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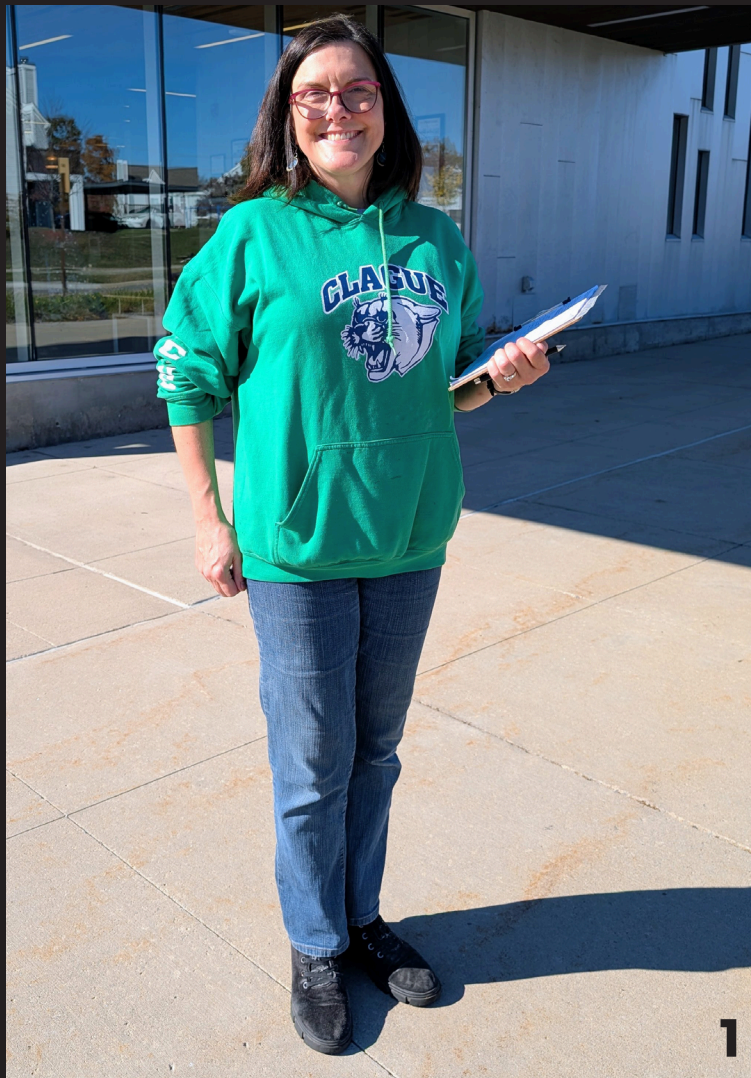
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1. Outside the Traverwood Library social studies teacher Karma Nordstrom collects signatures for the Invest in MI petition. 2. Thurston fourth grade teacher Xander Judge has been part of the Invest in MI group for over a year. 3. While at a local park AAPS teachers collect signatures on the weekend to support public education PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARAH ANTON

Teachers take time to collect signatures to help fund education

FRANCIS BADALAMENTE
STAFF WRITER

Standing on the corner of the Traverwood Library's entrance is a person on the sidewalk holding a sign and a clipboard. While they are bundled in a coat, hat, and gloves, they are not allowed to be in or on the library's property. This is because they are collecting signatures for the investment in MI. Alexander Judge teaches fourth grade at Thurston Elementary. He has been part of the initiative since last year. He became involved with Invest in MI Kids last spring when he heard a presentation from a member of the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan.

"On Saturday, members of the Ann Arbor Education Association hosted signing events at four AADL locations around the city, gathering signatures to ensure the Invest in MI Kids initiative will be on the ballot in 2026," Judge said.

He added that Michigan is 28th in the nation in per student funding, despite being the 14th wealthiest state. This gap in funding means not only are districts unable to provide teachers with adequate wages, but they are also unable to provide students with the support they need to be at their best. This shows up everywhere from being unable to pay for quality nutrition

for school food to a lack of bus routes and an inability to hire enough TAs to provide needed services for students. Judge said this impacts Clague students.

"There are 27 states who care more about their students and education than the state of Michigan," Judge said. "There are dozens of little ways that you could feel the lack of funding impact your everyday lives at Clague. Right now districts across class are directly connected to the lack of funding the state of Michigan puts toward your education. There will be

many opportunities for them to sign the petition before the February deadline and every

Michigan is 28th in the nation in per student funding despite being the 14th wealthiest state.

(According to Invest in MI)

vote matters in the battle to ensure this initiative becomes a law. According to the InvestInMiKids website, the Invest in MI Kids initiative is to collect 700,000 signatures from Michigan voters across the state."

This ballot proposal initiative Amendment would be put on the ballot in 2026 a vote to place a 5% tax on taxable

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"67" is the Dictionary's word of the year

ANNABELLE YANG
DESIGN EDITOR

On Oct. 28, 2025, Dictionary.com released 67 as its word of the year. To understand the reasoning behind why it's the word of the year, we must first understand how the numbers shot to popularity.

The first mention of 67 started when the rapper, Skrilla, included 67 in his song "Doot Doot (67)" which was released in December of 2024. While the reason 67 was included in the song is not particularly stated, it is most likely referencing 67th Street in Chicago, or it could

be that 10-67 is a police code in Philadelphia.

Despite it being included in the song, edits of NBA player LaMelo Ball helped it gain popularity since he is 6 feet 7 inches. Additionally, a video of a kid, also known as the "67 kid," whose actual name is Maverick Travillian, yelling six seven, and making a hand gesture that is now associated with the 67 meme, has blown up, gaining over thousands of views.

Seventh grader, Jyothsana Subbu Arumugam, said "67 is becoming too repetitive now, it was fine before when people only said it occasionally, but now it sometimes even

distracts my learning," seventh grader Jyothsana Subbu Arumugam said.

Its rising popularity and common usage have all added up and have resulted in it being word of the year, though some people complain that "67" isn't a real word. The traditional way of writing it, sixty-seven, was always included in dictionaries, but the slang term 67 has only been recently added to Dictionary.com, with a completely different meaning from the traditional spelling, so it could technically be

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Clague student featured in book

MEDHA SANGI
WEBSITE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Recently, a book titled "Sports for Everyone" was published, featuring a Clague Middle School student named David Wiljanen, who shared his experiences in adaptive sports.

"The book is about how everyone can play any sport they want," Wiljanen said. "I am in it because I play several adaptive (sled hockey) and non-adaptive (golf) sports." David is a seventh grader at

Clague, and outside of school he enjoys both sports and video games.

The purpose of the book is to highlight the importance of inclusivity in sports. "[The book is] important for [everyone] to read because it brings awareness to everyone," Wiljanen said. When asked what advice he wanted to offer to students around the world, he responded: "Be true to yourself," Wiljanen said.



Book cover of "Sports are for Everyone."



An image full of Korean traditional food. AEDA BAANG

Korean culture: Korean traditional food is increasing in popularity

AEDA BAANG
WEBSITE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Korean tradition has become more and more known as k-pop and Korean drama became more popular. Traditional Korean food has become part of social media and a lot of people want to try it.

“I think Korean food is very good and unique because it has so many different flavors that go well together in Korean dishes,” said seventh

grader Elyse Kwon. “I personally love Korean food and definitely would recommend that people try it! My favorite Korean foods are Tteokbokki, Potato Sujebi, and Kimchi Stew!”

A lot of people like it. Traditional Korean food has a lot of unique flavors. From spicy to sweet to savory. Spicy food is popular among Koreans and it is one of the trademarks of traditional Korean food. Koreans use gochugaru or Korean

chili powder to add spice to food. One food that has this added spice is kimchi stew. Once people start eating it, they can’t stop eating all that Korean food.

“I think Korean food has each of its own special tastes and that’s what makes it taste so good!” said seventh grader Joyce Kim. “I really like to eat Korean food. I think everyone should try it! My favorites are japchae, samgyeopsal, and kimbap.

Traditional Korean food has become viral in social media as well as the Internet. YouTube videos of mukbang YouTubers and k-pop have a big part in this. Once people started eating the food, they must’ve liked it because now there is a lot of traditional Korean food in American groceries (like kimchi) and amazing Korean restaurants near or in Ann Arbor. Some grocery stores that sell kimchi or other Korean foods are Kroger and

Costco. Some Korean restaurants in Ann Arbor are Rich JC and BBQ Chicken. Just five years ago there were very few Korean foods in American groceries.

“I feel like Korean food has such unique tastes and they are really good!” said seventh grader Olivia Yim. “I love when my mom makes me some at home! I definitely want more people to try them. My favorite Korean food is probably Tteokbokki!”

What does it take to go to All-State?

AEDA BAANG
WEBSITE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

All-State is a program where student musicians from across the state of Michigan audition to get into either the All-State Orchestra, All-State Band or the All-State Choir. Since people all over the state audition, it is very competitive.

Jayden Kim is a seventh grader at Clague. He is in second chair in the All-State orchestra and he plays the violin.

“[If you don’t get in] I don’t think you have to be disappointed or sad because it’s really hard,” Kim said. “I am very thankful to be in it.”

All-State is one of the hardest student orchestra, band and choirs to get into in the state of Michigan. It not only encourages people to practice but it also helps make players better in a musical way because of how many people register for All-State.

“I think All-State is really hard to get into because over 200 people register for All-State across Michigan,” Kim said.

Kim was very consistent with practicing.

“I practiced everyday for around three hours and I also set a goal everyday to

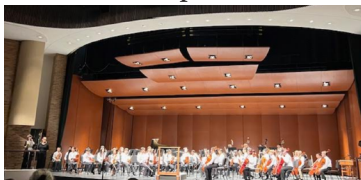
get better from the previous day, even if I got better by a little bit,” Kim said. “Even if I practiced for around three hours per day, I still had a minimum chance of getting in but I was lucky enough to get in.”

Seventh grader Gia Kim also got into All-State and plays the violin. She has practiced consistently as well.

“I think that all-state will be a fun experience and I practiced a lot and listened to the excerpts over and over again,” Gia Kim said.

Clague band teacher Jay MacArthur thinks All-State is a great experience for the students.

“They get to work together with the best musicians in the state,” MacArthur said. “There are two days of rehearsals and then a performance, so things happen very quickly. The performance space has amazing acoustics and is usually packed with a large audience which makes the concert extra special.”



The Clague orchestra performing in the Huron Auditorium PHOTO BY AEDA BAANG

Guiding young minds into math: Colleen Jbeily

LEA PARK
STAFF WRITER

Colleen Jbeily always knew she wanted to be a teacher. She also knew that math would be perfect for her. However, what she didn’t expect was that she would end up as a middle school teacher. This surprising journey into becoming a middle school teacher has allowed her to make Clague a better place for her students.

“I originally wanted to be an elementary school teacher, but I found myself at a middle school, and I really enjoyed it,” Jbeily said. “I majored in math in college, so I knew that would be a great fit.”

In the classroom, she has different methods of teaching. These methods help students to understand and connect more with the subject.

“I like to make learning fun, I love having classroom discussions,” Jbeily said. “And I also love when students work together.”

Jbeily always knew that she had a connection with math. She saw it as a subject she enjoyed, she found math as a fun and engaging subject. This made her want to major in math.

“I always loved math,

and I was always good at math, so it just made sense,” said Jbeily.

As a math teacher, Colleen Jbeily wants to help her students understand math in a way that is effective, while she also believes that learning math should be fun. Using creative teaching methods, she makes math enjoyable, making her students feel confident in the subject.

“I like to make teaching fun and make my students laugh, because I know that

math is a difficult subject and not everyone’s favorite, so I like to make it entertaining,” Jbeily said.

Jbeily has a goal for her students: to see math as an enjoyable subject, instead of fearing it. She believes that every one of her students can succeed in math.

“My hope is to change their negative thoughts of math to positive,” Jbeily said. “I want all students to think of themselves as math people, because they can do it.”



Mrs. Jbeily at her desk in her classroom. PHOTO BY ANGELA OH

Is AI getting too big? Exploring the pros and cons of AI

AVERIE GRZESIAK & AARTHI SENTHOORAN
STAFF WRITER

In this century, AI (Artificial Intelligence) has grown to the point where people question: Is AI Helpful or Hurtful? There are lots of benefits in using AI along with all of the faults that come with it, so in this article we look at the pros and cons of AI. What do you think, is AI HELPFUL or HURTFUL?

“I think AI can be both a good and bad thing but I lean more towards the negative side because AI is sometimes untrustworthy in my opinion and I think people use it way too much,” Grzesiak said.

Pros of AI

AVERIE GRZESIAK
STAFF WRITER

AI has impacted humankind in some positive ways such as explaining hard concepts to help people understand what they need to know. AI is also a common tool because of its availability and how anyone with access to the Internet can use AI whenever they want with ease. AI generators including ChatGPT, image generators, Meta AI, and more can give people helpful content and make everyday tasks feel easier.

“I sometimes use the Canva Image Generator, and I use the Google AI Overview at home,” Senthoooran said.

AI’s efficiency benefits the greediness of humans this century by getting an answer fast with no need to think.

“I do not use AI very often,

but sometimes I will use Varsity Tutors (which is a tool on Schoology that has a learning option where AI helps you understand and explains questions you have about work you do in school),” Grzesiak said.

AI robots, in general, have helped people feel less lonely because they have “someone” to talk to if they live alone or even just need company. ElliQ, a robot “roommate” invented for this reason, has helped people who live alone by talking to them and gives encouraging words to cheer the listener up. ElliQ also gives ideas on what to do (activities) and remembers everything the user tells it.

Speaking of robots, AI also has been helping in the healthcare industry by doing lots of different jobs. AI robots have greeted and engaged with people and have helped healthcare departments perform tasks. AI has also been helping with the design of robotic prosthetics, which are artificial arms or legs that people wear if they had to amputate one of their limbs, that receive neurological signals from the brain, and interacts with the user. There is also a Japanese robot called the Nurse Bear that can help lift and carry patients to another area or into a wheelchair/bed. (there are lots of other robots that help with these kinds of tasks). AI can also take care of human jobs that are dangerous or not

wanted.

“I think AI has benefits because it can teach others (always check your facts!), and there are different AI tools/resources that have helped people with their well-being, mental-being, and physical-being. There are also lots of jobs AI helps with.” Grzesiak said.

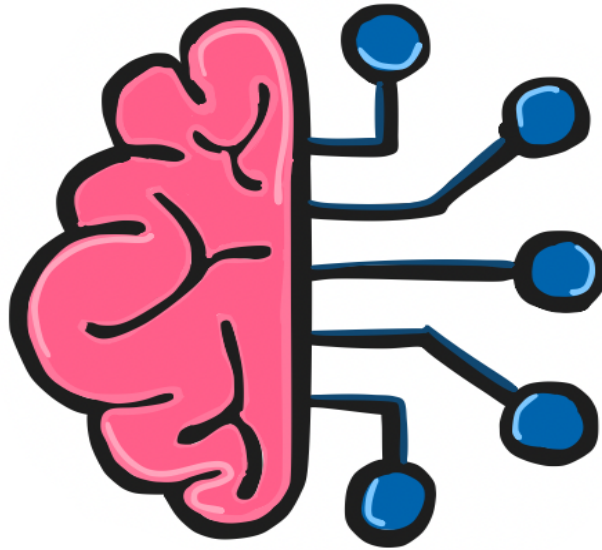


PHOTO BY MEDHA SANGI

“I lean more towards the con side because with negative inputs, AI can be dangerous,” Senthoooran said.

While AI has positive effects, there are also lots of negative ones too. Even though AI can give answers to questions and different varieties of content, AI is not always accurate and can make mistakes or give false information. AI also lacks creativity because everything AI generates is from a computer which also makes it easier to tell it is a robot, and not a human, you are talking to.

Cons of AI

AARTHI SENTHOORAN
STAFF WRITER

“When I search up something, I get answers from the Google AI Overview,” Senthoooran said.

Also, AI isn’t very accurate when it comes to generating images. When you ask AI to generate a picture of someone, AI might generate it wrong, depending on how specific you are. Another fault of AI is that it can be biased on questions like, “pizza or burgers” (this or that). If you ask AI to choose between two things it will most likely be biased based on “facts” and human opinions it has found on the Internet.

A concern on AI that a lot of people think about is how often people use AI and how it can be used as a cheating purpose for school work or other work, such as a paper or essay you needed to write that was supposed to be in your own words. Multiple schools have blocked AI because of instances in the past, when students used AI to do their work. Some people act as though they depend on AI and what they do in their everyday lives, like using it daily as some sort of assistant. This can be a positive concept but it can also be bad because

people can get so used to always using AI that they start to forget how to do simple things.

AI can also be used (not all the time) by “bad” people who try to scam, hack, etc. People use AI by generating fake images or voice recordings or even using AI to crack passwords.

“Lots of people use AI for dangerous purposes,” Senthoooran said.

Not only can AI be bad for humans, but it can also be bad for the environment. AI uses a lot of flat land by making data centers to hold all of the information that AI uses. To cool down all of the data centers and their machines/servers, lots of good water is wasted, and not only does it waste water, but when people use AI, it takes a lot of energy to take in the information. AI uses lots of energy from fossil fuels, which are non-renewable energy sources.

“I know that AI is rapidly growing every day,” Grzesiak said. “I don’t think AI has made me a better person, but maybe a smarter one. AI has made me smarter not by giving me answers to questions I ask, but by teaching me to always fact check and learn that not everything is trustworthy.”

“People can use AI if they want to, but I wouldn’t get too carried away with it,” Senthoooran said.

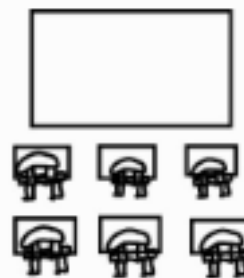
AI is a very complicated topic, but really matters is what you think; is AI HELPFUL or HURTFUL?

What is more beneficial: A2Virtual or In-Person learning classes

SANA SUBBU ARUMUGAM
STAFF WRITER

Over the past few years, A2 Virtual classes have become a major part of how students learn. Both in-person and virtual learning environments offer advantages and challenges.

While virtual learning is convenient as it’s on the computer, in-person classes typically have better structure and more guidance. Being in a classroom helps us build real relationships with teachers and classmates. When students are face-to-face, it’s easier to ask questions and get help if students don’t understand something.



On the left is a picture of a laptop used for A2V, and on the right, students are working in a classroom. JESSIE GUO

“In-person classes offer hands-on help and quick feedback from instructors,” seventh grader Jessie Guo said. Another major advantage of in-person learning is that classrooms are designed for learning. Teachers can spot when students are confused or losing focus, and classmates help keep each other engaged.

With A2 Virtual classes, it’s tempting to open another tab leading to distractions. Many students who struggled with virtual learning said it wasn’t because the work was harder, but because the lack of structure made it harder to concentrate. “In A2 Virtual, I didn’t really feel a need to do it, as no one was monitoring my progress.

As a result, I didn’t do anything and procrastinated till the last second,” seventh grader Ardra Murali said.

However, attending school in person has its own challenges. Students must

travel and get ready which can take a lot of time. “In person, it is harder as you have to get ready,” seventh grader Elaine Wu said. Even though in-person classes can be hard, they often lead to better results. Being in a classroom makes students get work done consistently. “You feel more pressure to do

your actual work instead of slacking off.” That helps you get more done,” Murali said. On the other hand, A2 Virtual classes give students the flexibility to learn at their own pace. This is something in-person classes don’t offer. Students can move quickly through the material they already understand and take time on the hard concepts. “Online classes help you learn better because you can skip what you already know and spend more time on what you don’t,” Murali said. A2 Virtual does have its benefits, including being able to learn at your own speed giving students convenience and flexibility. But for many students, the structure and support of in-person learning can lead to better results.

Robotics team makes it to state championship

ANNABELLE YANG
DESIGN EDITOR

The Clague robotics team attended the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Qualifier that was held on Nov. 22, 2025 where all robotics teams in Ann Arbor come together to compete for a chance to go to the Michigan FIRST Tech Challenge State Championship.

The Clague robotics team hasn't made it to states since 2019, but this year, robotics team 7305, the Clague Gearcats, was invited to the Michigan FIRST Tech Challenge State Championship that will be held in Muskegon on Dec. 12-13.

"I am excited that this is the first time Clague is being represented at the state championships in Michigan," coach Manthey said.

In a basic sense, two teams are paired together to compete against two other paired teams (each pair is randomly chosen and changes each match). The layout of the field has two baskets that Robots are supposed to shoot artifacts (artifacts are balls) into, a certain number of points are awarded per artifact that is made in the basket. There are two different color artifacts, green ones and purple ones, because there is also a color pattern (also called the motif pattern) where, if the robot shoots the artifacts in the correct color pattern, additional points will be awarded. Whichever pair gets the most points by the end of the round wins.

After each team has played five matches, six of the top-performing teams will be chosen to go to the play-offs. The six teams will then choose six other teams that will compete with them for the rest of the tournament (the pairs do not change in play-offs). So only twelve teams compete during playoffs. Teams will slowly be eliminated until only one pair remains, those two teams will be the winners of the tournament.

The top five teams were chosen to go to states, and the Clague robotics team 7305, the Clague gearcats, was among them.

"I'm very proud of how much progress we have made in the season, and how much we have learned and changed," seventh grader Charles Hyman said.

Within and beyond the stacks with Ms. McLean

JYOTHSANA SUBBU ARUMUGAM
STAFF WRITER

Kim McLean, the Clague Librarian, has always thought of reading as more than just a hobby. Growing up as a shy kid in the middle of Philadelphia, she escaped the noisy classrooms and playgrounds through the books she carried home from the public library. With no library at her school, she often took the bus across town just to borrow the stories that made her feel connected to worlds beyond her own.

"Reading gave me a wonderful sense of belonging in someone else's world," McLean said. "Clague students may not realize how lucky they are to have a fully stocked library within easy reach every day."

McLean didn't have one favorite author. Instead, she read as many books as the public library would allow her to check out each week. Her early passion for books guided her career, but she didn't begin working as a school librarian immediately. Before becoming a librarian, McLean spent 10 years working in marketing and public relations for major book publishers such as McGraw-Hill, CQ Press, and Rand McNally. McLean



The Clague library is run by Librarian Kim McLean. BY ANNABELLE YANG

moved to Ann Arbor 30 years ago, and began to raise her two sons. While her children attended Lawton Elementary, McLean volunteered in their school library for seven years, helping with book check-outs and book fairs. When her youngest began middle school, she took a job as a library clerk at Tappan Middle School.

"I decided I loved working in school libraries so much that I applied to the University of Michigan to complete my Master of Science in Information Degree," she said. At 43, after more than two decades away

from school, McLean was determined to pursue her passion. "I knew I really loved working in the school library and would do whatever was necessary to make it happen." Today, she is a fully certified AAPS librarian at Clague's library.

McLean has offered a lot of interesting books. She runs book bowls, book fairs, and monthly activities to keep students engaged and to read more.

"I strongly believe that the school library is the heart of the school," McLean said. "It supports the entire Clague community by fostering

literacy and offering a safe, collaborative space for learning." Her message to students is simple but important. Find your passion and don't give up on it.

McLean's own journey proves it. After raising two children and being a stay-at-home mom for over two decades, she returned to graduate school at forty-three to follow her passion as a school librarian.

"Never give up on your dreams," McLean said. "It can happen at any age."

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POLICIES

The Cougar Star staff meets on Mondays after school. All students are welcome to join the club at the start of each school year.

The Cougar Star is a member of The Michigan Interscholastic Press Association, Columbia Scholastic Press Association and The National Scholastic Press Association.

2025: CSPA:
Crown Finalist

2025: NSPA/JEA:
Pacemaker Finalist

2025: MIPA:
Spartan Gold

Letters to the editor can be sent to badalamentes@aaps.k12.mi.us

The contributions Ashley Clague made to AAPS

MAX FINE
STAFF WRITER

Ashley Hubert Clague was born on Aug. 27 1902 in Ishpeming, Marquette, Michigan and left school at the age of 12 to support his family by working in the Upper Peninsula iron mines. (FamilySearch.org) How did Mr. Clague, an undereducated boy from the Upper Peninsula, become one of the most influential people in Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) ever? He was a big supporter of multiple schools built during his school board tenure and created quite a few committees still influential to Ann Arbor today.

In 1922, at the age of 20, Clague moved to Ann Arbor very poor, and it's said with only 19 cents in his pocket. According to AADL News Archives, he took a job at King Seeley, a company that manufactured the first dash-mounted gas gauges in cars.

He moved to Big Rapids and studied at Ferris Institute for a year, before returning to Ann Arbor in 1926. After returning to Ann Arbor, he opened a grocery store on Packard Street with his uncle and would go on to operate the business for 43 years before retiring in 1968.

Clague's school board career started in 1941, and was elected president of the board in 1945. He was president for three years over two terms and stayed on the board until 1956. While on the board in 1953, he was a very strong supporter to build an addition to Slauson Middle school and was one of two board members who helped the addition to Slauson gain support. He was also a huge advocate for Ann Arbor High School, now named Pioneer.

Clague is most widely known for his contributions to the AAPS School Board and the development of

the district while he was serving on the board, he also was a member of the Ann Arbor Parks Commission for 19 years, and was mostly responsible for Veteran's Memorial Park on the west side of Ann Arbor. He also founded the Kiwanis Club's Forney W. Clement Memorial Committee and served on the committee for 18 years. Clague also served on the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce board and was the former president of both the Washtenaw Retail Grocers and Meat Dealers Association and the Muscular Dystrophy Associations of America for the Washtenaw County chapter.

In 1968, Clague retired from his grocery store and sold it and in 1970, the new middle school being built in Ann Arbor was named after him, becoming Clague Middle School. While on the school board, Tappan Middle

School, Pioneer High School, Eberwhite Elementary School, Haisley Elementary School, and the addition to Slauson Middle School were built. On Sept. 1, 1977, Ashley Clague died at the age of 75.

He impacted many people in Ann Arbor in a very positive way whether it was through the school board, the Kiwanis Club, or from the other clubs he was a part of. He is considered throughout AAPS one of the most influential and impactful people in the history of the district and truly lived up to his most famous message, "Live in service to your community."

In the Clague Middle school main lobby, there is a plaque commemorating the work of Ashley Clague, as well as a picture of him right after he was elected president of the school board in 1945.



In the main hallway of Clague Middle School, students pass by the Ashley Clague plaque whenever they go up to the second floor. PHOTO BY MAX FINE

Conformism vs. individualism: The importance of staying true to yourself

MADLINE ROSE
STAFF WRITER

Conformism is something that controls a lot of middle schoolers. Is it a good thing?

There is always some sort of style or cool thing like wearing baggy clothes or saying "six-seven." That's because people like to fit in and be cool or fly under the radar, but is that good? Is that the best way to be?

I would say no. I think it is

important to express and be yourself. Imagine if someone like Martin Luther King had never spoken out and decided he was just going to go along because that was safer, easier. We wouldn't be where we are today.

It is important to speak out, but sometimes it is not the best thing to do. Like if your friend is really upset because their pet pickle died, it is not the best time to say that you are angry at them for not thanking you for the pie you

brought them.

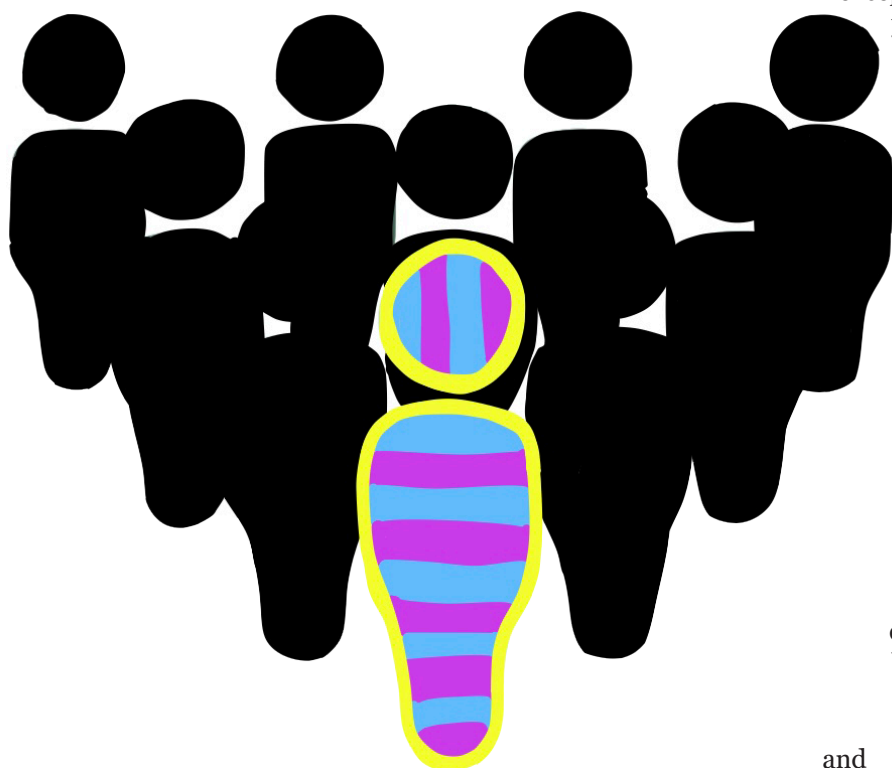
It is not only important to speak out but to express yourself and your style. If I want to wear a cozy t-shirt that stands out with purple, green and red polka dots, people would judge. But if everyone wore strange things and everyone was expecting it, it wouldn't be so strange.

It is important to try to change your mind set, believe in yourself and in others. That is hard and sometimes it feels undoable, but that is okay. Although it is close to impossible to have everyone except everyone, and you can't control

others thoughts or opinions.

What you can do is be the change you want to see, because the more you put down others, the more you feel judged and rejected.

The world is full of people and full of beautiful things, so at the end of the day, it is best to be grateful, encourage difference, be kind and be yourself.



The image shows one person standing out in a group of people that are the exact same. IMAGE BY MEDHA SANGI

Staff Editorial: Six-seven's time is up

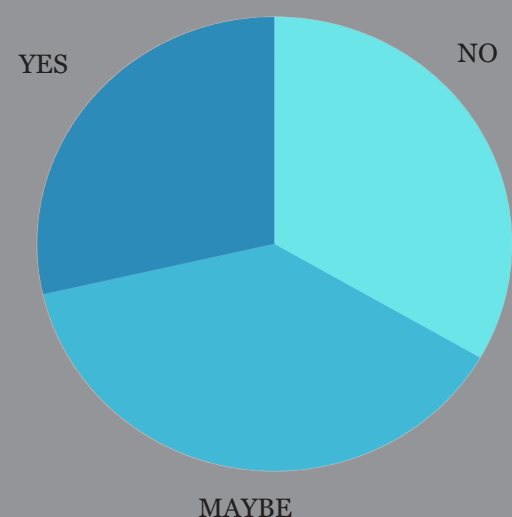
Six-Seven has been a recent trend that has become viral through social media. Originating from a song, people all over the world started posting videos of six-seven and it had become viral.

At first, the Cougar Star staff thought it was a really fun way to interact and socialize with students and thought it was a really fun trend. Not only did it help socializing with the students but it was also very fun when the whole class would shout out six-seven.

Trends usually fade out pretty quickly. Like Italian brain rot which only lasted for a few weeks. But six-seven was different, it lasted for a year and is still a trend. The Cougar Star staff thinks that six-seven is overrated.

It lasted for a really long time and even though everyone says six-seven, a lot of people are getting tired of it.

Six-seven is a really fun way to socialize with students and it is something that people have enjoyed. But a lot of people are getting really tired of six-seven. The Cougar Star thinks that six-seven was definitely fun at first. But we think it is overrated. It lasted for such a long time. Unlike previous trends like Italian brain rot or the meme of skibidi toilet. Even though six-seven was a really fun trend, even the Cougar Star agrees, it became too much after a while and a lot of people got tired of it.



Wicked For Good: a sequel that was totally worth the wait

LEILA ECKARD
STAFF WRITER

If you have a clock tick to spare, please read my review on *Wicked: For Good*, directed by Jon M. Chu.

The *Wicked* part 1 movie astonished me last year. I had seen the musical, but I had no idea it would become a movie.

The visual effects of *Wicked 1* were so amazing. Everything looked so real, and it was wickedly awesome when Elphaba, played by Cynthia Erivo, flies. Glinda was played by Ariana Grande. I was obsessed, and couldn't wait to watch *Wicked: For Good*! I was so happy when it finally came out, and I was in awe. The CGI was incredible, with special effects that blew my mind. Another cool fact about "*Wicked: For Good*" is that the end scene was kept a secret from the producers. It is totally worth waiting two hours.

Something that disappointed me was that the songs weren't as good as the first movie. I think that in the first movie, the producers were more focused on making the songs amazing. "Popular," "Dancing through life," and the "Wizard and I" to give a few examples. I think that in the second movie the producers tried to work more



"*Wicked: For Good*" released in theaters in late November. BY MEDHA SANGI

in the special effects. The songs felt really real, despite the not-so-good sounds. To make up for the not-so-good songs, the special effects were always surprising you, leaving you on a cliffhanger.

I think that the best song is "For Good." I love this song because the setting is Kiamo Ko castle, where Elphaba and Glinda are saying goodbye. It is so pretty and so sad because Elphaba and Glinda both know that they probably will never see

each other again. It has one of my favorite lines in any song ever in it: "And now whatever way our stories end, I know you have rewritten mine by being my friend."

I was disappointed that we didn't get to see Dorothy's face. She was played by the 30-year-old actor Bethany Weaver, who also features in *Matilda*, the musical. I think that Glinda had some emotional moments where she had her own way of showing it, but if you look

deeply into Elphaba, I think that she had the emotional moments.

The storyline is pretty straightforward, and you can guess what the characters are going to do most of the time.

Rated PG, this film contains some scary scenes, adult content, violence and themes that may not be suitable for young children. Overall, I think that this movie was done with an effect of intriguing, interesting moments. I don't think that

some scenes were necessary, and some don't fit the character, such as when Fiyero says "If it will make you happy, of course I'll marry you." When Elphaba slams her arms on her table, or when she sings a whole extra song, in a scene that never existed in the play. I think these scenes are unnecessary and unfitting to their characters, but I would still rate this movie 4/5 stars. I definitely recommend this movie!

Something Like Home: a book review

LEA PARK
STAFF WRITER

"Something Like Home" is an inspiring novel by Andrea Beatriz Arango. This book is easy to follow in an entertaining way. This book features the main character, Laura, and her point of view on her life. Throughout the story, Laura focuses on friendship, acceptance and finding connections with others.

The story begins when eleven-year-old Laura is placed into foster care. She is sent to live in a beautiful apartment with her mysterious aunt, whom she has never met before.

Her parents are in a rehab facility. Laura feels extremely guilty and believes that this situation happened because of her. Because of this, she tries to think of ideas for her and her parents to live together again.

One day, during a walk, she sees a dog in a cage with a sign taped to it that says, "FREE DOG." To her surprise, she finds a puppy inside, still and motionless. Her heart pounds nervously; it reminds her of what happened to her parents. Without thinking, she takes the dog home and goes to the vet with her aunt.

Thankfully, the dog, whom Laura decides to call "Sparrow," fully recovers. Sparrow and Laura develop a deep connection with each other.

Laura gets frustrated when her social worker, Janet, says that children

are not allowed in the rehab her parents are currently in, "Harmonic Way." To find out the truth, she searches the Harmonic Way website. Scrolling through their pages,

she sees a golden retriever with a red vest that says "THERAPY DOG." Suddenly, Laura knows how she can meet her parents again. She decides to train Sparrow to become a therapy dog. Even though he can be a handful at times, Laura is determined to do almost anything to reunite with her parents. A new friend she made at school, Benson, also decides to help her train Sparrow.

Laura and Benson continue to train Sparrow. Laura is happy to know that Benson believes in her and that she will be able to reunite with her parents.

I really enjoyed reading this book; the way the author wrote kept me engaged and captivated, like the part where she rescues Sparrow. Andrea Beatriz Arango's "Something Like Home" has won multiple awards, including the 2025 Michigan Library Association YouPer Award, the 2025 Massachusetts Children's Book Award, the 2025 Tennessee Volunteer State Book Award, the Pura Belpré Honor for novels in verse, and is a 2026 Oregon Book Award Master List selection. I would rate this book an 8.5/10 and would definitely recommend reading it to all ages.



The book *Something Like Home*
PHOTO PROVIDED BY LEA PARK

The School for Good and Evil: book review

AUDREY YUAN & AUDREY YANG
OPINION EDITOR & STAFF WRITER

Published in 2013, *The School for Good and Evil* is an exciting fantasy tale written by Soman Chainani, telling the story of two best friends, Sophie and Agatha. They lived in a town called Galvoldon, where every four years, two children, one good, one evil, suddenly disappeared, only to appear again years later in the storybooks the children read.

One fateful day, Sophie and Agatha discovered where the lost children went when they were kidnapped and brought to the School for Good and Evil. Their lives changed dramatically from that day on, as they faced challenges, sometimes together, and other times alone.

Sophie had always dreamed of being a princess, with pink dresses and long beauty routines, as well as being loved by everyone.

However, Agatha was gloomy and odd, and didn't like most people. When they don't find themselves in the schools they expected to be in, their tale becomes as twisted as a maze that they have no

idea how to exit.

With so much happening, Sophie and Agatha don't know if they will get their happily ever after, and things only get worse after they turn on each other. While reading this book, you'll watch the line between hero and villain blur, and get a perspective from both sides, instead of only from the hero's perspective, as most other stories do. This story will keep you wanting more, and you will be excitedly waiting for the next book, a sure choice for any fantasy lover.



Book 1 of the *School of Good and Evil*
PHOTO PROVIDED BY AUDREY YANG

Cougar girls basketball team takes on the Tappan Trojans



1

MAX FINE
MANAGING EDITOR

1. Protecting the ball, eighth grader Kennedy Wright looks to take on a Tappan defender.

2. Seventh grader Sa’Ny Middlebrooks picks up her dribble to try and finish at the basket. Middlebrooks scored four points in the Nov. 24 matchup against Tappan.



2



3

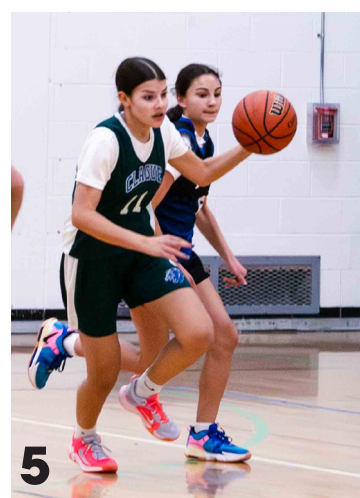
3. Eighth grader Madisyn Jackson looks to get past a Tappan player. “I think (basketball) is a really good way to be with friends

and also do physical activity,” Jackson said. “I enjoy it because it allows me to get better and also helps me with my other sports.”



4

4. Making a cut to try and get open on offense is seventh grader Berlynn Shafer. 5. Dribbling up the court to try and get breakaway points



5

is eighth grader Olivia Whitehead. Whitehead finished the game with two points. 6. Squaring up for a jump-shot eighth grader Ella



6

Mueggenborg looks to add points to the scoreboard. PHOTOS BY MATTHEW BEZAS

Dance is definitely a sport

SOPHIA LOUTTS
STAFF WRITER

What is dance? By definition, dance is the action of moving your body rhythmically, usually to music and in a choreographed way. There have been signs of dance dating as far back as 8000 B.C.E. There are many different forms of dance, including ballet, jazz, contemporary, tap, and hip hop, along with many others.

Especially now, the topic of whether or not dance should be considered a sport is being debated. Many people argue that dance is not a sport, but rather an art. They might think that because dance seems different from other sports, it shouldn't be considered one. Despite this, there are many people who believe dance is a sport, myself included. Here's why.

First of all, strength and flexibility are essential in many dance styles. Dancers must work hard not only in dance class, but also at home during their free time to maintain their form. Many dancers spend hours stretching and building their endurance to excel at dance. It is nearly impossible for most professional dancers to succeed if they do not have the strength and flexibility needed.

In addition to this, dance takes up lots of time. On average, dancers who wish to dance professionally spend 10-30+ hours per week training. Some dancers even choose to be homeschooled in order to have more studio

time. For dance styles with more precise movements, dancers have to practice for hours over time to perfect the movements.

Furthermore, dance can affect your physical health. Because of long schedules and constant pressure on the body, dancers

your mental health. Although the world around us has become much more body positive, there are many improvements that still need to be made. Many dancers are still forced to follow strict diets and exercise routines, which can deeply affect their mental health and how they view themselves. There are also many instances of bullying in the dance industry. This can come from peers, dance instructors, or even people at dance competitions.

Dance is very much a sport. Dancers must maintain high levels of strength and flexibility, devote themselves and their time to dance, and sometimes endure damage to their physical and even mental health. This shows just how much dancers are capable of, and how dance requires just as much (if not more) hard work than other sports.

oftentimes end up injured. Some common injuries resulting from dance include stress fractures, knee, hip, foot, and ankle injuries, along with even more serious issues such as arthritis. Furthermore, in forms of dance such as ballet, dancers have to wear pointe shoes and stand on the tips of their toes. This can damage their feet drastically and cause serious injuries. Different dance styles have varying amounts of physicality, but most are very demanding. This shows that dancers suffer from a wide variety of wounds, just like any other athlete.

Lastly, not only does dance affect your physical health, but it can also affect



The music of the nights: three performances showcase Clague Musicians



1. Sixth grader musicians performed at Skyline High School on Dec. 11. Ready to play are clarinet section members Zak Akabogu, Prime Catlett-Mendez, and Curtis Fu. PHOTO BY ANAYA SPERO MELONEY **2.** Eighth grader Amos Boonstra plays the flute during the fall eighth grade band concert. PHOTO BY THOMAS BADALAMENTE **3.** Seventh grader Audrey Yuan playing her oboe. PHOTO BY MEDHA SANGI **4.** The eighth grade concert band plays their three-movement piece “Little English Suite” at Clague Middle School. PHOTO BY BADALAMENTE **5.** The eighth grade choir sings during the Nov. 11 eighth grade concert. The choir preformed first out of three groups. PHOTO BY BADALAMENTE **6.** Middle school is the first time choir class is offered to students as a class. Singing in the front row are sixth graders Katherine Dani, Nellie Barbossa, and Caroline Pinskey. PHOTO BY SPERO MELONEY **7.** Seventh grader Kate Wang holds her violin in rest position as she waits for the next piece to start. PHOTO BY SANGI **8.** The sixth grade percussion section in the band plays “King Arthur’s coronation March.” Performing are Katia Boldenow, Westley Deneke, and Joseph Chin. PHOTO BY SPERO MELONEY **9.** Seventh grader Violet Kang plays her cello during the concert. PHOTO BY SANGI

MEDHA SANGI, THOMAS BADALAMENTE & ANAYA SPERO MALONEY
WEBSITE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND STAFF WRITERS

Repertoire

- BAND**
James MacArthur, Director
Melissa Carpenter, Associate Director
Evaristo Rodriguez, Associate Director
Sixth Grade
King Arthur’s Coronation March, Mango Tango, Mariachi Madness
Seventh Grade
Thunder Bay by John O’Reilly, Zenobia by Joseph Compello, Comet Ride by Brian Balmages
Eight Grade Jazz Band
Ja Da by Bob Carleton arr. Mike Hannickel, Swing Machine by Larry Neeck
Eight Grade
Little English Suite by Clare Grundman: Movement 1. The Leather Bottel, Movement 2. Roving, Movement 4. The Vicar of Bray, Genius March by Harold Bennett
ORCHESTRA
Abigail Alwin, Director
Elizabeth Paddock, Associate Director
Sixth Grade
Follow Me, First Scale March, Moja Mbili Tatu, Strings in the Trap
Seventh Grade
Dragon Hunter by Richard Meyer, The Old Boatman by Florence Price art. Dana Paul Perna, Walking Bases by Merle J. Isaac, Nighthawk by Mike Kamuf
Eight Grade
Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 by J.S. Bach, Arr by Mark Jasinski, Cardboard Regatta by Robert S. Frost, Romanian Folk Dances by Béla Bartok: Joc Cu Bâta, Arr by Deborah Baker Monday, Buciumeana, Poarga Româneasca, Maruntel
CHOIR
Alyssa Malbon, Director.
Daphne Mitchell, Accompanist
Sixth Grade
Give Me Wings, Let All The World Hear Music... arr. Patrick M.
Seventh Grade
Over the Rainbow arr. Audrey Snyder, The Clouds by Cynthia Gray, A Whole New World arr. Ed Lojeski
Eighth Grade
Can’t Help Falling in Love Arr. Roger Emerson, Land of Our Dreams Arr. Jay Althouse, Ain’t No Mountain High Enough Arr. Roger Emerson, Come and Sing by Wallace Hornady

GRAPHIC BY MEDHA SANGI