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VOL. 1 DIXON HIGH SCHOOL OCTOBER 2026

Why should we care about the literacy crisis?

BY: LILLYONNA TRANBARGER

In recent years, literacy and engagement in learning has been decreasing and it is increasingly concerning many people from teachers to students.

"Across the United States, scores have been going down to an all time low. They were going up before covid, I think, and now it's lower than it's been since like 1996, I think," said history teacher Simon Thorpe.

English teacher Kelly Gingras stated, "It's being reported in the media like the New York Times. Mostly looking for different reasons, like teachers aren't assigning long form assignments much anymore, or having students read long books or books in completion."

ABC News reported that 15 year old students' reading points have dropped 14 points since 2022 in the PISA test.

They also reported that according to the commissioner of the Department of Education National Center for Statistics the performance gap between higher and lower students is larger today than 10 years ago.

Donald Trump also defunded and initiated the dismantling of the Department of Education by an executive order in March 2025.

That directly cuts education funding, federal protections like Title VI, and downsizes FAFSA and research contracts.

It is not only teachers who are aware of a reading problem, students-young and old-see it as well.

Freshman Clayre Rodgers said, "It feels like nowadays, people would rather read a story wrong. Like, literally misconstruct it instead of actually understanding it. There are kids in my grade who read like they are two or four."

"Reading has gotten worse, but around the country several videos have distressed teachers who cannot reteach these kids the basic literacy concepts. They need to follow the set in stone curriculum. The students are stuck and the teachers have to watch and grade based on the fact that they are trying, rather than the academic skill level output of their assignments, meaning

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Schoolwide policy limits cell phone use

BY: MASON SCHAEFER

State-wide cell phone policy in Illinois, affecting students K-12 will fully ban cell phone use in schools starting in the 2027-2028 school year.

Over recent years, children and adults alike have become more and more attached to their online life rather than their real life.

According to Illinois state senator Cristina Castro, "I think technology is great, but we also need to know the limits of how much we should be using."

With the new cell phone policy, the hope is that it will cut back the dependency people have on their devices.

The principal at Dixon High School, Jared Shaner says, "I think it is difficult for kids and adults to be connected all the time and still have the discipline to say, okay, I need to disconnect for a little bit."

Even in classes, teachers have trouble with students not wanting to put their phones up for just a single period.

"I'm tired of seeing kids on their phone not paying attention half the time," said English teacher Tom Padilla.

To further back this up; In the past, teachers have noticed that after just a few weeks of school, students tend to just disregard the cell phone policy altogether and fail to comply with the rules.

"I guess it's like anything that people don't want to do, right? You grumble, you complain, you try to find your ways around it, and then when you find that your grumbling does nothing and you can't find a way around it, you kind of knuckle under," said Padilla

One of the biggest concerns of this new policy is if it will truly work out as intended. The end goal of this is to fully eradicate unauthorized device usage during class time.

In the past, students could be given detention or in school suspension for violating the phone policy, but the new law states that in school punishments cannot be put in place as it will affect the learning for the student.

Many people have been concerned about the sort of punishments that can be given to those who do not follow the rules.

It is just like speeding, although there's nothing stopping you from doing it, if you get pulled over and get a $300 speeding ticket, you have to be able to live with it, Shaner said

Even though you don't have to follow the rules, you have to be able to accept the consequences that may come with breaking them.

The final hope of this plan is to boost the overall learning standards within schools by getting rid of cell phones, it will hopefully, lower the amount of distractions from class to class, and help kids focus better.

"When I was a kid, we did not have phones, and what we had was boredom, and I think boredom is a gift," Padilla said.

September Student of the Month: Sebastian Seibel

BY: MEGHAN JACKSON

Senior Sebastian Seibel was chosen as the Dixon High School September Student of the Month.

"I feel honored. A lot of my peers contribute greatly to the school, so being picked as the first student of the month was very surprising. I am incredibly happy to have been chosen," said Seibel.

To Seibel, this title shows all the time and effort he has put into his high school career.

"This title represents all of the hours that I've been putting into my extracurriculars and academics since freshman year," said Seibel.

Seibel works hard in all aspects of his high school career.

"Sebastian Seibel has worked hard for every single thing he has and is still one of the kindest people I know. He is very deserving of student of the month," said junior Penolope Rodriguez.

Seibel is the president of the Broadcasting Club and also participates in Math Team, Scholastic Bowl, Key Club, and Student Council.

"I wouldn't say I necessarily intended to work for this title. For years, I have dedicated my life to building up the broadcast club and learning math to compete on a national level, and I feel that this award is a byproduct of the hundreds of hours I've spent doing the things that I love," said Seibel.

Seibel does many things to contribute to the success of the DHS broadcasting club.

"Not only is he a member of the club but he is the president of it. He runs two meetings a week and helps other students learn how to use the programs they use for their streams. All of the senior cards that you saw displayed on the video board inside as well as outside were made by him. He dedicated his own time to make those for all of the seniors this year. Overall, Sebastian dedicates a large majority of his time to the broadcast club to make sure everything works and runs as smoothly as possible," said senior Ethan Bond.



"It has been very rewarding not only working with Sebastian in the Broadcast Club but also watching him grow, learn and lead his fellow students. He is definitely one of the students DHS should be proud to call one of their own," said Robert Wendt.

Seibel also goes above and beyond in all his classes.

"Sebastian is a motivated student who seeks information beyond the scope of the curriculum. He often explores additional methods of problem solving and challenges himself using more advanced math methods. His intrinsic motivation has led Sebastian to be highly successful in competing at the State level for Math team placing in the Top 10 each year in 9th-11th grades," said math teacher Jessica Anderson.

Seibel completes all his class work and still finds time to help his fellow classmates succeed.

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October Student of the Month: Sophia Wendt

BY: MEGHAN JACKSON

Senior Sophia Wendt was chosen as the Dixon High School October Student of the Month.

"I feel very proud of myself for achieving this goal. It has been something I've wanted since I saw my older sister be a SotM my freshman year," said Wendt.

Wendt is grateful to everyone who pushed her out of her comfort zone.

"I have branched out so much in the past three years in order to be considered for this accomplishment and for that I am really proud of myself. I am also really thankful to everyone, especially my parents, who have pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and try new things," said Wendt.

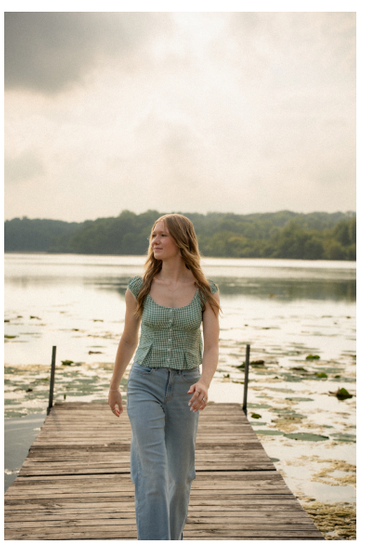
Wendt attributes some of her success to her older sister.

"My older sister was a big inspiration for me. She is someone who is so outgoing and kind. She showed me that you can do anything you set your mind to and that the only person holding you back is yourself," said Wendt.

Wendt is a hard working student and a well rounded person.

"Sophia is a responsible and respectful student who works hard, treats others with kindness, and always tries her best," said senior Eliza Zimmerman.

PE teacher Maggie Curry said, "Sophia is a hardworking, respectful, and well-rounded student who puts her best effort into everything she does. I've had the pleasure of coaching her in basketball, and she has always impressed me with her dedication and leadership."



Wendt sees this title as a big accomplishment she has been working towards for years.

"This title means so much to me because I have been working towards this achievement since freshman year. Throughout the years, I've looked up to the Students of the Month and always thought very highly of them. It is such a big achievement to me that being picked for October is truly rewarding," said Wendt.

Wendt has been involved in many extracurricular activities throughout her high school career.

"This year, I am involved in cheerleading, basketball, and I will be doing track in the spring. I am the Key Club vice president and the Student Council secretary. This fall, I am a part of the cast in the fall play Frankenstein. I have

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90 percent attendance policy raises questions

BY: GRACE ACKERT

The new 90 percent attendance policy that determines whether or not DHS students can attend school dances raised discussion among parents and students.

In a notice sent to DHS parents and guardians, Principal Jared Shaner explained that the school aims for an overall attendance rate above 90 percent.

The notice states that attendance is one measure the state uses to evaluate school districts and emphasizes the importance of students being present.

"The state's threshold level of being excellent is 90 percent and above for attendance so that is where the 90 percent cut off comes from" said Shaner.

DHS requires their students to have at least a 90 percent attendance rate to be allowed into school dances.

"In terms of homecoming and prom, essentially those are big motivators for a lot of high school kids," Shaner said. "We want to motivate kids whatever that is for them. If that means I have to come to school in order to attend homecoming then that's what we are going to use."

The Illinois State Board of Education defines chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of school days, whether excused or unexcused.

DHS asks students leaving school for appointments to sign out and bring back a note upon returning, however documented excused absences are still calculated within the 90 percent threshold.

Shaner explained that he does take into consideration family emergencies such as deaths, medical appointments, and extenuating circumstances.

"I go back and do some math and say ok, even though the state says you're at 83 percent, when looking for homecoming and prom, you're actually at 92 percent because I take out those doctor ones," Shaner said.

Students at DHS have expressed their frustration with the policy and managing necessary medical appointments in order to maintain a 90 percent attendance.

"This attendance policy has affected me personally. The second week of school I missed two days because I was so sick from walking pneumonia," said junior Laney Reinhold. "To have 90 percent attendance and attend homecoming, I had to go to school still sick and contagious."

The students are not the only ones affected by this policy.

Parents and guardians who are responsible for scheduling and attending the appointments also have had to make adjustments.

"It has become increasingly difficult to manage the schedules of our family while keeping in mind the eligibility requirements for dances being 90 percent attendance. A lot of parents work, have more than one child, and are attending higher education themselves. Most of the students cannot schedule and attend these appointments by themselves but they are the ones who are suffering consequences for situations out of their control," explained Jennifer Kastner. "If the student has passing grades, is eligible to play sports, and is not on social probation, why does their attendance prohibit them from going to their school dances?" questioned Kastner.

The attendance policy establishes a clear expectation for students who want to attend homecoming and prom. At the same time, including excused absences raises questions from students and parents alike.

(Seibel Continued from page 2)

"While Sebastian gets exceptional grades and excels in the classroom, he cares about his fellow students regardless of class or rank. There have been many times I have seen him helping not only his friends but also other students from freshmen to seniors with Math, English and Science. He takes the time to explain subject matter to others, so they truly understand," said Wendt.

Seibel's advice to younger students is to get involved in activities that you love and enjoy.

"I would recommend that you get yourself involved in things that you want to do. It is ridiculously easy to make your extracurriculars the best part of your day if you become involved in activities that you love doing," said Seibel. "It is rarely a task to work on these things when you genuinely enjoy doing it. Feel free to try new things, and don't be scared of change. Taking on new things and leaving old ones can be extremely frightening."

Seibel's plans post high school include going to college.

"I am planning to go to college to major in aerospace engineering. I may also choose to pursue communications or computer engineering to continue to expand my broadcasting skills," said Seibel.

Seibel added, "I would like to emphasize that life isn't all about building a resume. Be involved and do something fulfilling, but reserve time for the people that you love. Also, take more pictures. Taking more pictures throughout my senior year has helped me realize that while time is slipping away, I never wasted a moment, and I spent it with people that made it better."

(Wendt Continued from page 2)

also been involved in a few other activities like cross country and softball in the past couple of years as well as in the fall play for the past three years," said Wendt.

Wendt's advice for younger students is to get involved.

"For future students who are looking to apply for Student of the Month, my best advice is to get involved. No matter what year you're in, go out and try something new." said Wendt.

Wendt plans on going to college to pursue a doctorate in physical therapy.

"I am planning on going to college; however, I do not know which college yet. I am deciding between Millikin University and Elmhurst University. I am going to study Pre-Physical Therapy through a major in biology. Then I plan to continue my education after graduating from a 4-year college to achieve a Doctor in Physical Therapy." said Wendt.

Wendt has many good qualities that made her stand out for the choice of SotM.

"What makes Sophia stand out is her character and willingness to be involved in so many aspects of our school and community. Whether it's academics, athletics, theater, or student organizations, she gives her all. She is a great teammate, encourages those around her, and treats others with respect," Curry said.

Zimmerman added, "Besides her being a great student, she is genuinely a wonderful friend."

"It is truly an honor to be chosen as October Student of the Month," said Wendt.

Halloween attitudes at DHS comparable to national data

BY: ANDREW MCFARLANE

While national statistics show that Halloween is recovering from a decline, DHS evidence reveals that it is pretty mixed.

National statistics of Gen Z's participation show that Halloween festivities heavily slowed during the Covid years and have started back on a rise, though they have not fully bounced back.

Senior Raziel Magaña specifically talked about Covid's effect on Halloween.

"(Halloween) got blindsided by Covid with people using that as an excuse back then for not participating, and Halloween hasn't felt the same since," Magaña stated.

While passing out candy on a national level is at a low from past years, watching scary movies is just as popular as it was pre Covid.

Senior Jack McGrail thinks that it might be due to technology and strict parents.

"Parents don't want kids going out, and kids would rather stay inside," McGrail stated.

Another senior Quintus Henson would also agree saying that technology is a big problem and it is slowing festivities.

"Technology is getting too big, and kids would rather stay home," Henson stated.

Another reason could be declining costumes in quality and quantity.

Magaña would agree on the statement about quality.

"The decline started with (people) trick or treating in regular clothing, and a decline in costume effort," Magaña stated.

National statistics display that dressing up has decreased during Covid but is beginning a slow rise back to pre pandemic levels.

A common thought between Henson and Magaña is that trunk or treating could have a big impact on a possible decline of Halloween.

"Trunk or treat can ruin the community aspect in Halloween since you're doing it in a parking lot with tons of cars of possibly random people instead of individual houses in your community or neighborhood," Henson said.

A schoolwide poll was taken at DHS about the topic, and the students' answers were comparable with national statistics of Gen Z.

The poll showed that roughly 60 percent of students dressed up last year with roughly 20 percent being two plus years ago and another roughly 20 percent who haven't dressed up in four plus years.

With trick or treating it almost split half and half with roughly 50 percent participating in trick or treating last year and the other 50 percent being a mix of people who haven't done it in roughly 2-5 years.

Another portion of the poll showed that 152 are dressing up with 136 trick or treating, and some of the other popular choices were handing out candy, going to parties, decorating their houses, and flat out nothing.

When the poll asked on a scale of one to ten how much students believed Halloween was declining the highest answers were sevens, and eights.

Comparing the National Statistics with DHS's they are pretty agreeable and do shed light on the fact that Halloween is declining, but it is doing better than it was in the pre Covid era

At DHS Halloween is still in decent popularity with a good portion still participating in the holiday spirit.

Students have mixed reaction to Progress Learning

BY: CLAYRE RODGERS

Dixon High School has seen some changes in Progress Learning this year, one being that freshmen and sophomores are now required to do Progress Learning assignments alongside juniors.

Progress Learning is a program that is meant to give students an equal standing when it comes to testing and tests students' attention to detail.

Progress Learning can help students with not only the ACT, but in the classroom as well.

When a student gets a question wrong, the program explains the answer for them.

There have been many reactions to this news alongside plenty of groans from freshmen who do not like the program.

"I really hate it because it doesn't even teach how. It just makes us do it and expects us to know how the first time," said freshman Ariya Shaffer.

Before this year, only juniors had to use the program to prepare for their ACTs.

Assistant Principal John Tate explains that it is a website meant to prepare students for tests as well.

"So my advice is to kind of just take it in for what it is. Your score is your score, but also the other part of the testing is exposure to the types of questions you're going to get, and I think that's equally important," Tate stated.

Some students, despite not enjoying it, understand the importance of Progress Learning.

"From an education perspective, I get it. I've been doing it for a few weeks and I am already learning more," Shaffer said.

Progress Learning has helped some students to understand topics they previously did not understand thanks to its video lesson feature.

In the videos, the instructor explains certain topics and then the student is asked questions about the video they just watched.

"I like the videos better because they show transcripts and it gives me a visual way to see what is being said and that helps me a lot," Shaffer said.

Another helpful feature is the explanation feature.

Despite the claims that it was helpful, many find it to be the opposite.

"I don't like it because it takes up too much time in advisory that I could use to be doing homework," freshman Maya Sutton said.

A senior, who no longer has to do Progress Learning, shares some experiences with the program.

"When I was doing it, I did not find it helpful. That is likely due to it being

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Winterland takes over as head football coach

BY: BRAYLEIGH JOSEPHSEN

Weightlifting teacher and assistant football coach Brad Winterland became the new head football coach replacing Principal Jared Shaner, who had coached the team for 6 years as the head coach.

Winterland was selected following an interview process.

"We all kind of rated all of the candidates and coach Winterland became our top choice," Shaner said.

Shaner said he was pretty confident in choosing one of the coaches that had been with him previously, to keep the consistency on the field.

Previously working at AFC High School as their head coach, Winterland applied at Dixon as an assistant coach and Drivers Ed teacher after deciding that it would be the best choice for his long-term coaching and teaching career.

There were little changes after Winterland took over, the most being small tweaks.

Many players were expecting Winterland to be chosen, so there wasn't much surprise when he was.

"When it was official I was relieved and happy I wasn't going to have to get used to a new possible head coach," said senior quarterback Jagger Kemp.

Kemp spoke about smooth operating routines for home and away games, as well as how most things were kept the same.

Winterland tweaked small details on the field that people may not have noticed or looked at, like how the football players wear their guardian caps at Thursday practices.

A lot of the small changes are based on the football players and Winterland's personality.

No two head coaches are the same, which is the main difference in how Shaner and Winterland coach the team.

Winterland was not at all nervous about the hiring process, as he was an assistant coach for six years with Shaner and Assistant Coach Brandon Woodward.

"I am happy with the decision to hire Coach Winterland, and I think he is going to be very successful as head coach of the team," said senior linebacker Blaine Eberhardt.

Football senior spotlight: Kastner

BY: ELLEN COLE

Brendan Kastner is a class of 2027, varsity football player at Dixon High School, where he is a running back and defensive back for the Dukes.

Kastner has been playing football since he was in 7th grade, saying he wanted to join, "because all my friends were playing and it seemed like it would be a good time."

His friends and teammates describe Kastner as extremely hard working, and a guy they can all count on to be giving 100 percent at all times.

Teammate, Xavion Jones, described Kastner as, "An amazing leader, and an easy guy to talk to and get advice from."

Along with all the praise from teammates, Kastner's coaches would describe him as tough, hard working, and resilient.

Some highlights Kastner wants to point out from his high school football career are, "the nacho bar we got for playoffs," and "Just getting to be with my friends doing something we all are passionate about."

Kastner says his biggest challenges in football have been, "just pushing myself and the team to improve every day, and every week."

When asked what advice he would give to a younger player he said, "Just enjoy it and have fun. It doesn't last forever, so try when you can to get better, and just keep being you."

Kastner says he will miss the atmosphere on Friday nights, and the feeling of working towards the goal of winning every week with his best friends who all share that same goal.

After high school, Kastner plans to attend a 4-year university studying engineering. He then eventually hopes to work in the field of civil engineering.



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Volleyball senior spotlight: Ackert

BY: ELLEN COLE

Grace Ackert is a class of 2027 senior, and is one of the co-captains on the varsity volleyball team.

She has been playing volleyball for 7 years, starting in 6th grade.

Ackert has been on varsity the past two years, and this year has taken over the starting libero position.

When asked what her favorite high school volleyball memories were, she attributed her fondest memories to a graduated senior, Yui Santos.

"I really loved playing with Yui, and looked up to her a lot while I was an underclassmen. Not just in volleyball, but she was just a fun, amazing friend to have and I'm lucky I got to play with her." Ackert said.

Ackert also says something she is proud of throughout her volleyball career is how much her mental toughness grew from freshman year to now. "Being in the defensive position I'm in, I have to talk and communicate a lot and it's really improved throughout the years and brought a lot of confidence to my game," she said.

A huge quality Ackert carries with her is her leadership on the court.

With her being one of only a few seniors on the team she does an excellent job representing herself well and being a calming presence to the younger girls.

Head coach Bunyan Cocar described Ackert as "tenacious." Meaning, in his definition, tough minded.

Looking at a teammate's perspective, junior Rayven Mowery, described Ackert saying, "She's a great player to have in the back row. I feel better swinging at a good team if she's there covering me."

After high school Ackert plans to attend a 4-year university and possibly continue her track and field career along with her academics.



Girls tennis State qualifiers included singles player Brooklyn Arjes and doubles team Maddie Emmole and Jenna Mustapha. The team had a successful season, placing second at Sectionals.



The Dixon boys cross country team finished in first place last weekend at the Kaneland regional with a score of 26 points. The girls cross country team secured 3rd place at the regional, and both teams will now compete in the sectional at Kaneland on October 31.

Cheerleading spotlight: Fegan

BY: JOSIE CHASE

Addison Fegan, senior in cheer, is described by a few as being 'inspirational' and 'uplifting' for others among the cheer team.

After cheering her entire high school career, she was complimented by both her coach and teammate on how she helps and uplifts others around her.

"I feel like personally, like I would be that type of person— like I've always been that type of person, like, make sure somebody's okay," Fegan said. "I feel like I've always been one of those types of people that like wants to make sure they're included and they feel okay and like you want to make that person feel like they're a part of the team."

Senior Sophia Wendt, who is new to cheering and didn't know the various things they needed to perform, stated that Fegan was there to help her.

"I had a lot of cheers, band chants, and dances. She helped me by critiquing small details which helped me become better." Wendt said. "She is truly an inspiration."

Speaking on how she is able to just go and help others, even when she doesn't know if she is doing it right or not, shows just how from her mood and energy that she is a reliable source to learn, cheer from and teach.

Coach Alicia McPhilips, who has been with her since the beginning, said she has made a huge difference from when she first started to now.

"She has worked so hard from her freshman year all the way through her senior year," said McPhilips. "She's definitely one that I can trust, like hey, can you go work with this person one on one, or even can you take this group and go work with them."

Fegan does her part helping others and knows that they will eventually get it.

"She's a very good quiet leader, like she's not in your face. She's not like, 'I've been doing this for so many years, why aren't you getting it?'" McPhilips said. "She's very good at leading by example."

Addison Fegan is a cheer member that her team can depend on and look up to, including her coach, making her one of the valuable seniors.

Soccer spotlight: Bond

BY: BLAINE EBERHARDT

Ethan Bond is the lone senior on the 2026 Boys Varsity Soccer team.

Bond has been on the team all four years of high school.

A big accomplishment Bond had on the team was when they "won conference against Winnebago."

Bond was a sophomore at the time and this was an extremely memorable moment for him.

After he saved the final penalty shot, Bond remembers "running out of the goal and meeting the entire team at midfield and celebrating."

Bond is also extremely proud of "being named one of the captains on the team."

Since he is the only senior on the team, Bond's leadership and team work has been extremely necessary to help the team gel together.

Junior Carter Full explains that "Ethan has been a leader on this team by showing me the ropes my first year playing high school soccer."

Bond has been an extremely flexible piece to the soccer team who had to really push for enough people to play.

Junior Cameron Foulker explains Bond as "versatile because we can use him on offense or defense."

Bond credits a lot of his success as a person and as a soccer player to Spanish teacher Señora Wendy Fitzanko.

He explained how she "pushes everyone to do their best, and motivates him to do better."

Bond's soccer career may be coming to an end, but he still has an exciting journey ahead of him.

After high school, he "plans on going to a four year university and getting a degree in engineering," he said.

Boys golf spotlight: Kitzman

BY: BLAINE EBERHARDT

Max Kitzman is a senior on Dixon High School's boys varsity golf team.

Kitzman has been playing golf ever since he was young and has been on the team all four years that he has been at Dixon.

His experience proved to be very helpful once he joined the golf team his freshman year.

Head golf coach Lee Eastman asserts that "Max came into our program with good golf knowledge and great athletic ability."

A memorable moment Kitzman had on the team was sophomore year when he "won his first tournament at Mount Morris" and "it was the first time that I have ever broken 80 in an actual IHSA golf tournament."

Kitzman has also worked extremely hard to become a successful golfer for the team.

"Max is an extremely hard worker. Occasionally you get athletes like Max who work on their own without being asked, and outside regular practice," Eastman said.

His hard work and dedication has really paid off.

"I have been on varsity all four years of my high school career, and I have gone to sectionals three times," Kitzman stated.

After high school, Kitzman plans on focusing on his academics and his future career choices.

"A guarantee would be going to a four-year college, even though I have not decided a college to go to. I would love to pursue either pre-med or engineering," Kitzman said.

Foreign exchange student outlines French school day

BY: FLORA CAILLEAU ISABELLO

The French school system is a lot different than in the United States, so let me explain to you the differences.

First, you enter high school when you're fifteen, and you graduate when you're eighteen. There's only three years of high school.

After ninth grade, students choose between three distinct high school pathways. I'll only explain one to you today, the most common one, "La seconde generale." It means the general way.

It's the way that allows for more opportunities, but there is a lot of work, so you have to get good grades to go.

Most of the time, people take that way when they don't really know what they want to do later. Sixty one percent of the French students are in the general way.

Then, another difference is that you can't choose what you're studying. Here are the classes:

French, four hours per week, maths four hours per week, history and geography three hours per week, physics and chemistry three hours per week, language five hours and a half per week.

There's also life and earth science an hour and a half per week, economic and social science, an hour and a half per week, digital science and technology an hour and a half per week.

And finally physical education two hours per week and moral and civic education eighteen hours per year.

The schedule is for two weeks. The first week is A and second one is B. The classes are not the same everyday and they don't have the same length every week. I know it's confusing so here's an example :

Monday on week A, my friend starts with two hours of history from 8 to 10a.m. Monday on week B, she has math from 8 to 9a.m., and French from 9 to 10a.m. Then she has Physical education from 10 to 12a.m. on both weeks, A and B.

The latest that we can finish is 6p.m. So when you start at 8a.m., you spend ten hours at school. Most of the time when we have a very long day like that, our break for lunch is two hours, or even more. I think that makes no sense because a lot of people can't go home, so they're just staying outside for two hours, not doing anything, and then they go home at 6:30p.m.

That's why people that are playing sports only have games on the weekends, because we wouldn't have time after a school day.

Another variation between France and the United States is that here, in Dixon High School, I have some classes with students that are not in my grade. In France, it will not happen because you're staying with the same people all day, and they all have your age.

At the beginning of the year, you have a list with your name on it and all of the other people that you're going to spend the year with. Because we can't choose our classes, we all study the same thing, so we stay together as a group

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Memories made on the bowling team

BY: MADELYN BIRD

Bowling is a really fun sport that I feel more should participate in at Dixon High School it also gives people the opportunity to try something new.

Not many people like it and I'm not going to be against them for that, but I feel people should join the sport.

Each year the boys and girls team get smaller because nobody wants to join because many think it's boring or that it's not a sport.

From experience I can say it is a very fun and interesting sport to be in and people that have also bowled for years can say the same.

Having a bigger team for this sport is good for us especially when it comes to tournaments and matches sometimes.

You don't have to be good to be in it. Yes, sometimes people in bowling get mad when they do bad but I've learned over the years that you should be happy at matches and tournaments because you are with people that make you laugh at the end of the day.

Trying this sport is a good way to try a new experience. There are so many fun things that come out of the bowling team.

In the bowling team you get to go to practice every day and be goofy with your friends and have fun and the long bus rides to other games is just a blast with people laughing and making funny jokes and making good memories that you will never forget.

At games you get to meet new people, make new friends and get to bond with them at other matches and tournaments when you see them again.

One great thing about a bowling team is that there are people who are not even on your team who will support you and no matter what you always want to support others even if they are not part of your team; do it to make people happy.

When we go to tournaments that's even better than plain old matches even though there are some down sides to tournaments like having to get up early to drive an hour or two away, but you get so much good out of it at the end of the day.

Meeting new people at tournaments, getting to spend time with them all day and getting to eat lunch with them and get to know them more just in one day.

At games and matches there might even be people that you look up to because of how good they are and you want to be like them and bowl like them.

When it comes to bowling there is so much people are missing out on and they don't even know it.

You don't have to be good at bowling or win anything from it; it's just about the good experience and memories you can make and get out of it and can be an amazing opportunity to try something new and get so much out of the sport.

Schools should step away from technology

BY: MEGHAN JACKSON

I think it would benefit both teachers and students if schools took a step back from technology and started converting back to paper.

One reason I think this would benefit schools is that it makes it harder for students to cheat on homework and tests.

If most of the in class work is on paper students do not have access to artificial intelligence or other sources they can use to cheat on their work.

Now on technology students can access artificial intelligence even if schools have blocked the website just by simply searching on Google.

One example about how this can improve schooling is in English classes.

If students had to write essays on paper in class without access to the internet they would have to write and come up with their own ideas which will lead to improved writing skills.

Many studies have also shown that doing work the traditional way with pen and paper, helps students retain and memorize information better than they can using online assignments.

This may also lead to better results on tests and homework, and students may feel less of a need to cheat.

Having school work on paper also gives the students eyes a break from the strain of constant screen time they may experience.

Excessive screen time is also linked to the decreased interest in reading among children.

This is because increasing screen time lowers attention spans and makes it hard for children to focus.

Decreased focus also leads to many students not paying attention and comprehending what they are supposed to be learning in the classroom.

Writing in the traditional way can also improve things like children's handwriting and spelling.

When students have to write on paper they do not have access to things like grammar or spelling check.

The slower process of handwriting forces your brain to focus more deeply on the letters you're writing and can be proven to improve grammar.

The use of technology creates the risk that students do not have their technology charged and ready for school each day.

When students have homework online the work then requires wifi.

If a student does not have power or wifi they can not get the work done on time.

With paper the students are given the assignment by their teachers and most of the time all they need to do the assignment is a pencil.

Having to keep track of paper assignments can also help to teach students responsibility and accountability.

Computer work also gives students many distractions like games or videos they may use instead of doing their work.

Taking away computer work gives students less to get distracted by and will help them stay on task.

Smartpass needs changes to be more useful

BY: LILLI MCCALL

I think that Smartpass is stupid. I think that it has a lot of faults that need to be changed.

This year Dixon High School started using Smartpass for when students need to leave the classrooms, supposedly to make it easier for students to leave and easier for teachers to keep track of where they are going.

I understand why the school has started using it but I think that there are some things about Smartpass that make it more confusing and difficult than it needs to be.

One of the problems about using Smartpass is changing the room that you are in. The Smartpass is designed to change automatically based on your schedule, but it is very inconsistent when it changes and it is just overall confusing.

If the whole point of the app is to keep better track of the number of students who are in the halls at a time, then the app should work the same way every time.

Another big problem on the Smartpass is the amount of time that we are given for some of the places we have to go. For example, you only get 10 minutes to go to the library which I think is unreasonably short because in the library you most likely are not gonna take only 10 minutes to pick a book.

You get seven minutes to go to the tech zone which I think is also unreasonably short because you never know how long it's going to take in the tech zone especially if something is really wrong with your Chromebook.

The time also should vary depending on which floor you are on and which floor you are coming from, if you are on the first floor and you have to go all the way up to the fourth floor it's not going to take you that short of time to get all the way up there, get the help that you need, then go all the way back down to your class within the time that you are given.

I think that there should be a way for the teacher to pause the pass once that student gets to the place that they set their pass to such as the library, nurse, or office. Since the pass shows up on the teacher's computer the teacher for that class should be able to make sure you are there, then pause the pass, and then when you are ready to leave that teacher should be able to unpause it.

Students should not have to worry about their pass running out of time when they are doing something that they are supposed to do, because once your pass runs over the time limit more than a few times then you can't make passes anymore.

Overall, I think Smartpass could be a useful thing, but it needs some changes like if the app worked more consistently, allowed multiple stops, gave students more time for certain things, and allowed passes to be paused then it would make the whole thing less confusing and make things easier for students and teachers.

Freshmen should not have to do Progress Learning

BY: ADRIANNA OAKES

Every freshman at our school has to log into Progress Learning, go through the lessons, and probably forget most of what they learned by the end of the week.

So why are we spending class time on a program that does not really help us yet?

I believe freshmen should not have to use Progress Learning because it would be more useful starting in sophomore year, when students are more prepared for it.

Progress Learning is meant to help students prepare for important tests like the ACT.

These tests become more important as we get closer to applying to college. However, most freshmen are still adjusting to high school, figuring out how to manage homework, and learning how to study effectively and efficiently.

Making us focus on test prep so early seems unnecessary when we are still trying to get used to high school.

Another problem is that many freshmen have not learned all the material covered in Progress Learning yet.

We are still working on the basics in our classes, and our teachers should be the ones helping us understand those topics first.

When we have to answer questions about things we have not learned, the program can feel like we are doing something wrong when we simply have not been taught the material yet.

Time is another reason freshmen should not have to do Progress Learning. Between classes, homework, sports, and clubs, our schedules are already busy.

Spending extra time on a program that may not match what we are learning in class can take away from other things that actually help us.

We could use that time to study for a test, work on a project, read, or even take a much- needed break.

Or we could use it on going to the classes we struggle the most with and getting extra help understanding the material.

I think sophomores should continue using Progress Learning because they are more prepared for it.

By sophomore year, students usually have a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and have learned more of the material covered on important exams.

They can begin preparing for the ACT and develop better study habits before the ACT gets closer.

Starting at this point gives students more time to practice and understand the material without feeling rushed.

Instead of making freshmen use Progress Learning, our school should let us focus on adjusting to high school and building a strong foundation in our classes.

We need time to figure out how we learn best and develop good study habits.

By sophomore year, we will have a better idea of what we need to work on, and Progress Learning will be more helpful.

Our school should move Progress Learning to just sophomore year and up.

Freshmen already have enough to focus on as they get used to high school.

Waiting until sophomore year would give students a better chance to get something useful out of the program.

We should focus on learning the basics now so we can be better prepared for bigger tests later.

(French schools continued from page 8)

from 8a.m. to 5p.m.

I think that should change because a lot of people are alone while their friends are all together all day.

Here, there are on average 20 students per class. In France the average class size is 30, and the most crowded class has 39.

It's really hard for the teachers to teach and for us to learn when there are that many people.

For the last difference that I wanted to mention, let's finish on a positive note : The vacations !

First thing to know in France, the school calendar splits the country into three geographical regions called zone A, zone B and zone C.

Each zone has a different schedule for winter and spring break.

For example, during spring break, my cousin that lives in the west is on vacation from the 10th to the 26th of April, but I'm on vacation from the 3rd to the 19th of April.

We have two weeks for every vacation, except summer break. The first one is in October, and it's called "La Toussaint." All of the French students have this break at the same time. The second one is "Noel," the Christmas break in December.

Then we have winter break, "hiver" in French, in February. A lot of people go skiing during those two weeks. The next one is spring break, or " Les vacances de printemps" in French, is in April. The last vacation is " l'été", or summer break, from the first of July to the first of September.

I think that the American school system is better than the French's in general. It's easier to learn and be focused when the days are shorter, when there's less people in class and when you're not staying with the same people all day. But I also think that the French system better prepares the students to have jobs, to work, and to their future life.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed on the Opinion pages of the *Dixini* are the opinions of the writer only and do not represent the opinions of the newspaper staff as a whole, the adviser, or of Dixon High School.

Negatives of 80/20 grading system outweigh positives

BY: MACI STEPHENITCH

I strongly believe that the 80/20 grading system at Dixon High School has a negative impact on students though I do get the benefits.

The 80/20 policy is a school grading system that divides a student's overall grade into two main categories: 80% for tests, and major projects then 20% for homework, classwork, and daily participation.

As students, we already have a lot of stuff on our plates like going to work, going to practice, or any type of extra curricular outside of school.

Trying to balance all of these extra responsibilities outside of school while also keeping up with school can become very overwhelming and stressful.

Knowing that one bad test grade can completely drop your grade down one or two letter grades can become extremely stressful.

I also believe it is unfair because some students work very hard and do try hard in class but are just not very great test takers.

In my opinion what matters is they are still trying.

Some students study for hours, do their work and still do not get a good test grade.

They understand what is going on in the class but just struggle when it comes to test taking.

Students who do try and put in the effort to get good test grades deserve to be recognized.

A grade should show more than just how well someone performs on a test.

The constant pressure to do really good on a test is so negatively draining.

It also becomes very stressful when you do all of your homework and it is worth very little of your grade.

Homework should help students practice what they have learned but should also be recognized for doing it instead of making it basically not part of a students' overall grade.

Some students do not even bother to do homework anymore because they believe it is pointless.

Students should not have to feel like one test matters more than all of the other work they have worked hard on.

Another negative impact of the grading system is people tend to prioritize memorizing and studying what will be on the test instead of actually trying to learn the material.

Students are focusing more on getting a good grade than actually understanding the subject.

The contrasting side does come with some benefits.

Having a test as a big portion of students' grades tends to reflect what the student actually learned rather than just a task completion.

Some students do not ever do their assignments at all so the grading system is beneficial for teachers who know students do not do their work and do not understand the topic.

The system helps provide a clearer understanding of what a student actually knows versus whether they just turn in their homework to get it out of the way without actually taking the time to understand it.

Another beneficial part of the system is if a student wants to retake a test you can and will be able to get up to an 85%.

This is good for when students do poorly on a test since if you do very bad on a test it is more likely to move you down to one to two letter grades.

Overall the stress, the lack of appreciation for effort, and many other negative effects of this grading system definitely outweigh the positives aspects.

Homework is more harmful than helpful

BY: BRIANNA MENDYK

It is my belief that homework adds to a student's stress during the day instead of helping.

Homework could throw someone's schedule off completely, especially if it's not someone who doesn't go right home right after school.

Most teachers expect it done the day after it was assigned although they may think it won't throw a student back, but it builds with all of our other homework and tests along with quizzes we have to study for that are happening that week.

Excessive amounts of work that we have after school cuts into our rest time which is strictly seven hours, which could be cut down five hours with sports, practice or school clubs that run activities after school cutting into evening time we have for ourselves.

Eliminating homework could help students so it helps better on studying for a test.

Having homework plus tests to study for could burn a student out in addition to being overwhelmed with work and not getting the knowledge we need for a test because of how much homework we have.

Just to wake up at six in the morning to end later in the evening, that cycle for 5 days of the week just to hardly catch a break and try to regulate during the weekend though needing a social life as well.

I'm not saying homework isn't beneficial; it can be, but I feel it should be more of an option or extra task that could be a homework grade for extra credit/help if they are struggling in that class.

Aside from sports, extracurricular activities etc, some students may have family issues and furthermore won't have time to get it done at home and are expected to have it done by the time they walk into class the next day.

With those things being said that could cut into having many pages of homework to do in one study hall period or trying to get it done in a class with just a few minutes left.

Instead of having a want for learning It often leads to anxiety on what to do next, Or what's coming their way during that school day.

Most importantly with how much time homework could take up in a student's evening it takes away their ability to do more things of what they would like to do then having to stay indoors with homework in place of hobbies we find enjoyable.

(Crisis continued from page 1)
students aren't learning, they're just remembering. Not to mention the screen time," Senior Mercedes Greenfield said.

Freshman Ariya Shaffer said she sees the reading challenges her third grade sister faces.

"I don't think it's an individualized case. I can see that the third graders are learning differently, as well. They don't really have to memorize anything anymore," Shaffer explained.

This spreading theme of lack of reading ability has been coined "The Literacy Crisis."

Thorpe described it in his classroom as, "I remember you could ask students to summarize and give an answer, and they'd do that. They could get off topic of course, but they'd get it done. But now they just say, "Oh, I don't know. I can't do it."

Students have stopped attempting their work, they are simply giving up.

While their lack of understanding can be blamed on the teacher, there is often a different answer, especially if it is being reported nationally.

Gingras said, "We've become so accustomed to short form media, something longer is hard. When everything is short and concise, everything is harder to understand. And from what I've seen when people use AI, they use it to summarize a passage. I think that's detrimental to the learning process because you're not doing the actual hard work to read it."

Senior Owen Tucker agreed with what Gingras had to say of the media's effects on the Literacy crisis.

He said, "I believe that the widespread usage of social media starting with the rise of youtube in the early 2010's has distracted people from the wealth of knowledge held in literature. Not only does it afflict my generation with social media but the younger generation being raised on low quality media and video games appropriately coined as brainrot has only furthered the literacy crisis. Parents, the school system, and other organizations need to do more to get books in the hands of teens and children and encourage reading as a necessary and efficient form of growth."

This concept of a societal lack of intelligence is not new as it has happened before in The Gilded Age during the late 1870s.

It was brought on by the majority of people being in the workforce-the work environments being unfair and dangerous–and was helped by prioritizing education.

Thorpe said, "The Gilded Age is a good parallel; people are getting more and more wealthier, and people are being used as consumers and taken advantage of, tipping the scales in unbalance. The Age used laborers, until people you know, fought back. And that makes me think of AI, sort of how people are willing to use it and give up their knowledge just like how they were willing to work in horrible conditions. And then Teddy Roosevelt came in and worked to reform it! So I guess it really depends on the leadership of America. And the Gilded age, you know, school became more mandatory and stuff to get more people into education and out of the workforce, making citizens more intelligent. So you know, maybe that's what we have to do."

Knowing what has to be done is different then knowing why it should be done; a national crisis cannot be solved if people do not find it of substantial i

mportance.

Gingras said, "I think that people need to decide that information and learning and growth is important."

This crisis goes further than a lack of reading skills or media literacy; it changes one's ability to critically think.

That is what makes this crisis filled with substance.

"Critical thinking. It's not just readiness; it's you know, media literacy. It's being able to look at something and think about the thought process. When you spend your life not thinking, you cease to need to think at all. And that is how we allow people to think for ourselves; and that can be incredibly dangerous." Gingras said.

The Literacy Crisis is real, and has impacted not only students and children's ability to think and read, but also how classrooms and education work.

Children need to be able to read and think for themselves, and if they do not learn to, there is a chance that this pattern will continue on to their children as well.

Therefore, the Literacy Crisis and the education system should be a priority in the coming years.

It is something that has the potential to be dangerous, but unless people decide to work against it, it can continue on a ruinous path for thinking and education.

(Progress Learning continued from page 4)
new," senior Lillyonna Tranbarger said. "I remember my first day, even my teacher was confused by the program."

Since then, the administration has learned more about the program and has word on seeing improvements in the program.

"...our junior class did it from August through May and we did see students that actively used Progress Learning, so they actually tried on the activities," Tate said. "They took their time. They did all of the activities that were assigned and most of them did see an improvement."

Students have also noticed that they have improved academically since starting the program.

"I found that it helped with understanding," said Alajandria Alvarez.

This serves to show that Progress Learning can show benefits if effort is put into the activities assigned.

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