



STAFF PHOTO / Avery Slaughter

Robotics Club members from various teams across Massachusetts play spikeball at Kickoff.

Robotics Club Hosts Season Premiere Event

By Avery Slaughter || ASSOCIATE ONLINE EDITOR

The Andover Robotics Club (ARC) hosted Kickoff, the season-opening event for First Tech Challenge (FTC), on September 6. Dozens of teams from across Massachusetts travelled to AHS to attend.

ARC has not been able to host any events on such a large scale in several years due to a series of consecutive advisors retiring, so many members were excited by the opportunity to reintroduce the club to the greater robotics community following its success during the 2024-2025 season. Kickoff is one of the few times in which every team in the region is invited to attend and share one venue, making it an especially important outreach event for hosting teams.

"It's a great opportunity... [and] a great way for us to reach out to the community and all these other teams," ARC President Raahil Parikh said.

Junior Connor McGovern, co-leader of ARC Thunder, shared Parikh's enthusiasm. Prior to Kickoff, he had not experienced any ARC-hosted events since his freshman year, when the club held two qualifiers called Robostorm.

"I'm excited," McGovern said. "We do a pretty good job, I think."

The FTC community places a heavy emphasis on cooperation and relationship-building between teams. Networking is an important part of having a strong, competitive club, and there are few better ways to develop camaraderie within the region than hosting events such

as Kickoff. Tech Tigers' Amulya Ponnappolly, who attended from Shrewsbury, expressed satisfaction with Andover's setup. Similar to McGovern, she had not been to an ARC event since Robostorm prior to Kickoff.

"I love it," Ponnappolly said. "I always love coming here. It's definitely a bit of a drive, but I always have a good time [at Andover]."

In addition to workshops and community building, Kickoff is when the game objectives for the robotics season are announced. As one of the event organizers, Parikh was one of the few people to know the game details prior to September 6.

"I'm super excited for the game," Parikh said. "I think it's really cool. I think it's one of the most unique games I've seen, and it's definitely the most challenging one in the last couple years."

This year's game, which is called Decode but has been dubbed "shooter game" by the community, is fairly complex. The objective is to pick up purple and green balls (called "artifacts") in a specific, random order of colors and to shoot them from a specific position on the game field. Points are only earned if artifacts are in the correct spot based on their color. Following FTC tradition, Decode matches begin with a 30 second autonomous period followed by a two-minute user-controlled segment.

In addition to Kickoff, ARC also has a few more events planned throughout the year. Robostorm is set to occur in January for the first time in several robotics seasons.

990 Hours: State Policy Halts Mid-Class Walks

By Arshiaa Prem || STAFF WRITER

For computer science teacher Marianne Bezaire, having classes in a windowless room can be a great difficulty. Students are faced with challenging coding assignments, all while being greeted by a dimly lit, bleak room. The four walls of cement are decorated with green plants and flowers, yet nothing can compare to the feeling of real sunlight. Students looked forward to walks because they enjoyed the outdoor break and fresh air. However, with a new policy enacted, teachers are no longer allowed to bring students outside for walks during class.

"In looking at the policy and reflecting on some of our practices as a whole, ultimately the breaks in the middle of class don't align with the language of the structured learning time in Massachusetts," explained Principal Jimmy D'Andrea.

The policy traces back to a Massachusetts regulation called 603 CMR 27.04, which requires that "all schools shall ensure that every secondary school student is scheduled to receive a minimum of 990 hours

NO WALKS / page 4



STAFF PHOTO / Arshiaa Prem

Sophomore Dani Almeida looks wistfully out at the path most teachers use to take their classes out for walks. A new policy states that teachers are no longer permitted to take classes for walks.

OPINION

By Anya Gorovits || OPINIONS EDITOR

A first-day tradition in English class: the teacher hands out a page listing the plan for the year. And almost each year since middle school, I've heard my teachers say some version of: "This is still not confirmed, we may read something else." Oftentimes, by the end of the year, what we covered in class doesn't match the initial agenda, and each teacher chooses a different path. Clearly, AHS English teachers have some freedom in what they teach.

Of course, for all subjects, each teacher may assign different amounts of homework or arrange their units

uniquely. Yet when talking to friends about their classes, I've realized it isn't just that our English teachers are on different timelines: often they assign completely different books and essays altogether, sometimes making it seem as if AHS English classes depend less on the course title and more on which teacher you happen to get. Since high school English is vital in preparing us for AP courses, college essays, and other future writing, I've been left wondering if these differences leave some students more prepared than others.

One AHS junior shared this sentiment. He described how his sophomore English teacher assigned fewer writ-

ing assignments than others, leaving the student feeling like he's forgotten how to write an essay. Now in AP Lang, the student is nervous about his ability to write successfully at a more rigorous level.

"Some of my friends in other sections said they were writing five essays and doing lots of practice, while my class was doing almost nothing," said one senior about her AP Lang class. She described feeling underprepared both going into the course and in taking the nationally standardized exam. While her friends were receiving much more guidance, this senior felt she received in-

ENGLISH CURRICULUM / page 2

Didn't We Take the Same Class?

EDITORIAL

Maintaining Journalistic Integrity: A Letter to You

At ANDOVERVIEW, we believe our main responsibility is simple: to tell the truth and present information based on this truth: Journalism is not just about writing stories; it's about building trust between readers and writers.

Today, news spreads faster than ever; sometimes full of truths that are not fully developed, as well as disinformation being accidentally or purposely spread. This is why integrity in journalism and news sources is crucial. Every article we write should add real knowledge, not confusion to our audience.

But being journalists doesn't mean we have all the answers. We know our readers see things from different angles and bring ideas we may not think to include. That's why we welcome guest opinions and letters to the editor. If something you read makes you think, inspires you, or even annoys you, write to us.

Of course, we ask that if you are considering writing a letter, you make it respectful. Debate and disagreements are openly welcomed, but false claims or attacking the article or the reporter do not help the conversation. Good journalism depends on if we can converse while listening, responding, and learning from each other.

For many years, newspapers everywhere have dedicated space for letters and opinions because those exchanges make reporting stronger. When readers push back or add their perspective, respectfully, it ensures journalism reflects a wider picture of the community. That is why we, as the ANDOVERVIEW staff, want not only to speak to you, but also for you to speak with us.

The voices at Andover High School make our publication of ANDOVERVIEW better. If you disagree with an article, have new information, or want to share your perspective, we want to hear from you. Letters give us a chance to see what matters for the members of the school that we ultimately write for. Just as our articles start discussions, your responses continue them.

Integrity is about honesty, fairness, and openness. We will hold ourselves to those standards every time we publish. But the real story of our school and community isn't complete without your input. Write to us. Help us keep journalism alive and meaningful.



CARTOON / Mason Lawrence

OPINION COLUMN

Discrepancies in English Curriculum

ENGLISH CURRICULUM / page 1

sufficient practice simply because of the teachers she had for English 10 and AP Lang. If the exam is standardized, shouldn't each student receive equal preparation? As the senior said, "It doesn't feel fair."

Indeed, it doesn't seem right that students who sign up for the same course aren't guaranteed to learn the same material. The teacher we receive is mainly up to luck, but luck shouldn't decide our ability to succeed in writing and college essays and exams.

Yet teachers have a different view of their students' readiness. AHS English teacher Jennifer Meagher thinks freshmen are actually being overprepared for AP. "I push back on the pressure-cooker mentality—students shouldn't feel that their whole value is defined by an AP exam," she said. According to her, English teachers are over-obligated to cater to AP needs.

As for the class content differences, English teacher Jennifer Percival believes that the skills students learn are constant across teachers. "How we get there varies," she said.

Percival and Meagher said that over the past years, required English curriculum has become more skill-driven and not content-driven. The teachers emphasized the importance of these skills over that of specific texts. "It doesn't really matter how you get there as long as you're reinforcing those skills," said Percival.

Students don't seem to agree. Sophomore Romy Obbard commented that, while there is no problem in teachers assigning different projects, our core texts should be the same.

Senior Nabeeha Monjur said, "I think there should be more consistency. When teachers do things very differently, some classes end up much further ahead than others. That can really impact students."

AHS English teacher Katherine Johnson added an interesting perspective about these differences in teaching. "It mirrors the real world," she said. "Your future coworkers, professors, or bosses will all have different styles. What matters is that students are all hitting the same skills." She also described that, in many ways, what you put into an English class is

what you get out of it.

While I agree, I still believe teachers share the responsibility of ensuring that each student is exposed to the same content. Students can choose how much to take from the material, but only if we are given the same material to begin with.

"English should be either easy or intermediate for everyone. I don't think it should be hard in some teachers' classes and easy in others," said junior Maryam Bhatti. According to Percival, the current 10th grade curriculum includes required units and limited required texts. Bhatti added a new structure proposal for sophomore English, saying three to four books and four essays a year would work best for her.

Most other departments are highly standardized. Walk into any equally leveled precalc, biology, or world history class, and you'll notice each teacher is providing roughly the same material. Though there may be slight differences in homework assignments, projects, or tests, each student will end the year having learned the same content—especially since these classes are textbook-based.

History teacher Robert Michaud described the high level of structure in AHS history courses, with curriculum provided both by the state and APS district. "It creates more consistency between classes and a clearer roadmap for students," he said.

Yet AHS English teachers appreciate their current curriculum and the freedom it brings. They enjoy the chance to teach what they like rather than to follow a rigid outline. "It's important to preserve autonomy, so we're able to teach to our passions, while also giving students the skills they need to thrive," said Percival. She added that the curriculum should evolve as students do and that she doesn't believe teachers need more structure. "I think if you try to fit every teacher into the same box, it won't really work."

A teacher's passion is essential; it's what brings a classroom to life. But when this passion begins to dictate what we learn instead of how we learn, education loses its balance. Analyzing and writing aren't just skills needed within the rooms of the English hallway; each student will need them in life, no matter what path they choose. The teacher we have shouldn't decide what we're going to learn. The course we choose should. Same course, same knowledge.



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Is the New Tardy Policy More Favorable, Effective Than Last Year's?

By Abigail Chachus || STAFF WRITER

MY OPINION

The problem with the new tardy policy is that no amount of detentions or strict rules will magically get students out of bed and come to school any faster. If a student truly wanted to be on time, they already would be.

There are obviously reasons that students don't always get to school on time, but shouldn't the AHS staff and administrators be helping students who can't get to school on time, as opposed to punishing them?

Oversleeping, struggling with motivation, or juggling obligations of any kind are not problems that harsher rules can solve. For many students, mornings are a reflection of larger issues, whether it be late nights due to extracurricular activities, homework overloads, and for some, even mental health struggles. Adding punishments such as detention doesn't erase these challenges.

If someone already finds it difficult to drag themselves out of bed, the threat of a detention isn't suddenly going to create energy at 6:15 a.m. Policies like this miss an important reality: students and people in general develop bad habits through choice and circumstances, not punishment. Those who care about punishments already make the effort to arrive at school on time. For the students who don't always get to school on time, for the most part, the motivation is not there yet.

A quote from Ashleigh Warner, a psychologist published in The Minds Journal, applies to other things as well as being tardy. Warner said, "Beneath every behavior there is a feeling. And beneath every feeling there is a need. And when we meet that need rather than focus on the behavior, we begin to deal with the cause, not the symptom."

YES

According to Principal Jimmy D'Andrea, this year's attendance policy improves on last year's by changing how tardiness data is collected, making the process more efficient and less disruptive to students' class time. D'Andrea said, "It's important to note that the policy is not changing, just the practice of the way we collect the data is."

Last year, teachers were responsible for collecting data and marking students present, tardy, and absent. Many found it challenging because stopping class to mark a student tardy was different from previous practices. D'Andrea said, "A lot of teachers said that it was challenging because that's not the way it was done in the past." This method also created delays during first block classes.

This year, attendance is collected in the lobby as students enter if they arrive after 8:15, designed to avoid a long line and missing class. D'Andrea said, "We went back to something that was similar to the practice of a couple of years ago, but designed it very intentionally to get students to come to class as quickly as possible. We do not want lines up the door and students missing class."

D'Andrea expressed that the punishments for being late, a detention after four tardies, was in place last year. He said that the student handbook did not change, the only thing that changed is the enforcement of these consequences.

The policy also allows for flexibility during events like bad traffic, excusing students so no one is unfairly penalized. "All the students were excused that morning [with bad traffic] because that's not fair to the students," D'Andrea said.

NO

The goal is to motivate students to be on time and start their day positively, reducing stress and anxiety caused by running late. D'Andrea shared, "My hope is that students will be motivated to want to be in their first block class at the beginning, to not miss anything, and really get off to a positive start."

Junior Eleanor Linehan believes that last year's tardy policy was better. "I personally preferred last year's policy because it felt less stressful and gave students a chance to mentally prepare for the day," she said.

Linehan explained that last year's way of collecting data had some flaws, mainly because of inconsistencies: "The teachers were the ones marking people [tardy] last year, and since some teachers enforced the tardy rule more strictly than others, you may not have always been marked late." She explained that students came to class at different times depending on the enforcement their teachers provided while this way of collecting data was in place. "In some classes you could walk in at 8:25 and not be marked late, while in others you would be marked late the second you walked through the door after 8:15."

Still, Linehan said she "100% liked last year's better on a personal level because it made mornings less stressful."

While she admitted there are more inconsistencies in last year's data collection system and acknowledged that this year's stricter rules and detention system "will push more people out of bed earlier," she wished it didn't have to be that way. "I don't know anyone who would say they like this year's policy more than last year's," she said.

Capturing our Community: Fall Festivities



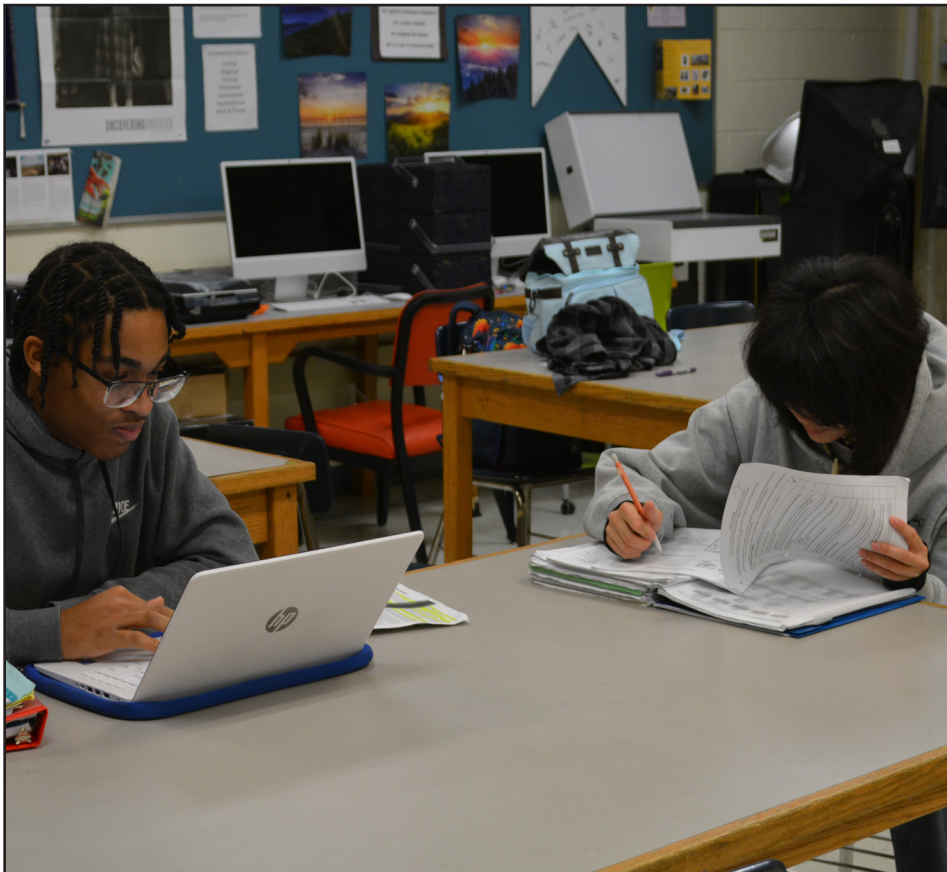
Image above: From left to right, seniors Alivia Baldwin, Sarah Maher, Ashley Goglia, Gia Masiyiwa, Rylie Charron, and Lindsey Desfosse dress in colorful outfits for the Homecoming Dance on October 18. This year's dance was themed "Neon" and had over 400 students in attendance.



Image right: Students dance to the Cha Cha Slide at Homecoming.



Seniors in the Golden Warrior Marching Band celebrate Senior Night at the AHS football game on October 10. These seniors were honored for their hard work and dedication to the sport throughout high school. STAFF PHOTOS / Adeline Whitsett



STAFF PHOTO / Adeline Whitsett

Students in Erica Frisk's H-Block work diligently on homework and school assignments.

H-Block Phone Ban Sparks Debate

By Clara Strong || COPY EDITOR

A ban on phones during H-Blocks was introduced this school year by Principal Jimmy D'Andrea, in a decision that frustrated students but generally earned support from teachers.

Many students believe the ban was because of concerns about the impact of phones on focus and productivity. However, according to D'Andrea, it was actually due to concerns about a possible state-wide phone ban. On July 31, the State Senate passed a bill which would ban phones in all schools for the entire day, starting in the 2026-2027 school year. It is currently being considered by the House of Representatives, who will need to approve it for it to become law.

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell, who joined with a few legislators to introduce the bill, said on mass.gov that the bill is meant to "create learning environments free from distraction and a digital landscape that prioritizes the well-being of our youth." Already, 18 states have completely banned phones during school hours, and 15 others have rules about their use, according to ABC News.

D'Andrea said the school's current policy was because he did not want the school to have to transition suddenly and completely to a blanket phone ban because that would be a difficult change for many students. However, if the phone bill does not pass, he said he would be open to renegotiating the H-Block rule. He was very clear that the policy was not because of focus issues.

"I think our students here do a really good job with cell phone usage," D'Andrea said. "It's not that I'm opposed to using cell phones while you're doing work, or to provide a resource."

History teacher Lauren Ream said she began with an open mind about phone policies. "I always started with this idea of, 'We're all grown up, even though we're not all grown-ups.' This is a very human problem. It's not necessarily a kid issue. Adults do the same thing," said Ream. However, she explained how a few years

ago, some students in her class used their devices inappropriately. School administration and parents had to be involved, and ever since, she has had students use the "phone jails."

"A lot of students struggle to find time to study and do homework, so getting students off their phones during H-Block can help with productivity," said Robert Zhu, a senior. "The less people are thinking about phones during school, the better, just for mental health benefits and being present during school."

However, Zhu also expressed doubts that teachers would actually be able to enforce a ban, and added that students could also text and play games on their computers.

Freshman Leo Sassin said he only ever uses his phone during the school day to text his parents, but "a lot of people are just constantly looking at their phone, checking Snap and stuff, and that's distracting them from doing important work." He doesn't fully support a ban, saying, "It's probably best for the students, but of course they might need it for specific things, like contacting their parents, so I think [we need] some sort of in-between—between letting them have it whenever they want, and just completely banning it."

However, many students are quite frustrated with the policy and argue it doesn't help. When asked what she thought of phones in school, junior Kylie Deloach said, "Yes! Pro phones! Pro phones!"

"When I finish my work, what am I gonna do? Sit on my bum while the rest of the class is doing their work? Or not doing their work," Deloach added. "I like to have my phone next to me while I work [in H-Block] so I can stay up to date."

Ream questioned this philosophy: "I am still fascinated with how, at the end of class, kids go running up to... check their phone, and it's like, 'what did I miss? What did I miss?' I'm like, how could you have missed anything? Everybody else was in class!"

AHS Ends Mid-Class Walks

NO WALKS / page 1

per school year of structured learning time." The policy explains that the time a student spends at breakfast and lunch, passing periods between classes, in homeroom, at recess, in non-directed study periods, receiving school services, and participating in optional school programs do not count towards the minimum structured learning time requirement.

"We all have to obey the law, and that's what we're dealing with," says Kerry Costello, a school psychologist with 54 years of experience at AHS.

She also spoke to the importance of mental rest. "The brain needs downtime," Costello said. "Just like athletes warm up before a game, students need short breaks to prepare for learning. It doesn't always have to be a walk... mindfulness, deep breathing, even stretching can help reset the brain."

Bezaire has found herself navigating this new policy with mixed feelings. "[Classes] have not gone on any walks this year, but we completed our day 1 scavenger hunt icebreaker activities in the courtyard and also conducted part of a lesson outside," Bezaire said. "What I miss most is the flexibility—the ability to call for a walk if the class is having trouble focusing or if the students are struggling with something."

For Bezaire's students, most of whom spend significant time on computers coding, this flexibility was a game-changer. "I like them to take a step back, figuratively and literally, from the screen so they can think about alternate strategies to debug their code or achieve the logic they want for a particular program."

Bezaire also stated, "For our room with no windows and no access to any natural light, I feel it is important to find a way to add sunlight into our class time when it works with the lesson for that day."

Costello agreed. "Oxygen getting to the brain, it's always better to be outside, to get some of that vitamin D that the sun can bring to us as well, which people sometimes forget about," she added.

Biology teacher Cole Hauser sees the policy as a new middle ground. "Having brain breaks is a good thing," he said. "But I do think those walks can interrupt learning." Fortunately for Hauser,

the great outdoors offers him the opportunity to conduct lessons outside, where biology truly exists. "We've done nature surveys in the school garden, and when we talk about ecosystems, we'll head to the trails out back."

When life gives you lemons — or in this case, new regulations — just turn them into an outdoor activity!

D'Andrea encourages this idea of outdoor education. "PE classes can definitely go on walks outside as part of the curriculum, [and] science classes [can go on] nature walks," he emphasized. "It has nothing to do with being outside. It's just about how we can maximize the class time."

D'Andrea even sees a silver lining. "I would love to take the courtyard [accessible from the English and Social Studies hallways] at some point and install some sort of furniture so it could be like an outdoor classroom in addition to the cafeteria courtyard," he said. Some students do not have a particular liking for the new policy. Sophomore Daniela Almeida stated, "Seeing green was nice because the classrooms are all blank and there is not that much real sunlight in the classrooms."

Bezaire also expressed concern about her students and the policy. "A change of scenery, a break from a screen, and a chance to use their brain independently of the screen can help them think more creatively about how to solve the problem they are wrestling with. It can also be tough if they are experiencing the coder's equivalent of 'writer's block.'"

"It can be harder to give students the message that we care about their whole health and wellbeing, while also limiting their ability to move their bodies or experience sunlight during the day."

Bezaire added that there are other ways to engage in learning outside the classroom.

"With the hours we spend on screens and the concern many people have about screen addiction, taking a moment to move your body, [...] or think independently of interacting with a screen, are so important," said Bezaire. "We could also model that importance in school, in the same way we model life skills like communication, showing your work, and time management."

Bezaire added, "They are important in life, and they are important now."



You can read all of Violet's comics at ultravioletcomics.com!

Hypothetical AHS Response to ICE

By Samantha Sun || COPY EDITOR

The protocols for how AHS would respond if Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents came to the campus are important for all students to know.

ICE is a federal law enforcement agency under the Department of Homeland Security and focuses on investigating criminals and enforcing immigration laws. According to the American Immigration Council, a nonprofit organization, as of January 2025, policies that once protected schools have been rescinded, causing a wave of concern amongst administrators, parents, and students.

"We are fortunate to have strong guidance from the Massachusetts Attorney General and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the district will follow this guidance if needed," said Superintendent Magda Parvey, regarding a potential ICE arrival. The Massachusetts Attorney General and DESE outline the important information surrounding student information, safety, and rights under the law.

According to the Massachusetts Attorney General, schools may release directory information to third parties but should be careful depending on the sit-

uation. Directory information is information in a student's education record, such as their name, phone number, grade level, dates of attendance, participation in activities, and awards. Parents and students are allowed to opt out of releasing certain information.

However, if an ICE agent were to request a student's personally identifiable information (PII), AHS would be prohibited from providing it to them as stated under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). PII includes sensitive information such as parents' names, social security numbers, and dates of birth.

There are several reasons why ICE would come to investigate on a school campus: a civil detainer, judicial warrant, or administrative warrant. Officer Thomas Paolera explained a civil detainer is a request from ICE to the local law enforcement to hold someone in custody. However, as an officer for the Andover Police

Department (APD), he noted that he is not legally obligated to enforce them.

An administrative warrant signed by ICE agents, not by a judge, also doesn't give ICE the right to enter a nonpublic space, according to the President's Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, an organization made up of American college and university leaders.

On the other hand, a judicial warrant is signed by a federal judge or magistrate, and could allow their entry. A judicial warrant is necessary if ICE directly requests for a student to be questioned or removed. If one is provided, it would be sent to Parvey, who would consult with the legal counsel to review the scope of the search or arrest. Depending on that result, it would influence how the situation would be handled.

Additionally, Principal Jimmy D'Andrea would immediately be notified about ICE's presence. "If an ICE agent requests access to a student [we'd] refer the agent to the district central office...and

immediately contact the student's parent or guardian," said D'Andrea.

Paolera clarified that his role doesn't include enforcing ICE's orders, it's only to maintain safety and peace at AHS. D'Andrea explained his new policy of putting classes on "hold" to verify each student's safety. "It is rare that we would put detailed information out over the PA system...if there were something going on, we want to make sure that students are staying in their classes and we know where everyone is," he said.

If any students ever feel unsafe, Paolera advised they ask him questions and noted that his door is always open.

"It's really important to me that students feel safe, physically and emotionally, and feel connected to the school...I'm always happy to follow up personally," added D'Andrea, who encourages students to email him with any questions or concerns. The guidance office is also always available for students if they ever need extra support.

"The district's mission is steadfast—APS is a district where every student belongs and receives the support they need...we remain vigilant and proactive in ensuring the safety of all APS students," concluded Parvey.



COURTESY PHOTO / NATIONAL ARCHIVES & RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Wake Up Call: Potential School Time Push Back

By Kaveri Dole || SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

At 8:15 a.m., students rush through the front doors, coffee cups in hand, open backpacks on one shoulder, and yawns hidden behind half-smiles. For most, this start time is already late compared to neighboring districts—for in-

performance, the question in Massachusetts—being reflected in AHS—is whether or not the logistical trade-offs are worth it.

In 2023, Florida passed House Bill 733, which mandated the same start times that Massachusetts is now also

sleep science with schedules, sports, and staffing?

"For me, it's not about one way or the other," D'Andrea said. "It's really about making sure that whatever is decided, we think about the contingencies."

He pointed out that transportation and buses are often one of the biggest challenges. "Most districts have waves of bus routes," he said. "Very few can bus all their students at once. It just doesn't work out in terms of busing."

And for AHS, with its packed athletic calendar and single turf field used "just about every day until 9 p.m.," the ripple effects could be significant. "If time were cut from that," D'Andrea said, "then how is the use of the field reallocated?"

Still, he emphasized that student health and well-being must remain the top priority. "If you're staying up till one, two, three in the morning working on homework, talk to your counselor. Your health is more important."

The proposed change would delay the start and end of school by 15 minutes; some students think delaying the start time until 8:30 a.m. is not enough. "I would love it," said junior Selina Amere. "But I need more than fifteen minutes."

Amere agreed that later start times could help students feel more alert, but she doubts they would actually sleep for a longer duration.

Amere also raised a concern many share: later start times mean later end times. "That means I'm gonna get home at eight and have only two hours to do my homework before I want to sleep," she said, referring to her role as a captain of one of the robotics teams at AHS and the after-school commitments that come with it.

For Amere, the issue isn't about when school starts, and instead, it is about how much pressure students are under once they're there.

Some teachers, like Mary Robb from the history department, wish AHS could go back to starting at 7:45 a.m. "I haven't seen the improvements we hoped for,"

Robb said. "In fact, it's made things worse. We're losing so much class time because of [early] dismissals."

With bus driver shortages and packed extracurricular schedules, Robb said students often leave early for sports and clubs, sometimes hours before their events even begin. "If I have kids leaving for an extracurricular at 1 p.m. for something that starts at 4 p.m., that doesn't make sense," she said. "Unfortunately, it's because that's the only time a bus is available."

The problem, she explained, isn't just lost instructional minutes; it's teacher workload. "If it's six different students over a week leaving early, I have to catch them up, track their work, and reschedule tests. That takes time away from planning."

She suggested that lawmakers might be overlooking a key factor: bus driver pay. "They should consider raising wages for drivers," Robb said. "The more drivers you have, the more routes you can do, and the less time students lose."

As of fall 2025, the Massachusetts bill remains in the Joint Committee on Education. No vote has been taken yet, but public hearings have drawn testimony from parents, students, and educators across the state.

If passed, schools would likely have a few years to prepare: adjusting bus routes and extracurricular schedules. D'Andrea said he hopes that whatever the outcome, "the focus stays on what's best for students."

Whether that means 8:30 a.m. start times or not, the conversation remains unfinished and far from over. For AHS, where mornings already feel like a sprint, the question isn't just when the school day starts but how to make every hour count.



STAFF PHOTO / Abby Chachus

Students line up in the foyer to receive a tardy pass in the morning.

stance, North Andover High School, which begins at 7:40 a.m. However, if a proposed bill at the Statehouse passes, schools across the state would push the start time even further.

House Bill 647, proposed in early 2025, would mandate all Massachusetts high schools to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m., and middle schools no earlier than 8:00 a.m. This bill echoes efforts that have taken place in California and Florida, where lawmakers are trying to align school schedules with students' sleep schedules.

While sleep researchers argue that later school start times could be beneficial for student health and academic

considering. However, in 2025, Florida lawmakers began reconsidering the bill.

A new bill is being worked on to repeal the mandate on the grounds of bus driver shortages, transportation costs, and disruptions to after-school programs. Instead of dictating start times statewide, Florida's proposed repeal would require each district to report on its schedules, community feedback, and financial impacts.

Principal Jimmy D'Andrea has seen school start times change before in his former high schools in Maryland and Pennsylvania. He has watched districts wrestle with the same question time and time again: How can schools balance



ATHLETICS

Tee-ing Off Tradition Kathryn Ventura, the Only Girl on the AHS Golf Team

By Ella Hu || SPORTS EDITOR

On the ninth hole, Senior Kathryn Ventura faces a moment every golfer knows: one shot to turn the match. Standing just off the green and needing a strong finish, her swing sends the ball back onto the green, and a steady putt secures the win. The victory? Not just for herself, but for the entire AHS golf team. The hero? The only girl on the team—and the only one in more than four years.

"[Ventura] was all even going into the ninth hole, and beat her opponent," said AHS Golf Coach John Sheridan on the September 17 match against Billerica High School. "She made her putt, and that won us the entire match. It was very dramatic. She was the star that day, and I could not be more proud of her."

Ventura's match-defining shot on the ninth hole wasn't a stroke of luck; it was the result of years of practice, discipline, and consistency. Unlike other sports teams at AHS, the golf team rarely meets up for practice. Students on the team are expected to practice outside of school and only meet up for their matches, given their short 6-week season.

"She's very consistent, which you need in golf," Sheridan said. "She rarely messes up. In golf, we call it 'Steady Eddie.' She's constant. She's the North Star. You can count on her one hundred times out of one hundred that she's gonna do exactly what she needs to do. And that consistency is really what makes her good."

AHS doesn't have a girls' golf team. Aside from the boy-dominated golf team, there has only been one all-girls golf club at AHS. It was casual, no competitions or matches, and they only met to practice at



STAFF PHOTO / Ella Hu

Senior Kathryn Ventura lines up a drive during a varsity golf match against Billerica at Indian Ridge Country Club on September 17. Ventura has been the only girl on the AHS Golf Team for the past four years.

the driving range. When Ventura entered high school, she had already been competing in golf tournaments since she was 11 years old. With no other option, she tried out for the boys' varsity golf team.

"There was not enough participation to create an all-girls' golf team," Ventura said. "Even though we wanted to create one, there weren't going to be enough

girls."

Ventura made the varsity team as a freshman and has stayed on the team ever since, nearing the end of her fourth and final year this season.

"There is only one varsity team. If you don't make varsity, you get cut and have to try again next year," she explained. "Everyone has the same standard. No matter

if you are a girl or a boy, you have to reach that target score."

Being on the golf team means that Ventura will predominantly play against boys' golf teams from other high schools.

"Even when there is a girls' team, I still end up playing against guys because we don't have a girls' team at AHS, so I have to compete with the guys," Ventura said.

Despite this challenge, Sheridan shared that as the only girl during most matches, Ventura will get to play one tee up, giving her a slight advantage (taking her first shot while the rest of the golfers will be taking their second). Still, Ventura's success on the team stands out beyond these adjustments. According to Sheridan, her impact reaches beyond her own matches.

"I think that she's had a very positive impact," he said. "I know a lot of people don't really get out to see golf matches, but as a coach, it [has] given me hope that down the road, more girls will try out. I think that she has shown that girls can do this and girls can be successful at it too, and not just do it just to do it. She's very successful, and with her success, it gives me hope for the future that we can continue having girls who can be successful on the golf course."

Ventura finishes her final season on the AHS golf team and stands out not just as the only girl on the team, but as a player who's made every shot count. Preparing to graduate at the end of this school year, she walks off the course, leaving the tee box open, left for the next girl willing to swing.

AHS Special Education Teacher Takes on New Role as Head Golf Coach

By Ella Hu || SPORTS EDITOR

John Sheridan, a special education teacher at AHS, stepped in for the role of new head coach of the varsity golf team this fall season after longtime golf coach Dave Fazio retired.

While new to coaching golf, Sheridan, having coached lacrosse and hockey programs across Massachusetts, brings years of experience in coaching youth and varsity sports. However, this is his first time coaching what he calls an "individual team sport."

"It's definitely much more focused on the player," Sheridan said. "In a sport like golf, we can really dig into each player's performance, like what went right, what went wrong, and help them learn from it."

Students on the AHS golf team agreed that Sheridan has made a strong impression from the start, on and off the course.

"He's honestly a great coach and someone you can talk to," said Max Mulhern, a senior on the team. "Everyone was wondering [in the] off-season who was going to be the new coach, and Sheridan is the perfect fit. Everyone likes him. He really fits with the team and helps team chemistry."

According to Mulhern, Sheridan's approachable personality made the transition smooth for the team. "It's like last

year, just a new face," Mulhern said. "He gets to know everyone, our personalities, and what we are like. He really helps to motivate us."

The AHS golf season lasts only six weeks, with around three matches scheduled per week. The tight window means most players already come into the season prepared and self-motivated.

"This is really just a showcase," Sheridan explained. "They've worked hard all summer and in the off-season. We're here to help them with strategy, preparation, and the mental side of the game."

According to Sheridan, the mental aspect of sports, such as staying focused and reflecting on past matches, is a major focus of his coaching style.

"Reflection is really important in golf," he said. "Our players are learning how to break down their rounds, identify what worked and what didn't, and prepare differently next time."

Mulhern said that Sheridan's emphasis on mindset has already made a difference.

"He's taught me not to play down to my opponent and just play my own game," Mulhern said. "He's definitely boosted my confidence and makes me feel really comfortable while playing."

Beyond his coaching style, students agreed that Sheridan's everyday support stands out just as much.

"Every time we have a match, he'll get us food, drive the van, and talk to us," Mulhern said. "[When] I forgot a glove one time, he bought one for me. He does that for kids a lot. If they forget stuff or need snacks or anything, he'll always be willing to buy it for us and help out."

The transition has gone smoothly for Sheridan, with support not only from the AHS golf community but also from Fazio.

"It's a great community—all the other coaches have been really supportive," Sheridan said. "All the preparations were made, and Coach Fazio has made that

really easy for me. We talk almost weekly, and he's really guided me."

Looking ahead, Sheridan is optimistic about staying with the program for future seasons.

"I'd love to be back next year and I hope to keep building something here," he said.

Mulhern believes the team will continue to grow under Sheridan's leadership.

"He's definitely building the team for the long run and is already creating connections with the younger guys," he said.



COURTESY PHOTO / John Sheridan

Left to Right: Kathryn Ventura, Jacob Santagati, Nate Waldinger, John Sheridan, Luke Batchelder, and Max Mulhern.

AHS Alum Chelsea Frei Stars in 'The Paper'

By Janaesa Macasaet || ARTS EDITOR

The studio lights flare, the camera rolls, and Chelsea Frei takes a deep breath before stepping into character as Mare Pritti in "The Paper", a spin-off series of The Office. Before that, however, the AHS graduate was performing in the very same Collins Center we know, as part of the Theatre Guild.

"The Paper" is a mockumentary style sitcom featuring a struggling newspaper in the Midwest being revived by volunteer reporters. The series is now available on Peacock, and is set to premiere on NBC this November. For Frei, the role means getting the once-in-a-lifetime chance to spread the same joy she loved in "The Office."

"I've seen every episode 20 times," said Frei. "I'm probably the biggest original Office fan, in a really embarrassing way. And that show got me through such hard times...I could just watch it when I was homesick at college [and] when I'm shooting really far away and away from my family...That show means so much to me. And so for me, if our show can do that for people—provide comfort, laughter, and familiarity—I think we've won."

Before landing a Hollywood role, Frei spent her time performing in and around Andover. In her summers, she was a part of Boston Children's Theatre and the North Shore Music Theatre. At AHS, she performed in the Theatre Guild's productions all year round. Frei credits Susan Choquette, the Director of Theatre Arts, for inspiring her to pursue professional acting.

"The experience was incredible...I realized I wanted to do it full time," Frei said. "Ms. Choquette was so supportive when I [said] I [wanted] to audition for colleges and try and get into a BFA program, and she was so helpful throughout that entire process. So I give her so much credit for any success I have in this industry. I mean, she's really just so special," said Frei.

After earning her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Acting from New York University, Frei found a community of supportive actors and created her own creative opportunities. One of her early projects was her "Andover Moms" podcast, a comedic homage to home that she started for fun, and ended up being a memorable part of her artist profile.

"I did these Andover Mom[s] videos, which are so dumb...I would do them with my camera, with my iPhone and they were just a fun thing me and my mom [liked] to do together. And I think I did five roles on TV and still in every audition I went into, they [said] we saw your Andover Mom[s] videos—those were really funny," said Frei.

Currently, Frei is writing a script for her own original comedy, a project she has been working on for five years. Whether it be with her own projects or her acting, Frei has found that true fulfillment comes from connecting with others.

"It doesn't matter if you're at the top of your field, at the bottom, you're

going to have high highs and really low lows," said Frei. "And the only way to get through those is having really good people surrounding you and people that believe in you no matter what...When one of my friends succeeds...it's a win for all of us."

Despite having been part of numerous works, appearing on national television, and even appearing as a guest on "Late Night with Seth Meyers," Frei carries the idea that success is not found in accolades but through celebration with those who matter.

"First of all, none of us are going to be successful forever...you have your moments of excitement and you have your moments of failure," said Frei. At the end of the week, Frei just wanted to be in the car with her dad, talking to him about what happened. "That to me was my greatest moment of success."

Those small moments remind Frei of why she started acting, and of her time at Andover High.

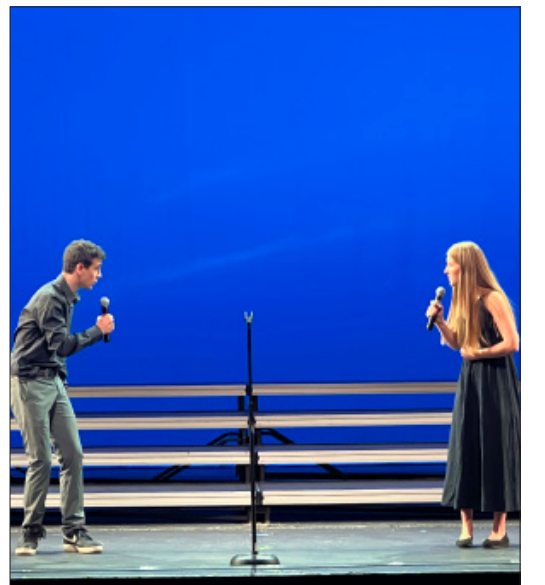
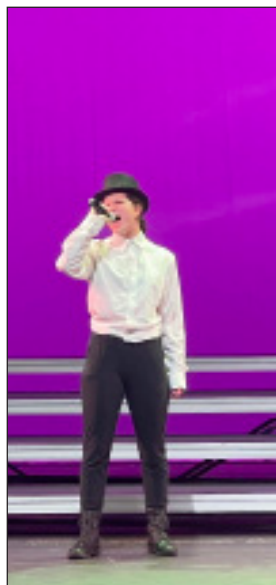
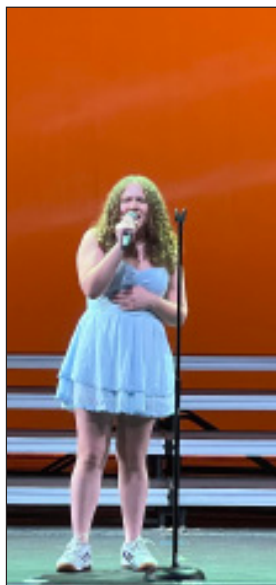
"I look back right now at my time at AHS, and...thank God. I went through those awkward moments and those hard times and felt like I wasn't going to make it," said Frei. "There are these things that make you so self-conscious about doing it. And I'm on the other side of it, [and] I'm like, oh my god, lean in...The best thing you can be is different, truly."



COURTESY PHOTO / Peacock

Chelsea Frei (left), who plays Mare Pritti, with creator and star Domhnall Gleeson (right) who plays Ned Sampson, on the set of "The Paper," a mockumentary spin-off of "The Office."

A Night of Performance: Highlights from the Broadway Cabaret



STAFF PHOTOS / Janaesa Macasaet

Show Choir and other student performers take the stage in solos, duets, and ensemble acts at the Andover Vocal Music Broadway Cabaret on September 30. Performances included songs from the Greatest Showman, The Spongebob Movie, and Heathers.

AHS Revisits H-Block Intent, Makes Changes

By **Tomas Kruecker-Green & Isabella Yan**
EXECUTIVE EDITORS

This year, AHS has made changes to H-Block, renaming it to “Directed Study” and limiting most club meetings during the period.

According to Principal Jimmy D’Andrea, these changes reinforce H-Block as structured learning time. The change to “Directed Study” helps distinguish between Advisory, previously known as H1, and the four other H-blocks in a cycle. The new name also more explicitly indicates the academic nature of the period and the expectation that students use the time for academic work and meeting with teachers.

Last school year, the AHS administration surveyed teachers for feedback, D’Andrea said. He shared that staff identified H-Block procedures as something they wanted to see changed.

The timing of the changes coincides with heightened state scrutiny of similar programs across Massachusetts. As reported by the Boston Globe, Amherst Regional High School’s “Flex Block” period was deemed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as noncompliant with the structured learning requirements. DESE determined that students there in the past school year were nearly 100 hours short of the 990 hours of structured learning time required by the state, prompting a request that Amherst reformat the high school schedule for the school year and realign the purposes of Flex Block with state requirements.

English teacher Brian Shea, who served on the original scheduling committee when H-Block launched in 2017, shared that when designing the current schedule, the committee wanted to ensure that H-Blocks would count as time on learning to fulfill state requirements.

According to Shea, H-blocks were originally intended to provide enrichment activities for students, guest speakers, and extensions of learning, not primarily as study halls or academic support time.

Over the summer, the AHS administration revisited student learning time guidelines from DESE. According to state

regulation 603 CMR 27.02, “structured learning time” is defined as “time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum.” The regulation specifies that the “time which a student spends... in non-directed study periods” does not count toward the minimum 990 hours of

broadly continue to be acceptable uses of H-Block,” said D’Andrea. Examples include the Exploring Religions Club, Spanish Conversations, BioBuilder, Girls Who Code, or clubs that have guest speakers or skill workshops. Furthermore, clubs such as the Yellow Tulip Project still meet because their activities are aligned with the school’s guidance curriculum, and

“It was important to the people who wanted to be in the club that [we] meet during H-block, because a lot of them already have other stuff going on after school,” Bezaire said. “We wanted to make sure that those people also felt included and had an opportunity to participate.”

Lindsey L’Ecuyer, the advisor for the BioBuilder Club, a club that engages students in synthetic biology and bioengineering projects, shared that the club still meets during H-Block due to its unique circumstances.

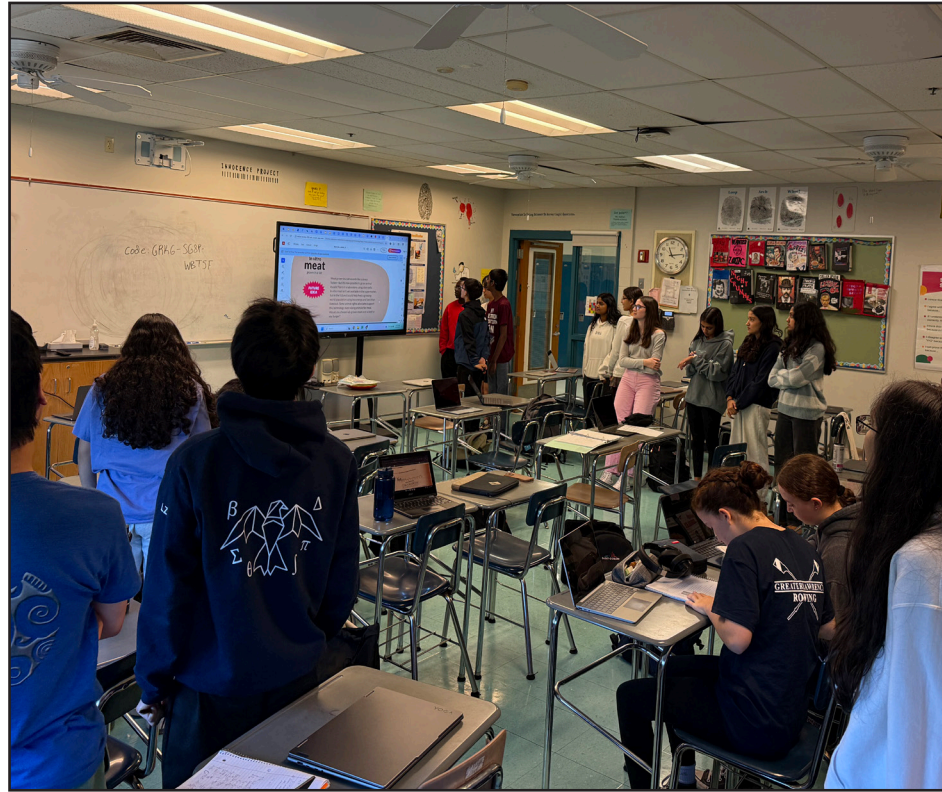
“[BioBuilder is] so technical in nature that... for the students to get that information outside of the school day meant that it was really hard for everyone to get that information,” L’Ecuyer said. Years ago, when meetings were held after school, attendance was inconsistent, forcing L’Ecuyer to constantly reteach material to whoever could attend each week. “Kids were frustrated, and I was frustrated, and kids just couldn’t get their projects up and off the ground,” she said. By meeting during H-Block, BioBuilder produced five projects last year, compared to one project in previous years when the club met after school.

Some students worry the new restrictions may limit opportunities for those who cannot participate in after-school activities.

“I do feel that it might be a bit of a disadvantage for some students...because they might not have that time after school [to attend clubs],” said senior Milena Tiernan.

Tiernan added that teacher availability is another consideration. “Teachers might be able to have a bit more presence if [clubs] are able to meet during H-Blocks because it is certain that they will be in the school and not have to attend a teacher meeting after school,” she said.

While Tiernan said she understands the faculty’s desire for more academically focused H-Blocks, she believes the period should help students develop autonomy. “H-blocks are for students to learn time management, and so I think it’s important that they have the option to go to clubs if they wish to,” she said.



COURTESY PHOTO / **Lindsey L’Ecuyer**

BioBuilder Club has their first meeting of the school year during the H5 Block in Lindsey L’Ecuyer’s room.

structured learning time required for secondary schools.

D’Andrea emphasized that AHS met the required 990 hours of instructional time last year and will again this year. However, the administration sought to ensure H-Block activities align with state guidelines for structured learning time.

As a result of the administration’s review, many clubs will not be allowed to meet during H-Block this year. In practice, this means that routine club business, like planning events, logistics, and general meetings, will not be allowed to run during H-Block. The period is meant for students to meet with teachers, get help, make up work, and participate in structured learning activities.

However, learning-focused clubs are permitted to run. “Learning activities

Warrior Friends Forever can meet because of its inclusive peer activities.

By contrast, groups like the student government should not use H-Block to plan activities and logistics, according to D’Andrea.

If students want to offer an H-Block session, they work with their club sponsor, who submits it through myFLEX. AHS then checks whether the session fits the state’s definition of structured learning time based on the three broad categories previously described.

Marianne Bezaire, the advisor for the Girls Who Code Club, shared that last year, to permit the club to run during H-Block, they had to complete an application and meet with an assistant principal to explain the club’s purpose before receiving approval to meet during H-Block.

AHS Implements Color-Coded Hall Pass Policy

By **Areeta Faiz** || STAFF WRITER

A new hall pass system that designates one color to each floor of the school was introduced this year. The policy aims to simplify hall monitoring and cut down on unnecessary traffic so students can better focus on their learning.

“We’re using a ‘stoplight’ system for hall passes,” said AHS vice principal Alicia Linsey. Red is for the third floor, Yellow is for the second, and Green is for the first floor. The physical education department is marked blue, and the office white.

“If a student is on the floor that matches the color of their pass, they won’t be stopped by a monitor,” Linsey said. Otherwise, a monitor may ask where they’re headed.

Teachers were informed of this change at a faculty meeting on September 3.

According to building monitor Dianetsy Febus, more commonly known as Ms. Didi, last year was a bit chaotic when it came to passes: “Some kids...were just roaming everywhere, often without passes, so it helps

keep the school more organized.”

Taking walks during instructional time has become a habit for many. “It looks like [the policy] should work on paper, but the culture of the building sometimes shifts that a little,” said monitor John Barry. Febus notes that students often gravitate towards the cafeteria and vending machines when they need a quick break, and she doesn’t mind the pit stop as long as students return to where they need to be.

Luke McKicka, like many AHS students, said he’s fond of taking walks in the halls during class. Whether or not he uses hall passes depends on his teacher, and he often takes laps on the same floor as his class regardless. He isn’t sure how much this new policy will accomplish, and others agree.

“I also don’t think it’s going to work out, because a lot of teachers don’t give passes, especially if the bathroom’s close by,” said junior Maryam Bhatti. “[The monitors] don’t really look at your pass at all.”

However, Linsey noted that “early feedback indicates that students are transitioning between destinations more efficiently,” allowing for increased classroom

time and reduced hallway time.

“It’s a lot less [hallway traffic],” Febus said. “Kids are in class, which I’m very, very happy [about]. It’s just been a lot smoother than it was last year.”

According to Barry, “the color of the pass isn’t as powerful an indicator of what should inform [his] next move.” He says that schools are vibrant—there are a lot of moving parts and different personalities. To him, enforcing the policy often requires judgment calls.

“There are some kids that get a pass to go to the bathroom, but they need [to just] buzz around once or twice before they head back to class.” Barry might look at the color of your pass, he said, but he might also notice the look on your face.

According to Linsey, if a student needs to go to another floor, teachers may give the corresponding pass so that monitors understand where they are supposed to be.

School leaders hope the system, combined with new phone policies and adjusted H-Blocks, will maximize instructional time and improve the learning environment.