

Elephant In The Room

Milton High's Student Newspaper

25 Gile Road, Milton, MA 02186

April 29, 2025

Volume IX, Issue IV

Letter to the Editor:

MHS Athletics Fans, Have you ever heard of a Watercat?

Of course, you haven't.

Watercats are the members of the Milton High School Swim and Dive team. The Swim and Dive team is the most overlooked competitive sports team offered at Milton High School.

In the past, the team had been reported as the Girls Varsity even though the swim team has been coed for the last four years and is currently listed as such on the MHS Athletics page. Swim and Dive has not only been overlooked by students and staff, but also by the MHS Boosters, whose mission is "to promote athletic excellence, good sportsmanship and character-building relationships among athletes, coaches and parents," and by MHS Administration, which consistently fails to recognize the team during morning announcements. For example, the day after winning, there was no mention of it in the morning announcements.

This year, our team broke numerous records at state, and no mention. We seem to be recognized in the Milton Times for having a high winning record, but nothing else.

During the 24-25 Fall season, the Watercats won 90% of their competitions, ranking them #1 of all MHS team sports. For the last three years, the boys have brought home several gold medals from the state championship, set many records, and beat the second-place team by more than double their points. Additionally, the Swim and Dive team holds the most records out of any of the D2 teams at the high school. But you'd never know it.

Coach Jessica Gillooly helps her team become better swimmers and people. If you're looking to join a winning family, sign up for the 25-26 Fall season at <https://www.miltonps.org/page/athletics-gs>.

GO WILDCATS!!!

- XAVIER BROWN

**Read more Letters to the
Editor on Page 4!**

Cars or Motorcycles

The Override

Extra Credit

By GRIFFIN ANGUS

Citing "family concerns" and facing a daunting budgetary crisis, Milton Superintendent of Schools Peter Burrows announced that he would resign, effective June 30th. The Milton School Committee voted unanimously to accept the terms of his resignation.

Burrows began at Milton before the 2023-24 school year and is the fourth superintendent since longtime administrator Mary Gormley retired in 2020.

Burrows spent the first 100 days of his tenure on a 'listening and learning tour' which led him to develop a strategic plan for the district's future. He said that "while I had intended to be here and lead [the district]" through the proposed changes, he ultimately had to leave to support his family.

However, it is also worth noting that Burrows has also faced criticism from parents, staff, and students over his handling of the budget deficit and other administrative errors. At a February community forum, Burrows was harshly criticized for his language toward special education staff and parents and for the district's inability to properly predict salary and utilities costs.

According to the MPS budget page, the budget would need an increase of \$6.4 million "to maintain our

level of services next year." Without an override, the school budget would only increase by approximately \$1 million, leaving a \$5.4 million shortfall.

Burrows says he "remains committed" to the district and his work through the end of the year, particularly as it relates to the override vote. The Milton Select Board set the override amount to \$9.5 million, which voters will decide to approve along with several town-wide races on April 29.

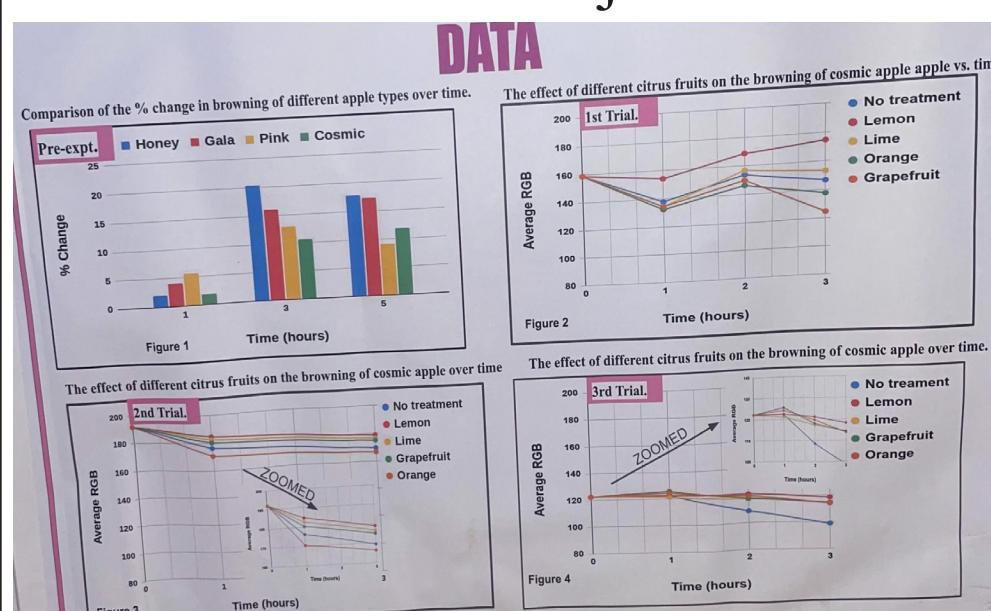
School committee chairwoman Lizzie Carroll delivered the committee's response to the resignation, thanking him for "leading our district over the past two years." She added, "we recognize that this decision to resign comes at a very difficult time for the Milton Public Schools," given the deficit.

Burrows will reportedly return to Vermont as the interim superintendent of Springfield, the district announced March 26.

The district then began the search for a new superintendent, with applications for an interim leader for the 2025-26 year closing on March 31st. A tight turnaround is typical to ensure the process is efficient and that the new superintendent can begin working immediately during the following school year.

The committee tapped the

Passion and Dedication Shine in MHS Student Science Projects



Michaela Oppong's data.

By AIDAN LESCHUK

Fields of science and scientific research are essential in shaping the future of the world we live in today. The individuals involved strive to make the world a better and safer place for everyone, innovating to cause change. While one may expect to find scientists developing medicine

in labs or conducting projects at colleges and universities, there may actually be true innovators at your very own high school.

MHS students Michaela Oppong and Ryan Denny had the unique opportunity to take their skills to the next level by presenting STEM-based

Continued on Page 2

Burrows Bails Amid Financial Fiasco, Phelan to Fill in



Dr. Peter Burrows. **Photo courtesy of MILTONPS.ORG**

Massachusetts Association of School Committees and its executive director, Glenn Koocher, who also aided in the process of hiring Burrows, to help in the hiring process.

Ultimately, the committee selected John Phelan as its appointee to the role. Phelan has served as principal of Pierce Middle School, Assistant Superintendent under Gormley, and most recently, superintendent of Belmont Public Schools. He retired from Belmont after the 2022-23 school year but will return to lead Milton for the interim beginning July 1st.

An avid supporter of special education, he currently serves as Director of Operations for Partners for Youth with Disabilities and in a coaching role with the Massachusetts Association of State Superintendents, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Sing, Slam, Share: Milton High's Open Mic & Slam Poetry Night

By VALERIE HUANG

Milton High School's library transformed into a vibrant stage on the evening of April 11, as students, staff, and community members gathered for the Open Mic and Slam Poetry night.

This three-hour event showcased artistic expression, featuring students singing a song, reading a favorite poem, or performing an original work.

The highlight of the night was the poetry slam, where student poets competed for top scores from a panel of judges. Far from passive audience voiced their opinions with enthusiastic shouts of "higher!" whenever a score seemed too low. This playful back-and-forth created an electric atmosphere, making the competition both exhilarating and inclusive.

"It was my first time experiencing

Continued on Page 3

Science Projects

(continued from page 1)

projects at the regional and state levels. Despite differences in their products and processes, both have shown immense perseverance and ingenuity in reaching their goals.

Oppong, a freshman at MHS, developed a series of tests and experiments all centering around a singular, unassuming object: an apple. By testing the impact of browning on different citrus fruits applied to the apple, she created a representation for hyperpigmentation of human skin. Further, the project served as a model with applications to the beauty product industry.

In stark contrast, Denny, currently a junior, utilized artificial intelligence models to create "profiles" for theoretical people. He then used these profiles to develop a new statistical model for estimating creditworthiness called Data Augmented Credit Scoring (DACS). Denny's model is especially useful for individuals currently underrepresented in the system because of a lack of access.

Denny said the model included variables based on "physical and mental health" and fake social media posts, measured based on financial responsibility. His project, dubbed "Social Credit," demonstrated greater accuracy than the currently widely accepted model.

The science fair journey always starts with finding inspiration. For Oppong, this inspiration came when she combined a preexisting interest in immune systems with objects she found around her house, leading to the creation of her apple-centric idea.

In Denny's case, he began to take an interest in the effect of credit after looking into the causes of poverty in countries like Brazil. "Maybe I can do a project creating an alternative model," he said, "including these people who don't have access to banks."

These projects, in addition to being impactful in their research, required an immense amount of dedication to complete. In her data collection phase, Oppong said she would record "two or three trials" in a day to ensure higher accuracy in the measurements. Both students spent months refining their projects, research, diagrams, and poster boards.

Behind each science project is a true passion. A passion to discover, to cause change, and to improve society as a whole. The passions and voices of Milton's scientific revolutionaries should not go unnoticed, as they will no doubt be the future innovators.

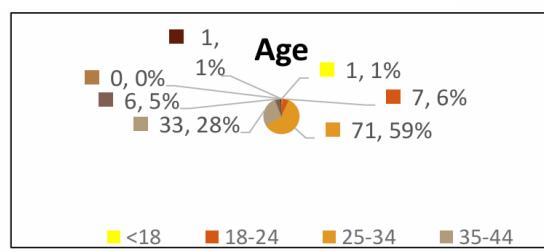
The graphs below show the demographics of the profiles Denny generated using AI, which he then used to calculate the "Denny Alternate Credit Score" based on a weighted measure.

Demographic Data (119 Synthetic Profiles)

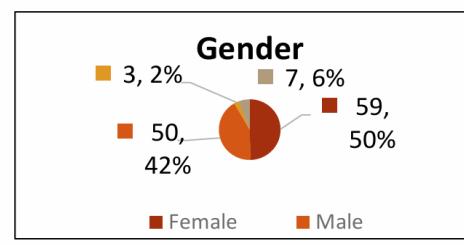
Chat GPT Query: Create a multi paragraph human synthetic profile that indicates something about a person's gender, demographics, employment status, lifestyle (if they party, homebody), finances, where they live, how many roommates they have, their family, their number and type of pets, how often they go out, do they live in a village, do they live in a city, are they generally responsible or irresponsible (spend a lot of money on hairdressers or drugs, alcohol), do they do things in a timely manner, are they educated etc. Make them from underdeveloped countries. All types of people and ages. provide a FICO score.

Age:

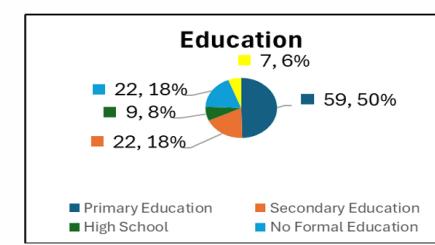
18-24 years: 7 (5.88%)
25-34 years: 68 (57.14%)
35-44 years: 30 (25.21%)
45-54 years: 6 (5.04%)
55-64 years: 0 (0.00%)
65-74 years: 1 (0.84%)
75+ years: 0 (0.00%)

**Gender:**

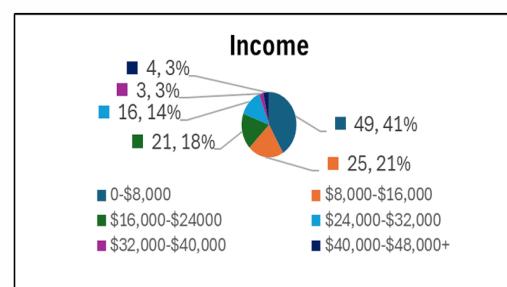
Female: 59 (50%)
Male: 50 (42%)
Non-binary: 3 (2%)
Unknown: 7 (6%)

**Education:**

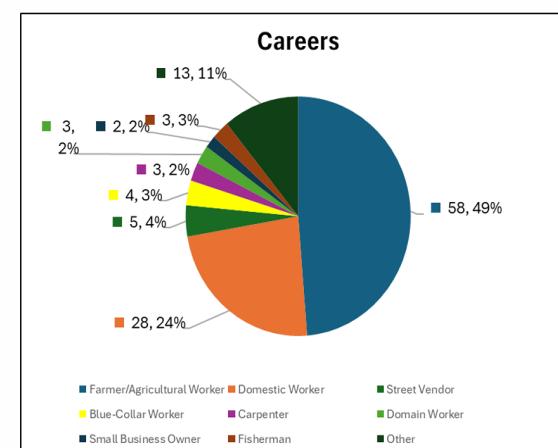
Primary Education: 50 (42.0%)
Other/Unspecified: 40 (33.6%)
No Formal Education: 12 (10.1%)
Secondary Education: 11 (9.2%)
High School: 6 (5.0%)

**Annual income (salary ranges):**

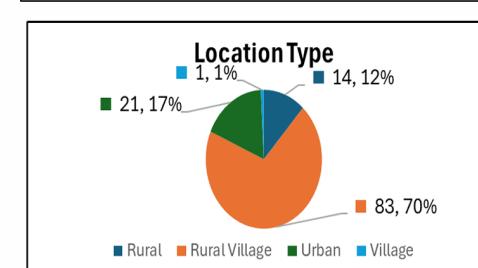
0-\$8,000: 49 (41%)
\$8,000-\$16,000: 25 (21%)
\$16,000-\$24,000: 21 (18%)
\$24,000-\$32,000: 16 (14%)
\$32,000-\$40,000: 3 (3%)
\$40,000-\$48,000: 3 (3%)
\$48,000-\$56,000: 1 (1%)

**Career:**

Farmer/Agricultural Worker: 25 (26.3%)
Domestic Worker: 22 (23.2%)
Informal/Unskilled Labor: 11 (11.6%)
Street Vendor: 5 (5.3%)
Small Business Owner: 2 (2.1%)
Blue-Collar Worker: 2 (2.1%)
Carpenter: 2 (2.1%)
Cleaner: 2 (2.1%)
Fisherman: 3 (3.2%)
Plantation Worker/Labor: 2 (2.1%)

**Location type:**

Rural Village: 82 (68.9%)
Rural: 12 (10.1%)
Urban: 14 (11.8%)
Other/unspecified: 11 (9.2%)

**Conclusion:**

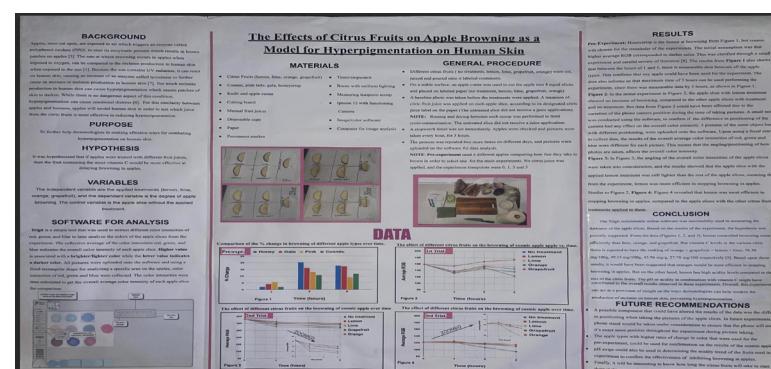
This research demonstrates that a multi-faceted credit scoring approach incorporating AI driven behavioral analysis and psychometric indicators can enhance financial inclusion for individuals lacking traditional credit history. Key takeaways include:

- *DACS outperforms single-factor assessments, reducing bias and improving classification accuracy.
- *Social media behavioral analysis can serve as a viable supplementary credit assessment tool, though it must be refined further to address potential biases.
- *Demographic data remains the strongest predictor, suggesting that structured financial information still plays a crucial role in creditworthiness assessment.
- *Synthetic AI-generated personas are effective for testing financial models while maintaining privacy and avoiding real-world data collection risks. This study highlights the potential for AI-driven alternative credit models to bridge financial gaps, offering new pathways for credit assessment in underserved communities.

Graphs and Conclusion by RYAN DENNY



Michaela Oppong at the Massachusetts Science + Engineering Fair. (Left)



Oppong's Project about the Effects of Citrus Fruits on Apple Browning as a Model for Hyperpigmentation on Human Skin. (Right)

Photos courtesy of MICHAELA OPPONG

New members are always

welcome to join!

Meetings are every

Wednesday morning at 7:00

in room 212

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

Thanks for reading and see you next issue!



Sincerely,
The Elephant in the Room staff

Underclassmen:

36 DAYS
UNTIL SUMMER
BREAK!

Seniors:
19 DAYS
UNTIL SUMMER
BREAK!

Comic by THOMAS HAYDEN



"Just ten paces, alright?"

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Searching Beyond The Sinking- A Review of TITANIC: The Artifact

By OSAYAMEN EGBON and AALIAH LIRIANO

You must have heard about the Titanic, but here's why it is a historic legacy: the Titanic was the largest ship to float when it departed in 1912. However, it struck an iceberg on the night of April 14, 1912, and sank the following morning.

Fortunately, there are two traveling Titanic exhibits in the U.S. and four permanent exhibits. By going to the TITANIC: The Artifact Exhibition Boston at The Saunders Castle at Park Plaza on March 20th, my friends and I, Aaliah Liriano, Emma Dugliss, and Osayamen Egbon, were able to explore the causes and effects of the sinking of this well-known ship.

When we walked into this exhibition, we were greeted with the Titanic's course from Southampton, England to New York City. We then learned that the so-called "unsinkable ship" had some major flaws: there weren't enough lifeboats stored on the ship in case of emergencies, and the propellers were too small for such a big ship. This made it harder for the ship to be steered away from the iceberg.

Moreover, we learned that there was some social class segregation and discrimination on this ship. Specifically, because the design for each class was based on wealth, the first-class passengers had a more luxurious stay than the rest.

We also discovered that there were only enough lifeboats for a third of the people on board, and some of the lifeboats weren't filled up when they were sent into the ocean. The



Osayamen Egbon, Emma Dugliss, and Aaliah Liriano on the Grand Staircase at the Titanic Exhibition. Photo by LINDA EGBON

Titanic soon split in half because the hull plates split open and continued cracking as the water began to flood in.

Eventually, in 1985, the Titanic wreck was discovered on the North Atlantic Ocean floor. The ship is currently being eaten by bacteria, which is causing it to rust and decay. It was also interesting to learn that the Titanic had two sister ships, the RMS Olympic and the HMHS Britannic.

We think the audience would most admire the Titanic model when you first walk in. We loved the presentation of the artifacts because you can tell the gentleness that is used to care for them.

The Ice Wall, which is made of real ice and set to a temperature sim-

ilar to that of the water on the night of the sinking, was a very important part of the exhibit. The metal piece that visitors can touch was a very essential part of the exhibit because it helps people connect to the ship and the tragedy that occurred on it. The only thing we didn't like was that we felt there should have been more artifacts.

If you like history, boats, or the Titanic movie, then you would like the Titanic museum and you should visit it to learn more about the story of the ship. You can touch and visually see the history in every piece. We loved the museum and will definitely recommend it to Titanic experts or history lovers like us! It is an amazing place to go back in history and con-

TikTok at MHS

By MELINA ZULLAS

In a place full of academic responsibilities, student successes, and various after-school activities, something else takes up students' time, too. When in the hallways or before the next activity, many students spend their time scrolling through their endless feeds of cute animals, lip-syncing, recipes, and trending challenges.

According to a report from the market research agency Opeopl, TikTok is used by about 70% of Gen Z. The federal government has frequently discussed TikTok.

On Friday, April 4, President Trump said he would postpone enforcing the TikTok sale-or-ban law for another 75 days.

In other words, one day before it was set to be banned this month, TikTok was given another extension to sell its U.S. operations (from the Chinese company ByteDance) to a company or an individual within the U.S. A deal was said to be just about finalized on Wednesday, April 3, but it ended with Trump's announcement of widespread global tariffs on countries, including China.

The Trump administration,

which has greatly increased its presence on the platform in the past few years, has said it has been "working very hard on a Deal to SAVE TIKTOK." It even suggests that the U.S. offered a deal involving China's agreement to approve a TikTok sale in exchange for lowered U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports.

So, how is all this affecting the students and staff at MHS?

Concerning the app's 12-hour shutdown in late January, one junior said, "Personally, I was really sad and heartbroken, and I didn't know what to do...I honestly had a lot of free time on my hands, and usually when I have free time, I go on the app." Even students who mainly use Instagram noticed influencers show up on Instagram Reels to complain about the ban.

Meanwhile, for English teacher Stephen Collyer, "The ban has nothing to do with social media; my concern is its impact on the division of power in the government: Congress outlawed it, the Supreme Court upheld it, and the executive branch is trying to negotiate it. It introduces a new tension. I guess a challenge with the separation of power among the

three branches of equal government."

In general, many students seem to appreciate the app while recognizing its addictive features and potentially harmful impacts on our generation.

Specifically, junior Frankie Occhino commented, "TikTok has been a part of my everyday life, and the influencers that I watch are like my friends."

However, junior Aubery Sharples said, "I think that TikTok has a very strong influence on everyone's psyche, like their minds, and it has been a dangerous influence on our generation because it has limited our attention spans."

As junior Lily Babb puts it, "I think it, in general, does have a lot of negative side effects, but there is also an aspect of community that people can find on TikTok, depending on which side they are on."

As debates over its future continue at the highest levels of government, TikTok remains more than just an app—it's a daily habit, a source of connection, and, for better or worse, a defining part of student life at MHS.

Open Mic

(continued from page 1)

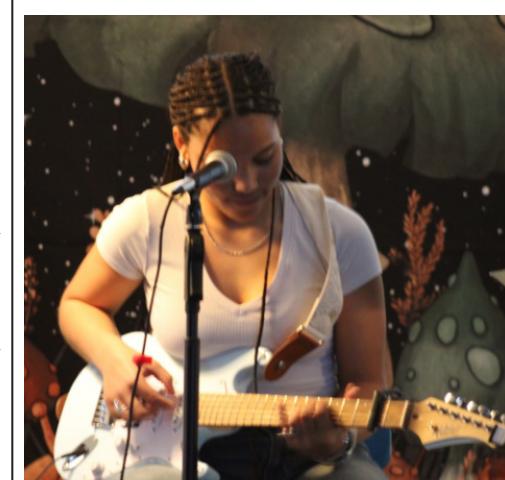
riencing slam poetry live, and it exceeded my expectations," shared one student. "There was so much room for creative expression and variety. The community was incredibly supportive and welcoming, which made it feel even more special."

This sense of belonging was evident throughout the night, as audience members cheered on their peers and celebrated every performance.

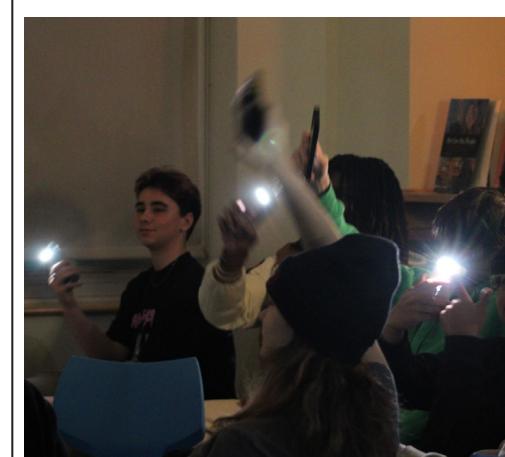
Performers ranged from seasoned artists to anxious first-timers, each bringing their unique voice to the stage. The diversity of styles and stories enriched the evening, reflecting the wide range of talent found at MHS.

The event's success was made possible by the combined efforts of several school clubs, including the Culinary Club, Poetry Club, Tech Club, Photography Club, and The Echo.

By the end of the night, Milton High's Open Mic Night was not just a showcase of talent, but also a celebration of courage, creativity, and community, bringing together students of all different backgrounds.



April Pichardo singing a song onstage. Photo by VALERIE HUANG



Students waving their phone flashlights to show support for the performers onstage. Photo by VALERIE HUANG



August Alvarova welcomes students to the event. Photo courtesy of SEAN LOPRESTI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cars or Motorcycles

Dear Editor,

People often say motorcycles are more dangerous than cars and promote reckless driving. So you might assume that a motorcycle permit should be harder to acquire than a permit for driving cars, right?

Driving motorcycles is dangerous, and people who ride motorcycles are classified as “reckless or not good drivers.” But is that true? For all of you who said “yes,” I’m here to correct this assumption.

First, let’s start with some basics: An M-class license is the permit that legally allows you to operate a motorcycle. A D-class allows you to drive and operate an automobile.

Now, let’s compare the process of getting your M and D class license and a permit. Everyone knows that you can start Driver’s Ed at 15 years and 9 months. But did you know you still can not drive until you’re 16, for both a motorcycle and a car?

In Massachusetts, that’s the legal age at which you can get your motorcycle and car permit. Both M class and D class also have similar tests. For an M class license, you must pass the MREP, or the motorcycle rider education program, which consists of a 25 to 30-question test, for which you must get above a 75%, just like the automobile driving test.

Both also require Driver’s Ed. For both the M class and D class licenses, you have to wait until you’re 16 and a half to apply, and the tests both consist of a road test. This shows that people with motorcycle licenses go through the same process as automobile drivers. This also emphasizes the point that anyone can be a bad driver; it doesn’t matter if you’re in a car or a motorcycle, anyone can get into—or cause—an accident, and a motorcycle rider can know road laws and how to drive better than an automatic driver.

There’s a common misconception that people who drive motorcycles have a higher tendency to crash or cause more accidents, but is that true? No.

Did you know that most of the time, in an accident between a car and a motorcycle, the car is at fault? According to Hardison & Cochran, a law firm that specializes in crashes, “70% of motorcycle accidents occur at intersections because drivers do not see the motorcycle or car drivers fail to yield the right of way to motorcycles.”

Because obtaining a motorcycle permit and license is the same process as getting one to drive a car, the education level is the same. Since most motorcycle crashes are likely to be the fault of other drivers, are motorcycles all that bad?

Sincerely,
EMMA DUGLISS,
class of 2028

Out of Service

FOR CLASSES 2026 AND LATER (2027, 2028, 2029...):
Milton High **no longer** requires students to achieve **140 hours of service**. Instead students are tasked to complete **60 hours of community service in order to graduate** along with standard requirements of a **total of 85 credits and taking a tech and fine arts course**.



Infographic by LAYLA RAYMOND

The Override

Dear Editor,

Griffin Angus’s article “Milton Public Schools to Restructure Administration for 2025-26” was very impressive, especially his information about the budget. However, most conversations on the budget have revolved around what led to it, and a more critical focus is the consequences of the budget deficit.

The question on most people’s minds is how this will affect our school district in the future if the town votes on an override. In this case, an override means the taxes will increase for every household in Milton, and the tax revenue would cover the deficit for the school budget. If the override does not pass, the district must cut a lot of spending. This means there might not be as many clubs available, and sports teams might not have freshman or JV teams, only Varsity. Also, there might not be as many theatre productions, and they might have to cut some new teacher positions in the district, not because they are bad teachers, but because the district can’t afford their salaries. I hope the clubs, sports, and education will not be drastically affected next year or in the years to come because Milton High School is known for its excellent education system, sports teams that win us many titles, and clubs that bring students together.

Students come into our school yearly because the education is excellent, and our sports teams are title holders. So, in the future, the district needs to make a thorough, long-term plan to make sure we will not be in this mess again. A long-term plan is vital to maintain the quality of our education and extracurricular activities.

The Milton community comes together to watch sports events and theatre productions, and they send their kids to Milton schools because the education is top-notch. It would be terrible to take these things that bring the community together.

Sincerely, **OSAYAMEN EGBON, class of 2028**

Seniors—make sure to vote! Here are polling locations based on precinct:

Precinct	Location
Precinct 1	Tucker School
Precinct 2	Milton Senior Center
Precinct 3	Cunningham Park Community Center
Precinct 4	Milton Senior Center
Precinct 5	Milton Senior Center
Precinct 6	Copeland Field House-Milton High School
Precinct 7	Cunningham School
Precinct 8	Cunningham School
Precinct 9	Copeland Field House-Milton High School
Precinct 10	Tucker School

Extra Credit

Dear Editor,

Extra credit. Why do some teachers offer it while others do not? I have experienced this inconsistency in my classes—some allow extra credit for missed or incomplete work, while others do not, and the reasons are often unclear.

Some teachers think it should not be allowed because it would make the class too easy, but nobody will want to learn if the class is challenging. Another argument that some teachers make is that if extra credit is always available, students won’t try on assignments. I believe that is true only if extra credit is always given no matter what. Extra credit should only be given if the student misses an assignment, not if they do poorly.

Extra credit should always be available because it can motivate students to complete their assignments and improve their grade averages, enhancing their prospects for college admissions. When extra credit is not an option, it feels like we have fewer opportunities to succeed in school, which negatively impacts our mental health. With extra credit, students are less stressed and can do better work on all their assignments and tests.

I tend to have better grades in classes where extra credit is offered and feel more excited about attending. The reduced stress about assignments, tests, and grades makes a significant difference. According to my research, teachers agree. One teacher even said that extra credit opportunities create a positive and exciting learning environment that benefits the students’ mental health.

Inconsistent policies like this can make it difficult for students to understand what is expected of them. If the policies on extra credit were standardized, students would spend less time worrying about whether they can get some extra credit and spend more time focusing on the quality of their work.

Overall, being pressured to do better on assignments is very stressful, and you don’t work to your full potential when you are stressed.

Sincerely,
RONAN HANLEY,
class of 2028