw the good in the event and so, "I wanted to bring it back." "I think high school is a tough few years. People the same age as you can be mean. And having someone to go to that you can just talk to or feel comfortable with, even if you're not addressing a situation that happened, but someone that you just feel connected to and is there to help you is really good to have," Bleiweiss

reflected. "I also think the event builds a sense of community, and it probably brings out some teachers and faculty members who might not think to catch a volleyball game. They get to see their student athletes doing something they love outside of school hours. Then the players feel like they're supported by their teachers so they're going to try harder in those classes." In other words, this teacher recognition award has so many positives.

When asked what the awards ceremony meant to them, Nora DiNicola, a junior on the volleyball team said "I enjoyed the ceremony because I think it gives teachers recognition for the impact that they have made on students throughout their career. I chose my teacher because she was great at helping me transition into high school during my freshman year, and she was a teacher I could trust. And she

continues to be someone I could go to at any time and still have academic conversations with or friendly conversations with." In addition, Samantha Guy, another junior on the volleyball team said "I really enjoyed this ceremony because I got the chance to recognize my favorite teacher and so did the other girls on the team. I chose my teacher because she's been the one who has impacted me the most and made coming to school enjoyable. It's good to have a teacher you have a genuine relationship with in high school."

Even Coach Bleiweiss gave the award twice when she was at North Shore as a student and on the volleyball team. "My first year, I gave the award to Miss Finning, who was my guidance counselor in Middle School; she helped me through a lot. Then the second year I presented the award to Ms. Sara LeMar, a science teacher at the High

School, who I interned for." Now, as the coach, Bleiweiss is having a full circle moment. "Three girls picked teachers I would have picked if I could have, so this evening was great. I liked emailing the teachers and making them smile. Plus, having them come to the game that night and support the girls, and me, was even better!"

In the end, the ceremony wasn't just about recognizing the teachers; it was about taking the time to reflect on how the teachers who were chosen this year have had an impact and how they are appreciated. Each teacher took pictures with the student who chose him or her and received a gift box and handwritten card as well. It really meant a lot to both the team and the teachers. Hopefully this tradition continues...and maybe other teams will start their own teacher appreciation events as well.

*The teachers (and students who acknowledged them) included: Ms. Janet Goldberg (Grace Harding), Ms. Casey Turk (Lauren Krupski), Ms. Evelyne Pommateau (Leila Peraica), Ms. Lauren DeLuca (Chloe Rowell), Mr. Steven Burgos (Hailey Sanchez), Ms. Lynne Johnson (Lila Frame), Ms. Brooke Hope (Sam Guy), Ms. Sara Millman (Nora DiNicola), Ms. Lisa Suau (Lily Bombardiere), Ms. Tracy Iacovelli (Devyn Mandell), Ms. Sarah Hogan (Faith Virgilio), Mr. Josh Timlin (Delaney Strecker), Ms. Jennifer Rizza (Olivia DeCesare), Ms. Laura DiLallo (Talia Ricciuti), and Ms. Nicole Larkin (Giuliana Barba).*



Photo Taken By: Lana Gasparri

## Lighting It Up

By: Nick Nyffler

It's a Friday night and you are driving down Dosis Lane right by Glen Cove High School. All of a sudden a loud chant starts and thundersticks are heard being banged together. Kids are decked out in red and white as they walk towards the school. A football night game is about to start. The spirit is palpable. North Shore High School needs this kind of energy. How can we get it: by putting lights on the main field.

Adding lights to North Shore High School's turf field is not a new idea. In fact, in 2019, lights were discussed. However, the Board removed the \$1 million allotted for the lights and ensured that the bond proposal that year remained under \$40 million. As a result of this removal, the bond cost taxpayers no more than what they were paying prior for a bond that the District was paying off (*Long Island Herald*). But, there are so many community members and students who feel that lights would only create a positive atmosphere for the community and should not continue to be pushed off. Don Lang, the Athletic Director of the North Shore Schools, recently stated that "A couple of years back lights were in a bond, but then they were taken out at the last minute; then there were other times when they were voted down partially because they would cost anywhere from seven hundred and fifty thousand to one million dollars." He added that we could rent lights, but they are not that good." Another way to get

lights on the turf field was, according to Mr. Lang, proposed by the Town of Oyster Bay. The Town stated that it would put lights on the field, but the catch was that the District had to share the area with the Town. Needless to say, this option was a no-go.

There are also some who do not want lights on the field for several reasons, such as the potential to be bothered by them, as well as the noise, for a few hours at night. In addition, there is concern that some students who attend night games may not act well. On the flip side, there are so many others who think they would only create more school spirit, allow parents who normally work during the afternoon games to come see them at night, and help the athletic program, in general. In fact, Diego Villacis, a 12th grader, stated that he would come out to these night games as well as train on the field in the evening. In addition, Chase Conzelman, a sophomore, said that last year he had to play against Wantagh in a football game and they had to stop the game because there were no lights on the field. Unfortunately, the players could not see what they were doing once dusk set in.

In the end, anyone who drives by a school at night or even attends a Homecoming game at night will only see positive things happening. It's a total vibe, and one that North Shore could only benefit from.

## Do Football Players Need A Guardian?

By: Chase Conzelman

You're at your high school Homecoming game and it seems like the entire school is there. The game is tied in the fourth quarter and your star quarterback is suddenly tackled and slams his head on the turf. Boom; just like that, his season is over. Scenarios like this one are quite realistic for high school, or even middle school, football players.

A concussion is an intermediate brain injury, meaning it's moderately traumatic, and caused by a hit or jolt to the head that makes the brain bounce or twist inside of the skull. The percentage of players who have suffered a concussion while playing football has dramatically gone up. In fact, in 2024, a study found that 5 percent of youth football players (ages 5-14) sustained a concussion per season. Older players (14-18 years old) show a higher percentage of concussions at 10.6%. Also, after suffering a concussion, the risk of experiencing another only increases. Plus, the effects could be even worse.

Due to the great risk of injuries for young football players, there has been quite a bit of talk over the years regarding ways the issue could be assuaged. In 2020, the National Football League implemented an option for players to wear a Guardian cap, a protective accessory that is placed over the helmet. It costs anywhere between 75-115 dollars according to the official Guardian website. They "bring a padded, soft-shell layer to the outside of the...helmet and

reduce impact of daily hits" (guardiansports.com). It is made of closed cell foam, which allows it not to "pick up weight in the rain (or wash); and is covered by spandex fabric" (guardiansports.com).

Despite what some think are positives, the added protection has been criticized by others for being too heavy, as a standard one weighs a little less than 7 ounces. This could potentially lead to other types of head or neck injuries. But, since many teens have seen college level players and professional players such as Romeo Dobbs and Damar Hamlin wearing one, they want to try it out as well. So now, children on teams across the country sport them.

When asked about potentially purchasing Guardian caps for North Shore High School's Football Team, Athletic Director Don Lang said "We have spoken with multiple schools around here who use them." For instance, two of the high schools in the Bellmore-Merrick School District use them. So, only time will tell.

Guardian caps could be the start of a new wave of player safety at North Shore and across the country. So many people feel that putting a stop to the risk of head injuries heavily outweighs the price of the helmets. And is that not a simple, but important reason to purchase them?