

## GETTING AHEAD: Clague students advance to high school for math classes

**Eighth grade students work on solving rational equations in AC Algebra 2. Students travel from the middle school to take advanced math at Huron. PHOTO ILLUSTRATION MATTHEW BEZAS**

**DAVID PARK**  
NEWS EDITOR

Every morning 22 eighth grade students start their day at Huron High School. This year is the biggest group yet with Clague having a sudden increase in students taking advanced courses.

The first opportunity for acceleration often appears as early as fifth grade, where students can test out of certain math levels; this is more prominent on the

North side of Ann Arbor. Beyond the school year, some students continue to accelerate by taking online math courses over the summer, often in subjects that go beyond what's typically expected for their grade level. Still, faster is not always better according to principal Crystal Fluker.

Fluker said that all students should be able to progress in math and she supports it. She also said students may lose the chance to learn

alongside same-age peers.

But for eighth grade pre-calculus student Vihaan Sharma, he said he enjoys it.

"The class is challenging and forces me to grow academically," Sharma said.

Students being able to start at Huron is facilitated by Clague's new schedule shift, where advisory is now the first class of the day in combination with high school's start time

being earlier than the middle school. This creates a 20-minute gap between the students getting back to Clague and the second hour starting, which makes up for lost advisory time.

Kids going to Huron either have to take an early bus, walk, bike, or carpool.

Eighth grader Ashok Senthoooran said that the math is challenging and he feels pressured to do well. However, he still enjoys the course because he can study

with his friends and feels good when he gets the material.

Likewise, their math teacher Adelaide Barcalow said, "Taking a high school course

in middle school means more than just learning—it also requires a level of responsibility many middle schoolers aren't ready for yet."



**A group of Clague students board the bus back to middle school after taking their first hour class at Huron. MATTHEW BEZAS**

## Student Council visits Atria Assisted Living

**MAX FINE**  
MANAGING EDITOR

On Thursday Oct. 23, the Clague Student Council visited Atria Assisted Living to paint pumpkins and spend time with the residents. Atria assisted living is a facility on the North side of Ann Arbor on Plymouth road. Over the past two years, a partnership has been established between Atria and Clague.

"Last year, Atria and Clague had a partnership," Student Council advisor Cheyenne Taylor said. "Our student council members were penpals with some of the residents, and then they invited us for an end of the year luncheon. It was really sweet. The 8th graders were so emotional! This year, we painted pumpkins with the residents and we'll start our pen pal

program in January."

Because of the proximity to Halloween, the Clague student council decorated pumpkins with the residents. Some student had a bigger responsibility during the trip.

"Our students were able to be a breath of fresh air for the residents," Taylor said. "The student's energy really helped liven up the space. For these

residents, even having someone to talk to can make a difference."



**Members of Student Council help residents of Atria Assisted Living paint pumpkins. CHEYENNE TAYLOR**

## PTSO hosts first Fun Night of the year

**MAX FINE**  
MANAGING EDITOR

On Oct. 24, Clague had their Harvest Moon Fun Night to celebrate the end of Quarter One. The event was Halloween themed, and students were allowed and encouraged to wear their Halloween costumes. The night

started at five, and the available activities were: A dance floor, a movie room, basketball and volleyball games in the gym, and other games such as Jenga in the tech hallway. There was also a Trunk or Treat at the end of the night. The next school wide Fun Night will be an eight grade only event in December.

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# Construction impacting student drop-off and pick-up

**MAX FINE**  
MANAGING EDITOR

Since April of the last school year, there have been many different construction projects near and within Clague, the biggest being the addition of the new Logan Elementary school on the outdoor Clague athletic campus. This had created an entirely new system for drop-off and pick-up for students, as well as many new landscape additions to the front of Clague.

“All cars will use the Bluett Rd entrance to drop-off and pick-up students along the drop off loop in front of the building,” principal Crystal Fluker said in a first day of school letter. “Cars will follow a one-way traffic pattern and exit to Nixon Road. Cars will not be allowed to exit off of (the) Bluett Road entrance.”

The changes in the front landscape have been significant,



Every day students walk past the new Logan Elementary School being built in front of Clague. The middle school community has adjusted for the construction. This has included new traffic patterns and traveling to other schools for athletic fields. SATVIKA RAMANATHAN

including multiple new walkways and a new staircase down to Bluett Road, and the reseeding of all the previous grass in the front area. Over the summer, there was also a new road installed in front of Clague because Clague

Street is currently under construction.

“Buses will now drop-off and pick-up along Bluett Road, and students will walk to the front entrance of the building,” Fluker said.

All these changes have made car and bus

drop-off and pick-up procedures different. Instead of using the circle drive on Clague Street for the car line, cars now use the circle drive in front of the main entrance for the car line. This had made the car line

significantly longer on some days and slightly less inefficient. This is also due to the fact that the only entrance to Clague for students is off of Bluett Road, which can also have traffic not associated with Clague drop-off and pick-up.

The construction has also changed where the buses are during drop-off and pick-up. Clague installed a new sidewalk on Bluett Road, as well as a new walkway down to the road and a set of stairs for students to easily be able to access the buses. The buses now line up next to the new sidewalk on Bluett Road.

Eighth grader Kevin McCabe likes the new area.

“I like the new area for buses because it feels more open,” McCabe said. “Getting on and off the front circle drive was very cramped with people.”

While it is not yet known if these changes will stay after the construction or if they will continue to be successful, so far they have worked well and efficiently enough for people to successfully get to and from school.

## Freshly designed bathrooms incorporate privacy and accessibility

**AEDA BAANG**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The bathrooms at Clague look a little different this year.

They have been renovated

so that all people can go to one bathroom area. The stalls are more secure with doors that go from the floor to the top of the ceiling with no cracks, the colors are different, and the towel dispensers are automatic. Some people love it while others don't. There is definitely a big change in the facilities.

One of the big things that is different are the stalls. Since anyone can go into one bathroom, the stalls are much more secure. They have heavier wooden doors, metal locks and you can't see if a person is in a stall or not.

“I don't like the Clague bathrooms because they're too claustrophobic,” seventh grader Jyothsana Subbu Arumugam said.

When students lock the stall, a little sign above

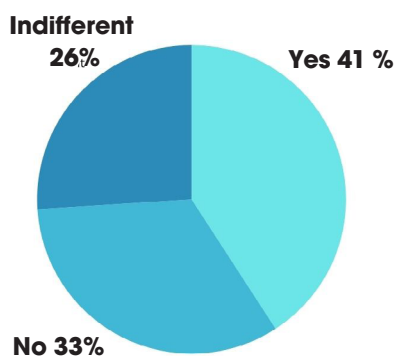
the doorknob turns red and says occupied. When it isn't locked, it says vacant. It gives people a lot more privacy. But this also means that anyone can use a stall.

“I personally don't like the Clague bathrooms right now and I prefer the old ones, the bathrooms half the time are disgusting or have the toilet seat up,” seventh grade Aina Miyazawa said.

Another big thing that changed are the colors. Now, the bathroom is green and blue because the Clague colors are green and blue. The ceiling part is green and the floors part is blue. Also the bathroom entrances don't have a door anymore. It is open and you don't need to open a door which is very convenient.

“The decision to design the bathrooms at Clague was made by the former superintendent and former school board,” principal

Crystal Fluker said. “I ordered signs for three girls, three boys, and three neutral gender. These are for the stalls in the bathroom. They will come soon.”



We asked 169 students their thoughts on the new bathrooms. ELLISE BAIDEL



Last year the Clague bathrooms were remodeled with full closing doors and a more open sink area. (photo taken after school when no one is in the restroom.) JESSIE GUO

The last renovation in the bathrooms is that the towel dispensers are automatic. When a person waves their hand in front of a sensor, just the right amount of towel comes out of the dispenser. You then rip the towel off of the dispenser and it is so convenient.

“It smells disgusting and I don't like it. I prefer the old ones,” seventh grade Annabelle Yang said.

## Cougar Star becomes finalist for NSPA Award

**MEDHA SANGI**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The 2024-2025 Cougar Star staff recently became

a finalist for the Pacemaker competition. Often referred to as the Pulitzer Prize of student journalism, this award has been recognizing

the best writing and reporting in student journalism since 1927.

“This was totally unexpected,” said Cougar Star adviser Sara-Beth Badalamente. “Last year was our first time printing our publication since I took over during the pandemic in 2020. To be up for this prestigious award our first time submitting is an honor.”

The Cougar Star received first place for the website and fourth

place for the print edition at the Seattle Journalism Education Association's National Convention.

The Pacemaker award is run by the National Scholastic Press Association, an organization dedicated to showcasing student journalism. NSPA holds many other competitions, including but not limited to the Leadership Award in Student Journalism and the Wikoff Scholarship

for Editorial Leadership.

“The nomination was not a goal I had initially planned for,” said Annabella Mi, former website editor-in-chief of the Cougar Star. “I've always strived to show the publication in all its true clarity through many different methods, like having a hard-copy issue or redesigning the website for competitions and readership.”

The winners of the Pacemaker Award will be announced at the

upcoming NSPA Fall National High School Journalism Convention, an important gathering for student journalists to showcase their work and receive well-deserved recognition.

“I'm so incredibly proud of the work the students continue to do,” Badalamente said. “Something that stands out about our club is that ALL are welcome.”

The staff will find out on Nov. 12 what award they will receive.



The Cougar Star staff outside the library where they meet every Monday. SATVIKA RAMANATHAN

# Clague updates schedule to have common advisory period

**AEDA BANG**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Clague bell schedule was modified this year moving Advisory into the first hour time slot. Advisory now starts at 8:15-8:40 a.m. and kids go to their advisory once they arrive at school. The AAPS Administration has changed the bell schedule as they are in charge of this. Some people think it is a great change, while some don't. I personally like it because you have time to reset your brain to school mode.

"I don't like the advisory first hour because advisory

is usually used for relaxing time, but in the morning, you already come to school relaxed (you just woke up)," seventh grader Elyse Kwon said. "I think that we should have an advisory before or after lunch and not first thing in the morning."

In addition to students having different opinions about this new schedule, this is a huge change for teachers who have been at Clague for a long time.

"I think there are pros and cons," social studies teacher Karma Nordstrom said. "I like that since we all have Advisory at the same time, it has become a time where kids

2024-2025  
Clague Bell Schedule

6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
1st 8:15 - 9:15	1st 8:15 - 9:15	1st 8:15 - 9:15
2nd 9:20 - 10:13	2nd 9:20 - 10:13	2nd 9:20 - 10:13
3rd 10:18 - 11:11	3rd 10:18 - 11:11	3rd 10:18 - 11:11
Lunch 11:16 - 11:38	4th 11:16 - 12:09	Advisory 11:16 - 11:38
Advisory 11:43 - 12:09	Lunch 12:09 - 12:35	Lunch 11:43 - 12:09
5th 12:14 - 1:07	Advisory 12:40 - 1:07	5th 12:14 - 1:07
6th 1:12 - 2:05	6th 1:12 - 2:05	6th 1:12 - 2:05
7th 2:10 - 3:03	7th hour 2:10 - 3:03	7th hour 2:10 - 3:03

2025-2026  
Clague Bell Schedule

6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Advisory 8:15 - 8:40	Advisory 8:15 - 8:40	Advisory 8:15 - 8:40
1st 8:45 - 9:39	1st 8:45 - 9:39	1st 8:45 - 9:39
2nd 9:44 - 10:38	2nd 9:44 - 10:38	2nd 9:44 - 10:38
Lunch 10:38 - 11:07	3E 10:43 - 11:37	3E 10:43 - 11:37
3L 11:12 - 12:06	Lunch 11:37 - 12:06	4E 11:42 - 12:36
4L 12:11 - 1:05	4L 12:11 - 1:05	Lunch 12:36 - 1:05
5th 1:10 - 2:04	5th 1:10 - 2:04	5th 1:10 - 2:04
6th 2:09 - 3:03	6th 2:09 - 3:03	6th 2:09 - 3:03

**Old vs. New: the latest change in schedule pushed for a common advisory period for all grades.** AEDA BANG

from any grade can get help from just about any teacher. This is especially help and is for teachers like me who teach students at two different grade levels."

What Nordstrom means is that for example: a teacher who instructs seventh and eighth grade can now support both grade levels during advisory for make-up tests, study help etc. because advisory is at the same time for all grades.

One setback is that students who have to go to Huron

for the first hour can't go to advisory, as the math class and advisory are both in the first hour.

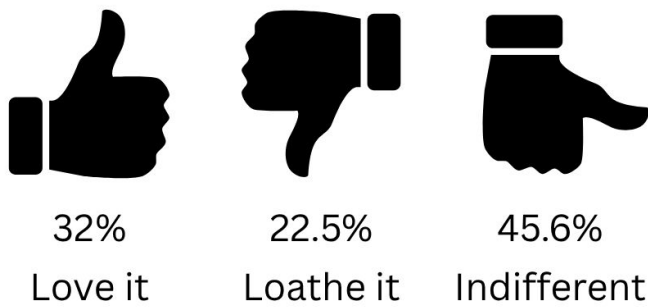
"I think it's pretty unfair because we can't listen to the morning announcements so we don't know when something is happening and what is happening," seventh grader Olivia Yim said. "I also don't like how we need to stay in school for 15 more minutes."

Another positive is helping with tardies. The new bell schedule is a huge change for

students as well as teachers.

"What I miss about the old schedule is that it was much easier to take kids outside during Advisory," Nordstrom said. "I personally believe middle school kids benefit from having some unstructured play time outside during the school day, and afternoon Advisory was a great time for that."

I like the change overall. You don't have to go right away to studying when you arrive in the building. You have time to adjust your brain to school.



169 students were surveyed on their opinion of the new schedule with advisory first hour. ELLISE BAIDEL

## A fun place for some to spend money on sweets – the snack bar is not for me

**JESSIE GUO**  
MULTI MEDIA EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The snack bar is a shop that opens during lunch where students can buy snacks and beverages by using money stored in their school account. Once the snack bar opens, swarms of students rush to get in line.

Some students like going to the snack bar, some prefer to save their money. I honestly think it's not worth it to go because your money should be used wisely. Money is precious, and it should be used with care.

If you're the type to spend your money instead of waiting for a better time to use it, then sure— go to the snack bar if you want, but you could get so much more from a

local convenience store at a different time.

"I'd want to go to the snack bar because I'd like to get food that's not the odd-tasting regular school lunch, but the prices aren't worth it," said seventh grader Annabelle Goebel. She doesn't use the snack bar, but sometimes wishes she does because of how yummy the treats look, but she'd rather save her money.

Others use the snack bar once in a while as a treat.

"I used to go there, and I'll still go if I want something sweet and yummy. I just feel like every time I go, I'm wasting money," eighth grader Lenaya Lee says, "It's worth it as long as I'm hungry or just really craving ice cream. It's also convenient

to give a gift to someone during lunch or to satisfy my stomach. Sometimes, when waiting in line, I feel like I'm wasting time, but when I get the treat, it's totally worth the wait."

The line for the snack bar is considerably long, so some students can go either way. As long as they're in the front, they'll go, but if the line's already packed, some people just say nevermind and leave. My friend, seventh grader Phoebe Jiang and I, always sit at the edge of our seats so when the snack bar opens, we immediately get up and speed walk there. Thankfully, we sit close to the snack bar, so we have a good chance of getting there early, and because I love fruit roll-ups and she loves Rice Krispies.

It'll usually take almost until the end of lunch to get through the line, and we don't want that, therefore we get there earlier. There was a time I went and stayed there until the end of lunch, and all I wanted to buy was a fruit roll up that I couldn't even eat.

Honestly, when I was in a bit of the back of the line, I thought it would be dreadful, and it would be unpleasant to me if I was in the back alone, so if you end up in the back, you should drag your friend along. Time will fly as long as you're in a good conversation—that's my way of making sure I won't be bored or alone.

If you ever want to go to the snack bar, you cannot bring cash. You have to ask your parents to put money into

your school account so you can use that money to pay at the snack bar. I would rather they also let you bring your own cash if you don't have any in your account. I personally like paying with cash because I can actually see how much money I have and make sure I have enough, while on account, I have to ask the worker how much I may have left, or ask my parents, and I'd rather be aware of what's available.

The snack bar is a good choice if you want a treat, but otherwise, the food is a bit too expensive, and you could buy the same item in bulk at any widespread grocery store instead. But I'm not the one trying to ruin the business here at Clague.

### EDITORIAL

Childhood is the time of your life when you develop a personality, interests, and skills. And yet, many try to escape it and become an adult faster. We think that the main reason why people think like this is because they believe that mistakes are caused by being a kid, not a natural part of it. Mistakes force you to learn and grow; without them, we would never learn how to problem solve or think critically.

To people who have outgrown being kids, sitting on the couch, playing games outside with your friends all day on a hot summer afternoon may seem like a waste of time. But it is essential to have these experiences to grow up. Sometimes, you need to spend 30 minutes thinking about nothing, and that's ok.

This is our reminder to you to cherish your childhood, because before you know it, you will be looking back on it.



Aeda Bang enjoys a quick treat after school during Newspaper. The staff of The Cougar Star reminds you to not grow up to quick and enjoy being a kid. MEDHA SANGI

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# The toxic side of Korean beauty

**JOYCE KIM**  
STAFF WRITER

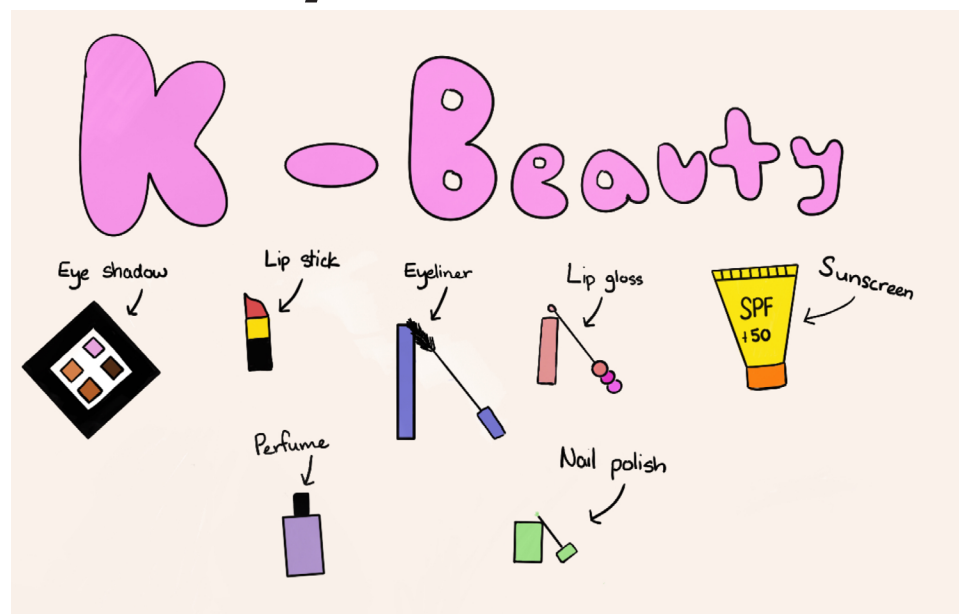
It feels that Korean beauty is everywhere- from K-pop idols to viral facemasks to makeup products. On social media, influencers gush over the newest beauty products from Korean skincare stores. In magazines, you see pretty K-pop idols with flawless skin and large, sparkling eyes. Korean beauty has gotten extremely popular over the years. However, is there a darker side to it? And why is South Korea known as the “plastic surgery capital of the world”?

South Korea is currently the country with the most plastic surgeries performed

yearly. Many people in South Korea believe that success can be achieved by looks. Sometimes, people will not even hire you for a job if they think that you are “not pretty enough.” Due to this, many people get plastic surgery, such as the double eyelid surgery, which creates a visible crease above the eye to make it look bigger. Double eyelid surgery is the most common procedure done in South Korea. The desire to have big eyes is so popular that even minors as young as 15 get the surgery done. Around 1 in 5 women in South Korea has gotten plastic surgery.

The beauty standards in Korea are very strict. Many are

inspired by American aesthetics. For example, Botox is popular in America; in Korea, it is also popular. If you don't fit into the beauty standards, you may be looked down upon. Some of the beauty standards include pale skin, double eyelids, a slim body, V-line face, full lips, and more. Because of this, skin whitening creams, double eyelid glue, Botox, and fillers are everywhere in Korea. It's also no accident that Korean pop stars emulate very specific beauty standards. You can always see K-pop idols with flawless skin, youthful faces, and very thin bodies. Sometimes parents will suggest their kids get plastic



A drawing of Korean makeup. AEDA BAANG

surgery and will even give it to them as a gift.

During the summer, teens I personally know who came back from Korea had plastic surgery

done.

While Korean beauty does have its positive sides, such as self-care, we need to understand that not everything about it is

good.

# Labubu: creepy or cute?

**AEDA BAANG**  
WEBSITE-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Labubu dolls are a recent trend that come in a variety of sizes and colors; most Labubus come in blind boxes. Some people find them cute, some find them creepy. Created by Kasing Lung and Popmart (a Chinese company), these cute demon-like creatures are enjoyable to collect.

“I think Labubus are cuter than creepy because I like the different types of colors of the Labubus,” seventh grader Olivia Yim said. “It makes each Labubus more unique and cute. People say their eyes are creepy, but think it’s

the main thing that makes Labubus cute.”

First created by artist Kasing Lung, Labubus originally appeared in The Monsters trilogy (storybooks). Inspired by Nordic folklore, Kasing Lung created the creatures in the image of lovable elves. But not all people like them.

“I personally think that Labubus looks scary, because of its smile and the thing stars at you with its big eyes,” seventh grader Aina Miyazawa said. “Some of them kinda look mad too, which also scares me.”

At first, Labubus weren't as trendy as they are now. But

when Popmart started making and selling these dolls, famous pop singers began to collect them (for

example, Lisa from Blackpink or Dua Lipa). But many people have concerns about how they look.

“I think that Labubu's can be cute or creepy depending on how they are designed,” seventh grader Elyse Kwon said. “I heard that they were supposed to resemble devils, and that was what they were based on. A lot of K-pop idols like Lisa like them, so that is how these Labubu dolls became trendy.

I honestly think that if people like trending and stylish items,



A pink Labubu doll. By CLAIRE JUNG (SIXTH GRADE)

they will like them, but they actually can be a little creepy. But I really like their outfits.”

Many people love Labubu dolls. The back story behind them is a cute lovable one. Labubus are mostly loved all over the world

because they are a trend.

**I personally see no point in carrying around something hideous and the face is just too weird for my liking.**

— JESSIE GUO, 8 —



Pink and blue Labubu dolls sit side by side. BY CLAIRE JUNG (SIXTH GRADE)

## STAFF BOX

### OUR MISSION

The Cougar Star's mission is to deliver news to the best of our ability to the Clague community. We strive to work together as a team and build our leadership skills. We will treat each subject in an unbiased manner and provide all points of view. We aim to have a range of different topics covered with a variety of sources procured. All of our work is original and content is decided by students.

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# Raleigh Wood's path to reading

**MEDHA SANGI**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

For Raleigh Woods, childhood in Ann Arbor wasn't just a time of discovery — it was the beginning of a lifelong relationship with reading. Surrounded by creative opportunities and encouraged by his educator parents, he explored the world through books. Stories like *Animal Farm*, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, and works by Ian Fleming and Stephen King sparked his imagination and expanded his view of the world.

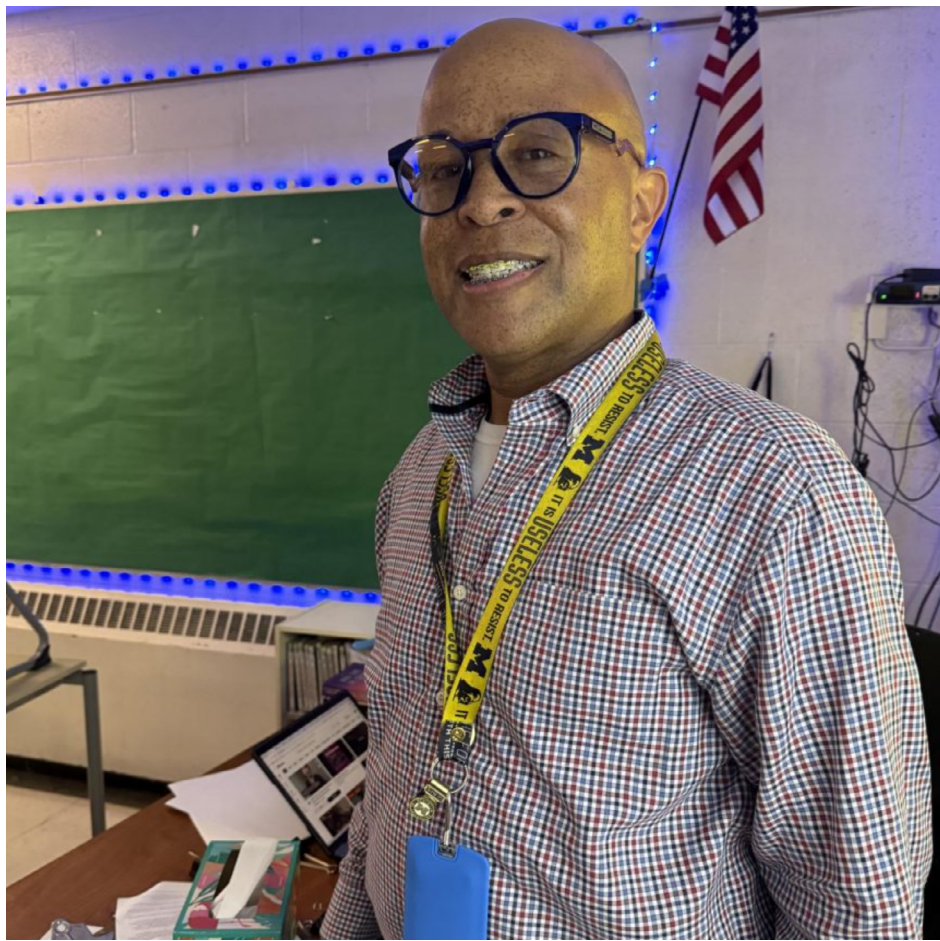
"I'm especially grateful for how literature opened my imagination and my eyes to how vividly diverse the world actually was," Woods said.

Woods thought himself to be extremely fortunate to have a childhood so rich with opportunity and learning. His parents played a major role in this; being career educators, they often exposed Woods to opportunities that would be unavailable for most children.

"[My parents] exposed us to literature that others would have considered too complex for children and youth to comprehend," Woods said.

Because of this, from a very young age, Woods became fond of books; his reading interests ranged from scary novels to spy thrillers and magazines.

"Reading evolved into



**What Raleigh Woods brings to his classroom is his love for reading.**  
COURTESY OF RALIEGH WOODS

less of a chore and more into an escape for me at that point- I could go places without an adult directing me exactly where to go, and I could choose my own literature to read," Woods said.

After his college education, Woods found his way to teaching. He had always enjoyed mentoring the youth and hoped to change the world for the better. Woods understood how important education was for the future of humanity.

"There is a deep understanding (and ultimate hope) of teaching that we are planting seeds, and decades later, the world will be able to reap the harvest of

the next generation of teachers who want to empower youth to leave this world in a better condition than they found it," Woods said.

While teaching, Woods draws from his own experiences as a student in the AAPS public school system. Woods believes that the classroom will be as dynamic and interesting as the amount of effort the students and teachers put into it.

"I try to teach in a way that if I were a student in my own class, I would not be bored to death and would continue on my quest to be a lifelong learner," Woods said.

While Woods was receiving his own ed-

ucation in AAPS, the environment and methods that teachers used were drastically different. Education today uses a much more technology-based curriculum.

Through the years, as Woods went from flipping the pages of his book in his fourth-grade classroom to directing his own students through silent reading, Woods has maintained his love of reading. He encourages students today to make the world a better place as soon as possible, but most importantly, do what you enjoy.

"Find your passion and never let it go, be true to yourself; always let your passion grow!"

# Davison brings her passion for art to Clague

**AUDREY YUAN**  
EDITOR

Clague welcomed new art teacher, Jenny Davison, who previously taught at an elementary school in Gahanna, Ohio for eight years.

She teaches art because she loves to share the value of creativity and how it enriches part of our lives.

"I believe art is much more than the act of creating; it's the meaningful connections, the problem solving, perseverance through creative challenges, and discovering diverse



**Courtesy of Jenny Davison**

ways to share your own story," Davison said. She loves teaching art, and is continually surprised by the creativity students share with her.

Davison's favorite piece of artwork is *The Disintegration of Persistence of Memory* by Salvador Dali.

"He is one of my favorite artists and I really enjoy all the different layers of complexity that surrealist art has to offer," Davison said.

Davison said that if she could have a different career, she's not sure if she would choose something else.

"I truly enjoy teaching and creating with students," Davison said.

However, being an art

conservator, someone who preserves historical paintings in museums, has always been an interesting field to her.

"I feel like understanding the science and different techniques behind art conservation would be a very unique experience as an artist," Davison said.

Davison loves analyzing surrealist art, and feels like there are so many facets to surrealism and enjoys seeing how different artists use symbolism in their work.

## Spirit Week Photos



**Eighth grader Raina Snell wearing a colorful wig on crazy hair day**  
PHOTO CREDIT: Gemma Scott

**Seventh grader Bo Bradley wearing a wig on crazy hair day.**  
PHOTO CREDIT: MYRNA FLAHERTY



**Seventh grader Madelyn Surerus staying warm on Tuesday, pajama day.**  
PHOTO CREDIT: MYRNA FLAHERTY

**Sixth graders Elizabeth Florea and Caroline Pinsky posing in the hallway for a picture on western day.**  
PHOTO CREDIT: MYRNA FLAHERTY



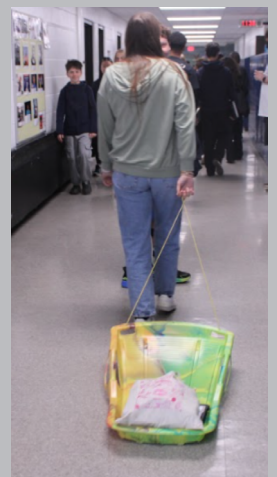
**Eighth graders Ryan Moore, Akil Granahan, Athen Hotz, Henry Swarup and Nicholas Bezas on anything but a backpack day.**  
PHOTO CREDIT: MYRNA FLAHERTY

**Sixth graders showing school spirit on pajama day.**  
PHOTO CREDIT: THOMAS BADALAMENTE



**Orchestra teacher Abigail Alwin is wearing pig-tails on crazy hair day.**  
PHOTO CREDIT: AADYA DESAI

**Eighth grader Eve Pinsky dragging along their sled on anything but a backpack day.**  
PHOTO CREDIT: MYRNA FLAHERTY



# The Life of A Showgirl: Taylor Swift's most recent album

**ANNABELLE YANG**  
DESIGN EDITOR

Within the first 24 hours of her new album release, Taylor Swift sold over 1 million copies of her newest album, *The Life of a Showgirl*.

People all over the world have been buzzing about Taylor's newest album, *The Life of a Showgirl*. Released on Oct. 3, the album contains many different kinds of songs that range from catchy and upbeat, such as *Wood*, to songs with a sadder backstory, like *"Ruin the Friendship."* With her latest album, Taylor has set many new records like all twelve of the album's songs to be on the "Billboard Hot 100 Chart" simultaneously. She has also set the record for most vinyl records sold in one week. With this many records and awards, it's only logical to find out the backstories of these songs.

The song, *The Fate of Ophelia*, was based on Shakespeare's famous play, *Hamlet*, where Ophelia is a character whose story ends in tragedy. Ophelia was the daughter of a royal counselor and ends up

falling in love with Hamlet, who rejects Ophelia and accidentally kills her father. In her bout of grief, she went mad and was found dead. Taylor takes inspiration from the story and strategically crafts a song that reflects the story in her own life.

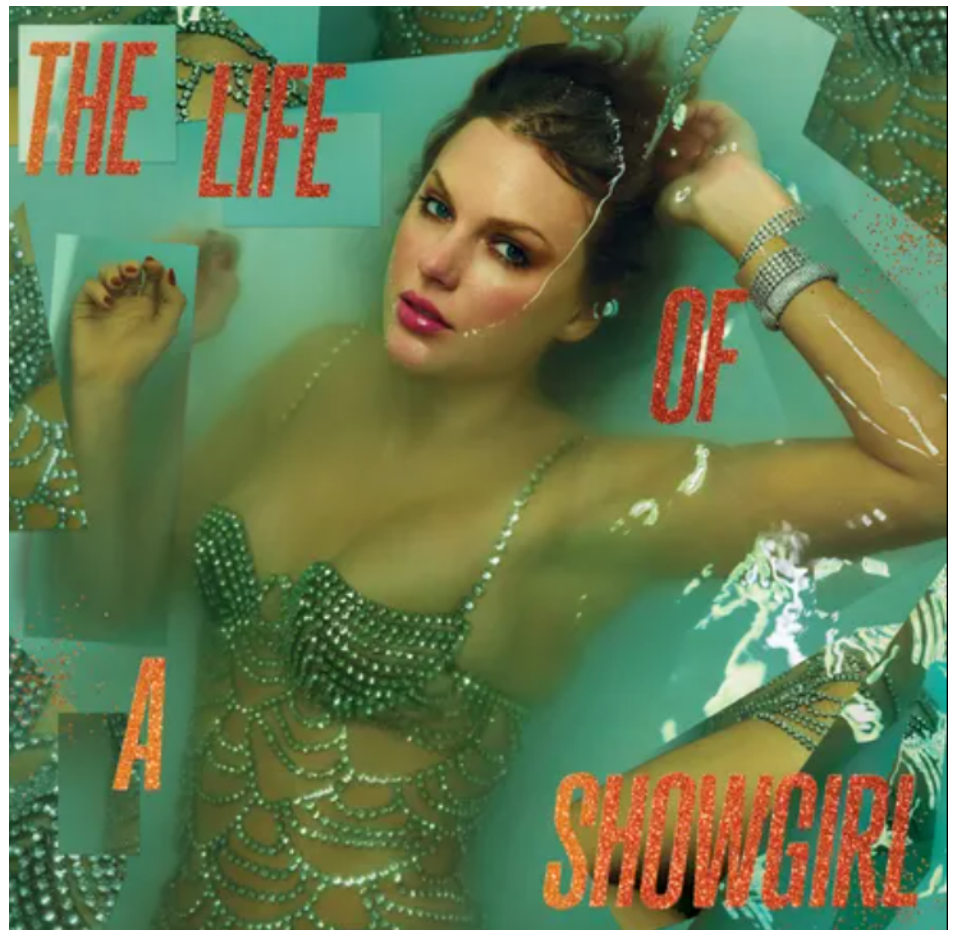
"Opalite" is a metaphor that represents the idea that you must create your own happiness instead of waiting for it to appear. Taylor has cleverly used the stone, opalite, as a metaphor to showcase this idea. Since opal was pricey and was also hard to find, people made Opalite to mimic the appearance of Opal for a much more affordable price.

"Ruin The Friendship" dives into Taylor's past. It's written about her high school friend, who is, although not confirmed, suspected to be Jeff Lang, who died on Nov. 2, 2010. The song talks about her crush on him, but also about how she was afraid to ruin the friendship if she confessed. It is a tragic song that talks about her regrets and has a hint of nostalgia as Taylor revisits her high school years.

The themes of Taylor's song, "CANCELLED!," revolve around the criticism and backlash that many celebrities face. It likely references famous actors or singers such as Blake Lively, Sabrina Carpenter, or Brittany Mahomes, who have all faced different kinds of judgment and scrutiny from the public. Despite these rumors, the song could also simply be about the "darker side" of the entertainment industry and the obstacles celebrities often face.

"Wi\$h Li\$t" is written about her dream for a simple life, and in an interview, she states that it represents the safe space in her mind where she goes every time she is stressed or panicked. It also discusses her hopes for settling down and starting a family. While many people are worried that she will stop making music, she has disproved those theories, saying that the rumors were "shockingly offensive" and that she will continue making music.

"The Life of A Showgirl" is a song that talks about the pros and cons of being an entertainer. It shows the enjoyable



"The Life of a Showgirl" released Oct. 3, 2025, through Republic Records.

and fun side of being an entertainer, but it also talks about the hardships of the job. The character often mentioned in the song "Kitty" is referring to the fictional character Taylor came up with, whose full name is Kitty Finlay, Kitty being her mother's passed dog's name, and

Finlay being a part of Taylor's grandmother, Marjorie Finlay's name. Which I think is clever and fun.

While there are many more songs in the album, these six stick out the most with their intricate backstories. Though I think the catchy melodies, heartfelt lyrics, and

the different themes all add up to make a wonderful album. There are also Easter eggs hidden in previous albums or songs that date back years and have referenced this album. Be on the look out for more in *The Life of A Showgirl* that will reference future songs or albums!

## K-pop Demon Hunters Review

**JESSIE GUO**  
DIGITAL MEDIA EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kpop Demon Hunters is a movie about a girl Kpop group called HUNTRIX that fights off demons with their voices, uses music to protect the world,, and keeps the demons in the underworld with Gwi-ma, the demon king that's made of fire.

There are three girls in the girl K-pop group, our main protagonist Rumi, who's secretly half demon while also being a demon hunter, and chooses to fight against demons, because her mother, who was also a hunter, fell in love with her father, a demon. Mira, who's loyal and very sharp, has pink hair and is the tallest one in their group. And finally, Zoey, who has black hair, is the maknae of the group who came from America. These three were united by Rumi's guardian, Celine, since her parents died, and they were set to be the next generation

of hunters.

One day, they meet a boy band who are secretly demons undercover. The members of the band are Jinu, the lead of the band (according to logic, don't listen to random theories online just yet), Abby, Romance, Baby, and Mystery. These boys want to get rid of the girls so the demons can take over the world. The names are questionable, but they resemble the boys' personalities, except Jinu and Abby's, which are simply normal names, with no explanation of why they were named that. Some believe Abby is supposed to be for 'abs'.

The two groups meet one day, and many likely faced second-hand embarrassment when Zoey and Mira saw Abby, who was wearing a floral button-down shirt that popped off and Mira commented on how 'hot' he was. Then Rumi is accidentally bumped to the ground by Jinu, who then refuses to help her up. I personally



ILLUSTRATION OF K-POP DEMON HUNTERS  
PHOTO CREDIT: JESSIE GUO

think this scene is made to get reactions out of viewers, and the creators probably also felt it was cringe, but it adds humor and drama to the moment.

During their fan meet-n-greet, the movie shows clear signs of shipped relationships between the two bands: Jinu+Rumi, Mira+Abby+Romance, and Zoey+Mystery, while Baby is simply alone, sipping milk. Jinu and Rumi were the main focus here, but fans were disappointed that they never did anything more than hang out. This is because of the

culture of Korean idols, to be respectful and it was deemed rude if they showed PDA, and this is an important detailed included, even in an animated movie.

According to popularity, the most liked Saja Boys are Jinu, Abby, and Baby. Mystery and Romance still are credited and well known, but not as much as Jinu, who's the most popular, mainly because of his and Rumi's love story. At the same time, Abby is popular for being the choreographer and having interesting dance moves. And Baby is known for his laid-back

and carefree personality, being disinterested in all of the HUNTRIX girls in general.

The music made huge hits on Billboard, and has over 3 Billion streams globally. It's mainly because of it's deep connection within the movie, the meaning, the sensation between the lyrics, and how catchy it sounds, which probably explains why there's a billboard in LA dedicated to people who sing Golden in their car while they drive...

In the end, the boys die, and the girls seem happy, but many fan theories were spread on social media, like Zoey and Jinu being secretly siblings, that Jinu is actually in Rumi's sword after he died, that Baby Saja never died, and there's a secret fourth member in HUNTRIX due to Chinese mythology facts on the four heavenly beasts.

In the end, the plot can be meaningful and impact in different ways, like using unrealistic situations to mirror

the harsh reality of our world in general.

Many of these questions will be answered in the next K-pop Demon Hunters movie, which is likely to come out sometime from the summer of 2026 to around 2028. There's no official release date yet, and fans need to be patient because movies like this aren't easy to make.

This movie is overall popular for its culture being specifically rooted in Korean culture, and unlike other movies, song and music plays a crucial role in Kpop Demon Hunters, which makes the music feel more like a main perspective and focus, instead of just a simple add-on. It's relatable and can help true fans understand the perspective of famous artists and Kpop idols in real life. Additionally, the music is performed by actual voice actors, and even one song in the soundtrack, *Takedown*, by TWICE.

# Cross country races through their season

**MEDHA SANGI**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

1. The Cross Country boys team warming up before the final race of the season. Eighth graders on the team always lead warmups at races.
2. Slauson girls running in the final cross country meet.
3. Eighth grader Gemma Scott completing her final warmup run on the last cross country meet of this year.
4. A group of seventh graders jump in celebration as they finish the warm-up run.
5. Seventh grader Clara Fonseca running the warmup route on the last cross-country practice of the season.
6. The girls cross country team poses for a photo.
7. The boys cross country team poses for a photo.

PHOTOS BY MEDHA SANGI



## Digging deep: Girls volleyball takes on Tappan

**MYRNA FLAHERTY**  
STAFF WRITER



1. With the game tied, seventh grader Berlynn Shafer takes a swing at the ball, trying to win the point and get a kill.
  2. Eighth grader Elena Skerlos dives for the ball and tries to keep the play going.
  3. A team cheering on the B-team before their game against Tappan.
  4. Before touching the gym floor, the volleyball team make an attempt gain a point through a dig.
  5. Eighth grader Sharon Lee reaches back to serve the ball and get an ace.
- PHOTOS BY ANAYA SPERO MALONEY

## Season 2 Sports: A sign-up guide

First, determine which sport you or your student would like to play for this season: Wrestling or Girls' Basketball. Then, follow these steps:

**STEP 1:**  
Fill out the Season 2 Clague Middle School Athletic Registration Google Form on the Clague Athletics website.

**STEP 2:**  
Pay fees through the Rec & Ed website (Clague Pay to Participate).

**STEP 3:**  
Print a physical examination dated after April 15, 2025. This form can be found on the Clague Athletics website.

For more detailed information, visit the Clague Athletics website at [sites.google.com/aaps.k12.mi.us/clagueathletics](https://sites.google.com/aaps.k12.mi.us/clagueathletics).  
  
Athletic Director Brandon Copeland: [copelandb@aaps.k12.mi.us](mailto:copelandb@aaps.k12.mi.us).

# What is your favorite fall memory this year?

**MEDHA SANGI**  
WEB EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



**Fall Favorites:**  
we polled 175 students and here are the results

**MEDHA SANGI**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**Favorite activity:**  
Going to a cider mill



**Favorite fall food:**  
Donuts



**Rivalry Pick:**  
UofM: 71%  
MSU: 3%  
OSU: 3%  
NONE: 23%

**Halloween Costume:**



Seventh graders Zora Polikoff, Alison Boehmer, Sofia Christensen, Kate Wang, and Paarthavi Pradhan going trick or treating.