

SQUALL.

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NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!



The Dexter Varsity Dance Team wins
first-ever national title. pg. 6



Cover

National Champions!

The Dexter Varsity Dance Team celebrates together immediately after receiving the national championship trophy for their Gameday performance. Watch the championship-winning performance on Instagram by scanning the QR code!

Photo courtesy of Coach Morgan Dubey



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WRITER  CALEB WILSON

Some of the most important things in life are someone's passion and their faith. Multiple Dexter athletes combine the two by applying their faith to their sport. Those athletes were excited to share their stories with *The Squall*.



Tyler Craig (Soccer)

Tyler Craig has shown himself to be a true leader through his faith. Tyler joined Andrew, and Dane Barbaro as co-captains of this year's varsity soccer team. And Tyler stated that when he started out he was not what he needed to be; He was very quick tempered and aggressive on the field toward opponents and his own teammates. *"I didn't grow up in a religious household, so I never really went to church. But now I do, and I feel like my sport actually pushed me to go into church,"* he said, noting teammates initiating pre-game prayers was significant. *"Freshman year, our high school soccer team would do a prayer before games would start, and that's kind of what introduced me to faith. It really kind of gave me the push."*

That push has allowed him to find ways to worship on and off the field and grow his faith.



Andrew Barbaro (Soccer)

Andrew Barbaro has been able to use his faith to bring his teammates together in his sport. For example, he would use prayer as a tool before games to not only bring the team together, but as a way to bring them strength from the Lord.

"It helps most in preparation for any challenges, especially for big games," he said. *"But, sometimes prayer helps me navigate the recovery process."* He believes that faith is one of the greatest motivators in life and in sports to work harder and push yourself when needed. And his positivity, and strong willed ways allowed fellow team members like Tyler Craig to be guided towards their faith.

"Faith is grounding in all things, but especially in sport," he said.



Vienna Wallace (Volleyball)

Vienna Wallace is a well-known player for the DHS varsity volleyball team. She has been described as of the most positive people at DHS, and she herself has attributed part of this to God. Her faith has allowed her to see the positivity that comes with a win, and the positivity that comes with a loss. *"Faith has helped me be more resilient,"* she said, adding that her faith is a reminder that volleyball isn't everything. And it really helps her to have a friend on the team that she can go to with her faith.

"Larkin [Pham] and I prayed before every game and others would join in with us," she said. Something that helped Vienna sharpen her faith during an injury. *"After getting injured, it helped me get really close to God,"* she said. *"My whole life has been volleyball 24/7. I actually have time to be in youth group and take the time to slow down and really focus on my relationship with him."*

That break where she couldn't play allowed her to re-evaluate some things, and that was a key factor that shifted her thoughts from volleyball 24/7 to focusing on her faith. She has been able to go to youth group now, and really focus on her relationship with the Lord.



Larkin Pham (Volleyball)

Larkin Pham is someone well known both on and off the volleyball court. Her goal has always been “to have a Christ-like mindset when I play.” She is someone who believes that you can’t truly have the sport without faith.

“If someone asked me why I play my sport, besides me answering it with the basic ‘I love it,’ I can say I can use it to glorify God.” It’s become the reason she can enjoy volleyball, because she isn’t playing for herself or a trophy; she’s playing for God.

“When the realization hits of I’m playing for God, it makes a big difference.” It’s not easy to not lose yourself in the heat of the game, but it’s been easier to keep God on her mind no matter what thanks to team support. *“I had a lot of surrounding Christians which made it easier,”* she said. *“We would pray before and I didn’t feel alone.”*

“

IF SOMEONE ASKED ME WHY I PLAY MY SPORT BESIDES ME ANSWERING IT WITH THE BASIC ‘I LOVE IT,’ I CAN SAY I USE IT TO GLORIFY GOD.”

-Larkin Pham,
Senior



Olivia Atkins (Equestrian)

Olivia Atkins is not only described as an amazing horseback rider, fellow students call her amazing human being. She will always find time for the Lord over anything else, and if she can’t find the time she’ll make it. She will always give a prayer with her horse before any practice, or race, just to make sure she has had a moment to sit with God.

“I always consider my time on horseback as time to be closer with God, whether it’s going on a trail ride admiring God’s beautiful creations or at a race praying that my horse and I will compete safely,” she said. Her faith has allowed her to open up so many doors in her life, especially with making friends with her teammates.

“Kate Haidl and I have become so close from being on the equestrian team together,” she said. *“And through that she introduced me to our church (Huron River Methodist Church), helped me join our youth group (The Edge). We are both women of God, have been group leaders at our Dexter Christian Athletes club, and this helps us build up other athletes and bring them even closer to God.”*

And her faith has really given her strength outside of her sport as well. Back when she lived in Colorado she held onto her faith through all struggles, including her one friend not supporting her attending church. *“Now that I have moved here, I have felt such a strong sense of community with everyone at DHS,”* she said, *“but most of all with my fellow athletes in Dexter Christian Athletes.”*

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!

The Dexter Varsity Dance Team wins its first national championship

WRITER  AINSLIE RAMSBURGH

Despite the nerves that naturally come with such a high-stakes performance, the Dexter Varsity Dance Team (DHS-DT) team took the stage, rose to the occasion, and delivered a routine that was both technically clean and highly engaging.

Their performance was marked by sharp motions, synchronized execution, and a level of enthusiasm that captured the attention of both the crowd and judges. The routine not only met but exceeded expectations, showcasing the team's preparation, discipline, and commitment to excellence.

The atmosphere was electric, and every movement had to be executed with precision, energy, and confidence.

It all added up to a national championship performance.

"Every year the goal is to be the best team that goes on the floor, so it feels really good to actually be recognized as such," Head Coach Morgan Dubey said. "This team has worked so hard, and it definitely shows with the product we put on the floor for all three of our routines."

This accomplishment, which also included advancing to the finals in three routines — Jazz, Pom, and Gameday — demonstrated the team's depth, versatility, and ability to compete at the highest level across multiple styles.

"I had a really strong intuition that we were going to win, but obviously you're not going to go into the competition acting that way," senior captain Ella Jensen said. "All of our competition was really strong. It was still a surreal experience. After our performance, we watched our video as a group. Once I saw the performance, it made me feel, 'oh yeah, we're going to win."

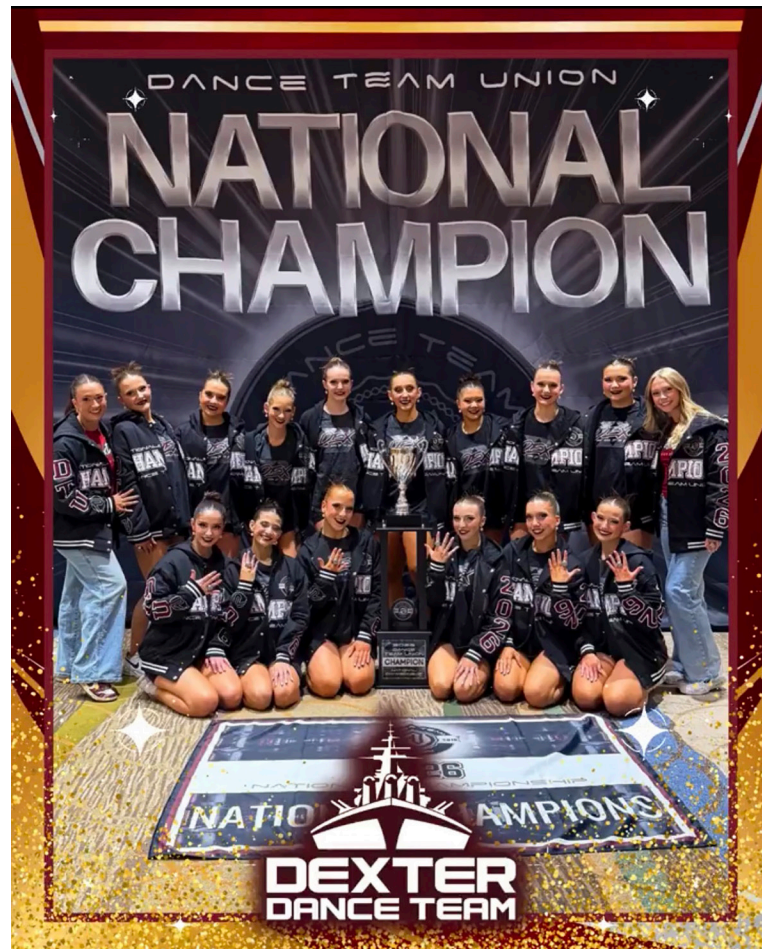
"That was the best run we've ever had. When they announced third place - that was the national champion the year before - it was like an insane feeling. I was like, 'Oh my God, we actually did it.' It's such a rush of emotion because all this hard work has come down to this moment and it has paid off for that moment."



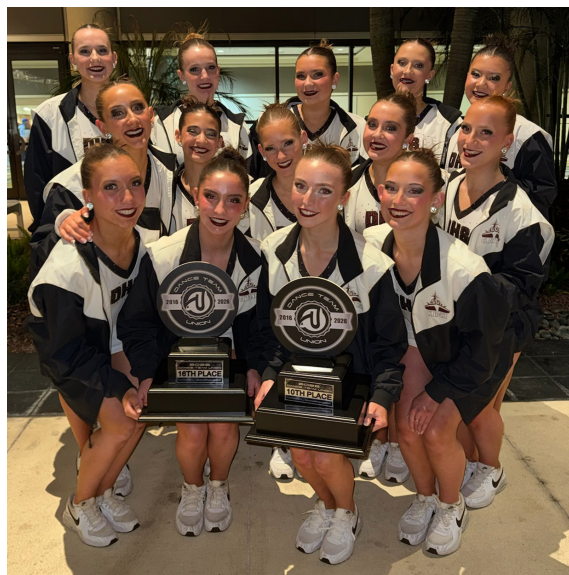
The DHS-DT traveled to Orlando, Florida, from February 4-10 to compete in the Dance Team Union (DTU) High School National Championships, one of the most competitive high school dance events in the country. Hosted at the Orange County Convention Center, the National Championship brought together hundreds of elite programs from across the United States, all competing in a variety of styles.

Dexter qualified and competed in three categories: Gameday, Jazz, and Pom, placing them among the top teams in the nation and allowing them to showcase their versatility, athleticism, and performance quality on a national stage.

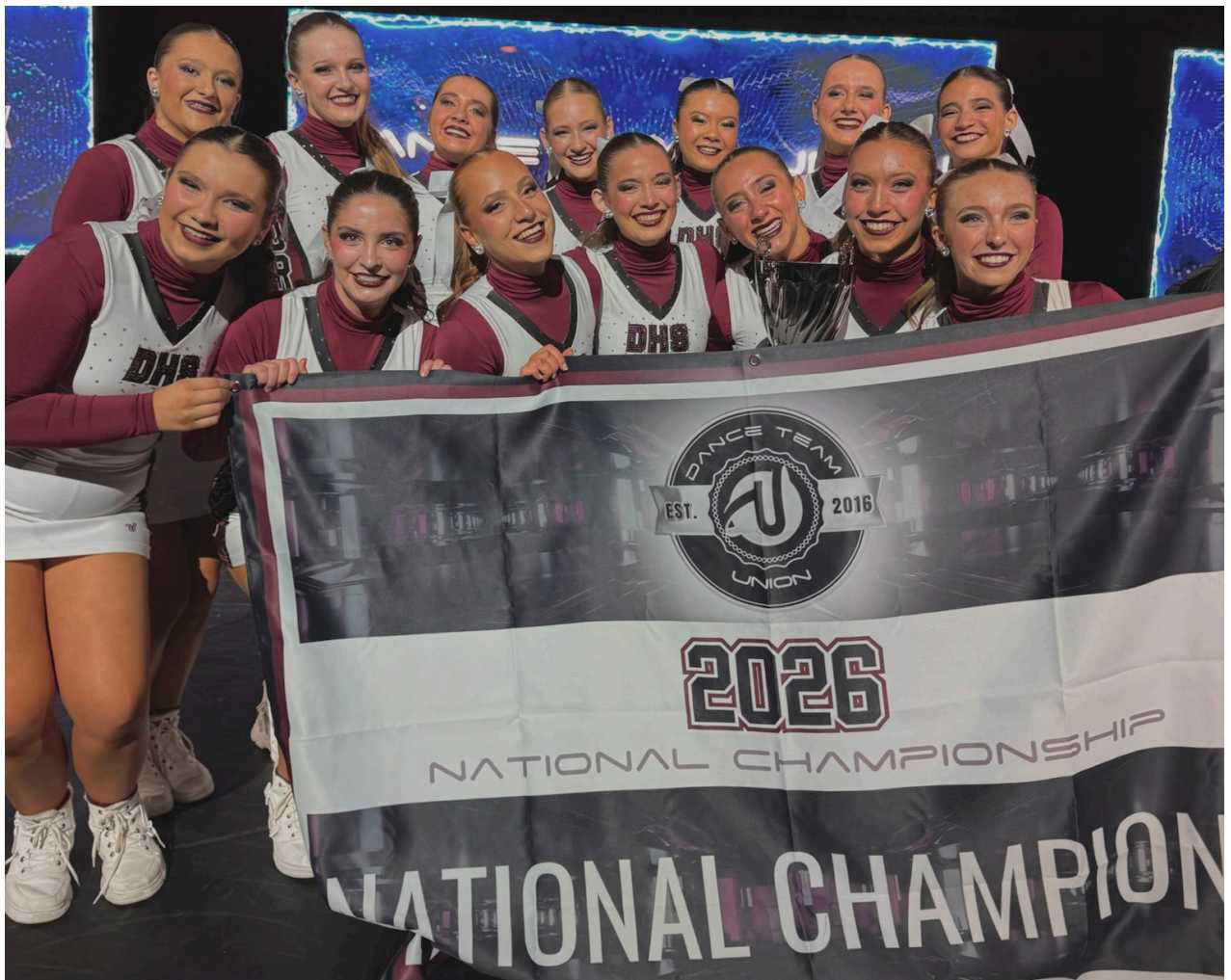
On Friday, February 6, the team took the floor for Medium Varsity Gameday, knowing they had just one opportunity to make an impression in preliminaries. DHS-DT entered the competition with confidence, having already secured both regional and state titles for this routine earlier in the season. However, the national stage presented a new level of intensity, with high-



STRIKE A POSE: The 2025-26 DHS Dance Team, wearing their championship rings, poses with the national championship trophy in Orlando, Florida. Photo courtesy of Instagram (@dexterdanceteam)



OPEN THE TROPHY CASE: Along with the Gameday national championship, the team also claimed 10th place in Pom and 16th place in Jazz. Photo courtesy of Instagram



HANG THAT BANNER:
The 2025-26 DHS Dance Team poses with their National Championship banner. The team took first place nationally in the Medium Varsity Spirit Showdown - Gameday category. *Photo courtesy of Instagram (@dexterdanceteam)*

er stakes, stronger competition, and the pressure of performing in front of national judges and a large audience.

“Backstage before each dance there was an immense sense of support for one another,” sophomore Kelsey McKaig said. “It was truly when the nerves and excitement came together and our blood was pumping with adrenaline.”



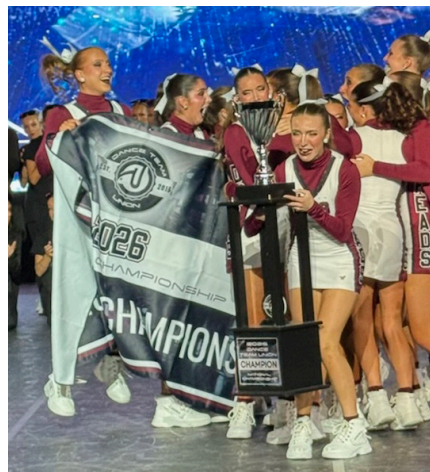
The Dexter Dance Team has a long-standing tradition, having performed as a club for over 25 years before transitioning into a more competitive program around 2013. Since then, the team has steadily built a reputation for success.

A major turning point came when Dubey took over mid-season in 2022, bringing new energy, vision, and structure to the program. Under her leadership, the team quickly reached new heights, earning its first-ever national placement that same year with a fourth-place finish in Small Varsity Gameday.

This achievement marked the beginning of a new era for Dexter dance, setting a standard for future teams.

Coach Morgan, as she’s known to her team, has not achieved this success alone, as she has been supported by a strong coaching staff over the past several seasons. Coach Julia Acton played a key role in the program from 2022 to 2025, helping to build the foundation for the team’s recent success. For the 2025–26 season, Coach Jena Davenport joined the staff, bringing additional experience and perspective to the program.

Over the past four seasons, DHSDT has continued to grow and evolve, consistently placing in the top 10 nationally in both Gameday and Jazz. Their continued success reflects not only talent but also the culture of hard work and accountability that has been established within the program.



FILLED WITH EMOTION:
(LEFT) Members of the dance team hold back tears after being announced as National Champions. *Photos courtesy of Instagram (@dexterdanceteam)*

Together, the coaching staff has emphasized not only technical improvement but also team culture, leadership, and confidence, all of which have contributed to the team’s success on the national stage.

Adding to the significance of this season’s accomplishments is the fact that the team welcomed seven rookies, with only one athlete having prior experience competing at the national level. Integrating new members into such a high-performing program can be challenging, but the team’s leadership and supportive environment allowed these athletes to grow quickly and contribute meaningfully.

“The team felt so much like a unit,” McKaig said. “It was the greatest feeling.”

These results are a testament to the dedication, resilience, and work ethic of every member of the team, as well as the strong leadership that continues to push the program forward.



BLEEDING MAIZE OR GREEN

Students and staff share how they became Michigan or Michigan State fans

WRITER  CAMERON SWEENEY

“Trouble with the snap.”

Those four words mark arguably the most famous moment in the Michigan vs Michigan State rivalry. This moment is MSU fan Evan Pregont’s favorite moment as a fan, but for many Michigan fans, this is the most painful moment.

The two schools have won a combined 21 national titles in basketball and football. With only a 58-minute drive separating the two titans, Dexter is in the middle of the two heated rivals, dividing the high school into two sides: maize and blue, or green and white.

This division has led to a strong amount of animosity between the opposing fanbases at Dexter, and which school is truly the better to cheer for.

To start, many people at the high school are loyal, and their words can carry heavy weight in this argument. Many Michigan fans have strong ties to the university itself, and are not a part of the “Walmart Wolverines” group (a nickname to mock Michigan fans with no ties to the university).

“My great grandfather was the coach of the swimming team and the Olympic team,” noted freshman Collin Wirkner. “My grandfather wrestled at Michigan,” junior Karl Fink added.

This same connection carries over to MSU fans as well. Junior Ryan Hempton said his “grandpa played D1 football at MSU,” and both of junior Logan Moore’s parents went there.

These connections are the main reason that people became fans of the universities in the first place, but sometimes people become fans based on colors, certain players, or other random reasons.

“Growing up, when I was younger, my uncle was my favorite person,” Pregont said. “He liked Michigan State, and then I just kept liking Michigan State as I grew up.”

Another reason for fandom comes from great moments in that school’s history. Fortunately for people in Michigan, both schools have had their fair share of great plays.

As noted above, trouble with the snap is a moment that MSU fans will never forget, but they have had other great moments. Ryan Hempton and Logan Moore both agree that beating Michigan in 2021 was one of the best moments in recent MSU history.

“When we beat Michigan at home, I think that was 2021, with Kenneth Walker when he had five touchdowns, when I was at that game,” Hempton said. “That was probably the top moment of being at MSU.”

“Going to the Rose Bowl in 2014 and beating Stanford,” Mrs. Krista McDonough noted as her best moment. But most MSU fans will tell you that their best moments don’t come from the gridiron, but rather the hardwood. Beating Duke in the 2019 Elite Eight, or constantly beating Michigan, are, in many MSU minds, the best moments as a fan.

While many great moments for MSU fans have come against Michigan, Michigan still has their own great moments. When asked about his favorite moment, Karl Fink says “the [2021]



SCHOOL DIVIDED: Juniors Ryan Hempton (MSU) and Tristan Thompson (Michigan) show off their fandom holding university flags. Both students used flags that are flown in teacher classrooms.

Photographer - Cameron Sweeney

Ohio State game, in the snow,” was the best. Zane Eisel said “building relationships with Michigan players,” has been one of his favorite moments.

Paths soon differ among MSU and UM fans though. While MSU likes basketball the most, Michigan fans enjoy their football. Every Michigan fan agrees that one of the best moments was winning the 2023 national championship. Finally climbing to the top (not without controversy) is an achievement that will forever live on in Michigan’s fan minds.

Another major difference between MSU and UM fans is their least favorite school. MSU fans agree that Michigan is the worst school, but Michigan fans believe that Ohio State is the worst. This may be the reason why the term “little brother,” a nickname for MSU coined by Michigan running back Mike Hart in 2007, has carried on for almost two decades.

If you are not a sports fan you may wonder, what impact does being a sports fan have on the universities, and why do they care so much about sports? Besides the sports bringing in plenty of money — \$255 million for Michigan and \$170 million for MSU annually — fans want to go to the school that they cheer for.

When asked if being a fan impacted the idea of going to Michigan, Brady Bishop said, “yeah, it definitely impacted it.” Ryan Hempton said, “If I could go to MSU, I definitely would.”

Both of the universities are great for education and sports, with many great moments coming from great sides. If you prefer watching football, Michigan is the school for you, more of a basketball person, cheer for MSU. But, both sides will give you the full adventure of being a sports fan.



SURVEY: MORE THAN 60% OF STUDENTS DON'T LIKE ADVISORY

While students enjoy some of advisory's benefits, the overall structure has made it a monthly dread

WRITER  KENDALL BROWN

A year and a half ago, DHS students were asked their advisory opinions. Many expressed frustration and concerns about how time was being used in advisory, and confusion about its purpose.

Fast forward to today, 1 ½ years later, has anything changed?

A recent *Squall* survey, which had 330 responses, found that nearly 63% of students still do not like the advisory period.

"Advisory doesn't have a point to it," junior Makena Sugg said. "It would be more likable if we got to go to other classes and see our friends. I think that we should be able to travel to whatever class we want and work with our friends, and we would be more productive if that happened."

When advisory was first brought to DHS for the 2024-25 school year, its purpose was to provide students with the support they needed, guidance, and time to work on schoolwork. However, many students feel like advisory is filled with tedious tasks and has strayed from its intended purpose.

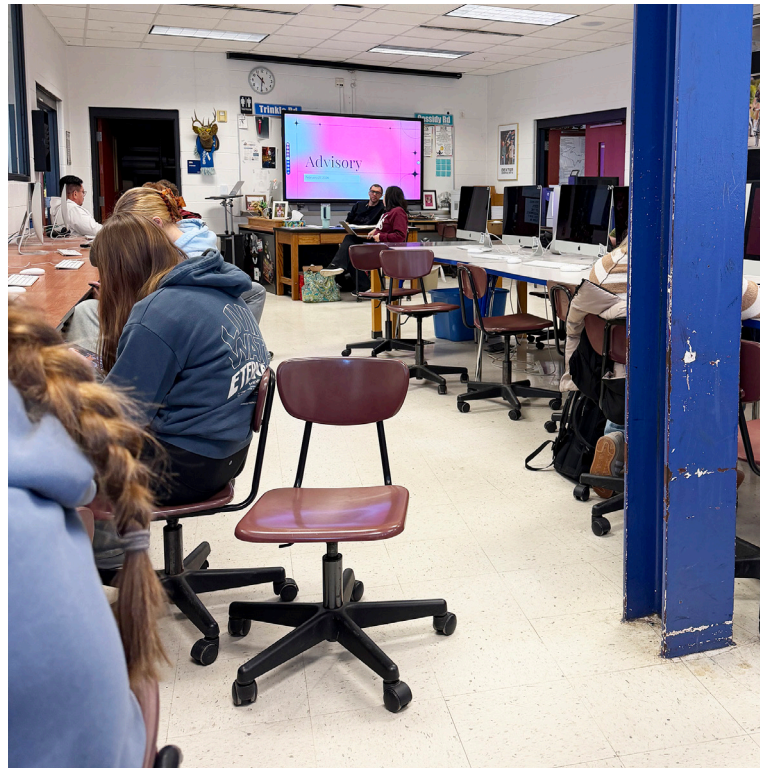
"All we do is schoolinks that mean nothing and are pointless," junior Leah Williams said. "I would enjoy advisory more if we got to choose our teachers and have our friends in it... I literally just sit there on my phone half the time."

While students have expressed many concerns, they also have some suggestions about how to improve productivity during the period. A recurring theme in the responses was the desire for students to have the option to choose their teacher.

"We should switch teachers every year to be able to branch out and make more connections," senior Alaina Fuqua said. "There are a lot of teachers in this school I've never met, and I've never built a relationship with because I've been stuck with the same advisory teacher. It's a good way without taking someone's class to be able to connect with them."

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Leah Williams
Junior



SLIDE TIME: Graphic Arts teacher Mr. Nick Stanko begins the advisory slide show on Friday, Feb. 27. **Photographer - Kendall Brown**

Another common student request was to change advisory to a complete study period. Instead of having to complete Schoollinks and have a guided period, students would like to work on what they feel is most important.

Many students feel this would allow them to catch up on homework, study for upcoming assessments, or get help on subjects they struggle with. Having a more flexible period would allow them to be more productive and reduce stress.

Despite the criticisms, not everyone has something negative to say about the period.

"As a first-year teacher at Dexter High School, I have enjoyed advisory because it has allowed me to meet more students," Mr. Alex Karapas said. "Specifically, the junior class, which I don't have a lot of juniors, so it's been valuable and being able to make additional connections and get to know more people around the school. I've enjoyed advisory for that reason."

Overall, after a year and a half, students' opinions suggest that the program was created to be helpful and efficient, but has not quite reached that point.

Students' opinions have shown that this period can be more effective than just removing it. With a few changes, it seems that advisory will become more beneficial and likable for students.



THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SNOW DAY

A Superintendent's decision on whether to call off school doesn't have a "good formula"

WRITER  KAYCE McALLISTER

Dr. Timmis sets his alarm for 3:30 A.M. on an expected snowy morning to drive around Dexter and get a sense of the roads: "It's kinda miserable and there's no good formula." This is the life of a superintendent when he's trying to determine whether it's safe to have school.

We talked to Dr. Timmis, the Dexter Community Schools superintendent for the past 13 years, and Mr. Bruder, the assistant superintendent who will be taking over Dr. Timmis' role beginning in March, to find out the actual process behind calling a snow day.

"I wish there was a step-by-step process, but the days vary," Timmis said.

With weather being truly unpredictable, superintendents have created a system that helps them navigate throughout the process.

When there looks to be a large snowfall in the evening or overnight, they will watch the weather on a website called NOAA.gov. That information helps they decide if they need to make a decision the night before, or wait until the morning. The superintendent is always in close contact with the road commission to help make a decision. The district is also in constant communication with other Washtenaw Country School District to see what their roads are like, and if they are closing. All snow days must be called by 5:30 AM, before the bus routes start at 6:00 AM.

"On these days, we generally stay up until 11:00 pm or so watching the different forecasts, drive the roads the night before, and get up at 3:30 or 4:00 in the morning to start driving roads to anticipate what the roads may look like at 7:00 a.m.," Timmis explained. These drives consist of visiting at least three different parts of town to get the best feel for everyone traveling to school. "We are monitoring the temperatures, the forecasted precipitation, and the wind speeds and directions (for snow drifts)," Bruder added.

We asked Timmis what the weather that he and the district look for when calling a snow day. He said, "The perfect

formula for a snow day is 4" of snow or more starting at 7 p.m. the night before." With this weather there is not enough time for the road crew to plow and make the roads safe to drive on. "This is the easiest call."

However, this perfect scenario rarely happens. Timmis also gave us some more common scenarios and outcomes.

When there is lots of snow on the main paved roads, it makes it hard for buses to drive and stop. The dirt roads pack down the snow with the rocks. They are okay to drive on, but the paved roads aren't and become slush. Lots of snow= no school.

When there is melted snow or rain the opposite happens. The wet weather with below zero temperatures, the roads become sheets of ice. "The paved roads are generally fine these days but the dirt roads are like an ice rink so we close," Timmis stated.

When snow and ice mix, that is when we see multiple days in a row off. The layers just cause everything to melt, but the extreme temperatures cause it to freeze into ice. "Ice = closed. Easy decision."

Cold days are becoming more common due to having record setting cold winters. DCS has determined that -20° is the magic number for canceling school due to the cold. This number is set for the safety of students standing outside waiting for the bus. At that temperature, any exposed skin has a high risk of being frostbitten.

"The number used to be -25, but we found that at -22 and -23 we were always closing anyways. So, we moved it to -20 and held pretty firm at that number."

Dr. Chris Timmis,
Outgoing Superintendent



*ICE RINK: Taken while stopped for a moment in a local Dexter neighborhood, this photo captures the "ice rink" back roads. This was taken after a late night practice, but the roads managed to get cleared and school was open the next day. **Photographer - Ayla Wright***

Timmis added, "The number used to be -25, but we found that at -22 and -23 we were always closing anyways. So, we moved it to -20 and held pretty firm at that number."

These are the most common scenarios and protocols for snow days. However, there's always the "hysteria" closing. Here is how Timmis described it: "The news stations start acting like we're getting 20' of snow and people start rushing to the store to buy water and groceries. Some counties outside of this area announce they're closing at 4:00 pm the day before the snow even falls. All evening the news hypes up the number of districts that are closing and more begin to close. At some point, we're one of the few left open and it still hasn't even snowed so we close. The next morn-

“Snow days are great for students and teachers but tough days for many of our staff. We still have staff who need to come in on these days in order to make sure we pay our bills, clean the snow, clean our buildings. Make sure to thank all of the vitally important DCS staff members who are here rain, snow, or shine so our schools can be such great places for students.”

- Outgoing Superintendent Dr. Chris Timmis



SNOW DAY MORNING: Also taken in a local Dexter neighborhood, the pure iced over roads weren't as terrible since there was a snow day. **Photographer - Ayla Wright**

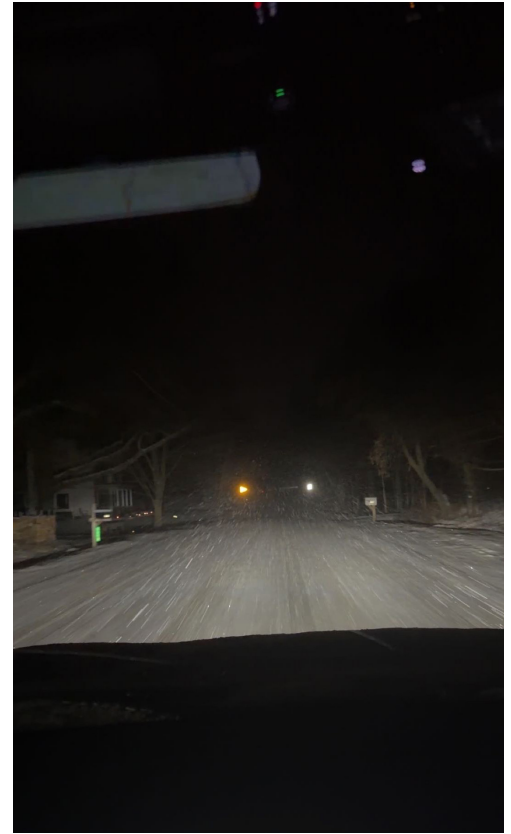
ing, it either snows 2-3” and people question why we decided so soon the night before OR we get 6-8” of snow where we know we made the right call OR it doesn't snow at all and we look like fools. This has happened at least a dozen times over my career.”

Both Timmis and Bruder mention how DCS doesn't plan to ever do early dismissals or late starts due to weather. “Parents of our youngest students need to be home for Kindergarteners, etc. If we send kids home early, we risk parents not being home OR parents hurrying to drive home in bad weather which is more dangerous than just following our normal times,” Timmis said.

Now, with the change in superintendents, Bruder was asked if his approach to snow days will change, or remain similar to Timmis. “Nothing with the snow day



WHERE'S MY SPOT? When arriving at school for an early morning meeting, the plow crew hasn't finished the parking lot and some seniors couldn't see their parking spaces. **Photographer - Ayla Wright**



BLIND: Not being able to see the paved road in front of you in a common experience while driving on Dexter's backroads. This photo shows the active snow and road conditions on Mast Rd at night. **Photographer - Ayla Wright**

policy will change...we have a great team of staff who work together to determine school cancellations so while ‘the final call’ is mine to make, the folks informing the decision remain consistent.”

Bruder was a part of the process this year, learning, watching, and helping making decisions. “I've been up early, driving the back roads of Dexter from about 4:30-5:30 a.m. for nearly every snowy morning this school year,” Bruder said. “On most of the snow day calls this year, Dr. Timmis and I have been in communication the night before and the morning to make sure we are on the same page. Though, the first snow day of this year Dr. Timmis slept through his alarm, so that one was all me!”

“On most of the snow day calls this year, Dr. Timmis and I have been in communication the night before and the morning to make sure we are on the same page.”

Mr. Ryan Bruder,
New Superintendent



DREAD FASHION: AN INTERVIEW WITH ECHO SUINO

WRITER & PHOTOGRAPHER  RYAN DEC

Ryan Dec: How would you describe the current fashion climate at DHS?

Echo Suino: People aren't expressing themselves in the ways that they could be. I think there's an opportunity, regardless of what kind of fashion people like or what they're interested in, to express themselves through their clothing. I don't think enough people are acting on the opportunity to express themselves through fashion.

RD: Why do you choose to dress against the "norm" at DHS?

ES: I love expressing myself through clothing, and I like dressing differently. For quite a few years now, I have always had the idea in my head of being a little bit different and standing out, not in a way that's obnoxious or anything, but being my own person.

I like it when people notice me for my fashion. One of my favorite compliments to get is, "Your outfits are so cool". I just think that my fashion really expresses who I am as a person, even if it is just through the colors and the types of clothing that I wear.

RD: What are your current three favorite brands to get clothes from?

ES: Right now I love Urban Outfitters, Free People, and probably Billabong. I love to wear their stuff in the summer.

RD: When do you create your outfits and what goes into that process?

ES: I usually make my outfits before school every morning. Like today, I woke up, and I immediately went on Pinterest and tried to find something that sparked an idea for an outfit. Once I get an idea, I then put together something that resembles an outfit, probably change it around a few times, and then go do the rest of my morning routine. It normally takes about 20-30 minutes for me to make an outfit.

When it comes to what goes into putting an outfit together, I think a lot about what pieces go well together and how the colors look, along with how "unique"



the outfit will be. I never just "wear the clothing"; I always style it in some way to suit myself and my personal style.

Even when I wear sweatpants and a hoodie, I will tuck in the hoodie, or I'll pin it up or something like that. Other times, I'll add a scarf around my waist or something else to add a feature to make the outfit less boring, like wearing more jewelry that day, or doing my hair a certain way, or matching my shoes to my top. I don't like my outfits being boring.

I'm not just gonna buy a shirt solely because I like the color or because I think it's cute. Am I able to put something with it? Will this fit me? Do I already have something that I can pair with this? Is this thrift blindness, or is this actually something I like?

RD: If you could give advice to students at DHS on their fashion, what would you say?

ES: You don't have to be boring to fit in! It's okay to wear fun clothing, and I'm sure there's only a small percentage of people who think it's not, but I still want people to hear that it's okay.

However, if you like wearing something that's not necessarily "fun", that's also okay! It's okay to wear what you want. I don't want people to think that I'm calling them boring just because they don't dress a certain way.

Everyone can dress the way they want to. That's why clothes are so cool, because everyone can have their own style, and everyone can wear the clothes and colors they want and pair them in ways they see fit. I just think everyone should invite more options into their wardrobe, and I think more people should value the ability for self-expression that clothing gives us.

ECHO'S OUTFIT
 Light Pink Tank-Top - Thrifted
 Dark Pink Tank-Top - Urban Outfitters
 White Shirt - Target
 Denim Vest - Urban Outfitters
 Jeans - Urban Outfitters
 Scarf - Mom's From The 70s
 Shoes - Converse

RD: Where do you thrift, and what do you look for when thrifting?

ES: My favorite place to thrift is Kiwanis! I also really like thrifting at Share House, along with the Salvation Army. When thrifting for clothes, I first look for color, then size, and then I decide if I like the piece itself. And if I do, I think, can I make an outfit with this?





IS YOUR CLASSROOM GOING INTO AIRPLANE MODE?

With Governor Whitmer signing the bill into law, cell phone use in classrooms in 2026-27 can be banned

WRITER  ALDER MESKO

Starting next school year, every public K-12 school in Michigan will be implementing a new law banning all cell phone use in classrooms. Passed by the state Congress in January 2026 and signed into law by Governor Gretchen Whitmer on February 10, this new law bans student use of wireless communication devices during class times. While district-owned school devices like tablets or our school laptops are still allowed, personal wireless devices such as cell phones will not be. There are exceptions built into the law for things like non-internet devices (flip phones), emergency use, and medically necessary devices. Cell phone use before and after school and during passing time will also be permitted.

While school districts already have the right to establish their own cell phone policies in Michigan, the expecta-

tion is that the new law will reduce friction and provide the needed “back up” to give schools much stronger authority to actually enforce these rules.

As for what form the enforcement takes and what the penalties are, the law leaves that up to individual school districts to decide. Whether that means phones are just put into airplane mode, left in backpacks, placed in lockers, or put into Yondr bags (lockable cell phone pouches) during class time is up to the discretion of the school district.

New superintendent Ryan Bruder explains that the administration is still working out the details of how this law will look in Dexter. “There is no specific penalty outlined for districts that do not comply,” Burden said, adding this appears to be an “unfunded mandate,” so any purchasing of restrictive devices will be up to the school to pay for.



ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY? *The bill that bans cell phones isn't popular with all students and is likely to cause a stir for the 2026-27 school year.*
Photo Illustrator - Alder Mesko



PHONE HOME: *The “phone jail” in Mrs. Annette Jones’ room sits empty between classes.*
Photographer - Alder Mesko

Although loosely enforced, Dexter schools do already have cell phone policies in place. Cell phone use is currently restricted during class time, but enforcement is left up to the discrimination of the teacher. This leads some students to predict that things really won’t change all that much.

“I think that it is a good idea, but since our school policy already aligns with that, I don’t think there is going to be much change in enforcement,” senior Nick Palozzolo said. “As far as I’ve seen, teachers still have their preferences for phone use and different tolerances, so even if the state changes their policy, I don’t think that the teachers will because they already answer to the administration and they are still answering to it after the ban.”

The ultimate stated goal of this law is to improve student education by cutting classroom distractions, boosting student participation, and improving academic success; it is also hoped to “have an im-

pact on improved mental health and decreased cyberbullying at school,” according to Mark Tisdell, the state Republican representative who proposed the bill.

In fact, a Pew research poll in the summer of 2025 found that 74% of U.S. adults and 41% of teens said they support banning middle and high school students from using cellphones during class.

Many DHS students also support the class-time ban.

“I support it because it’s already in line with our school policy, and I believe that, while students generally do have a need for their phones, there is a time and place for them and that is generally outside of class,” Palozzolo said. “Generally, when students are using their phones, they are for non-educational purposes. So, when it’s not an emergency, I feel it is in the best interest of the students to not have their phones on.”

The state of Michigan is not alone in this effort to improve student education; 38 other states have also implemented some kind of state-wide restriction. However, due to the low ranking of our education system by national watchdog organizations like the Annie E. Casey foundation, which places Michigan’s education system as 44th in the nation and the lowest in the Midwest, state leaders are particularly motivated to take action. The passing of this recent legislation is one example of a renewed effort by Governor Whitmer and the state legislature to improve education in Michigan.

While there is much evidence in support of the positive effects of school cell phone bans, there are also many critics. Some argue that today’s students already live in a digital world and that suppressing phone use doesn’t teach kids boundaries and just delays learning them.

They suggest student independence should be respected by teaching responsibility rather than imposing control. Others argue for safety concerns and emphasize that many families feel secure knowing their student can communicate quickly and privately if an urgent situation occurs at school.

Another argument is that rather than banning phones, perhaps instructional methods should be reviewed and updated to make boring or irrelevant instructional methods more engaging in the first place.

Critical concerns such as these are expressed by many DHS students like sophomore Sean Myint, who argues for



HELLO, DARKNESS: A student puts their phone into a teacher’s phone caddy as they are arriving to class. The phone is expected to stay in the caddy for the entire 90-minute class period.
Photo Illustrator - Alder Mesko

practical money-saving aspects of using cell phones as tools in classrooms. “[This] saves the school from having to purchase expensive calculators for everyone, Myint said. “In the real world, I think that no workplace is ever going to ban phones, so as much as they say it’s going to get us ready for jobs later in life, it’s quite the opposite.”

This is a concern echoed by DHS teacher Wilbur Tong, who, while definitely generally in support of the ban due to all the clear benefits on mental health and student productivity, does balance that support with a concern.

“There has to be some sort of personal responsibility,” Tong said. “Students have to learn how to make the right choices in life, and this is one place where they could do that... I would love to see that students have the maturity to do that on their own without me, the teacher, collecting phones and policing phone use.”

Regardless of the arguments, the law has passed, and changes are happening. What that means exactly for Dexter High

School is still being reviewed.

“I think we need to rethink cell phone use in schools, and out of schools, for that matter,” Bruder said. “If we are being honest with ourselves, I think many people would agree that all of us, students, teachers, kids, and adults, are all on phones way too much. Do I think cellphones can be a tool to help improve instruction? Sure thing! Do I think cellphones can be a huge distraction? Absolutely.”

According to Bruder, this conversation is a place for the entire community, including students, teachers, and parents, to contribute and define what the new policy will look like.

“One thing I would hope to do is have some community conversations on the topic to make sure that we really understand what students, staff, and families think about the subject before we make any big changes. It will be important that we listen to one another and work to find some common ground before we start making big changes.”



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STOLE TAKEAWAYS

For the Class of 2027, students will no longer be awarded the 150+ service hour stole

WRITER



ABIGAIL DOBRY



Juniors Delany Hines and Ayla Wright say a promise made to them was broken less than a year later.

At a recent National Honor Society (NHS) meeting, students were informed that beginning with the Class of 2027, members will no longer receive a stole for completing more than 150 service hours — an achievement that reflects exceptional commitment.

“I’m very upset about it, because I feel like I was promised it,” Wright said. “And that’s why I worked for as many hours as I did, because I had already gone past the required ones.”

Delaney said the timing of the announcement made the decision more frustrating.

“It wouldn’t be that bad, but I am mad because they didn’t tell us until just now, after I have done so many extra hours.”

Wright also believes that this decision will have a domino effect.

“[Students] will do fewer NHS hours, and then [NHS officers are] gonna be upset that the sign-up geniuses aren’t full and that they’re empty,” Wright said. “But why would we do it if they’re not gonna give us anything? Why would we go above and beyond if they’re not gonna go above and beyond for us back?”

According to Honors Graduation, the company that supplies various cords and stoles to schools across the country, “The purpose of these cords is to visually distinguish honours graduates from their peers and to celebrate their hard work and dedication throughout their academic journey. They serve as a symbol of pride and accomplishment for the students and their families.”

That leads to the question Wright, Hines, and others have: Why is the stole being taken away?

Assistant Principal Mrs. Rachel Hervey said this is something that has been discussed in various ways over the past few years, even before she began at DHS for the 2024-25 school year. The decision, she said, was a collaborative effort.

A main concern that Hervey expressed about the removal of the stoles was equality throughout the school.

“Giving different pieces of regalia for something like having a certain number of hours, there’s an equity concern that comes

into play,” Hervey said. “And then it becomes something that students who have the privilege of accessing have the opportunity, but not all students have that opportunity, right?”

Students in NHS have recognized the competition is intense, as there is a race for sign-ups and hour opportunities. That unhealthy competition was another concern, Hervey noted.

“There’s a real competition for getting hours, and it has lost the idea behind community service,” Hervey said. “Community service, which is what NHS is about, is for doing things to better your community through volunteer work. If their sole motivation was so they could have another piece of something around their neck at graduation, then was that really what the intent behind NHS is?”

The equality of opportunity and the intensity of the competition have weighed heavily when opportunities come into play.

“Then kids who maybe weren’t on their computer right away, or needed to check with a parent about transportation or whatever, don’t even get the opportunity to sign up,” Hervey said. “So, we as a school want to be really mindful of making sure our opportunities are equitable across the board.”

With all of these concerns and motivations coming into play, the removal of the 150+ NHS hour stoles has disrupted the NHS community. Is it important to be equitable and equal, or is it perfectly acceptable to flex your stole when you walk at graduation?

“If students work and put in the hours for these clubs,” Wright said, “in these activities, they deserve to be recognized at graduation — the one day that they’re supposed to be celebrating what they’ve done for the past 13 years of their life.”

As the change takes effect, students and administrators continue to debate whether the decision will shift the focus of NHS back to service or discourage participation altogether.



OUR VIEW: CHANGES ARE NEEDED FOR MHSAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Private schools consistently win a disproportionate number of state title; there are simple, equity-based fixes

WRITER  STAFF

When the 2025 Dexter football team lost the Division 2 State Championship to Orchard Lake St. Mary's, the reaction didn't stop at the final whistle. It reignited a debate that has existed quietly for years and loudly for weeks after our superintendent's "Public School State Champions" shirts made headlines.

Was it petty, or was it pointing at a deeper issue?

To answer that, *The Squall* analyzed the last ten years of Michigan State Championship winners across mainstream sports, including football, basketball, baseball, softball, hockey, and lacrosse.

What we found was impossible to ignore.

Across nearly every sport (especially football, hockey, boys basketball, baseball, and lacrosse), private schools consistently win a disproportionate share of state titles. Despite making up a clear minority of MHSAA schools, private schools dominate entire stretches of championships, winning multiple titles in a row or accounting for over half of champions across a decade.

Public schools still win championships, but far less frequently, and often in narrower windows.

This isn't about one loss for our school. It's about a system that statistically favors one type of school.

Bigger Than Football

Looking at the charts as a whole, considerable trends stand out:

More often than not, private schools appear in championship slots across all divisions, not just the largest ones. Jackson Lumin Christian has won 7 out of the last 10 state championships in Divisions 6 and 7 football.

In sports like men's hockey and lacrosse, private schools dominate year after year, with some programs, such as Detroit Catholic Central's hockey, appearing almost every year.

Even in sports traditionally thought of as public-school strongholds, like baseball and basketball, private schools have been consistently breaking through at higher rates.



UPHILL CLIMB: Despite making up a clear minority of MHSAA schools, private schools dominate entire stretches of championships, winning multiple titles in a row or accounting for over half of champions across a decade. Three solutions include separating public and private schools in the playoffs, alter divisions based on enrollment size, or use a promotion and relegation model based on skill. **Photo Illustration - Tyler Craig**



“State championships should be about excellence, not institutional advantage. And if the data is telling us something, it’s time we listened.”

For instance, Wyoming Tri-Unity Christian has won three out of the last five Division 4 state championships in boys basketball.

Certain private schools reappear across multiple sports, suggesting institutional athletic advantages, not one-off success. Orchard Lake St. Mary’s has won multiple state championships in football, baseball, and basketball over the past 10 years.

Meanwhile, public schools, especially mid-sized ones like Dexter, often make deep runs but struggle to clear the final hurdle when matched against private programs with broader enrollment access and established pipelines.

That’s not an accusation; It’s what the data shows.

Solution 1: Separate Public and Private Schools in the Playoffs

The simplest solution is complete separation.

Public schools would compete against public schools in playoff brackets. Private schools would compete against private schools. Regular seasons and conferences could remain the same, but championships would reflect competition between schools operating under similar rules.

Given the data, this would immediately address the imbalance. Private schools would still win titles, just against each other. Public schools would finally have championships that reflect parity rather than structural disadvantage.

Yes, private schools would have fewer divisions. But fewer schools means fewer divisions—that’s not discrimination, it’s math.

Solution 2: Fix Divisions Based on Enrollment Size

Another major issue exposed by the data is how loosely divisions are tied to school population.

In some sports, schools with nearly 3,000 students compete against schools with fewer than 1,000. East Kentwood has 2997 students enrolled there. In comparison, Adrian High School has 800 students enrolled. A school like Grand Rapids Chris-

tian has 739 students, while Grass Lake, a public high school, has 376. Grand Rapids Christian can also recruit, on top of having double the students of Grass Lake, but they still play in the same division.

That’s only a portion of the students enrolled, but they still would compete against each other in certain sports. That gap matters; depth, injuries, roster size, and specialization all scale with enrollment.

Reworking division cutoffs or expanding division counts would help level competition across the board. It would also naturally push many successful private programs into higher divisions, where they would face schools with comparable resources and depth.

If divisions exist to promote fairness, then enrollment needs to be taken more seriously than it currently is.

Solution 3: Promotion and Relegation Based on Skill

The most ambitious solution is a promotion-and-relegation model for playoffs.

Under this system, divisions would be based on performance, not enrollment. The strongest teams move up a division the following year. The weakest move down. Conferences stay the same, but playoff competition reflects actual competitive level. This is how the English soccer system operates, where teams move between divisions based on season performance.

Over time, the data would self-correct. Programs that dominate would rise. Programs that struggle would find appropriate competition. Championships would mean beating the best, not just being placed favorably.

It’s complicated. It requires effort. But it directly addresses what the last ten years of data reveal: the same teams winning over and over.

The Counterargument: “Private Schools Just Work Harder”

Supporters of the current system argue that private schools aren’t cheating; they’re just better coached, better prepared, and more committed to athletics.

And they’re not wrong.

Private schools often invest heavily in sports, emphasize discipline, and build winning cultures. None of that should be punished. Success should always be rewarded.

But acknowledging hard work doesn’t mean ignoring structural differences.

Private schools can draw from wider geographic areas. They can attract transfers more easily. They aren’t bound by district lines in the same way public schools are. When the data shows sustained dominance across multiple sports and years, it suggests that the playing field itself may be tilted, even if everyone is following the rules.

Fairness isn’t about blaming winners; it’s about ensuring the competition itself is fair.

A Debate Worth Continuing

Dexter’s loss didn’t create this issue. It exposed it.

The charts from the past decade make one thing clear: Michigan high school sports are not operating on equal footing.

Other states have found ways to tackle the issue. Four states — Maryland, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia — completely separate public and non-public schools for both the regular season and the playoffs. Four other states — Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, and New Jersey — combined teams during regular season play but have different brackets for the playoffs.

Michigan is joined by a bunch of other states, including New York and Wisconsin, in using a multiplier system that adjusts enrollment for non-public schools, having them play in higher divisions for competitive balance.

Whether the solution is separation, restructuring, or rethinking playoffs entirely, doing nothing means accepting a system where outcomes feel increasingly predictable.

State championships should be about excellence, not institutional advantage. And if the data is telling us something, it’s time we listened.



PROMOTION & RELEGATION COULD FIX MICHIGAN HS SPORTS

Breaking down a system that keeps competition honest and meaningful

WRITER  TYLER CRAIG

When Dexter High School fell to Orchard Lake St. Mary's in the Division 2 football state championship, the debate over public vs. private schools grew louder than ever. But instead of splitting schools apart or endlessly arguing about enrollment numbers, there's a third option that could actually solve the problem: promotion and relegation based on performance and skill level.

It's the system used in soccer leagues around the world, most famously in the English Premier League. Teams move up when they succeed and move down when they struggle. The result is simple: teams play opponents at their actual competitive level.

Michigan high school sports could do the same.

How It Would Work

In the English Premier League, the bottom three teams are demoted to the English Championship each year.

The top 3 teams in the English Championship get promoted to the English

Premier League the next year.

Some teams are promoted one year but then get demoted the following year. However, some teams that that move up sustain success and stay in the Premier League.

The Premier League isn't dominated by the same team every year, and every league in England is super competitive with small skill gaps.

Imagine the MHSAA built divisions around skill, not enrollment.

The top teams in Division 2 move up to Division 1 the following year. The weakest Division 1 teams move down. This would apply to all divisions.

Public and private schools compete together, but only against teams performing at a similar level.

If a small public school dominates year after year, it moves up. If a powerhouse private school struggles, it moves down. No assumptions, no arguments about fairness, just results.

Over time, divisions would balance themselves. The same teams wouldn't keep winning titles simply because of

structural advantages. They'd have to keep proving themselves against tougher competition.

Why This Fixes the Real Problem

The data from recent years shows certain schools appearing again and again in championship games across multiple sports. That doesn't happen by accident.

Some programs have deeper talent pools, better pipelines, or more resources. They might not be cheating, but they clearly have advantages.

Promotion and relegation doesn't punish success; It rewards it with tougher competition.

Instead of arguing about public vs. private, it asks a better question: How good is your team right now? That's what sports are supposed to measure.

It Keeps Rivalries Intact

One concern is losing traditional matchups. However, regular seasons and conferences wouldn't have to change.

Schools like Dexter could still play rivals



Pos	Club	P	GD	Pts
1	Man City	38	61	89
2	Arsenal	38	45	84
3	Man Utd	38	15	75
4	Newcastle	38	35	71
5	Liverpool	38	28	67
6	Brighton	38	19	62
7	Aston Villa	38	5	61
8	Spurs	38	7	60
9	Brentford	38	12	59
10	Fulham	38	2	52
11	Crystal Palace	38	-9	45
12	Chelsea	38	-9	44
13	Wolves	38	-27	41
14	West Ham	38	-13	40
15	Bournemouth	38	-34	39
16	Nott'm Forest	38	-30	38
17	Everton	38	-23	36
18	Leicester	38	-17	34
19	Leeds Utd	38	-30	31
20	Southampton	38	-37	25



Pos	Club	P	GD	Pts
1	Man City	38	62	91
2	Arsenal	38	62	89
3	Liverpool	38	45	82
4	Aston Villa	38	15	68
5	Spurs	38	13	66
6	Chelsea	38	14	63
7	Newcastle	38	23	60
8	Man Utd	38	-1	60
9	West Ham	38	-14	52
10	Crystal Palace	38	-1	49
11	Brighton	38	-7	48
12	Bournemouth	38	-13	48
13	Fulham	38	-6	47
14	Wolves	38	-15	46
15	Everton	38	-11	40
16	Brentford	38	-9	39
17	Nott'm Forest	38	-18	32
18	Luton Town	38	-33	26
19	Burnley	38	-37	24
20	Sheffield United	38	-69	16

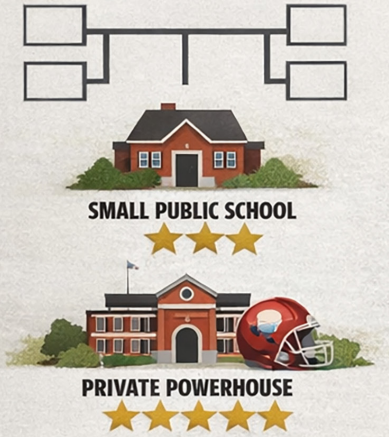


Pos	Club	P	GD	Pts
1	Liverpool	38	+45	84
2	Arsenal	38	+35	74
3	Man City	38	+28	71
4	Chelsea	38	+21	69
5	Newcastle	38	+21	66
6	Aston Villa	38	+7	66
7	Nott'm Forest	38	+12	65
8	Brighton	38	+7	61
9	Bournemouth	38	+12	56
10	Brentford	38	+9	56
11	Fulham	38	0	54
12	Crystal Palace	38	0	53
13	Everton	38	-2	48
14	West Ham	38	-16	43
15	Man Utd	38	-10	42
16	Wolves	38	-15	42
17	Spurs	38	-1	38
R	Leicester	38	-47	25
R	Ipswich	38	-46	22
R	Southampton	38	-60	12

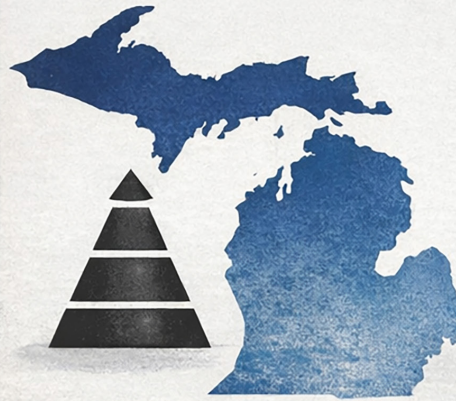
Move Up. Move Down. Earn Your Spot.

How Promotion & Relegation Could Change Michigan High School Sports

Enrollment-Based Divisions



Same division. Different resources.



If it works in global soccer, why not Michigan?

Performance-Based Divisions



TITLES ARE EARNED



RISING TEAMS MOVE UP



PUBLIC & PRIVATE TREATED EQUALLY

in conference games; Dexter could still play Chelsea and Saline every year. The difference comes in the playoffs, where teams would face opponents at their true competitive level. This could also create new rivalries by playing the same competitive opponents in the playoffs.

It would also create incredible storylines: A rebuilding team fighting to avoid relegation. A rising program earning promotion. Underdogs climbing divisions year by year.

This could also create new and better rivalries between schools. Those are stories fans care about.

It's Fair to Both Public & Private Schools

This system avoids the biggest criticism of separating schools: discrimination.

Private schools wouldn't be punished for existing. Public schools wouldn't be stuck facing programs with long-standing structural advantages. Everyone plays under the same rules.

If you win, you move up. If you lose, you move down.

No excuses. No asterisks.

Challenges to Overcome

Promotion and relegation wouldn't be easy. Travel distances could increase. Scheduling would get complicated. The Michigan High School Athletic Association would have to redesign playoff structures.



PROMOTION AND RELEGATION DOESN'T PUNISH SUCCESS; IT REWARDS IT WITH TOUGHER COMPETITION."

There is also a lot of athlete turnover. Which means, since rosters change so much from year to year, more research about teams and athletes will be needed every year.

But high school sports have changed before, with new playoff formats and conference realignment. Change is possible when fairness is worth it. And fairness is worth it.

Championships Should Mean Something

State titles should represent beating the best teams at your level, not navigating a system tilted by geography, enrollment quirks, or institutional advantages.

Promotion and relegation offer a way forward that keeps competition honest and meaningful. Dexter's loss didn't create this issue, but it showed why we need to rethink the system.

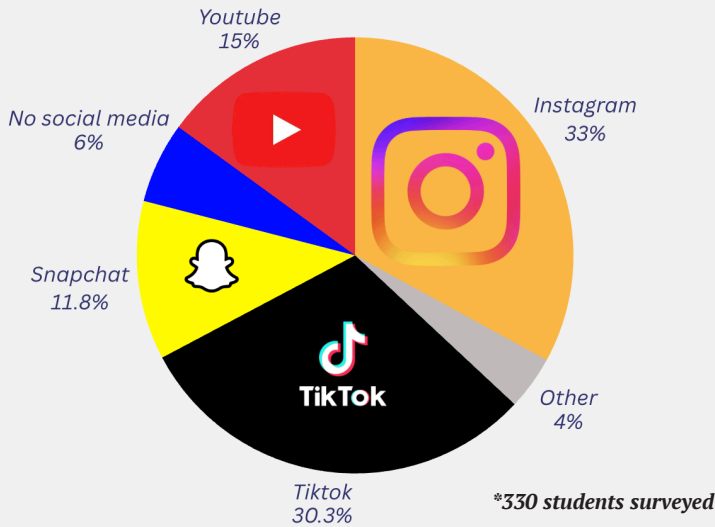
If Michigan high school sports want championships that feel earned instead of inevitable, then it's time to try something bold. Because in sports, the best system isn't the one that protects tradition: It's the one that creates fair competition.



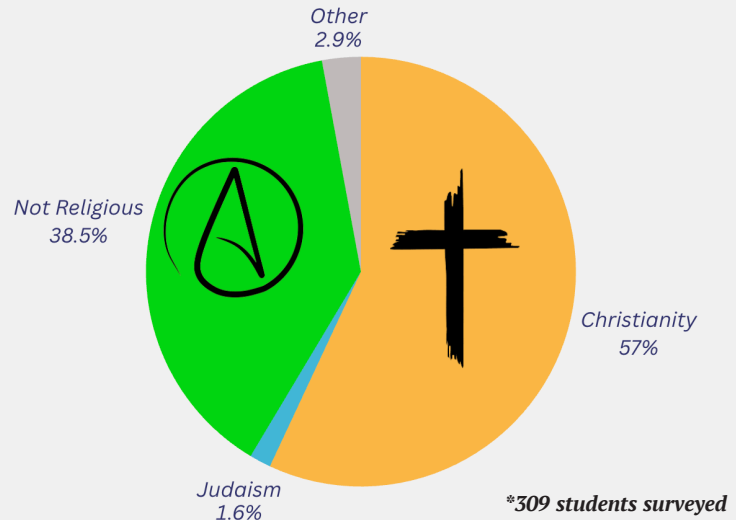
FROM AI TO MUSIC, STUDENTS SHARE THEIR VIEWS

DESIGNER  MICHAEL PECKHAM

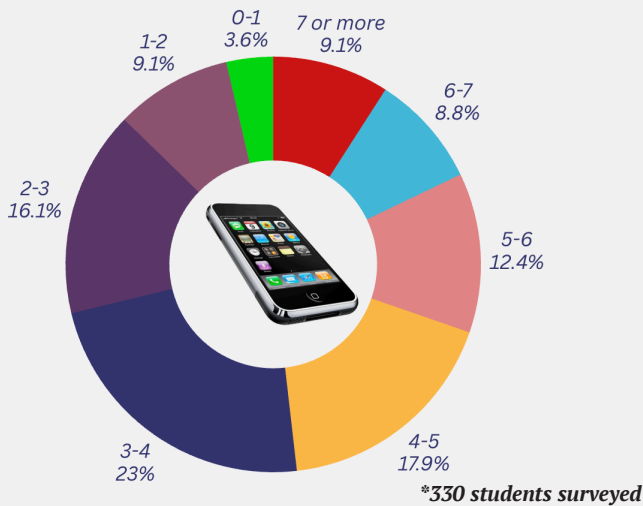
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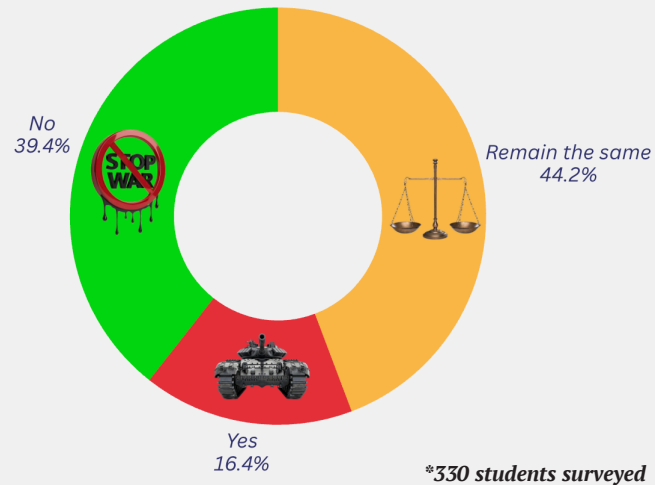
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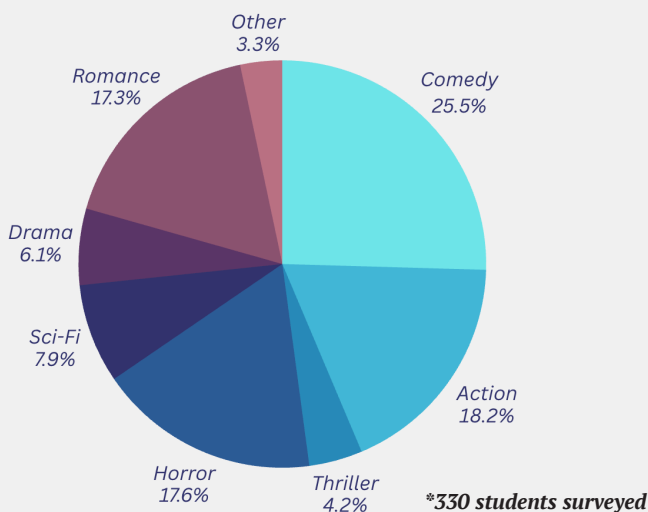
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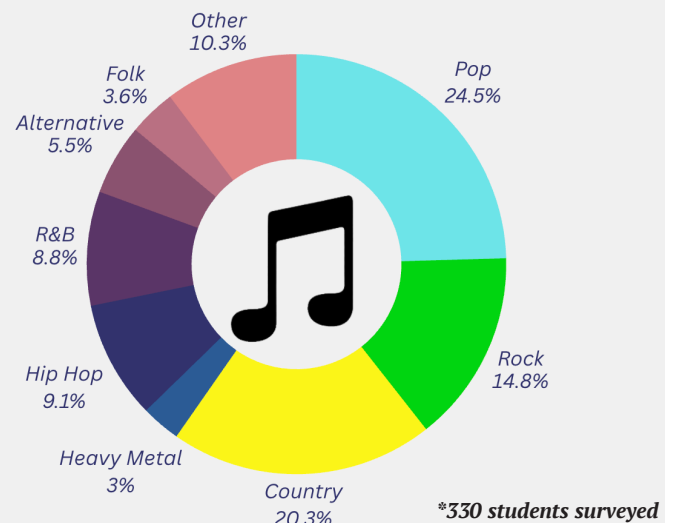
SHOULD WE INCREASE SPENDING ON THE MILITARY



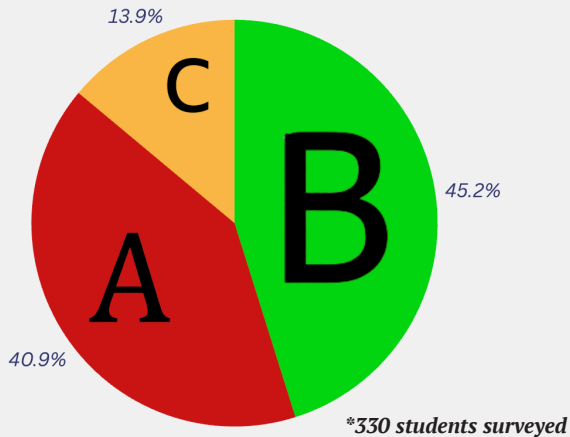
FAVORITE MOVIE GENRE



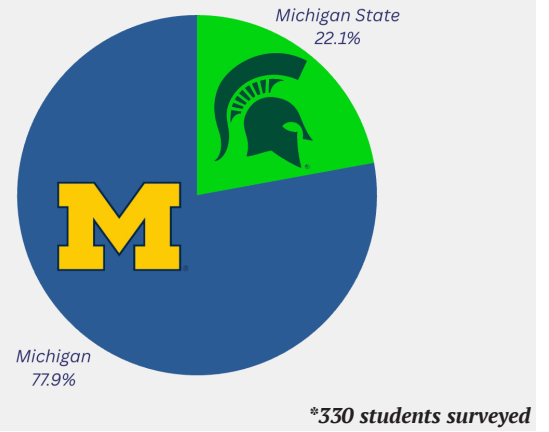
WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MUSIC GENRE



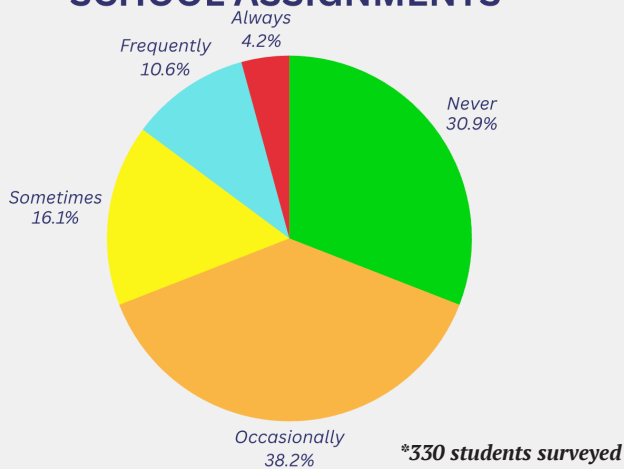
WHAT IS THE BEST LUNCH HOUR



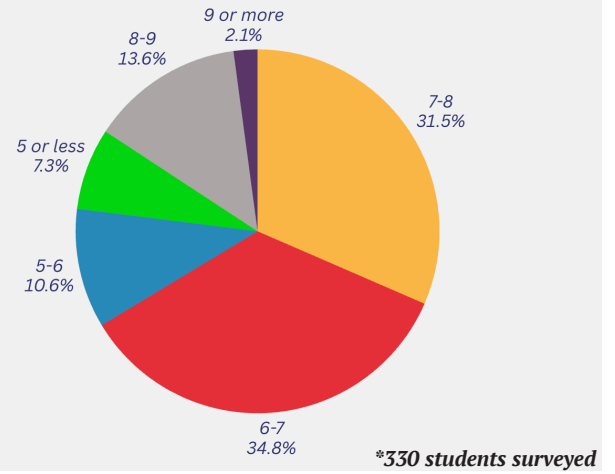
MICHIGAN OR MICHIGAN STATE



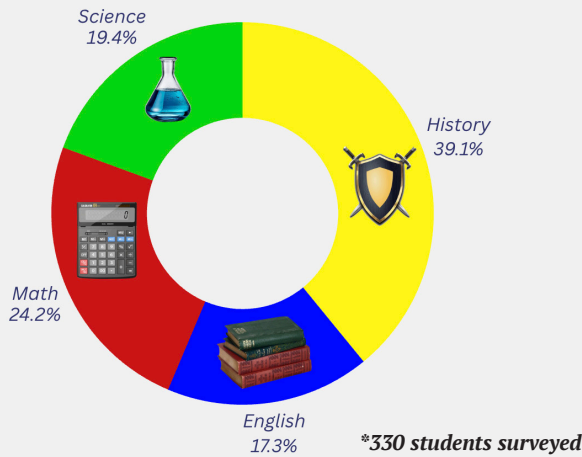
HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE AI ON SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS



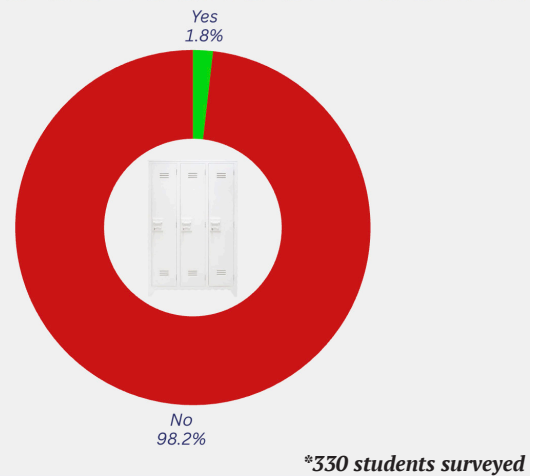
AVERAGE HOURS OF SLEEP



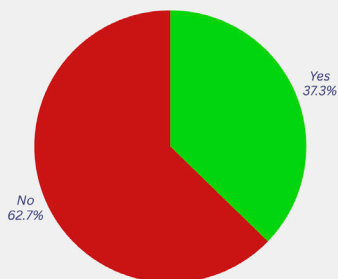
FAVORITE CORE SUBJECT



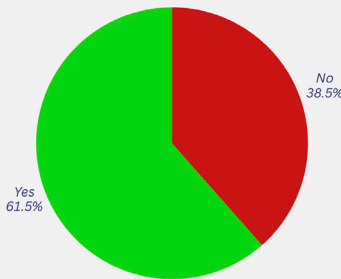
DO YOU USE SCHOOL LOCKER



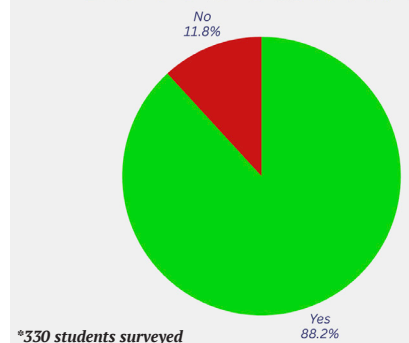
DO YOU LIKE ADVISORY



DO YOU OWN APPLE AIR PODS



DO YOU OWN A PET





The Anchor

SEUSSICAL: The Dexter Drama Club wowed four nearby sold out crowds with their production of Seussical: The Musical over the first two weekends in February. The production starred Dane Lee as the Cat in the Hat and Aidan Zeglis as Horton the Elephant.

PHOTOGRAPHER  ALEX SCHELLER

