

The Update



Midland
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Page 5

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Bridge to consumption

Seniors Anna Barbeau, Luvya Dhar build program with intention to aid Bridge Food Center

Kelly Daoud
co-business editor

As part of the IB Diploma program, candidates are required to create a Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS) project. Seniors Luvya Dhar and Anna Barbeau worked together for their project which focused on supporting the Bridge Food Center.

“We did a lot of work together on planning our project, and then we divided that by our strengths,” Barbeau said. “So [Dhar] is doing a lot of the more technological stuff that he’s stronger with, and I’m doing more of the social, written, and all that stuff that I’m stronger with.”

Dhar, specifically, collaborated with the Bridge Food Center to build a website that they can use to help with their daily operations.

“So basically, the Bridge Food Center is a nonprofit grocery store that mainly sources members of the ALICE population, and the reason it’s important is because, the ALICE population, they earn too little to financially and comfortably shop at traditional, well-known grocery stores like Meijer and Kroger, but they earn too much to qualify for governmental aid and food stamps,” Dhar said.

The Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population is made up of people who need financial help to get groceries. The Bridge Food Center helps keep prices low for the ALICE population.

“The Bridge Food Center, what they do is they take groceries, they buy stuff straight from the factory or straight from the supplier,” Dhar said. “They just mark it up five cents to cover the credit card costs.”

This helps people that are part of the ALICE population because it’s now more accessible.

“People who aren’t financially comfortable spending too much money on groceries, [The Bridge Food Center] helps them pay for it,” Dhar said.

While this is a helpful organization, Dhar wanted to look at potential improvements to their current system. Looking at the store’s way of doing things made Dhar realize how complicated their tasks can get.

“I looked at one of the pads that they used to record their data, and it was really just illegible, [like] hieroglyphics,” Dhar said. “You couldn’t even read what they had written down.”

The employees at the center could struggle with taking inventory and could easily miscount. Dhar shares an example of what this might look like.

“They’d be on like, 131, 132 and then 140 [items],” Dhar said. “Then they had to recount that whole shelf there. It’s not automated or online at all.”

The solution Barbeau and Dhar developed uses technology to count these



photo by Isabelle Hetherington

Last-minute teamwork: On Dec. 2, seniors Anna Barbeau and Luvya Dhar worked together to finish up some final touches. “We are working on our initial reflection for our CAS project,” Barbeau said. There were three reflections that needed to be done, this one is the first.

food items instead of it being done manually.

“[We] used free online databases,” Dhar said. “You can just look at food barcode databases. It already has the barcode attached to the name of the food. So after that, then all we would have to do theoretically [is] input the nutrition information, all the stuff, a picture of the product, or all this stuff, like once.”

After the barcode has been scanned, the system reads and records that data.

“What I wanted to do was utilize an iPhone’s camera to scan the barcode

on each item,” Dhar said.

“This would help because barcodes are all attached to online, free databases that include all the nutritional facts and the information about food.”

This solves the problem of miscounting and is not as time consuming.

“[It’s] a lot more hassle free than having to write down and count all the items,”

Dhar said. “You can just scan it in, and it’s kind of foolproof.”

There are multiple reasons this was better and more accurate.

“We were also planning on using predictive analytics,” Dhar said. “It’s important because they’re a nonprofit grocery store, so they need to put as much money towards utility as possible.”

Predictive analysis can show what is bought more frequently by customers and what isn’t, which helps inform employees of what items are popular. This is helpful since items for the store are bought in bulk.

Dhar originally came up with this idea because of a DECA event. The prompt was: How can artificial intelligence be integrated into a business’ framework? During the DECA event, Dhar was required to work with a store, which is how he connected with the Bridge Food Center in the first place.

“As time went on, I realized that maybe I can actually do this; maybe I can actually institute it and help out the Bridge [Food] Center,” Dhar said.

Beyond fixing the system, there were a few other goals for the project.

“My long term hopes for this project is that, once we institute it, to use the predictive analytics dashboard to track buying trends,” Dhar said. “The Bridge Food Center can cut costs by at least around 25% and, hopefully, more as time goes on.”

Barbeau also had some expectations in regard to what she expected in terms of both personal growth and project growth.

“I hope that this project is fun for me to do and something that will help the community, something that is creative and has action and service,” Barbeau said.

While the project is currently going well, there were some tough obstacles along the way.

“The hardest part about this project was figuring out how to start, because the amount of things and the variety of ways that I could start and how to perfectly capture [the purpose of] user interface [for] people who haven’t used a lot of online applications and systems, how to find out which user interface would be the easiest and most intuitive for them [was difficult],” Dhar said.

As Dhar pursues refining the project, he continues to face some challenges. A problem he’s facing currently with the Bridge Food Center is the database not being familiar with every food brand.

“The databases that include the barcodes of these non-traditional products aren’t as readily available as the databases that include brands,” Dhar said.

Dhar also mentioned that there was a moral side of the project and a reason behind it all.

“We want to make it as easy for them as possible,” Dhar said. “So why would we ever make people pay for something [when they don’t have to]?”

With all this work, Dhar has learned a lot about himself.

“I don’t need a reason to do something good for the community,” Dhar said. “I can just do it just because I can; it is good. I don’t need recognition. I don’t need money for it. I don’t need certain material aspects that can come with things like this. Because sometimes, the best things that are done are done in silence and are done without huge recognition.”

The Feed

Kelly Daoud & Addyson French
co-business editors

MPS 2026-27 school start date change

Many parents and teachers are concerned with the 2026 Midland County Fair’s start date colliding with the 2026-27 school year. In the school board meeting on Nov. 17, the issue was addressed and several community members voiced their frustration regarding the matter.

“We didn’t make a rash decision but collected all the facts [and] investigated,” MPS Board of Education president Phil Rausch said at the board meeting.

At the meeting, Superintendent Penny Miller-Nelson talked about a press release that was created. It essentially states that there might be a change in the start date, but that there is no set calendar. According to Miller-Nelson, this press release at least lets parents know that the issue is being discussed, even if nothing is finalized yet.

Families are worried because the fair is such a significant event for the community. Parents are nervous that a changing of the school-year start date could affect their child’s participation in fair activities, such as 4-H. However, a later start of the school year could also lead to difficulties for others, such as teachers having to figure out how to manage teaching so much for the first semester.

“We anticipate we’ll have a finalized calendar to share sometime early next year,” Midland Public Schools’ Instagram said.

Students voices shape MPS future

MPS administration recently sent out surveys for students, staff and the community to provide their input regarding what they want to see in the school district’s future. Right now, many MPS schools are reaching their limits as to how many students they can accommodate. The surveys, which are available on the MPS website, are supposed to allow for suggestions to solve this problem in the long term.

“We want to know the things that are good so we can continue them,” Penny Miller-Nelson said. “It asks students to talk about what their vision for their ideal or dream school is; it asks what do you want to see changed to make [the district] better for you as a Midland Public Schools student.”

The main result that Miller-Nelson wants out of this survey is to get everyone’s perspective on what makes MPS great, and what can be improved. Miller-Nelson wants to know what students think about MPS, so the district can be successful in meeting students, teachers, and community members’ needs.

“I want students to know that their voice matters,” Miller-Nelson said. “You are the consumers of this. You’re the ones who are here everyday. This is the moment for us to really recognize the honor and respect that students deserve.”

TAKE a NUMBER

4%
of people go Christmas caroling

77%
of people put up Christmas decorations

graphics by Tanner Witzke

48%
of Americans have Christmas lights outside their homes

1 in 10
Americans complete their Christmas shopping prior to Thanksgiving

information from “2024 Christmas Facts, Statistics, & Trends Unwrapped” on Driveresearch.com

Club Briefs

Madalyn Blohm
managing feature

HOSA Club heads to Districts

A Career and Technical Student Organization that focuses specifically on health care is available to all students at DHS. Health Occupations Students of America, better known as HOSA, is a club that gives students real-world scenarios through health care-focused competitions.

“There’s testing events where they can take just certain testing skills, there’s things like medical, math, nutrition [and] there’s other skills like sports medicine where kids would have to wrap an ankle on a patient and things like that,” senior, Michigan HOSA Region Seven Representative and DHS HOSA club Vice President of Public Relations Evana Reineke said.

HOSA is a gateway to those pursuing a career in any area in the medical field. Those who aren’t pursuing anything health related can still join. Recently, club members competed at their regional competition on Dec. 5. At their competition, 34 students qualified for states. Outside of competitions, HOSA hosts volunteer opportunities for its members.

“We made Thanksgiving cards for people in the hospital [and] nursing homes and then we’re also setting up times for kids to go into nursing homes and just meet with different people and be able to help out,” Reineke said.

HOSA club meets every other Monday in adviser Marnie Williams’ room, 369. Meetings typically start after sixth hour, but occasionally begin after seventh.

DECA DECA DECA

Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) focuses specifically on the four components of business: marketing, finance, hospitality and management. DECA puts business students through realistic scenarios in different competitions as well as written events.

“There’s two different types of events,” DECA President Audrey Hyde said. “You can do some role plays. They’ll go in and they get a set amount of time with a business situation, and then they have that time to prep. And then they go into the judge right away, and they present their solution to that business plan, and then the judge asks questions. Whereas a written event, they only compete at states, but they have months to prepare. And then they go in with a paper and a presentation, and they also present that to a judge.”

DHS has the second largest DECA chapter in Michigan, sitting at 216 members. Due to having such a large membership, the club has created its own officer team.

This officer team is a resource that allows for every member to have a clear understanding of their competition and offers assistance with anything else they may need.

The club meets in the Little Theater on the second Thursday of every month and has both a morning meeting at 7:10, and an afternoon meeting after sixth hour. Their last meeting was on Tuesday, Dec. 9, which was two days before their district competition.

Getting social at Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is a club available to all students at DHS. The club typically meets every other Wednesday in room 371 during both lunch hours. Lunch Bunch has a very social environment, allowing students to comfortably eat lunch and meet new people. This club was made with the students in Educational Service Agency (ESA) programs in mind.

“It started as a way to help students in the ESA programs have more interactions with the general student body,” club adviser Elizabeth Shuster said. “It’s mostly to create a safe space for all of the students in the building to meet new people, try new things, feel supported, be themselves, be their true, authentic selves and have people recognize that there’s lots of different ways to navigate the world and navigate our school, and that’s okay. It’s a place of acceptance.”

Eating lunch is not the only thing the club does. Sometimes, they will play games with each other, which is almost always followed with a snack that is aligned with current events.

Consistent change

Exam schedule includes more structured time

Madalyn Blohm
managing feature

In past years at DHS, students have experienced multiple exam schedules. Typically, first and second hour exams are taken on the first day, third and fourth hours on the second day, and fifth and sixth hours on the last day, leaving seventh hour to be placed on either day one or day two. This has left the last day to be a half day on some exam schedules. This year, however, students will experience something that is different from previous schedules.

“We’ve had lots of times at the end of the semester where the last day is a half day,” Principal Scott Cochran said. “We’ve got other times like this year where it’s a full day. That’s really decided by, we have a Calendar Committee for the district, which is teachers and administrators that are working downtown.”

While making the exam schedule, middle school and elementary school schedules are also considered. In previous years, the exam schedule did not need to stay as consistent with the middle and elementary schools as it does now, which has allowed previous exam schedules to have half days on the last day of exams.

“We used to have the half day where you guys got to go home,” math teacher Jason Gehoski said. “That was our work time. We were able to grade, and we were able to finish things up and have everything done. We don’t have that time anymore.”

With the exam schedule no longer having half days, there is more time to fill. One of the many ways this has been achieved is through the addition of class time for seventh hour. Seventh hour typically does not receive a class period to prepare and instead goes straight to their exam time. This addition has been made to ensure fairness for all classes.

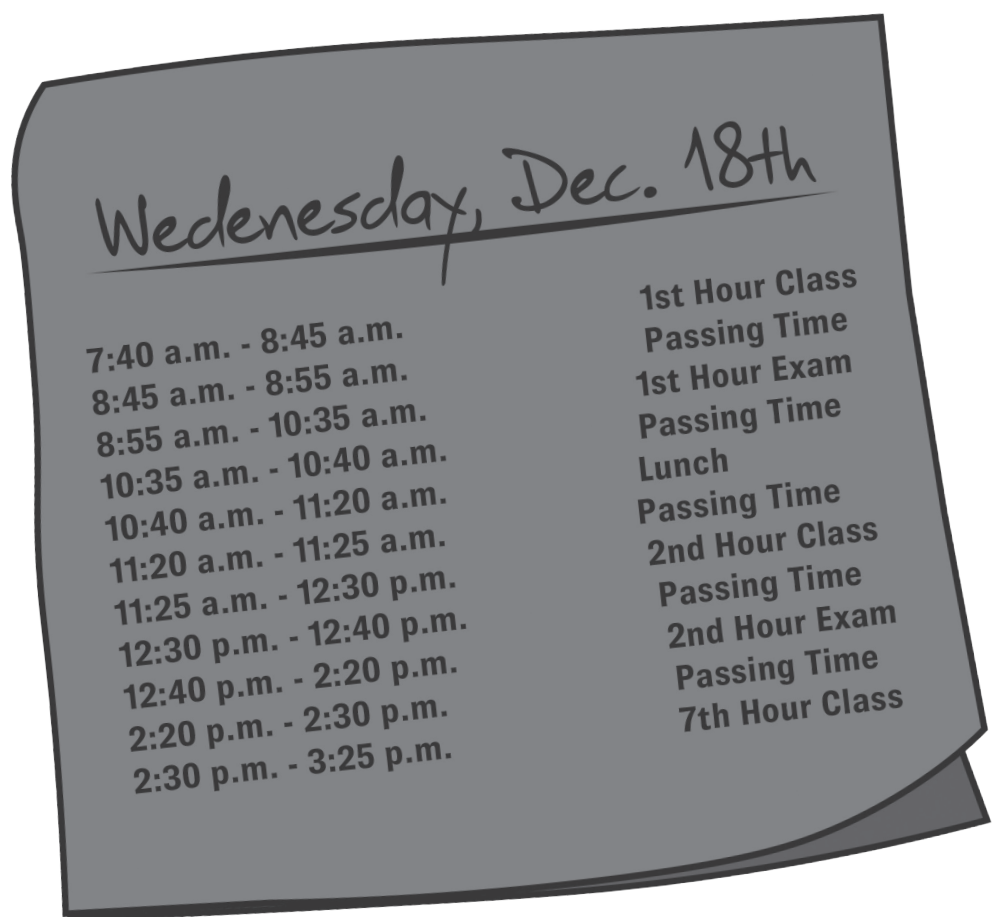
“And so the idea was to make it so that every class had a similar experience,” Cochran said.

However, there are inconsistencies across this year’s schedule. For example, break times throughout the day differ, ranging from five to 10 minutes. Similarly, with class times. Some are 65 minutes while others are only 50. The main reason for these differences comes from the addition of the seventh hour exam and class period.

“The seventh hour day is always the trickiest one because you’re trying to start it earlier because it has to be done by 3:25, so you have a hard end time,” Cochran said. “So that means the start has to be before the traditional end of sixth hour. Well, that impacts the rest of the schedule.”

Adding the class time for seventh hour is one of the biggest changes to the schedule this year. Another big change that may come as a surprise to staff and students is found within the second and third day of the schedule. In previous years, third and fourth hour exams and class periods took place on the second day of the schedule. Whereas this year, they switch places with fifth and sixth hour.

Another more notable change is the use of wording when referencing class times,



or what some students might recognize as study periods.

“I also think it’s important to point out that those are class periods,” Cochran said. “Those are not study periods. [They] are not optional. It’s just that it’s another school day, so students are required to be there.”

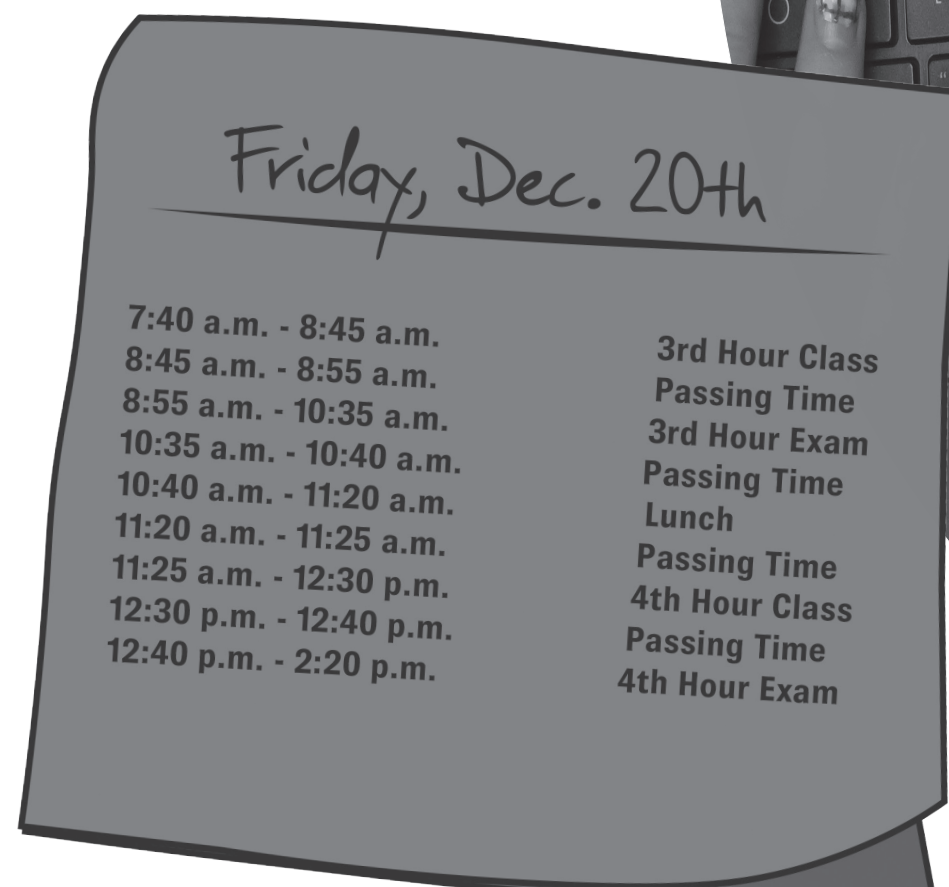
This name change is an attempt to encourage students to come to class during these times. Over the past few years, attendance has gotten lower and lower during the study periods. The name change is not the only difference. The intent of these class times is to focus specifically on review.

“If I was teaching a history class, I might divide the time periods that were covered in the exam into several different segments and then have students in the class, you know, maybe put them in groups of four and explain to each other each of the different segments,” Cochran said.

With all the new changes in the schedule, it is too early to say whether it will be successful enough for it to stick for future years. What is known is that no matter the schedule, people will almost always find something that can be improved. Even with this said, some things simply can not change. For example, the schedule always needs to stay consistent with the middle and elementary school schedules as well as meet the number of minutes and

days that the State of Michigan requires schools to have.

“This could be a really effective schedule, I guess we’ll have to wait and see,” English teacher Andrew Frye said. “I’m hoping, and I have absolute trust in the administration, that they will reflect on whatever schedule they have here to determine if it is a good one, and if it is, they’ll implement it, if not, [they’ll] change it up, mix it up, [or] do something different next year. I have trust in them.”



graphics by Isabelle Hetherington

photo by Madalyn Blohm

Class. Test. Repeat.

Exam schedule presses students to attend class periods with no benefit

Isabelle Hetherington
managing photo

As an exam's content tends to change yearly, so does the exam schedule for MPS. In recent years, the schedule has changed almost every year going back and forth from half day schedules to full day, adding and subtracting class time before the exam.

However, the majority of students do not attend the allocated study periods, which causes attendance to be abysmal during exam week.

"So for me particularly, I have a lot of people still showing up," math teacher Jason Gehoski said. "I see [kids present] throughout the school. I would say

[attendance] is less. Honestly, if it was me, if I was a student in today's scenario, I wouldn't come."

While this schedule doesn't heavily differ from last year's, it's still a significant change.

"The other big change that we made is in the last couple years we had a situation where its, first hour class, second hour class, first hour exam, second hour exam, so you go from first to second, then back to first and back to second," principal Scott Cochran said. "And so you'll notice in this one and we kind of say, Why do that? Why not have it be, you know, first hour class, first hour exam, second hour class, second hour exam. So that is an important feature, I think that we're very pleased about [that] in this schedule."

While the idea of having class time before an exam can seem beneficial to many students who do attend them, the majority of students don't use the given time to their full advantage. Many students come in simply because their parents make them. The period counts towards attendance and with the new policy of a max of ten excused absences implemented last year, the new schedule makes it more likely for students to show up, however, that doesn't mean their time will be spent productively.

"So more often than not, they just turn into an hour of sitting there, just managing a class," English teacher Andrew Frye said. "And I know you're supposed to have, it should be a learning experience, activities planned, like a typical class, but it's kind of extra. I don't know if I should say extra, but it's kind of tougher. It's tough for me to justify introducing any kind of material when the exam is right there."

According to a study conducted by University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Health, students typically learn best when they keep a consistent study schedule compared to cramming before an exam. In theory, cramming will allow for someone to remember the information for a short period of time, long enough to use during the exam. However, cramming has also proven to increase stress levels leading to panic and anxiety, making it harder to process information. It's not a guaranteed method to retain knowledge and, regardless, most won't remember any of said information after the exam, so what's the point of using the period to study?

"I think the study period isn't good because if you're going into your exam not knowing anything, and you're riding on that exam prep, you're probably not going to do good," senior Makayla Chew said. "I mean it might be a little beneficial, but I think that you should be preparing for your exam earlier than just an hour before."

Some teachers have strayed away from distributing a traditional exam for their classes, many of them doing projects and presentations instead, to end the year or semester. This is another reason why the study period is unnecessary; it provides minimal benefit to students who don't need to study, because they don't have a traditional exam.

It's likely that the exam schedule will continue to change in years to come through. Adding more study periods, removing them completely or even going back to half days. It's important that when MPS administration decides how to change or improve the schedule for the coming years, they include the opinions of students and teachers and how the schedule would best benefit them.

Mission Statement

As a public forum for student expression, The Update will honor the H. H. Dow High community and the journalism profession by placing truth, accuracy and objectivity first and encouraging all sides to voice their opinion.

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Staff Editorial

The staff editorial is the managing editors' response to current news events. The staff editorial reflects the opinion of the Editorial Board. The final draft is subject to a vote by the Editorial Board. A majority vote is required for the document to achieve publication.

Letters are encouraged. They will be screened for libel, defamation, and/or obscenity and may be edited for length. All letters must be signed, although the Editorial Board will consider withholding names upon request. Letters may be rejected due to limited space, untimely material, or unbalanced representation. A full editorial policy is on file in room 218.

Open Column

The 'My Turn' column is open to the whole school. Columns will undergo the same screening process as letters. All columns should be turned in to room 218 and should include the author's name.

Membership/Awards

The Update is a member of the NSPA, CSPA, and MIPA. The Update was a CSPA Gold Crown Winner in 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, and 2019. It was a Silver Crown Winner in 2006, 2009, 2016 and 2017. It was an NSPA Pacemaker winner in 1999, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, and a finalist in 2001, and 2003. In 1989, 1999, 2000, 2004, and 2005 The Update won Best of Show in NSPA competition. It won second place Best of Show in 2006, eighth place Best of Show in 2007, and third place in Best of Show in 2008. The Update has won 27 MIPA Spartan Awards since 1989 and was inducted into the MIPA Hall of Fame in 2004.

Corrections for November issue

The Update prides itself in appreciation of the student body. We sincerely apologize and take full responsibility for the misspellings of the following names. "7 years later story - Brady Weyrowske, Matthew Huang "Rooted in researching story" - Hyunseo Sung

Dodging the bullet, schools need to prioritize enforcing safety

staff editorial

Schools aren't doing enough to keep students safe in the classroom. Students shouldn't have to worry about their safety while trying to learn, yet many do. According to the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation, Michigan has had 104 mass shootings since 2020.

Although many schools have a lot of safety measures, they need to increase protection through better equipment and technology. As technology advances, there is always room for improvement to protect students.

While measures are taken to keep school safe, such as metal detectors, it is not enough.

According to CNBC, as of September 2024, school funds have dried up. An estimated 250,000 education jobs are in jeopardy.

Unfortunately, schools as a whole often don't get enough funding to hire therapists. Most of the pre-existing funding goes towards sports, clubs, school lunches and basic necessities for students. Schools aren't getting any extra funding to go towards school safety. If schools got more funding it could go towards more staff trained in safety.

A big issue at DHS is the inconsistent patrol of the metal detectors. Throughout the day, most students are able to enter through the

front office without being stopped. This risks students avoiding detectors if they're coming in at any time other than before school or during lunch. Though this is a main issue, it's not the only thing that's causing risks. Some students let people in through doors, rather than making them go around to the front. This can create an easy entrance into the school for someone with an intention of violence. The rules at DHS state that students are supposed to go to the front office to be let in, but with so many doors, it is hard to monitor them all.

DHS can solve this issue by having staff members stand at the detectors throughout the day, but to do that, it would require extra personnel and money. Schools should also focus on having more safety drills throughout the school year, not to scare students, but to make them prepared in case of an emergency. Counselors should regularly check students' well being and ensure that there is help being provided for any students who may be in a mental-health crisis.

According to Concordia University, schools are leveraging advanced technology to enhance safety. Tools like AI powered security cameras and visitor management systems would allow

administrators to monitor students and have controlled access to buildings, along with the ability to spread information fast during emergencies. This can increase students' feeling of security because if there were to ever be an emergency, the advanced technology would be more efficient in alerting police and notifying families.

The lack of safety protocols has changed the way students, teachers and parents feel about school. School used to be a place that was thought to be safe, and that security is now being drawn into question. Schools are always trying their best to keep everyone safe, but there is still more to be done. Students deserve to learn and feel protected, and parents deserve to feel safe with their students at school.

photo by Madalyn Blohm

graph by Isabelle Hetherington



For Christmas, I only want **MORMORMORE**

Holidays are too expensive, commercialized

Jocelyn Larson & Tanner Witzke
managing social media & managing design

With Christmas stockings bursting at the seams and Santa's sleigh carrying more gifts every year, winter holidays have become over the top. Consumerism, commercialization and stress have all become a part of the holiday season. A season which is meant to be spent enjoying the company of loved ones is now full of overconsumption and ads. Consumerism and stress not only cause people to forget the true spirit of Christmas, but they also pressure people into spending way more money than needed.

"There's definitely an argument to be made there that [Christmas] is over commercialized," economics teacher Garrit Pickelmann said. "And it's such a huge consumer spending time because of the holidays. So I think everybody wants to get in on that."

Companies such as Macy's, Amazon and Hallmark all take advantage of the holiday season. Macy's and Amazon flood the television with seasonal advertisements, decorate their stores and post all about their amazing deals. Hallmark mass produces its repetitive Christmas movies, in hopes to influence buyers, and it works. All of these companies bring in over 30% of their revenue every year during the winter season, and for Hallmark, that's over \$300 million.

"I see we get bombarded with [Christmas commercialization], in not only the shows that we watch, but also social media and all the ads, and everybody's connecting [to the commercialization]," Pickelmann said.

But companies aren't the only ones who capitalize on the holiday season; individuals do it, too. Pop icons like Mariah Carey and Kelly Clarkson have exploited Christmas for years with their holiday songs. Carey's song "All I Want For Christmas Is You" earns her \$3 million alone annually with the tens of millions of streams the song receives each

year. Clarkson's Christmas songs such as "Underneath the Tree" and "Santa Can't You Hear Me" are streamed year after year and have earned her thousands.

All of the media from Amazon's ads to Mariah Carey's YouTube videos, create an internal monologue that encourages people to splurge all Christmas season. It often pressures people into thinking that they need more than just a Christmas tree and holiday cheer. This pressure is also not just placed upon adults, but even students. Junior Kaelyn Cole spends a good chunk of money on the holidays for family and friends.

"I worry about making money just to go and spend [it] on other people, since [Christmas] is so expensive nowadays," Cole said.

The feeling of worry that comes with spending lots of money during the holiday season is shared across the U.S. The American Psychological Association states that 9 out of 10 adults will have heightened stress levels during the holiday season that ranges from financial worries to family conflict.

"Christmas is a major expenditure for many Americans. According to the latest data from the National Retail Federation (NRF), Americans spend an average of \$902 each Christmas," Fabio Duarte, of Exploding Topics, wrote in an article titled "How Much Do Americans Spend On

Christmas (Latest Data)."

Though the holiday season is nostalgic, it's sometimes hard to ignore the stress that comes with it. Almost every store around Christmas, such as Target and Home Depot, has fake trees, inflatables, decorations and an excessive amount of green and red. This can overstimulate some people during the holidays, not to mention the hundreds of videos on social media platforms about Christmas recipes, decorations, clothing and more.

"If my friends get me gifts, then it's like, oh, I need to get them a gift too," Cole said. "Or, talking about what you want for Christmas, all the advertising, I feel like there's a lot of pressure just to buy stuff."

While spending money on others isn't a bad thing, sometimes spending time rather than money on a gift can be more affordable. Some might prefer a more sentimental gift that has more significance to them because it shows a different type of effort and thoughtfulness.

"I feel like there's more thought in [handmade gifts] than just slapping a price tag on something and being like, 'here's this thing that I bought you from Target,'" junior Macy Christiansen said. "I feel like giving [someone] something handmade is a lot better, and of course, it costs more time than money, but I feel that's kind of what makes it more special."

Buying over the top gifts for someone could cause them to feel guilt and pressure to get something equally as valuable. Sometimes it gets to a point where there

is no value in the gifts and it's just spending money to see who can come out on top.

"But I think for a lot of people, it's almost become like a competition of who can give the best gift, and sometimes that's more financial than how much thought you actually put in," Christiansen said.

The holiday season should be about spending time with family and friends, not a competition of who can buy the most. Try making a homemade and sentimental gift this year. Try to spend less money on things and more time with loved ones. Gifts are always replaceable, but friends and family are forever.



graphics by Tanner Witzke

My Turn

with Kendall Plumley



Real hearts, paper worlds

I love to read. Reading is one of my favorite things to do. My current book will come with me everywhere, no matter the occasion. I will bring it to events, to every class, and then back home to enjoy it before I fall asleep. I love to dive into a story for hours on end and forget about everything going on around me.

Unfortunately, though, I find that many other students and people around me do not feel the same way about reading. Some students don't even bring a book with them to class unless it's required by their English teacher. It is sad to me that not only do people not seem to enjoy reading, but after doing research, I found that the general population is reading less than they used to, which made me realize that this is a problem.

Reading has benefits that can last lifetimes. It helps build critical thinking skills, enhances conversation abilities and can strengthen your brain. These are only a few of the benefits. Reading can also help improve sleep and reduce stress, which are both things that many people struggle with.

Even with all of these benefits, you don't find as many people reading anymore. An article from the National Endowment for the Arts titled "Federal Data on Reading for Pleasure: All Signs Show a Slump" by Sunil Iyengar, reported that only 14% of 13-year-olds read for fun daily, which was a significant drop compared to previous years. The article further went on to say that 16% of 13-year-olds rarely read for fun, and this is the highest statistic it's ever been.

However, not everyone has abandoned reading. There are plenty of people who still enjoy it regularly. Some people may not enjoy reading because they have other things they would rather do, such as watch movies. Others may not be as good at reading because they did not receive enough help when they were young. Some may have even given up on trying to learn or improve. Some people simply do not have long enough attention spans to read an entire book.

Even though the majority of people don't seem to enjoy reading very much, it still doesn't stop me from enjoying it myself. Reading has always been a safe space for me where I can dive into a world completely different from my own. I love following characters and reading from different perspectives. My love for it has even led me to writing small stories myself.

People may not enjoy reading as much as I do, but I do love to share my love of it with other people, whether that be through sharing stories I enjoy, or taking recommendations from others. It is something I find comfort in, and something that I can connect with others about. But even if it's not as popular as it used to be in the past, I hope people don't forget the wonder of diving into the pages of a book and forgetting the world around them just for a little while.

STUDENT REACTIONS

Julia Lacher
managing sports



School safety measures

"I think the school is pretty safe because we have the metal detectors."

Emma Malheim, freshman



New exam schedule

"I don't like it compared to last year. I liked how last year we got a half day on the last day of [exam week], but this year we don't."

Maya Cicci, sophomore



Young hockey team

"They're a great team and they have so much potential, and they are going to win."

Carmen Monge, sophomore



Midland Open Door

"It was really nice to be able to help out the community [while volunteering]."

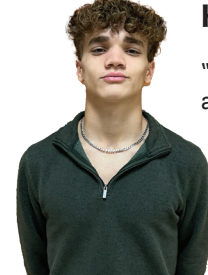
Bridget Reder, sophomore



Athletic code of conduct

"I think [student athletes] should be respectful and follow the rules."

Lucy Flint, sophomore



Hot Cocoa Crawl

"I think it's cool, especially around this time of year when hot chocolate is a very popular drink, and I think we all could use something to warm us up in the cold."

Riley Crenshaw, senior



Tyler Witzke *managing copy*

A hot cup of cocoa is a traditional way to get into the spirit of the holiday season, and Downtown Midland offers an annual festivity dedicated to the holiday drink: the Cocoa Crawl. This year's Cocoa Crawl took place from noon-2:15 p.m. on Nov. 22 after the Midland Santa Parade. It gave the public the opportunity to visit stores while also being able to try participating stores' hot cocoa recipes. In previous years, this event in Downtown Midland has been a beacon of light for smaller companies trying to break the ice with the community.

"We participate to support the downtown community and the organizers of the event," Proper Taco owner Ashley Rae said in an email interview. "We believe that if we want downtown to flourish, we must all make an effort to encourage and participate in community activities. From a business perspective, it's also smart; it's an opportunity to draw in a new crowd and convert people who step into our shop into long-term customers."

Not only do businesses as a whole get recognized, but each store is given the opportunity to spotlight their individual talents they offer to the community. As a result, Downtown Midland is able to give the public a diverse event.

"We like to make sure [the cocoa recipe is] either allergen friendly in some way," Health Hut owner Paige Fryzelka said. "There's [been] years we've done sugar-free. We do dairy-free. This year it's dairy-free hot cocoa ice cream. So it's something people can enjoy even if they're

lactose intolerant."

Health Hut was not alone in providing different experiences each year; Proper Taco also allowed the public to try new tastes and options.

"I try to expand people's tastes," Rae said. "Along with our cocoa (this year's topping is a toasted marshmallow whip, which is relatively simple), I will also offer hot cider as a dairy-free option. In the past, I've offered more unique options like spicy cocoa with cayenne pepper or authentic Mexican cocoa."

The event also allowed for people to visit stores they may normally overlook because they may be in a hidden location or just not the type of store they are looking for.

"[It] is a plus for us when someone who attends the event comes in the store and has a chance to see we are more than just a hardware store," Ace Hardware & Sports manager Lance Kilborn said in an email interview.

People visiting new stores is just one of the many benefits to this event. The participation also helps the community boost awareness about stores within the community. For example, as Kilborn mentioned, there is more than just hardware equipment at Ace Hardware & Sports.

"The largest benefit is the opportunity to meet and engage with the public," Rae said. "While it may not always translate into an immediate return on investment, it shows people that we are an engaging shop. They discover that we are more than just a taco shop; we also sell things like puzzles, sassy mugs and greeting cards. People often see our catering references and grab a card to book us for a wedding or graduation party. The easiest way to discover everything we offer is to pop in."

This year's Cocoa Crawl marked its fifth anniversary. It gave businesses an opportunity to showcase their organization but it also united the community together.

"I think it's really fun," Fryzelka said. "It's fun to see new people and get people into the store. So it kind of gets people downtown shopping instead of just packing up and going home right after the parade."

The event also serves as a smooth transition into the holiday season. People are invited to shop for the holidays while browsing local stores.

"Yes, I think it's a great way to kick off the holiday season [and] support local business," Cocoa Crawl attendee Elizabeth Wolfe said. "I love that we're supporting local businesses [in] Downtown Midland, and it's a great way to get the community together."

The Cocoa Crawl encourages people to stay longer in the downtown area, helping retail and supporting community participation.

"People are always looking for affordable things to do," Rae said. "They can attend the Santa Parade downtown and then get free cocoa, which entertains the kids without breaking the bank."

Some may say that the Cocoa Crawl was filled with joy. Everywhere someone looked, community members were laughing while enjoying their hot cocoa. The lines of the stores flooded main street with people actively wanting to support businesses.

"I think it's really important that we support local businesses, you know, because they're sort of the foundation of our community," senior John Velazco said.

Attendees were able to vote for the best cocoa throughout the entire duration of the event through a QR code on the posters of each participating business, or in person at a table with a downtown event coordinator.

The company emerging victorious was Three Bridges Distillery & Taproom with neck-and-neck runner-ups being WhichCraft and Lux the Salon. With this win, Three Bridges Distillery & Taproom was able to claim the Golden Mug Trophy for best hot cocoa and earn bragging rights all year round. The competition proved not to be just a contest for a trophy, but an event that brought warmth and happiness to all of Midland through cups of hot cocoa.

graphics by Tanner Witzke

DOW Wrapped Top Songs of December

Maddie Oliver *managing opinion*

"INDUSTRY BABY" Lila Nas X & Jack Harlow Jacob Curtis, Grade 10	"Your Body, My Temple" Will Wood Natalie Smith, Grade 10	"Always Forever" Cults Mikayla Leigh, Grade 12	"Blue" Joshua Bassett Zaya Gillis, Grade 9	"ANYTHING BUT LOVE" Tate McRae Kenzie Nickel, Grade 12
"The Life of a Showgirl" Taylor Swift (feat. Sabrina Carpenter) Landon Droomer, Grade 10	"1979" The Smashing Pumpkins Grant Beck, Grade 9	"LIKE ME" Future (feat. 42 Dugg & Lil Baby) Eli Piotrowski, Grade 10	"From a Distance" Romy Mars Sydney Kanitz, Grade 11	"Beauty And A Beat" Justin Bieber (feat. Nicki Minaj) Bailey Borrousch, Grade 9

screenshots from Spotify

Giving holiday hope

Midland's Open Door aims to improve lives of those in need

Gabe Nix
managing news



photos by Isabelle Hetherington

SERVING OTHERS: Midland's Open Door uses faith as a guide for all they do. "What we see is most important is your spiritual health because everybody believes something," Executive Director Saralyn Temple said. Midland's Open Door opened on W. Buttles Street in 1986.

Holiday music playing, an array of festive decorations and a delectable feast of food on the dining room table. Many would consider this to be a relatable holiday scene, although for others, it is not. An organization dedicated to helping those in need, Midland's Open Door aims to give everyone an enjoyable experience during the holidays and beyond.

Open 24 hours a day and 365 days a year, the Open Door is the only homeless shelter and soup kitchen here in Midland County. It officially became an organization in 1975 and started out as a coffeehouse ministry for young adults. Now, it has blossomed into a much larger operation that offers countless services to those in need, including shelters, a community soup kitchen, individual plan support, family support, homelessness prevention, job searching, referrals to other community agencies and biblical counseling.

"Anybody can really offer someone a meal or offer someone a bed, but our goal is really to see people move forward," Executive Director Saralyn Temple said.

The Open Door works towards their goal by helping their guests with six areas of life that they believe everyone must deal with. These include housing, employment and education, financial, relational, as well as physical and spiritual health. While all these are important parts of living a healthy life, the Open Door places an emphasis on some more than others.

"What we see is most important is your spiritual health because everybody believes something, and whatever you believe is what's ruling your life," Temple said. "And so what we want to do is we want to introduce people to Jesus, who has a love and a care for people in such a way that following Jesus can bring them the things that He promises, which are things like love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness [and] self-control: those things that really everybody wants."

The main population the Open Door helps is the homeless. Temple believes that the largest cause of homelessness is a poverty of relationships, meaning someone no longer has anyone able to support them. The Open Door, however, is always welcoming and there to help in many different ways.

"Most of the time, [we help] people who are Midland County residents who are homeless," Temple said.

However, there are also some resources that the Open Door provides to people who aren't homeless. If someone is struggling financially, the Open

Door works to help them with getting resources that improve their quality of life, such as gas, bikes or clothing. The community soup kitchen is another example of these types of resources.

"We will feed anybody, so you don't have to be low income; you don't have to be homeless," Temple said. "You could be just someone who wants to come for lunch and meet somebody new."

As food costs increase and the effects the government shutdown had on food stamps remain, the Open Door has seen an increase in the number of people they serve at lunch. This has inspired them to partner with other local organizations, such as the Midland County Food Assistance Network, to help out those in need. This involves directing some

of their donations to these places in order to help people easily buy groceries.

"For us, it was more helping people navigate [these problems]," Temple said. "So helping people not panic and know where to go and who to contact, versus [just] passing out the food, because we're not a food

pantry. So we still fed people, and we still gave people case management."

During the holiday season, everyone staying at the Open Door comes together to celebrate as a group through a couple of special events and services, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. These meals are donated by

local businesses, churches and individual donors to allow people staying at the Open Door to have an enjoyable holiday experience.

"Anybody that doesn't have any place to go or if you just want to come and hang out, that's when we'll do Christmas dinner," Temple said. "And then we will also provide gifts for the people that live in the shelter, for the children that live in the shelter, and a lot of that really comes from other donors in the area."

During the Christmas season, the Open Door also expands on how they financially assist others. This is done through what they call outreach, which sometimes includes helping a family who has recently left the shelter and is independent but needs a boost financially. This is usually done by helping

to provide that family with household essentials that are difficult to get with things like Bridge Cards, which are debit cards the state of Michigan gives out to low-income families that provide financial benefits when purchasing food.

With all these services, the Open Door heavily relies on donations and volunteers. There is usually a list on the Midland's Open Door Facebook page that shows the donations needed most at that point in time, which are usually common household items and foods, but monetary donations always help as well. In fact, a donation of \$2.30 is the exact amount the Open Door asks to be donated to provide one Christmas meal.

As far as volunteers go, many of these people are high schoolers. In fact, many students from DHS already volunteer or have volunteered with the Open Door. Volunteers do a variety of tasks, such as preparing or serving food, organizing donations and clothes, raking leaves or even painting porches.

"Honestly, we've had really good participation by high schoolers for sure," Temple said.

Junior Anna Poupard is one of these high school students who has volunteered with the Open Door. Poupard helped pack up and sort the unsold clothes from a clothing sale.

"I did learn that a lot of work goes into what they do," Poupard said. "I know they rely a lot on volunteers."

Poupard said the opportunity was positive, enriching and one of the better volunteering experiences she has had.

"Just hearing some of the stuff that they do, it definitely makes me happy to know what's going on in Midland," Poupard said.

All in all, the Open Door, with their mission to help the homeless, hungry and hurting, has become a valuable community resource, especially during the holiday season. In 2023, the Open Door provided 10,749 nights of shelter to 284 people. This exemplifies the significant impacts the Open Door has made on so many individuals through helping them to grow spiritually and live more fulfilling and stable lives.



EXPRESSING GRATITUDE: Volunteers Heather Murphy and Karen Moor pray while preparing a meal for guests at Midland's Open Door. "What we want to do is we want to introduce people to Jesus," Executive Director Saralyn Temple said. Volunteers prepared lunch in Midland Open Door's soup kitchen on Saturday, Dec. 6.



Jocelyn's Journal
with Jocelyn Larson

Until I Found You

Life is not easy. Some days are more difficult than others. Some days it takes so much energy just to put a smile on your face and act like yourself. Even with your friends, they have no idea what is going on in your head. They can't hear the harsh thoughts that are constantly battling back and forth all day long. It's hard when you want to scream and yell and tell everyone what's wrong, especially because you hate the idea of even opening your mouth. But I say, don't struggle in silence and speak up. Trust me, it's worth it.

Everyone is always going through something, whether it's exciting and liberating or dark and impending. I went through something I liked to call a dark cloud. I felt gray. My chest was heavy, and I was going through something that, unfortunately, a lot of people also experience. Over time, it only got worse. It grew and spread, and soon enough it was all I could think about. Then I got to the hardest part, which was also the best decision I made: I told someone. I let everything that was happening spill out. I told someone because I needed an environment free of judgment. I've learned to trust them and, in turn, they've made me feel safe. Despite it being difficult, it made me feel so much better. My person was my sunshine that made my dark cloud go away, and it just so happens that after a rainy day, sometimes a rainbow appears.

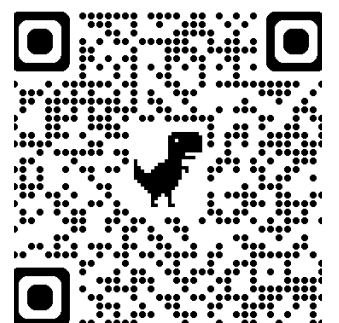
It's hard to go 'back to normal' after something complicated happens. It's impossible to just pretend like nothing happened, even when you want to forget so badly. It has to get tough before it can get better. There were a lot of arguments as well as good days and bad days. It could be such a sunny day and then one thing sets it all off. Bottled-up feelings all get bunched up and thrown out into actions and words we don't mean.

But there is a solution: communication. If there is anything that I have learned over these past eight months, it is that communication is key. It seems so hard to get all your thoughts and feelings into words, but, once you do, it is so worth it. Change is hard, but not impossible. Everyone can change in one way or another. It doesn't have to be anything drastic, just something that is meaningful and has a positive impact on yourself or others. It could be stopping and thinking before you speak or simply talking more about your feelings.

It is such a surreal feeling to need and depend on someone so much, after only knowing them for such a small amount of time. It is crazy how one person who you barely know can become someone so important that you go to sleep thinking about them and waking up doing the exact same. They simply become your lifeline. You can always depend on them to cheer you up when you are feeling down, make you laugh when you are sad and make you smile when you're frowning. It's so incredible that just seeing that one person or just hearing their voice can heal so much. But, it is equally as important to learn how to find happiness in the little things when you are alone too. You just need to remember that you deserve to be happy no matter what and that you can achieve happiness with or without your person.

As someone wise once told me, never give up on someone, and fight for them, even when times get super hard. It is not worth letting someone so special go just because you have trouble with change. Find something like a note or a picture that helps you remember the good days because it will help you in the long run. Don't spiral. Talk to someone. Find your person. It's going to be okay.

The Update Online



Athletic integrity importance

Athletic code of conduct addresses actions of high school students both in, out of school

Julia Lacher & Gillian Smith
managing sports & editor-in-chief



graphics by Tanner Witzke

All MPS student athletes are held to a high standard when it comes to expected conduct and are required to read and sign the MPS Athletic Code of Conduct Policy, which outlines regulations for athlete's behavior and penalties should they not meet expectations.

The MPS Athletic Code of Conduct Policy states that the possession or drinking of alcoholic beverages, abuse or possession of harmful narcotics and/or drugs, use of any prohibited substances - as outlined in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA's) list of banned substances- and use or possession of tobacco products in any form are prohibited. Prohibited means that athletes are not permitted to use or possess any of the mentioned substances while under an athletic contract, meaning the entire time they are participating in a school sport throughout high school. This includes intention to participate, for example, a student can face repercussions in the spring for an event that took place in the fall.

Any image, photo or video that implicates violation of the code of conduct may be used as evidence to confirm a violation.

Should an athlete be found to be in violation of the code of conduct, the consequences are outlined in the MPS Athletic Code of Conduct Policy. Violation of the code will result in immediate disqualification from interscholastic contests and scrimmages.

For a first offense, should the student self-report their violation to school administration, the student would be referred to counseling services and suspended for 20% of their season. The definition of self-reporting is outlined in the code of conduct as an athlete or their parent/guardian coming forward and admitting to a violation of the code of conduct.

In cases where a student's violation occurs late in the season, to where the penalty is not able to be served in full, then the student's penalties would carry over into the next season/sport they intend to play in.

For students who do not self-report, the repercussions are more severe, resulting in disqualification from practice for 90 school days and one-third of all scheduled sporting events, including matches, meets and games. If a student violates the Code of Conduct for a second time, they will be suspended from athletics for a full calendar year. Early reinstatement is possible once a student has served one third of their penalty. To be considered for reinstatement, the student is required to send district administration a letter appealing the original punishment. However, if a student violates the Code of Conduct after their second offense, they

will be suspended for a full calendar year without the possibility of reinstatement.

Despite athletes being required to sign the code of conduct when signing up for their sport, there are many student misconceptions about the code. These misconceptions include both confusion surrounding the actual contents of the agreement, as well as some not even being aware of the existence of the code.

"I think sometimes, due to our athletic registration, [student athletes] may not fully read through everything, which is fine, but it's always there for anyone to read," DHS Athletic Director Kevin Schwedler said.

A little over a month ago, a group of DHS student athletes were held accountable for actions involving underage drinking at a party. This resulted in a slew of consequences for everyone involved, impacting many of the students' athletic endeavors.

Wynn Diegel, a junior and member of the football team who was not involved in the incident, feels that the bad decisions of the students involved don't entirely define them as athletes.

"Those kids are good kids, like they made one bad decision, but we just got to next time make better decisions," Diegel said.

One major contributing factor in a student's conduct is the influence their coaches have on them.

"[Instilling good conduct] always starts with our

coaching staff and just the message that they portray," Schwedler said. "And then just how kids on the team just kind of hold each other to the standard of, 'We're teammates. We're going to look out for one another, and we're going to support each other.'"

For DHS tennis coach Terry Schwartzkopf, instilling good sports ethics into student's conduct is a crucial part of his coaching. Schwartzkopf holds his athletes to a high standard, expecting them to conduct themselves in an honorable way.

"What I expect my kids to be are honest, forthright [and] helpful, yet still competitive," Schwartzkopf said.

One core value that Schwartzkopf believes will positively influence students is the idea that they should have a good and honest relationship

with their coach. While he expects his athletes to conduct themselves well, he is also willing to stand up for them.

"My guys know that I don't care where we are [or] what the situation is," Schwartzkopf said. "If they step out of line, if they treat people poorly, if I see them cheat, if they react to an official in the incorrect way, we do a little bit of extra conditioning. But they also know that I will go to bat for them and defend them and do everything I can for them."

MPS's code of conduct similarly compares to both the NCAA's athlete code of conduct as well as the Michigan High School Athletic Association's (MHSAA's) athlete code of conduct. However, MHSAA's rules touch on attendance, and place more emphasis on demonstrating good sportsmanship while in competition, unlike MPS's. Both the MHSAA and NCAA's code of conducts accentuate the adherence to each athletes' respective school's code of conduct, as their codes are more specific than general division or association guidelines.

"[The MPS code of conduct] does kind

of go hand in hand with other policies that I've seen in other school districts and kind of with the NCAA policies as well," Schwedler said.

There are also many important values Schwartzkopf believes a team should keep in mind that are not outlined in the MPS Athletic Code of Conduct Policy. "How to deal with frustration, how to not be a

sore loser, but also not be a sore winner, how to treat people with dignity, even if you're coming out of situation from different circumstances, how to handle setbacks, how to plan, how to grow and get better and understanding that [all of these things] take personal sacrifice," Schwartzkopf said. "Things aren't handed to you just because you want them. The same is true with morals and ethics. I think [these values] just set the groundwork for success."

Most coaches make efforts to instill their own constructive moral values into the atmosphere and dynamic of their team, and the district's code of conduct is often thought of as a conventional set of expectations for them to view as a baseline.

"The code of conduct just backs up the conduct that I would expect my kids to have anyway," Schwartzkopf said.

Guest	12:12	Home
20		25
SCOREBOARD		

Selah Rose-Tonk
assistant sports editor

GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL

The girls varsity basketball team started their season with an away game against the Heritage Hawks. The team is led by seniors captains Melanie Kolnitys and Jana Mohr.

"I want to work on lifting other people up and helping them enjoy the game of basketball, because it is so much more fun when everybody else is enjoying it too," Kolnitys said.

The team will head to the "Best of Holiday Classic" to play the Tecumseh Indians at Belleville High School on Dec. 13.

BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL

The boys varsity basketball team started their season on Dec. 1 with a 60-63 loss to Swan Valley. The team is led by senior captains James Anderson, Owen Bond and JD Curtis.

Curtis establishes that the team's end goal is to win districts and get as far as they can get in playoffs.

"I hope to be more of a leader and more uplifting individual towards my teammates," Curtis said.

Their next game is home tonight against the Heritage Hawks at 7 p.m.

VARSITY HOCKEY

The varsity hockey team kicked off their season with a 7-1 win against Chelsea Bulldogs on Nov. 15. The captains are seniors Caden Nemeth and Caleb Pider. The assistant captains are seniors Danny Fishman, Zane Rastello and junior Danny Gabriel.

"I am most nervous about how the younger guys are gonna adapt to the faster pace and bigger guys," Fishman said.

The team is heading to the Bay City Showcase to play the Reeths-Puffer Rockets tonight at 7:20 p.m.

BOYS VARSITY WRESTLING

The boys varsity wrestling team started their season off on Dec. 6 at the Cadillac High School Tournament. The team is led by senior captains Jay Stevens, Cooper Ostyn and junior captain Blake Studebaker.

"My one goal is states," Studebaker said. "It is very personal to me because my brother did it and I want to see how far I can go."

VARSITY BOWLING

The bowling teams will kick off their season Dec. 16 at Grand Blanc Lanes and will play Saginaw Phoenix.

"I want to figure out where to move after I throw the ball after my first ball so I can get more pins and a better score," junior Ethan Frost said.

VARSITY COMPETITIVE POM

The varsity competitive pom team will have their first competition on Jan. 17 at Heritage High School. The team will also perform at a couple of the boys and girls varsity basketball games throughout their season.

"A personal goal for me is to keep my hopes up and not fall into the seasonal depression," junior Freya Falvey said. "I can get really negative and get in my head, but that's just something I really hope to work on because I know overall it'll help my mental health."

COMPETITIVE CHEERLEADING

The varsity cheerleading team will travel to Meridian High School for the Scholarship Invitational on Dec. 13.

"My personal goal is just to be in more rounds than I was last season," senior Ava Warner said. "I feel like I wasn't a huge contributor last season and I just want to improve so I am a better asset for the team."

Slashing through barriers

Freshman embrace existing bond between team members, make it their own

Maddie Oliver
managing opinion

The bond of a team is something that few like to mess with, especially in hockey. While being quick on skates and confident with the puck is important, knowing the team and how each player handles themselves on the ice is where the heart of the game lies. If a team cannot connect with each other, they cannot expect to perform well. This is something that the DHS varsity hockey team is learning very quickly this season.

With seven freshmen joining the team, the hockey team is learning to adapt not only to new players, but to the way each rookie plays. Like most other sports, some groups of players work better together than others, and just have a way of clicking.

Throughout a player's high school sports career, an athlete can develop a style of playing with their teammates that makes them resilient. When a team welcomes such a large number of new players, it's not uncommon for veteran players to struggle to play well with their new teammates.

"I think we might have a growth period at the beginning, but I think we're gonna be good at the end of the year," senior and captain Caleb Pider said. "Making sure we come together and build each other up, or making sure everyone's proud of practice stuff like that is important."

In hockey there are lineups or "shifts" that make up the players on the ice. Each shift consists of three offensemen and two defenseman. Over the course of a season, some lineups become stronger than others, because of players developing an understanding of a specific shift. When a lineup works, it's best not to mess with it. However, sometimes there is no choice but to change shifts, especially when players graduate and new players come on.

"I think our biggest struggle is going to be learning the new systems, because we have guys coming from different places, and we've got to learn how to work together," freshman Ryder Keefer said.

While the freshmen may be new to playing at the high school level, hockey is something that is far from new to them. Most of the players coming onto the team this season have been playing hockey since they could walk. Playing hockey as they grew up has both shaped their skills and their mindsets.

Freshman Kai Nemeth is one of the many new players who have grown up playing hockey. Starting at two years old, Nemeth has dedicated numerous years to improving his skills and growing as a player.

Throughout his hockey career, Nemeth has played for many teams, one of them being the Midland North Stars, which is a travel hockey team.

"So there's house, and that's like, you don't go anywhere and there's travel, which is where you travel, and it's competitive and then triple A is just the highest competitive," Nemeth said.

The Midland North Stars are a competitive travel hockey team in the Little Caesars Amateur Hockey League (LCAHL). Nemeth isn't the only rookie on the team to have come from a highly competitive travel team. Other freshmen such as Charlie Konicny, Mason LaPan and Cooper Mengu have all played at the LCAHL level.

However, playing at a high school level requires more focus, determination and passion for the sport than the LCAHL level, which are things that the rookies hope to bring to the team. While it may be intimidating to play against teams with older

and more experienced players, the DHS hockey team knows that bigger players don't always mean better teams. A big part of staying motivated to play against larger teams is getting the players into the right mindset.

"[High school hockey] is definitely faster," Keefer said. "Everything is a lot more quick, and you've got to be quicker to react to everything, and it's just a lot more fun. It's not really changing my mindset. I just know that I have to go give it my all."

As the season goes on, the team will certainly continue to face challenges. Sticking together and encouraging each other to push through those challenges is essential, as the team is determined to win districts this year. In the past, the DHS hockey team has had some struggles making it to districts and keeping themselves motivated during the playoffs. However, this is not stopping them from putting their all into every game and practice to earn their spots in the playoffs and the title of district champions.



photos by Selah-Rose Tonk, graphic by Tanner Witzke

ONE: Minutes before the game starts, the DHS hockey team lines up for the National Anthem, including freshmen Charlie Konicny, Kai Nemeth, Cooper Mengu, and Max Milewski. The team beat Grand Blanc on Dec. 3 with a score of 10-0. "It's fun," Milewski said. "I like the bond, and having people to look up to."

TWO: Senior defender Daniel Fishman waits for the puck to drop. On Dec. 3, the DHS hockey team played their fifth game against Grand Blanc with a winning score of 10-0. "It wasn't very challenging," Fishman said. "It was good to see the younger guys get out there and get to play more."

THREE: Sophomore Will Andrus watches his teammates play against Grand Blanc, debating his next move. The DHS hockey team played on Dec. 3 at Midland Civic Arena against Grand Blanc with a winning score of 10-0. "I felt like it was a good game, because it was our first SVL game, and we competed at our best and we didn't play down," Andrus said.

FOUR: James Bellinger skates down the rink with stick in hand. On Dec. 3 the DHS hockey team played Grand Blanc and won with a score of 10-0. "I feel that really gets us moving through the year," Bellinger said. "They weren't a very good team, but we were able to, beat them, and just keep going."



Gillian's Guide

with

Gillian Smith

Love letter to Dow girls swim

The best decision I made throughout my four years of high school was joining the girls swim team. It has been the most rewarding experience, and I wouldn't do anything differently if I could. The sets? Brutal. The meets? Long. The racing? Exhausting. But what kept me going were the people I met along the way.

Most swimmers join the team their freshman year, but I joined as a sophomore. It was difficult to catch up with most of the other girls who had been swimming their whole lives. However, the sets I thought were once impossible eventually got easier. These improvements would not have been possible without my sophomore year coach, Chilly. His coaching style was the perfect blend

of silly and serious. Chilly helped me strengthen my bond with my teammates, and instill my love for swimming.

That's why, when he announced his retirement at the end of my first season, I was distraught. I had just started to get comfortable with my team and the sport itself. I knew a coaching change would be tough to deal with, however, I never would have imagined in a million years that my chemistry teacher would become my new coach.

At the beginning of my junior swim season, it took a little while for my team and I to warm up to our new coach's style, and likewise, him to us. But after a while, he started to joke around with us and we realized that he was actually kind of funny. I think that his best coaching quality is understanding that the team needs someone to be "the bad guy" in the moment, so we can be better in the long run.

During the most difficult practices of the season, we're not always happy campers, and occasionally some negativity can be directed towards the coaches. Coach Meier knows not to take any of the temporary hostility personally. Our arms hurt, our legs hurt, our lungs are

begging for air and negativity can often be directed towards the coach who wrote the set. The important thing is he knows that nothing we say about him should be taken seriously in those moments.

Despite having great coaches, the best thing throughout all of high school swimming hasn't been them. It hasn't been the dinners or the feeling of satisfaction after a nice race. It's been all of the friends I've made. My friend Avery was the reason I started swimming in the first place. She puts her all into everything she does, and I owe her the world for introducing me to the sport.

One of my closest friends, Riley, has been swimming with me for three years. I would not be nearly as close with her as I am today if it hadn't been for swimming. She's hilarious, and our inside jokes always make my stomach hurt from laughing too hard.

During my junior season, I got really close with Sydney and Shae. Sydney understands that you don't always need to talk, that sometimes there's nothing to say and that's okay. She's very steady, and doesn't often overcomplicate things. Shae is trustworthy, and we always have the

best conversations about anything from swim to our personal lives. She and I try to keep things positive during hard practices and remind ourselves that things are never that serious.

Finally, one of my senior year swim buddies deserves some recognition. Vera is without a doubt the most humble person I've ever met in my life. She's incredibly fast, and she has never implied anything of the sort. Her accomplishments in the water alone are insane, but she always puts supporting her teammates before herself. Whenever someone finishes a race, Vera is right there to congratulate them on their performance. Even if they didn't get a personal record, she tells them how awesome the race looked anyway. While most people who swim at her level would be stressing out about the importance of an upcoming race, the dominant attitude she displays is spirit.

Despite the early mornings, the long practices and the leg and shoulder pain, joining swim was 100%, absolutely worth it. I will always look back on the fond memories of these years swimming and wouldn't trade them for the world.