

# The Elephant In The Room

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## Portland to New York City in 56 Days



Dobrindt during his trip.

By ISABELLE GOBBI

From the rolling green hills of the Pacific Northwest to the steep peaks of the Appalachians, senior Emerson Dobrindt spent his summer discovering America's vast and diverse landscapes. Over a period of 56 days, he biked 3,800 miles from coast to coast.

Dobrindt, who knew since last year that he wanted to make his summer a "big trip," struggled to find the perfect expedition. After researching different possibilities, he and his family settled on an organization called Teen Treks, an educational travel program that offers various bike trips for adolescents.

This discovery was perfect for Dobrindt, who has a passion for cycling. "I have a lot of experience in biking," he said. "I race in triathlons, I do biking races... I've been interested in biking all my life. I work in a bike shop. It's something I truly

enjoy."

On Tuesday, June 27, Dobrindt arrived in Portland Oregon, where his adventure would begin. He and six other teenagers—as well as two adult chaperons—were ready for their trek.

Each cyclist had their own road bikes and carried their essentials in their backpacks. In his, Dobrindt had four pairs of clothing, the tools needed in case of mechanical problems, some food, and dispersed group gear.

As a self-sufficient group, the cyclists had no car and cooked their meals with food purchased that morning. Besides their six rest days, when they spent the night in hotels, Dobrindt and his companions camped every night.

In the beginning, Dobrindt felt he had gotten into something bigger than he had anticipated. "I was struggling the first week," he said,

Emerson Dobrindt

"but overall I got stronger and stronger and feel much better than I did when I started, so I'm happy about that."

Beyond the physical effort, there was also an important spiritual dimension to Dobrindt's trip. He explained, "Sure the trip is big physically, but it's also big mentally. You're on a bike for eight hours a day, and there are times you are sitting with your thoughts for hours on end." This was tiring, he said. "We had days that felt long. I think that was our biggest struggle."

Throughout their journey, the cyclists became very close. Today, Dobrindt considers them like a second family.

As the weeks went by, the cyclists experienced the kindness of strangers. Every day, the group would be asked about their  
*(continued on page 3)*

## The Chilling Truth Behind Pope's Pond

By NICK PULGINI

On the morning of Wednesday, September 20, Milton High School's journalism class traveled to Pope's Pond for what was supposed to be a fun-filled excursion. However, the trek did not go as expected, revealing the pond's icy past and chilling present.

Pope's Pond, a staple of the Milton community since the mid-19th century, has developed far beyond its commercial beginnings. According to the Milton Times and the Patriot Ledger, during the 1800s, Jacob A. Turner, a Milton selectman, revolutionized the town through the introduction of ice harvesting. Before the advent of the refrigerator, ice was the only means to keep foods and drinks cool and was consequently rather lucrative.

John Meyers, a local businessman, was inspired by Turner's profession and began to harvest ice at a local meadow. He was surpassed by J. Frank Pope, from whom the pond received its name.

Pope's Pond is considered to be, as Elaine Cushman Carroll of the Milton Times stated, "the wilder sibling of Turner's Pond." This sentiment is reflected by the current state of the grounds, which, to the students' surprise, are more than just scenic views.

Mr. Young's journalism class began their trek peacefully, surrounded by a chorus of chirping birds and humming crickets.

A few minutes into the trip, however, as they crossed Pope's Pond bridge, the students were immediately greeted by the sight of a dead owl laying in the pond, caught in a fishing wire.

As they stood on the bridge, the class theorized the species of the bird and sympathized with the torture it had undergone.

Ray Shield, a friend of Young and a biology and environmental science teacher at Norton High School, identified the bird as a barred owl. "These birds are ghosts of the forest, with a haunting call and feathers which are evolved to make no sound in flight," Shield said, "But, if you do get a glimpse of a Barred Owl, the eyes look through you."

The tragic circumstances demonstrated the dire effects we have on the environment, exemplifying our ability to cause harm and our duty to make a difference. As freshman journalist Maddie Allen said, "People need to clean up after themselves in the outdoors, especially something like fishing lines."

## The Phone Purge

By GRIFFIN ANGUS

For the 2023-24 school year, Milton High has made one thing abundantly clear: no students may use their phones in class unless given permission by a teacher or for medical exemptions.

The policy, which was updated in the handbook before the start of the school year, states that "students are NOT allowed to use cell phones during class time whether they are in class or not." Additionally, cell phone "usage will NOT be permitted in class unless the student has prior approval from the teacher and the use is directly related to the instruction of the class."

The current policy not only limits use but also states that students must place their phones in a designated area of the classroom. The most common example of this has been shoe organizers with individual pockets.

The policy was updated because, "it is consistent with student expectations", says Karen Cahill, the prin-

cipal at MHS. Administrators reiterate that the policy was necessary to help students become less "attached" to their phones.

However, she adds that except for restrictions during advisory and the fact that teachers must have students place their phones in a designated area, the rule has been in the handbook for a number of years.

Cahill added, "it absolutely has" become a bigger problem in recent years, based on the information she has access to. She also explained that the decision was a collective one between members of the site council, which includes her, students, parents, and teachers, and that it was approved by the school committee.

In a survey of over 150 students, less than 18% of respondents said they approve of the policy as it currently is. The main concerns that have been raised by the student body include *(continued on page 3)*



# FEATURES

## Google Classroom Versus Schoology: Which Platform is Better?

By **AIDAN LESCHUK and SOFIA SERPA**

With school rolling in again, teachers and students alike are adjusting to our new assignment tracking system: Schoology. As with all new things, there has been some confusion. Some teachers are opting to stick with our old friend, Google Classroom, and others are embracing the new. Among the uncertainty, we’ve decided to take a deeper dive into the two platforms, both from a technical perspective and from a student perspective.

Google Classroom was released to the public in 2014 by Google. Its main purpose is to facilitate a convenient, paperless educational experience for students, which is exactly what it’s been doing for the Milton Public Schools for years.

The platform is compatible with other Google products, such as Google Drive, Gmail, and Google Chromebooks, allowing most digital resources that are necessary to a classroom to be closely tied and always readily available. Due to its ease of use, feedback for Google Classroom is positive overall: It’s ranked #6 in education apps on the App Store, a favorite of educators everywhere. It’s entirely free for both students and teachers to use, making it an excellent option for student education.

Based on the Powerschool website, Schoology was originally a project created by college students Jeremy Friedman, Timothy Trinidad, Ryan Hwang, and Bill Kindler. Schoology was created in 2009 and was acquired by PowerSchool, a Major Digital Education brand, in 2019.

This digital educational experience functions as a gateway for grades and assignments, profiting from many multi-faceted features on the teacher and student ends.

It uses Google Assignments to allow students to submit work using Google applications; however, it doesn’t benefit from the inherent compatibility that Google Classroom has with Google products. This year, with the Milton Public Schools replacing PlusPortals with PowerSchool as a universal grade-tracking system, Schoology has begun to replace Google Classroom in many teachers’ classes. However, is this what the students want?

We took it upon ourselves to answer this pressing query. Two days ago, we sent out a Google Form to the students of Milton High School to find out what the student body thinks about this issue. Over the course of two days, 154 students sent in responses. Let’s take a look at those responses now, question by question.

The first question asked which platform students preferred from a visual perspective. A 98.1% majority told us that they favored Google Classroom, with only three students claiming they preferred Schoology’s design. These statistics held true, with the same data in response to our question about platform navigation.

So far, Google Classroom has a large lead against Schoology, but can Schoology make it up when

it comes to technical difficulties? In short, 61.7% of students reported only ever having issues with Schoology, and, interestingly enough, 29.2% of students reported never having issues with either platform. The remaining 9% of students were split evenly between just having issues with Google Classroom and having issues with both.

Based on these responses, it comes to nobody’s surprise that 97.4% of participating students reported liking Google Classroom better overall, but what is interesting is why. Josalyn Scanlan voiced several of their issues with the navigation system of Schoology, and commented that, “You don’t have the option to submit an assignment with no attachment,” a key issue for students considering the

presence of the convenient “Mark as Done” option on Google Classroom.

Of course, the visual side of Schoology was critiqued as well, and as junior Winston Cathcart put it, “Google Classroom looks nice and it is easy to use. Schoology fails at this, for some reason. Even if Schoology can do so much more, why look at something ugly?”

Some students expressed a dislike for the platform overall, like Jacob Dally, who wrote, “Schoology feels like a step backwards. Luckily, I won’t have to be in the school when they inevitably switch since I am a senior. Hallelujah!”

While the student body’s response was largely anti-Schoology,

“Schoology feels like a step backwards. Luckily, I won’t have to be in the school when they inevitably switch since I am a senior. Hallelujah!”

-Jacob Dally

## Let Them Eat Lunch

By **LEO WALDBAUM**

Just last August, Governor Maura Healey signed into law the fair share amendment, making Massachusetts the eighth state in the nation to permanently provide free meals to students. This push started just last year with California becoming the first state to implement free school meals to all students. To pay for this program, Massachusetts introduced a 4% tax on all income over one million dollars.

One goal of this act is to minimize the effect of wealth inequality in Massachusetts schools, and we have already seen this work on the national level. Congress, in an attempt to alleviate the financial pains of the pandemic, passed a federal program providing free school lunches to all children in the United States.

The effect of this program was incredible, as Anna North of Vox explained, almost instantly an additional 10 million students gained access to free breakfast and lunch each day. North adds that when the program expired at the end of 2021, child pov-

erty increased by 41 percent.

Besides economic impacts, the CDC found that free school meals were associated with better attendance rates, fewer missed school days, and better test scores. This is especially important in Boston High Schools which are struggling to deal with truancy.

The Massachusetts Department of Education found that last year 48% of Boston High School students faced chronic absenteeism, which is defined as missing over 10% of school days. Free school lunches will hopefully reduce this tardiness, as the Boston Public Schools (BPS) found that 78% of Boston public school students qualified for either free or reduced-price meals.

According to the BPS, the introduction of free school meals will save families an average of \$405 to \$455 per child each year, helping families stay afloat during a time when the cost of living keeps rising.

Access to free school meals will also improve low-income students’ test scores. Tara Hayes of the

we decided to get a staff perspective to compare opinions. Many teachers chose not to use Schoology at the beginning of the year, but the few who did were able to express their thoughts on it.

“Any piece of technology, when we’re learning, can be difficult to learn,” said Mrs. Bettencourt, a member of the Schoology committee. “I think there’s some really great aspects to it, and I think there’s a lot for me to figure out. I empathize with students having to use two different learning platforms.”

She also believes that a portion of Schoology’s value lies in its novelty, stating that, “I think that it’s important for us to learn new technology, since we are in this time where technology is taking the world by storm.”

Additionally, we collected feedback from Mr. Larsson, a social studies teacher. “I think [Schoology] is easy to organize when you get used to it. I think it is very similar to what a lot of students might experience in college and grad school in the way it’s formatted,” he shared.

As a newcomer to Milton, he decided to try out Schoology to gain experience with a new platform. “I think it’s a really cool program with a lot of capabilities, and I think it will be really helpful when it’s adapted by more teachers.”

For the time being, regardless of student objection, we’re stuck with Schoology. In the coming months, many students will build experience with the platform, exploring all of its diverse functions. Who knows—by the end of the year, student opinions may be drastically different.

ing costs of living many families are struggling to pay for school lunches. So even if the addition of free school meals does not affect the majority of students, it will still work to even the playing field and make sure every Milton High School student has the same opportunities in school regardless of their life at home.

Dear Readers,

*The Elephant in the Room is always looking for feedback! If you have suggestions, feel strongly about an article, or think there’s anything The Elephant in the Room should address, feel free to submit a letter to our editors. Email your letter to [mhs.eitr@gmail.com](mailto:mhs.eitr@gmail.com)*

*Thanks for reading and see you next issue!*

Sincerely,

*The Elephant in the Room staff*



New members are always welcome to join!  
Meetings are every Wednesday morning at 7:00 in room 212  
Join the google classroom:  
3hmw1ql



# OPINION

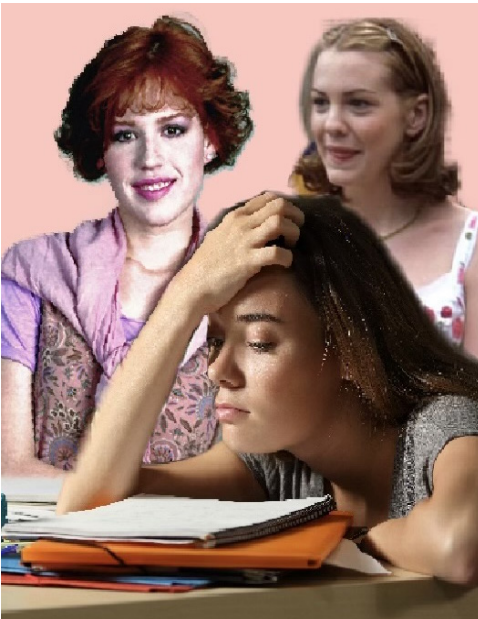
## My Ode to the Senior Class

Graphic and article  
By RORY MARTIN

As seniors return to school this fall, we should be returning triumphant, heads high and without a care in the world. We should have our legs up on our desks and every underclassman scurrying to bring us our every demand. We should be wearing sunglasses 24/7, driving sweet rides, and being perfectly dressed, tanned, and made-up at all hours of the school day, right? You may be wondering where I possibly got these notions. Well, I’ll tell you, every single movie about high school ever.

I would like to formally sue Hollywood for the complete false advertisement of the American high school experience. I’ve yet to solve a murder with my friends, or save an arts program or win Prom Queen then share my crown with every girl to solve sexism and I’m sick of it! I know it’s not the 80s, or the 90s or the 2000s anymore, but I’m beginning to think that life was never actually like that all along... I mean let’s think about it. I only know of one person who drives a sports car, the most makeup my friends ever wear is mascara and you will rarely see us in jeans, never mind heels, and a mini skirt, but was this a recent cultural shift or decades upon decades of movie magic?

To answer this question I went to the source, Youtube archives of high school back in the good ol’ days. My results were shocking. The 80s coming-of-age movies did not lie, every outfit, hairdo, and makeup look of Orem High School’s Class of ‘86 Video Yearbook was identical to the ones I’d seen so many times in Sixteen Candles and Ferris Bueller’s Day Off. John Hughes could be



From left to right: Sam from “Sixteen Candles,” a stock image of a girl studying, and Bianca from “10 Things I Hate About You.”

taken off of my subpoena. The 90s had similar results, they spoke fast in slang, looked like they were much more adult and cooler than I could dream, and lived out loud, as a community. After that, things started to split, the scenes were the ones I’d seen forever, just average kids doing average kid things. So what caused this change? Some might say phones, and some might say that the CW realized that hiring adults to play children was easier than the inverse, but I have another theory. I think Hollywood just got bored of telling our stories. Kids started buckling down, having less fun and more stress, so why not throw some vampires in there to spice it up?

So what’s my point? I think we should all strive to be more like an 80s movie high school protagonist. The ones that never are shown studying but end up at an Ivy and always get the dream ending and the graduation speech. So Class of 2024, let’s go get our Molly Ringwald moments.

### Portland to New York

(continued from page 1)  
story at least five times, Dobrindt said. “We’ve had a lot. ...of people give us food or drinks, or a place to rest.”

The most memorable stranger was Joe Young, a man the teenagers met in Great Falls, Montana. “He offered to let us stay at his house and cook dinner and breakfast for us. He was very kind and generous enough to let us stay there,” Dobrindt recounts. “We were really excited because we don’t get to have experiences like that often.”

After Montana, which was mostly wheat farms that stretched “miles on end,” the cyclists arrived in North Dakota, where they biked 400 miles on an interstate.

On Wednesday, August 16, the trekkers arrived in New York City. They had crossed 13 states,

overcoming mechanical issues, wildfire smoke in the Northwest, and persistent rain in the Appalachians.

According to Dobrindt, adjusting back to their normal lives wasn’t easy. The trip felt neverending, so “it felt weird to not be riding every single day,” he explained.

Dobrindt hopes to pursue a career in cycling. He would love to discover more parts of the world with his new family of cyclists.

Throughout his journey, Dobrindt met many kind and thoughtful strangers from around the country, showing him how generous people can be. He said, “Most people see the world as a bad place, but if you look in these small communities you’ll find kindness. There are people out there who would love to support you through your journey.”

### Phone Purge

(continued from page 1)  
resentment towards restrictions during advisory and feeling unprepared in case of emergency.

Cahill said that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the organization that accredits highschools, made it clear during the accreditation process in 2012 that students needed time to “form bonds” with each other and have a “trusted adult” in the building. Cahill says that “phone usage during advisory was taking away from that.”

However, many students, like Sophomore Lily Babb, don’t feel the same way. She said that before the restrictions were introduced for advisory, “the class actually felt more connected.” She adds that they “shared a lot with each other” when they had access to things like photos, videos, and music on their phones. Now, she says, “We are all buried in our work” because they feel as though there is

no alternative.

One senior, who chose to remain anonymous, said that the policy has led to them and other students feeling unwelcome in class. They said that “teachers don’t say good morning anymore, they don’t say hi, they say ‘put your phone away.’”

In response, Cahill said that she would “like to think that the first thing teachers do” is greet their students. However, she adds “Teachers shouldn’t have to say it every day if students are following expectations.”

Senior Neve D’Arcy said, “In an emergency, I want to contact my family.” Student concerns regarding emergencies have heightened after the numerous lockdowns at MHS last year, and many feel that with the new policy, they feel that they cannot access their phones in an emergency.

For now, Cahill says that the policy is “going as expected” and is likely here to stay.

# SPORTS

## Football Season Starts Strong

By RYAN KELLY

The Wildcats defeated Framingham at home 9-0 at the home opener, giving them a strong 2-0 start to the season.

Coming into the season, expectations were high for the team. Being ranked top 20 in Massachusetts, and coming off of a near championship season, the pressure was on for Coach Dembowski and his team.

Leading the team on Thursday, September 14, was Patrick Miller, the senior quarterback looking to fill the shoes of Owen Mchugh. Miller threw five touchdown passes on Thursday for a total of 200 passing yards.

Some highlights included: Ferris Collins catching two touchdowns and Luke Haley, Ronan Sammon, and Luke Hartford each-catching one as well.

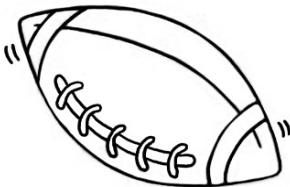
Sophomore quarterback Patrick Collins also ran for his first touchdown ever.

When asked how he thinks

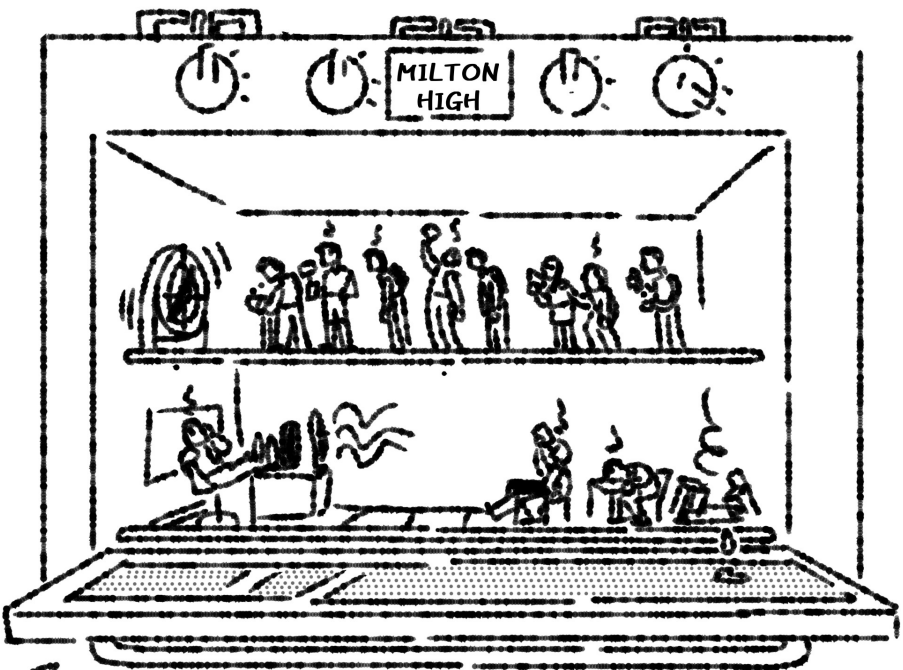
the season is going and what the future looks like, sophomore star Ronan Sammon said, “We are off to a great start, and I really think that we could make it all the way back to Gillette this year.”

So far, the Wildcats are living up to the expectations the seniors last year left for them. Luke Haley scored a touchdown in the final moments of the first quarter, which left many Milton fans satisfied knowing that the game was now out of reach for Framingham.

With another blowout win under their belts, and with the obvious confidence from the players, this start to the season is leaving Milton fans wondering: Could we be looking at another championship run?



Graphic by ISABELLE GOBBI



Graphic by THOMAS HAYDEN

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