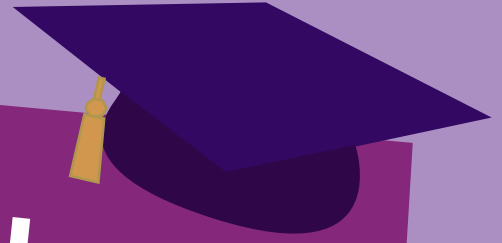




# Sweating For a Diploma



OP-ED BY LUCY MULLEN  
AND COLLEEN STURM

The four years spent in high school are a time of exploration and self discovery. Waterford High School offers a diverse spread of classes, sports, and clubs that allow students to discover new interests and possible paths for their futures. The 26 credit graduation requirement forces students to try a little bit of everything, but one credit in particular creates extra stress for varsity athletes.

Connecticut state law requires all high school students to take a minimum of one credit in physical education to graduate, which amounts to 120 hours over four years. At Waterford High School, that is equivalent to two half-credit gym classes: Lancer PE (typically taken sophomore year) and an elective PE class (typically taken junior or senior year). To fill this elective, Waterford offers Unified PE, Adventure PE, Aquatics, Bootcamp, Rec Sports, Dance Fitness, Lifeguarding, and Team Sports.

While many students look forward to gym class, for some varsity athletes, this requirement adds extra physical stress to their already demanding schedules. Varsity girls swim captain Zaya Haglund has roughly four hours of work to complete after her two hour practice every day. Haglund argues that the elective PE class is a “high opportunity cost for high achieving student athletes.” In other words, there is little reward for their enrollment in the class. This begs the question: should varsity athletes be required to take a full credit of physical education?

Waterford High School Athletic Director Chris Landry believes every student can benefit from taking PE, saying, “I think it’s important for balance.” Landry claims that the opportunity to participate in sports recreationally and without consequence is good for athletes. Andrew Walker, a veteran gym teacher, agrees, arguing that the experience of taking an elective PE class teaches students “lifelong fitness.”

Not all varsity athletes go on to play their sport at a collegiate or professional level; gym class teaches students how to maintain a level of personal fitness into adulthood.

While there are benefits to taking gym class in high school, many student-athletes, especially in their senior year, wish that Lancer PE combined with their varsity sport were enough to satisfy their physical education requirements. Landry states that the average varsity athlete spends approximately 15 hours per week at practice, attending games, and training to keep in shape. With a typical season lasting anywhere between 12 and 14 weeks, athletes put in around 180 hours per season. Based on this fact, a varsity sport should fulfill the state requirement, especially if a student participates in multiple seasons per year.



Photo credits: Zaya Haglund  
WHS Girls Swim Practice



**Photo Credits: Lucy Mullen  
Team Sports**

Though a strong advocate for gym class, Walker says he understands how the graduation requirement can be frustrating to students with a full schedule. Senior Hannah Grant is a high achieving gymnast outside of WHS who commits 20 hours a week to her sport. She argues that “junior and senior year are important academically and it’s hard to fill your schedule with good classes when you have [PE] credits hanging over your head.” She goes on to say that students who are high achievers in both academics and athletics would benefit from an exemption to PE class. She suggests athletes like herself fulfill the credit by filling out a form, signed by a coach, confirming their activity level.



**Photo Credits: Lucy Mullen  
Left to right: Caden Gaynor, Carter Russ, Thomas Tattersal,  
Miles Johnson**



**Photo Credits: Lachlan Burdy  
WHS Football Game**

Varsity athletes represent Waterford High School on local, regional, and national levels, a commitment that deserves recognition. Exempting varsity athletes from half a credit of physical education would allow more students to take classes they are actually interested in or have more time to do their homework in a study hall. Grant says that the elective PE credit prevented her from taking orchestra her senior year, a class she regrets giving up.

JV athletes may feel this is unfair because they also participate in one or more sports, but there are good reasons for their exclusion. Landry confirms that there is a clear difference in intensity between varsity and JV teams. Varsity seasons are not only more physically demanding but also last longer than the JV season.

Exempting varsity athletes would likely create an incentive for students to not only join sports but commit the time and energy required to excel. Additionally, it reduces the issue of job security for PE teachers, which, according to Walker, could be decreased by almost half without elective gym classes. Most students would still be required to take the PE elective, and many would opt to take gym even if it were not a requirement.



# COLLEGE VISITS

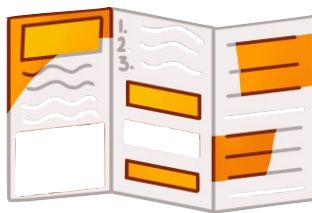
BY ISABEL HENRY

Entering the fall season, many seniors are deep in their college application process. Before applying, seniors have to choose which colleges peak their interest, as well as align with their wants and needs. College visits and tours are a great help in deciding.

Ms. Sweeney, the WHS college and career counselor, believes there are many benefits to in-person college visits: “You can ask questions specific to you because of the smaller group setting.” She goes on to say, “It provides so much information.” Ms. Sweeney explains. Going on college visits is hours of time spent exploring the campus, different facilities, and getting informed. While you tour the campus, there is a guide, typically an upperclassman, constantly spilling information about every aspect of the college.

Adyson Wiseman, a WHS senior, explains how “having a student guide is valuable because you’re getting the college from a student’s point of view. “They are the ones in the position that I will soon be in, so hearing the pros and cons from them means more.”

The guides explain classes, building



locations, and more, so college visits are just a fountain of information.

“Visits also give you a feeling of the vibe of the college,” says Ms. Sweeney. The vibe of the college you choose is so important because it affects whether you fit there or not.

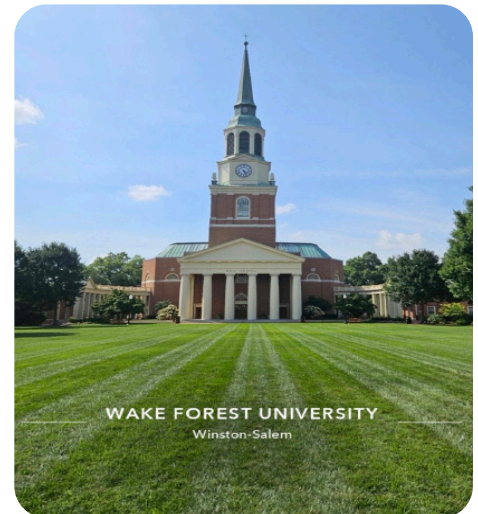
Ms. Sweeney says that the “prime time” for students to visit colleges is the beginning of junior year up until the beginning of senior year, but she makes sure to emphasize that “It is never too early!” You can never start researching too soon. “Sometimes, if you’re on a vacation, even in freshman or sophomore year, and you’re near a college that you might consider, take a visit.” Ms. Sweeney says. “It is better to start sooner than later!”

Pre-visit prep is also important. Coming up with a list of questions specific to you is essential because it will make your decision easier. “I have a list of questions in my college and career Google Classroom.” Ms. Sweeney says.

Ms. Sweeney is a key figure for seniors in their decision-making at WHS, and the questions she provides can be a good outline for anyone at WHS thinking about visiting colleges

Bronson Leone, a senior at WHS, has been on many college tours, specifically Boston University, Northeastern, University of Maryland, UVA, and Wake Forest.

Pre-college visit research is crucial. Leone spent a lot of time on the websites of each college he was interested in, simply finding out anything he could about each college, like the majors and extra programs the school offers, the





# EXTRACURRICULARS: WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING

BY MAYA SMITH

For high school students, the array of extracurricular activities offered at most schools can seem both enticing and overwhelming.

For hopeful college applicants, strong grades and test scores are just the beginning. Extracurricular activities provide a window into a student's passions, character, and potential.

"We look at the depth of a student's involvement," explains Rachel Labrecque, Waterford High School alum, former college admissions officer, and current academic coach. "It's not just about listing a variety of clubs, but understanding the impact they've made."

Extracurriculars often serve as a tie-breaker between candidates with similar academic profiles. "If we have two students with comparable GPAs and test scores, their extracurriculars can be the deciding factor," Labrecque notes. "We're looking for what makes them unique."

While there's no magic formula, certain activities tend to catch the eye over others. "Significant involvement in community service, independent research, or leadership roles often stands out," says Labrecque.

Leadership isn't just about holding

a title, as there is a clear difference between simply showing up and truly putting in the effort required to go above and beyond.

Labrecque recalls a candidate whose application was significantly boosted by their extracurriculars: "This student started a coding club at their school and organized workshops for underprivileged kids in the community. It showed initiative, passion, and a commitment to helping others."

For students navigating their extracurricular choices, the advice is clear: "Focus on activities you genuinely care about," college-bound Senior Valerie Cheng advises.

While participation in clubs and organizations offers opportunities for personal growth and community engagement, it's crucial to approach these choices strategically, especially with an eye toward college admissions.

Club participation and choices impact students' futures. Even more significant than many academics or sports, the clubs one chooses to participate in can be extremely important, from the advantages they could provide in applications to the people someone associates with.

There are various clubs offered at Waterford High School, some of the most common additions to applications being the Lancer Leadership

Council, Model UN, Yearbook, Science Bowl, WATERFORD Drama, Key Club, and Peer Tutoring.

Many of these clubs can greatly increase appeal to various programs and opportunities, especially when they coincide with one's plans for the future.

Many of these clubs are academically motivated and are used for applications to honor societies, colleges, or out-of-school programs. Many students choose the clubs they participate in for the experience offered; however, it also pays to take into account the experiences one could gain from just having been an active member of the right extracurriculars.

Often, the clubs are the difference between acceptance and rejection, especially among the higher-achieving students and the more competitive opportunities they apply for.

In general, clubs can greatly expand a student's knowledge and comfort level with topics of interest, or even those a student plans to pursue in the future. For many honor societies, certain clubs are required to gain admission, such as the Science National Honor Society, which requires active membership of at least one science-based club.



# Study Hall and Phones: When and Why?

BY AUTUMN PRICE

In recent decades, some school districts have lengthened school days, and others have experimented with start and end times to try to improve student learning.

Various schools have implemented later start times, arguing that teens need more sleep and struggle with arriving at school on time. A study hall in the morning can help some students start strong, but others find it unproductive due to poor early-morning focus.

Studies have shown that, especially in high school students, the ability to focus and get necessary assignments done early in the morning has a much lower success rate than students who have had to get those same assignments done later in the day.

Students will later classes, have had more time to process and wake up throughout the day, improving their productivity rates.



Nolan G. Pope's study at the University of Chicago, "How the Time of Day Affects Productivity: Evidence from School Schedules," analyzed grades and test scores of nearly 2 million students in the Los Angeles Unified School District from 2003-2009. Students started around 8:00 a.m. and ended at 3:10 p.m.

The study found that math students scored higher in the first two periods, while English scores showed no significant difference across periods. This suggests the impact of timing depends on the subject.

Dr. Wesam Abuznada's study "The potential effect of technology and distractions on undergraduate students' concentration," noted that laptop and cell phone use in class had some negative effects on student learning, as they cause distraction.

As stated above, cell phones are most often a distraction in class when any type of work is needed to be completed so therefore, phones are not the most effective device to utilize in a study hall, although students can tend to have different opinions on the use of phones.

Sophomore Summer Discordia expressed that having her phone during her 3rd block study hall can be very distracting because she would rather go on her phone instead of doing her work, although it does depend on the day. Sometimes she's more productive on certain days than others.

Sophomore Josie Back seems to have a different perspective on phones in study hall and finds them to help her



productivity. She prefers having a study hall 4th block to compile

assignments from the day and believes music on her phone helps her concentrate by blocking out excess distractions around her.

On average, students would rather have their study halls during the fourth block of the day, ensuring that they are the most productive and willing to get their work done.

There are plenty cons to the use of cell phones, but there are also various pros to counteract those cons.

A huge benefit of cell phone use is the ability to give students access to more educational resources that can't always be reached when using a laptop.

Along with that, cellphones also enable students to stay connected when they are not able to do so in person. For example, needing to communicate with a teacher or parent for personal reasons or school-related reasons when you are not able to do so in person.

Cell phones can also be vital in emergency situations to report any emergency services or report a dangerous situation.



# WHY'S EVERYONE AT SCHOOL SAYING '6-7'?

BY Xinxia Liu

Why do students giggle when they hear '6-7'?

The trend '6-7' originally came from the song "Doot Doot (6 7)" by Skrilla.

The song was released on December 1st, 2024.

A couple of lines are referencing 6-7:

"Bro put belt right to they behind (come here)

The way that switch brrrt, I know he dyin' (get him)

6-7, I just bipped right on the highway (damn)"

Shortly after, TikTok edits of the basketball player, LaMelo Ball, were made with the song. The song's connection to this basketball player was that LaMelo Ball was 6 feet 7 inches tall. Which was why it became the go-to song for his edits. It spread quickly throughout TikTok, growing in popularity.

During December, countless edits were made using the song. It was catchy to teenagers with its beat drop and creative edits.

In February of 2025, Paige Bueckers, the famous UConn basketball player, made a joke about '6-7' during an interview. She said, "I've been here for 5 years, but it's felt more like 6-7."

The song's popularity slowly died down, going into January-February 2025.

In the summer of 2025, the meme '6-7' resurfaced online. But this time it turned into a meme. People on TikTok would often use the song and include some sort of text. For example, the video would ask, "How many years have you guys been friends?" The song would answer the question by saying '6-7'. Referring to the fact that they've been friends for like six-seven years.

On the platform, people started creating 6-7 handshakes featuring the song, making cookies in the shape of a six and a seven, and even making their hands similar to 6-7 to pose in pictures.

The 6-7 trend has been strong at WHS this school year.

Junior Amayah Forrest Smalls says, "I say 6-7 in school all the time. Whenever the teacher accidentally says it together in a sentence, I look around the classroom to see if anyone else heard. We all say it in unison. It's addicting, but it's lowkey childish, so I should stop."

Senior Maria Paloka says, "I feel like it's based on events that happen every year. There's something funny, and

I think it's because it's promoted to be funny. The more you see it, the more it's stuck in your head. It's something so simple that you can remember, and it's like, you know, 6-7, 6-7."

When being asked why students move both their hands up and down while saying '6-7', Junior Ryan Johnston says, "The person who initially started it did that, so now people just copy him."

Junior Ailani Benitez Sanchez says, "The first time I heard about 6-7 was actually in my sophomore year when it became viral on TikTok."

Some students think 6-7 is funny, others not so much. When being asked if the trend '6-7' would be funnier on TikTok or in school, Junior Jayden Langley says, "It's gonna have to be neither."

Junior Camilia Diaz Castillo says, "I feel like it's over-used and was only funny for a bit, but now it's old."

Junior Patrick Lombardi was asked to explain the trend to someone who might not understand or know the trend. He says, "I would tell them that it's a nonsense meme that doesn't have a meaning. It's funny because it doesn't make sense."

Since the trend is spreading so fast, and so many Waterford High School students say it at school, teachers are impacted by the trend as well.

Mr. Ryan was asked if he had heard his students say '6-7'. He says, "Yes, many of my students find the phrase '6-7' to be very funny for some reason unknown to old people, such as myself. Some students can barely control themselves from saying '6-7' no less than 15 or 20 times in a class period. I never knew how hilarious two consecutive numbers could be. It seems to be the current thing. Hopefully it perishes softly and swiftly like all other internet trends."

Ms. Baumgartner says, "I am over it. Not funny at all. I pretty much tell my students that it is so last week and we need to move on to the next trend."

In the end, the two numbers have people in a chokehold. It's created laughter throughout classrooms in Waterford High School and has become an inside joke between teenagers.



WHS  
Film Strip



# HOTTER, COLDER: INSIDE WATERFORD HIGH SCHOOL'S HVAC

BY BEN STEWART

Whether too hot or too cold, one of the most frequent complaints at WHS is the temperature of the classrooms.

One of the biggest reasons the school suffers from these issues is the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system installed within the school. The school uses a geothermal system with 100 percent outside air, which “helps create a healthier environment for students and staff,” says Kirk Samuelson, Principal of WHS.

At the start of this process, the central air intake brings the air into the school. The air is then brought to heat pumps, which change the temperature of the air based on the desired temperature for the school, typically 68 to 74 degrees Fahrenheit.

When using air conditioning, the air is then run past chilled beams located in the ceiling of every room of the building. These cool the air further, making for a more comfortable experience.

The chilled beams do have some downsides, however. Condensation can form on the beams, leading to the ceiling dripping. When windows are open, too much humidity is



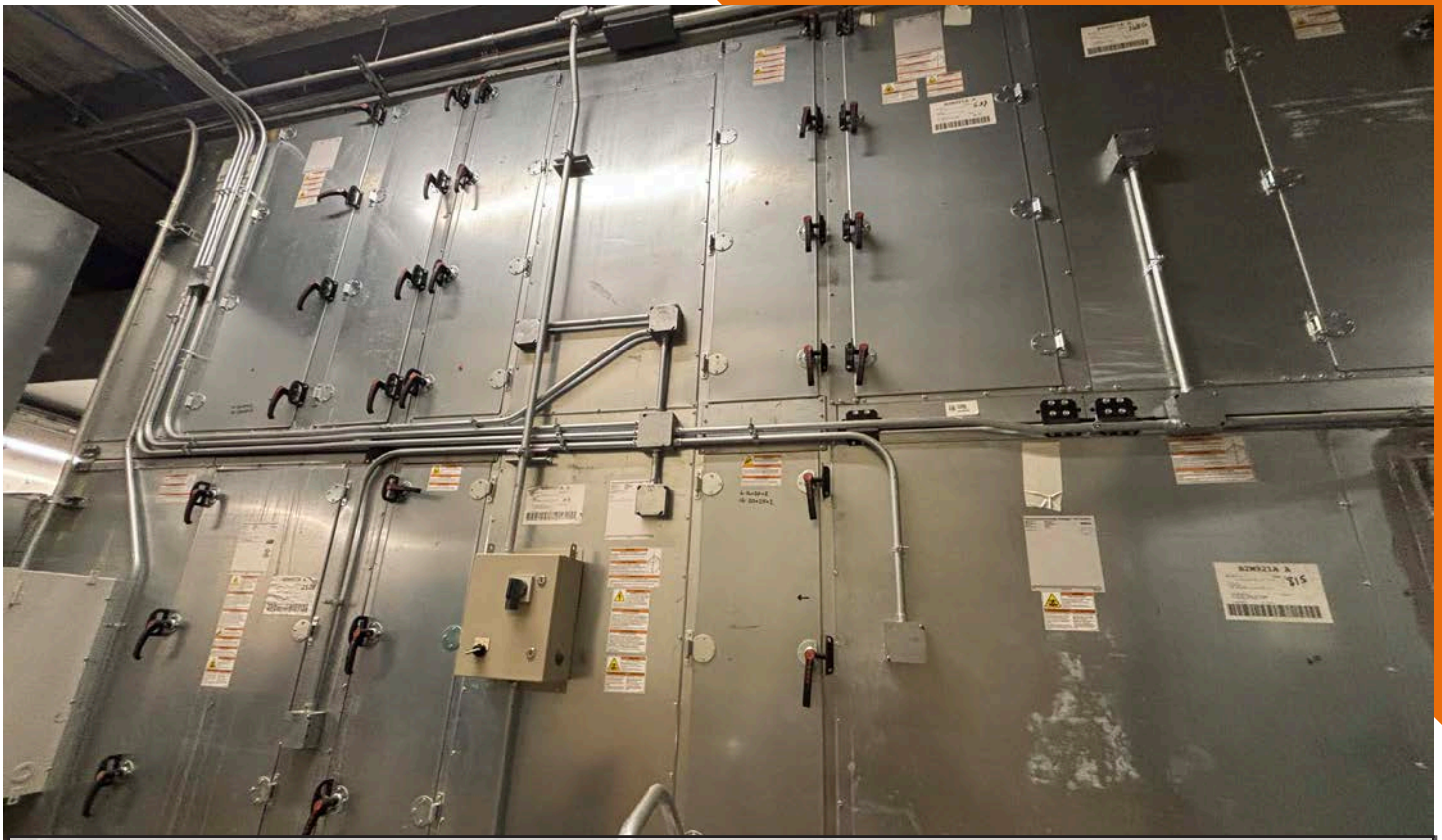
A Rooftop Unit (RTU), where air enters the field house. CREDIT GABBY PAGANO

introduced from the outside air, and the system automatically shuts off via a switch in the windows.

Kyle Stoddard, the school's HVAC technician, has some advice for students and teachers when dealing with the school's air conditioning: “Keep doors closed as much as possible and windows shut.” By keeping the room closed, not only will the room's air conditioning remain on, but the system will be able to

better control the conditions of the schools as a whole.

While the heat pumps used to cool the school are operating, they produce a lot of heat. This heat has to go somewhere, and the school uses a unique geothermal system. The excess heat produced by the pumps is sent to 50 different 150 ft deep wells underneath the upper parking lot, where it can dissipate into the ground. This geothermal system



THE HIGH SCHOOL'S MAIN VENTILATION SHAFT. CREDIT GABBY PAGANO

is between the first-floor bathrooms outside the cafeteria and the school store.

The school's HVAC system is an investment. When it was installed in the new building of the school, it cost significantly more than a traditional system. The efficiency of the system, however, leads to it costing less

in the long run, which allows the system to pay itself off.

Another common complaint about the school's HVAC is the pool. While swimmers appreciate the warm air after getting out of the pool, spectators at swim meets often complain that the air is too hot and humid.

The pool has to be kept hot, however. State regulation mandates that the air around the pool must be 4 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the temperature of the pool. Since Waterford High keeps the pool at 79 degrees Fahrenheit, the air must be at 83 degrees, leading to uncomfortable air.



THE HIGH SCHOOL'S GEOTHERMAL ROOM. CREDIT GABBY PAGANO

While Waterford High School sometimes suffers from some issues with HVAC, a lot of the problems stem from improper use and the unique system of the school. Students and teachers can take some actions to help the system work better, but a lot of the time, there isn't much people can do.

# WHAT CLASSES WOULD YOUR FAVORITE TEACHERS TAKE?

BY GABRIELLA PAGANO

Waterford High School teachers rarely get the chance to see other classes in the school, though many teachers have strong opinions on the classes they wish they could take.



Imagine your history teacher nervously presenting in drama class, or your math teacher trying to master watercolor techniques in art.

When deciding what classes they'd take, some teachers chose to stay in their own field and take their own class.

**Mrs. Ramos**, the culinary teacher, says, "I would definitely take my own class, but I would also take Mrs. Lally's art class because I'd like to learn to draw better. But I would love to take my own class because food is my life."

**Mrs. Lally**, one of the art teachers, says, "There are so many interesting

ones. I'd probably take AP Drawing. I'm writing it as I'm teaching it, and a lot of it is stuff I wish I had in high school."

**Mrs. Balisciano**, the child development teacher, says, "I would take Child Development and Culinary Essentials because it helps you throughout your entire life, no matter your career."

A couple of teachers decided on a class because of a teacher and all the good things they've heard about them.

**Mr. Bassett**, one of the math teachers, says, "I would take AP Government because I'm very interested in the government, and I also hear that Mr. Cheney is an amazing teacher, and I'd like to experience that."

**Mr. Wheeler**, the ASL teacher, says, "I'd take Coastal Nav with Mr. Ellis. I was in training with him and he kept talking about the class and it made me really intrigued. I'm really into learning about maps and going out on the water."

**Mrs. Virtue**, one of the history teachers, says, "I would say Mr. Cheney's AP Government class because he is an amazing teacher and I know I would learn a lot in his class and that would also help me to be a better teacher for my students."

**Dr. Dumin**, one of the science teachers, says, "I think I would take some PE class with Mr. Walker because he's a rockstar. I would also take the EMT class because my certifications are expired."

**Mr. Walker**, one of the PE teachers, says, "Any history class with Mr. Cheney because I hear so many great things about his classes and I'd like to sit in on one."

Some teachers picked their classes because of the life skills that they can provide.

Mr. Florio, one of the math teachers, says, "I'd take Child Development because my brother just had a baby and I have no idea how that works."

**Ms. Tessier**, one of the English teachers, says, "I think I'd probably take Culinary Essentials because I love cooking and the idea of being able to eat the food after."

**Ms. Keating**, one of the English teachers, says, "I would take criminal justice because that is such an excellent class and there is so much of it I could put in my own classes."

**Mrs. Agins**, one of the science teachers, says, "I'd take ceramics because I've always wanted to learn how to do pottery. It's one of my life goals."

**Mrs. Poitras**, one of the science teachers, says, "I would probably take a digital design or basic art class because I like to be creative. There's some freedom of expression in an art class and you get to use your imagination."

**Ms. Bono**, photography teacher, says, "I would want to take Culinary Essentials because I would like better cooking skills from Mrs. Ramos."

**Mr. Samuelson**, the Principal of



# MS. SHANNON: *FROM CLMS TO WHS*

BY CHLOE SAAD

Taylor Shannon moved up from Clark Lane Middle School (CLMS) to Waterford High School (WHS) this year and has been a physical education and health teacher for 10 years.

This year, she teaches two Team Sports classes, two Lancer PE classes, and a Unified PE class. She said, “I never anticipated being as excited as I was when I first learned about the PE opening at WHS. I took that as a ‘gut feeling’ that it was time for a change in my career and time for growth both professionally and personally.”

The difference between WHS and CLMS in PE is that she doesn’t have to give “constant reminders to students to keep their hands to themselves.”

When Shannon was younger, she wanted to become an FBI agent. In her high school years at Waterford High School, she played soccer, basketball, and lacrosse; she participated in the class council. She was a secretary for two years and vice president during her junior and senior years.

Since Shannon went to high school at the same school she is now currently teaching at, she said, the physical aspect is different than when she came



here during her high school years. The Waterford High School was built differently from how it is now. There was one floor, and now we have three floors.

She said, “It helps to feel like I am not in high school again since the only part that is the same is the gym,” which makes her feel like she’s at “home.”

The rest of the school feels different in a good way, and she said seeing the teachers she had when she was in high school to now having them as her co-workers, she commented, “It is nice to see, [but] it is funny at the same time.”

Shannon attended college at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Now that she is at the WHS, she expressed how she has absolutely loved it and it is the best decision she has ever made, but she will definitely go back to visit her students and coworkers.



**“I feel so lucky that I have this opportunity to reconnect with all of the students I had at CLMS who are now at WHS.” - Shannon**



# WATERFORD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



Coach Gbunblee has signaled a multi-quarterback competition. He told CT Insider, “We’re going to see who steps up. It’ll be about preparation, poise, and who shows consistency.”

BY DANICA AGSALUD











# 4 Things To Do This Fall

BY KENYAH HILL



## 1

### Cafe Date



A cafe date is the perfect fall experience for those who enjoy the scenery of fall. The falling leaves, festive colors, and pumpkin spice lattes embrace the transition from summer to autumn. It is fun to grab a drink or breakfast whether that be with a friend or by yourself during the fall season. Bringing homework to the cafe can be a good time to enjoy the changing leaves away from home and be productive. There are many good cafes in the Waterford area. For example, NV Bakery & Market Washington Street Coffee House, Muddy Waters Cafe, and Lion House Café are all great choices when going out to during a relaxing fall morning.

## 2

### Football Games

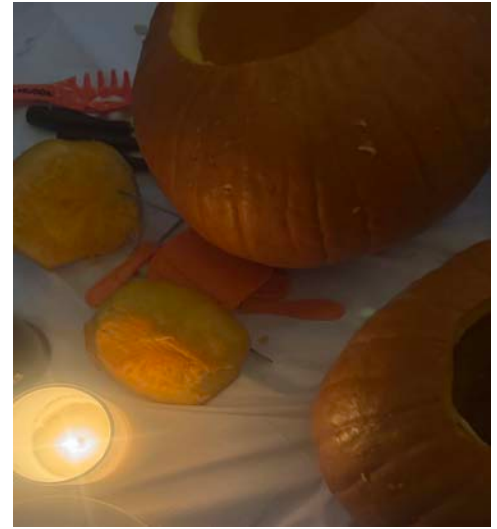
Whether watching a game at WHS or an NFL game in the living room, watching football during fall is the perfect opportunity to get hype and connect with friends and family. Additionally, a football game is the perfect opportunity to show off your fall fashion and play around with layers. As the weather gets colder and seasonal depression may start to begin, bringing some energy to a football game is the perfect way to lift up a crowd's spirit and release some stress.



# 3

## Pumpkin Carving

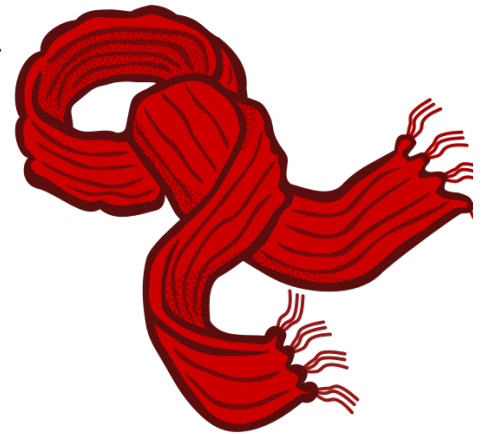
Pumpkin carving is the most traditional fall craft. It can be an ideal activity to do with family, friends, or alone. If someone is not into getting their hands dirty during carving, there are still many ways to use pumpkins during fall. For example, roasting the seeds from inside of the pumpkin can make for the perfect fall snack. There are many places where pumpkins can be purchased for a cheap price. At *Aldi* in Waterford, it is \$3.96 for a pumpkin. At *Costco* in East Lyme, pumpkins are around \$5.



# 4

## Watch Seasonal Movies

Watching fall-related movies or shows can be the perfect way to lean into the holiday spirit. For many, this looks like rewatching *Gilmore Girls* for the millionth time or watching *Scream* while hiding under the covers. *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* and *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* are two great picks when looking for the perfect nostalgic watch this fall. Cuddling up under a blanket, grabbing some snacks, and lighting a candle this year is the ideal way to embrace the changing seasons and enjoy autumn in comfortability.









# Traditional Home Ec to Full Restaurant?

Pictures by Sarah Ramos

BY EVY N.

Bringing the culinary department to a new level, Chef Sarah Ramos has moved from the standard of just teaching students how to cook to a fully student-run grab-and-go service at Waterford High School.

Chef Ramos started teaching at Waterford High School last year and worked to create a similar trade experience that she was able to teach at her former school, Norwich Technical High School. At Norwich Tech, Ramos's students had a full-scale restaurant experience in school--something she is aspiring to do at Waterford High School.

Currently, Waterford High has four culinary classes: Culinary Essentials, Bake Shoppe, Prostart 1, and Prostart 2.

Culinary Essentials and Bake Shoppe allow students to get the basics of cooking and baking, while ProStart 1 prepares students for making four-course meals and a deeper education in the culinary world. All of these classes are prerequisites for ProStart 2.

In ProStart 2, students have time to create a menu appetizing to the customers and execute it accordingly, essentially having full reign over what happens in the "restaurant."

The "restaurant" will be based in the ProStart 2 class, where Ramos will be taking orders sent out via email and

the students will cook the food accordingly. Students will then bring the food to their customers and receive the payment.

Ramos wants to create an opportunity for those who cannot get into tech schools to have a similar tech experience here at Waterford High. To accomplish this, she plans on making a new class and having the existing classes do more than before.

Before, Culinary Essentials was the prerequisite for all other culinary classes, but going forward, "both [Culinary Essentials and Bake Shoppe] will be a prerequisite for getting into [Prostart 1 and 2]," Ramos says if students do not know how to bake, then it will be more challenging for them to make a four course meal.

Also changing will be the ProStart 1 and 2 classes. Going forward, Prostart will no longer be called Prostart 1 or 2 (however the name is still being workshopped) and Prostart 1 will be an intermediate course that is more of an intro into management of a restaurant, while Prostart 2 is going to fully manage and run the "restaurant." This new system will allow students to get a tech school experience in the time constraints of a regular high school. They will also become only semester courses compared to the full-year courses they are now.

Ramos is also trying to get students ServSafe credentials, which is the organization that sets sanitation regulations

for restaurants. In every restaurant, at least one ServSafe-certified person is required to be working each shift, so these credentials will allow for students who receive these credentials to stand out and, if they are trying to get a job in the industry, they will be more valuable compared to the ordinary worker.

Ramos says that "if there is one fewer [certificate] you have to pay for when you leave this high school world, then you are already set up for success." These credentials are transferable worldwide, so it is a worthwhile thing for students to have coming out of high school.

During the summer, Ramos also wrote up a curriculum for a whole new class to even further advance the culinary department: a culinary internship course. Although not yet approved, this course will give students the opportunity to go out into the workforce and get a job in the food industry or become a student teacher in one of the lower-level courses. This class can become a game-changer for students because not only will they be working in a real-world setting, but they will be receiving credit for it, too.

Altogether, the culinary classes that Waterford High once knew will be changing into a hybrid mix of Ramos's industry experience and her tech school experience, bringing new life to the traditional scene of the Home Ec Department.

# SUMMER WORK

BY JADA COLLINS

A number of honors-level courses at Waterford High School require students to complete summer work. These range from reading a novel and writing an essay for 12th-grade AP English to completing problem sets in AP Chemistry. Because these assignments are the first grades of the year and set the tone for the first quarter, the value of these assignments are questioned.

“Summer is supposed to be a time of relaxation, but when summer assignments interfere with that, it seems like another part of an already long school year,” Larissa Martins exclaims.

Senior Danica Agsalud is currently taking three APs this year: AP Stats, AP Government and Politics, and AP Psychology. While registering for classes, she enrolled for AP Spanish and AP English, which “both have a good amount of summer work.”

During the summer, Danica also works at Camp Dash and plays volleyball. For many students, finding the time to complete summer work for AP classes becomes a challenge. Agsalud claims, “With the two other APs I was going to take during the school year, I coincidentally dropped the classes that I think had the most summer work.”

Mr. Collins, an English teacher, teaches both advanced and honors 10th grade English at Waterford High. He gives summer work to only his honors classes, which is reading one novel called *A Separate Piece* by John Knowles.

He said, “A decade ago, I would give all my classes summer work. However, the push from home has been to have a summer of relaxation, which I understand, but educationally is less valid.”

Senior Maria Campo said that she took both AP United States History and AP Government her junior year and out of those two classes, she only had summer work for APUSH. Campo says, “I felt like it was so much more stress and no guidance.”

Campo also works two jobs during the summer at Camp Dash during the day and the restaurant, Fat Tuna, during the night, while also participating in cheer, which holds practices over the summer. She thinks that “summer work is so stressful, especially if you have a job or do a sport, because you have no time to hang out with friends or time for yourself.”

Spanish teacher Mrs. Marchese, who teaches multiple levels of Spanish classes at Waterford High, doesn’t give out summer work, but does think that summer work is beneficial. She expressed that “summer is a long time to go without doing school work, and summer work keeps students’ minds ready to learn.”

Majority of teachers feel its beneficial giving summer homework, but APUSH teacher Mrs. Virtue says it’s tough for her; she states that she “dis



likes summer work but has to give it.”

APUSH used to be a three-semester class, starting in the spring of sophomore year through junior year. She thinks that “usually summer work is good because it sorts out the kids who are not committed to the class,” but “it is also not fair to students to give summer work because they should have their summer too.”

Since APUSH is a full course with a lot of topics to cover, it is important to have summer work to try and eliminate all of the work that would have to be crammed into the couple of months before the AP test in May.

Summer work has many advantages and disadvantages for both teachers and students because it can be a stressful experience for students because summer is a time for relaxation, however for teachers, it is a necessary part of the curriculum because it allows them to cover content that they do not have time to cover as well as get students prepared for the rest of the school year.

# School Shootings and Gun Violence

AN OP-ED PIECE BY ALI JENNINGS

How far would you go to protect gun rights? How many “incidents” would you turn a blind eye to, in order to defend the right to own a gun? How many horrors would you excuse to uphold the Second Amendment? How many people have to die? How many kids?

How many bulletproof backpacks have to be made? How many memorials?

At what point do we reach extremes? If children being locked inside a church and shot at through the skylight isn't enough, what is? Some things aren't fixable through “thoughts and prayers.” Some things are real issues that need real solutions.

In 2025 alone, there have been 146 incidents in K-12 school buildings. This count consists of every time a gun was fired, brandished, or when a bullet hits the school property. There have been 91 incidents where a gun has been fired on school grounds, leaving 86 injured and 31 murdered.

The number of students exposed to school shootings has tripled since 1999.

Every day in America, an average of 327 people are shot. 117 of those people die. Approximately 47 of those deaths are murders, and 66 are suicides. The rest of those 117 are a mix of unintentional shootings, legal situations, and unknown intent. Approximately 210 of the 327 people survive but end up injured.

23 children between the ages of one and seventeen are shot every day. Six of them die from gun violence.

Waterford High School has a four-period class schedule, each around 85 minutes. For every 85-minute block a Waterford High student sits through, there are 10 people shot in the United States.

Sitting through class doesn't seem so bad anymore when you really think about it, right? Surely students should be grateful to sit, trapped in a school all day, tucked away safe and sound from the risk of gun violence. Shielded from the dangers of guns and protected by their school.

Except we aren't. No one is.

Gun violence is far more common than it should be, especially in schools. In a place where kids are supposed to feel safe, there are millions of kids in America walking into school every single day, fearing for their lives.

The Pew Research Center held a survey in April of 2024 and found that seven out of ten American teachers reported being extremely afraid to go into work due to the risk of a school shooting happening at their school.

Pew Research also released a 2025 analysis that discovered the most common reason for homeschooling was because both parents and students fear school shootings.

This isn't a global issue; it's an American issue. Canada has had a total of 19

school shootings since 1884. In the United States, there have been 1,375 school shootings between 2000 and 2022 alone.

After asking several people how often they hear about school shootings, the majority of the group claimed they hear about them once a month. A notable point comes from senior Lucy Walker, who mentions: “They definitely happen more often than that, but I feel like I don't hear about them that much.”

There are far more school shootings than those that reach the news. The national news only broadcasts mass casualty events, such as Sandy Hook. The chance of being on the news depends on how many people die. The problem of gun violence in schools is so bad that the news channels are picking which school shooting is significant enough to broadcast.

The United Kingdom has an average of 0.05 gun-related deaths per 100,000 people. The United States has an average of 13.7 gun-related deaths per 100,000 people.

What difference would have to be made in order to bring down that number?

In the UK, gun ownership is a privilege, not a right. To own a gun, citizens need to obtain a Firearm Certificate and/or a Shotgun Certificate from the police, which proves they have a good reason to own a gun, such as hunting or for sport. Self-defence is not considered a good reason in the UK to own



