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Volume 23 Issue 5

Avon Grove High School, West Grove, Pa.

Friday, January 28, 2022

## PANDEMIC

# AG School Board debates mask mandate

By Jackson Morris  
Editor

Even though it was a cold evening on January 13, the tempers inside the Avon Grove Intermediate School audion were scorching hot.

The reason was one many Avon Grove community members, citizens of the United States, and humans globally have become quite familiar with: mask mandates. The issue has sparked discussion and debate, and has become a very polarizing issue.

The Avon Grove School Board of Directors held a special meeting to confront the raging bull of an issue that is mask mandates as they met to review the Health and Safety Plan for the district as required by the American Rescue Plan.

The synopsis: not much is changing around Avon Grove. Masks will be continued to be enforced, along with physical distancing, vaccination clinic efforts, and differentiating quarantine lengths depending on an individual's vaccination status.

While some consider the issue of masks to be cut and dry, many community members who arrived at AGIS on that fateful evening did not agree with the School Board's decision.

"I don't even know why we're here talking about this," said community member Matt

Schuster, Jr.

Many community members who went to the event were parents and guardians concerned for their kids, some even showing the powerful emotion this can invoke.

"Just let my daughter breathe," said Mr.

what is right for other people is insanity to me," said Powell.

Prior to the meeting on January 13, the school district sent out a survey to students, teachers, and caregivers.

In this survey it was revealed that 654

with moving to mask optional.

Of the 1598 caregivers who responded to the survey, 52% felt very uncomfortable with a mask-optional plan with high levels of transmission.

Inside of this survey and during the presentation, the school board said that their plan was subject to change per the guidance of the Chester County Health Department (CCHD).

On January 20, the CCHD did just that, proclaiming that contact tracing for COVID-19 was going to be discontinued in all schools in the Chester County area, including Avon Grove.

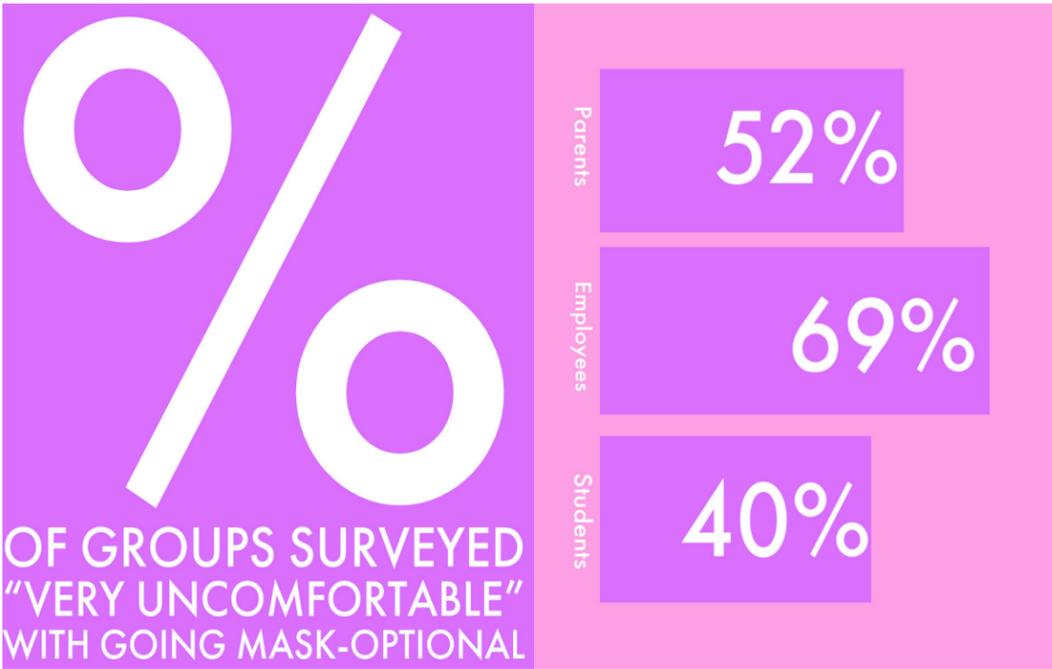
What does this mean for students at AG? High school nurses Mrs. AnnaMarie Bahls and Mrs. Colleen Munger said that the changes are miniscule.

"Shortened quarantines and quarantines of different lengths became too much to keep track of very quickly, which is why the change occurred," said Bahls.

"We might trace for a few special situations, but for the most part, now it is just tracing for at-home infections," said Munger.

While many have disagreed with this issue and with the school board's 7-2 decision to keep masks, one thing that was almost universally agreed upon was staying in school.

In the district wide survey, 95% of teachers, 96% of parents and caregivers, and 86% of students said it was very important for them to stay in an in-person learning environment.



Stevens, a community member who broke down into tears while addressing the board.

Mary Powell, one of the few community members who were there in support of mask mandates, also let her emotion demonstrate the ferocity of her opinion.

"The fact that people don't want to do

of 1604 (40%) students were very uncomfortable with moving to a mask optional environment with high levels of transmission, which was the level of transmission when the survey was sent out.

The survey also showed that 229 of 329 (69%) teachers were also uncomfortable

## SENIORS

# Submit or skip?

## SAT scores are not always required by colleges

By Gaby Bellaver  
Editor

Spring, the time of tests: Advanced Placements exams, finals, SATs, and ACTs. With all of the exams piling up, students' lives are filled with stress and sleep loss.

Is the stress of testing worth it when some colleges aren't even looking at your scores?

In the past, SATs and ACTs seemed to be the "it" factor for getting into college. In recent years many colleges have looked past the numbers and more at the person.

Applying to a school as "test optional" means that an applicant can choose if they want to submit their scores or not. Students have the ability to apply "test optional" for one school but submit scores for another school.

If a student chooses the test optional route, their SAT or ACT scores will not be considered in their application.

Back in 2019, *US News* reported that roughly 1,000 schools accepted test optional applications. The University of Delaware made this change in 2016 and Dickinson College (Carlisle, Pa.) started the trend all the way back in 1994.

Now that number is up to nearly 1,700. COVID has been the main factor in this sudden increase. Schools including West Chester University, Penn State, and the University of Pittsburgh have changed their application requirements.

Even prestigious Ivy League schools like Harvard have posted the requirements on their website and gave credit to COVID: "Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, Harvard College is extending our standardized testing policy through the 2021-

2022 application cycle. We will allow students to apply for admission without requiring ACT or SAT test results."

Close to 27% of applicants took up this opportunity, the Common App reported in the 2018-2019 admission year. This number increased to 57% during the 2020-2021 cycle.

With the uncertainty of the pandemic, schools are still considering if they should keep this option or not. While a number of schools are making it permanent, some are only offering it up to the class of 2023. Others are extending it to the class of 2025.

But most schools are taking it one year at a time.

The next rounds of SATs are right around the corner.

So how do you know if applying test optional is right for you?

Applying test optional could be the right fit for students who didn't do as well on their SAT/ACT. By not using these iffy scores, candidates might have a stronger appeal.

Senior Naomi Partridge chose not to submit her scores to every college.

"I submitted my scores to two colleges that I knew I was in the range of. For the other colleges, I didn't want to risk it."

According to CollegeVine, an aspiring student should submit their scores if they fall within or above the 25th percentile range. Those experts believe this range will strengthen the application's charm.

Many colleges list these scores on their website, allowing prospective students to see where they fall. Colleges always accept outliers, so these statistics should be used as a guide and a goal, not a requirement.

"I didn't do as well as I wanted to on my SAT and I had the chance to not show it. I chose this

### UPCOMING TESTING DATES

Test	Dates
SAT	March 12 May 7 June 4
ACT	April 2 June 11 July 16

SEE SAT ON PAGE 2

SENIORS

# COVID increases number of 'test optional' schools

SAT FROM PAGE 1

because the score didn't represent me as well as school test scores or GPA did," continued Partridge.

Not submitting test scores causes admissions officers to focus more on the qualities of a candidate. They can spend more time viewing extracurricular activities and personal essays.

"I think it's a good thing to not submit test scores because it gives a more holistic view of a person. It's important to be more than a statistic and be more well-rounded," said Partridge.

However, not submitting SAT/ACT scores can hurt if a student's GPA, extracurriculars, and/or course rigor is lacking. Colleges do like seeing test scores to determine if an applicant is ready for the work overload or college.

Admissions officers are looking for candidates who will bring pride to the school during and after their attending years. A large part of this is reflected on the academic side of applications.

Colleges want to show that they are good academically in hopes of attracting more future students. They need the current campus population to fill in this role.

While the personality of the candidate is more often found in the essay and recommendation letter portion, test scores play a

role in showing what kind of student they are.

Colleges also look at test scores to find a person's strengths. For instance, if there is a positive trend in the English side of testing, an academic advisor might recommend harder English classes for that student.

Likewise, if an applicant is lacking in the math areas, but wants to be an engineer, admissions officers might look to other areas to see if the student is really the best fit. This could help them follow the career path that best fits them. Most colleges are looking out for the best interests of hopeful students, even if it means not getting accepted into certain programs.

The strong appeal of applying test optional means more people will be applying to that college or university. This creates even more competition at the already selective schools.

Your score might help you stand out compared to the other candidates.

"If I didn't submit my scores, I think it would've hurt my application," said senior Naia Waters. "I think including it helped me stand out compared to other applicants."

"I submitted my SAT scores because I applied to many Ivy League and prestigious schools," Waters continued. "If I hadn't submitted them there was a very slim chance that I would've gotten in."

So both including and excluding test scores can make you stand out?

Oddly enough, the answer is yes. While the pros and cons of applying test optional are eerily similar, the question of if you should use them is completely situational.

If you decide to go to college, it might be beneficial to take the test as a precautionary measure. You can wait to see what schools you have in mind and then decide if you are going to submit your scores.

While current lowerclassmen can ponder their options, there are even more factors for the classes of 2026 and beyond. The SAT is going digital.

On January 25, the CollegeBoard released that the SAT will now be on a digital platform.

This will start internationally next year, but won't travel back across the pond until 2024.

Test takers will be allowed to use their own electronic devices, but will still need to go to certified testing sites.

The CollegeBoard hopes that by transitioning the test to an online site, the test will be easier to take.

The format of the exam will be very familiar to students since COVID has provided a digital experience. The CollegeBoard also be-

lieves that this new method will shorten the exam from 3 hours to 2 hours.

While the SAT, much like COVID variants, is adapting, there is still some negativity toward the exam.

"Personally, I think they should just get rid of SAT testing in general," said Waters.

But that is an argument for another day.

**NEWS** by the **NUMBERS**

- 83 school days left for the year
- 117 days until graduation
- 221 days until the new AGHS opens



# HERALD SPORTS

<p>● <b>Jan. 28</b>  <b>Cheerleading</b> @ PIAA Championships, 2:00pm Hershey  <b>Girls Ice Hockey</b> vs. Penncrest-Haven, 4:30pm Ice Works</p>	<p>● <b>Jan. 29</b>  <b>Girls Basketball</b> vs. Oxford, 5:45pm  <b>Boys Basketball</b> vs. Oxford, 7:00pm  <b>Boys Ice Hockey</b> vs. Unionville, 9:30pm, Ice Line</p>	<p>● <b>Jan. 31</b>  <b>Swimming</b> vs. D'town East, 4:30pm  <b>Wrestling</b> vs. Del. Military Acad., 7:00pm  <b>Girls Ice Hockey</b> vs. Moreland, 9:30pm, Ice Line</p>
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GIRLS BASKETBALL

## Underclassmen prove dominance during win over Interboro

By Riley Wiercinski  
Staff Writer

"We're 6-3 and I couldn't ask for anything better," said four-year varsity head coach Bart O'Connor after the Lady Devils beat Interboro 37-7 on January 15.

Freshman Leila Rubin led the offense with 10 points and senior Lianna Gardner put up 4 points in the sixth victory of the season. This was built upon as Rubin and junior Abby Mills made 10 foul shots.

Gardner, Mills, and freshman Gabby Beltran kept the ball in AG's hands with a combined 16 rebounds.

The defense held strong through the entire game as they only allowed 7 points, most of which were scored off of foul shots.

At this point, the underclassmen have become a force to be reckoned with, as Rubin, junior Sydney Traa, and Mills have snuck into the predominantly senior starting lineup. Rubin holds an average of 4.4 rebounds and 5.4 points per game, while Beltran averages 3.8 points and 4.4 rebounds.

Sophomore Brooke Huver adds to the fierce underclass with an average of 6.3 points per game.

"As a whole, things are going well. We have a good mixture. We have experience on the team with our 5 seniors, while we have 6 underclassmen," says O'Connor.

O'Connor has high hopes for the team to qualify for districts. Both senior captains Lianna Gardner and Bria Nartey share this goal.

"Personally, I would always like to be rebounding. Just getting on the board consistently is always a goal for us," says Nartey, who stuck to this goal successfully by averaging 8.8 rebounds and 7.8 points per game.

"Just keeping our heads up is a big thing for us," says Gardner, "which is really easy with a team like ours. Everyone is so encouraging and someone is always there to pick you up."

This team isn't here to play for themselves, or Avon Grove. They play for each other and preach the power of women in sports.

"Girls' sports matter. Across the board, whatever sport it is. All female athletes matter," says Nartey.

Note: As of January 26, the team is 7-6 and ranked 32nd in the district. The top 24 teams make it to the district playoffs.



-Photo by Riley Wiercinski  
Freshman Leila Rubin made a foul shot to push the Lady Devils into a 14-0 first quarter lead over Interboro on January 15.

### SENIORS

## Are Ivy League schools more than just the name?

By  
Maddie Butler  
Column

Growing up, many people dream of attending colleges with ivy-covered walls, but are these dreams worth pursuing?

The eight Ivy League schools (Harvard, Brown, Columbia, Princeton, Yale, Cornell, Penn, and Dartmouth) are selective colleges that welcome competition, great opportunities, and high tuition costs.

Many question whether the high tuition and more challenging courses make them worth it compared to other schools. An Ivy League school, however, has a lot more to offer than the negatives.

*Crimson Education* states that "attending an Ivy League gives you access to research and studying materials crafted by the most brilliant minds." Furthermore, Ivy League schools provide "[students] with leading-edge and timely research."

Once at an Ivy League school, students can learn from some of the best material available, although not only Ivies obtain this privilege.

Payton Smith, a senior at AG who has applied to multiple Ivies and non-Ivies, shared how Barnard Women's College works alongside Columbia University. Going there means still having access to the Ivy-level information and buildings.

While Ivies have outstanding educational programs, this doesn't mean that state schools and privates don't either. In fact, 5 out of the 10 top schools ranked by *U.S. News* as the best for 2022 aren't considered Ivy League.

The non-ivy schools are Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Mass.), Stanford University (Stanford, Calif.), University of Chicago (Chicago, Ill.), California Institute of Technology (Pasadena, Calif.), and Duke University (Durham, N.C.).

In addition to academics, Ivies also have, as Dalton put it, "the Ivy charm," which makes them stand out even if the difference isn't "a tangible thing."

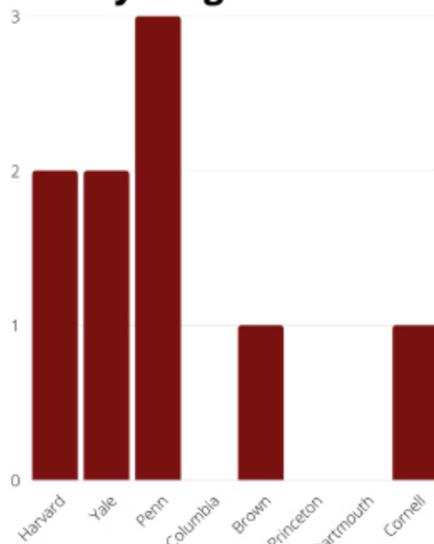
Historical stone buildings to intricately designed compositions of old and new styles form the basis for Ivy architecture. Creating the sophisticated atmosphere draws in so many through campus tours and images online.

Having already toured ten college campuses, Dalton reflects on how Ivies certainly know how to impress when it comes to their campuses. Pointing out the difference between New York University and Columbia is an example.

While both are located within New York City, Dalton explains how Columbia maintains its traditional college campus-style while NYU strays away from this. Hence, the student's campus becomes the city itself.

One downside to Ivies is the high tuition costs that limit the demographics of who can attend. Although, there are many ways to get these high costs down that ac-

AG Students Who Attended an Ivy League School



Past 5 Years

Source: AGHS-Guidance Department

tually show the positives of Ivies.

As found in *Scholarships360*, Ivy League schools have some of the best financial aid programs even if they don't give out typical scholarships. Their financial aid programs give grants instead of loans so student debt stays at a minimum.

Princeton has one of the top financial aid programs for college students within the United States, and as found on their website those with "family incomes up to \$160,000 typically pay no tuition." For the class of 2025, the average grant was around \$62,000.

Lafayette College (Easton, Penn.), a private liberal arts college, does promise to meet "100% of its students' financial aid need" according to *US News*, and *CollegeSimply* states that the average student pays around \$26,810.

Ivies also have, on average, smaller class sizes so students can receive more one-on-one education and their needs more easily met.

However, many private non-Ivies can have similar class sizes. Bowdoin College (Brunswick, Maine) and Lafayette College have enrollment rates comparable to those of the Ivies.

Beyond the appealing aesthetic and bountiful resources of Ivies, there are many pros to picking state or private schools as well.

As Avinash Thakur, one of the top students in the sophomore class, said, "the school you go to doesn't define what you can do in the future."

Numerous colleges that are not considered Ivy League schools are highly prestigious with low acceptance rates. Stanford has an acceptance rate at 5%, while Bowdoin with 9% makes these two right in the running with the Ivy League where the average acceptance rate is 7.75%.

Not getting into Ivies isn't the end of the world, and students are much more than the sum of their college's acceptance rate.

Typically the college one chooses is where they spend four years of their life, so it should be

a good fit. Whether this is based on the atmosphere, extracurricular opportunities, location, etc., it is vital to be satisfied with the college past just the name.

Considering all of the eight Ivy League colleges are located within the northeastern part of the United States, the location could be a significant factor in whether or not Ivies are worth it for a person.

Some prefer the cold, and some prefer the heat, but not everyone is the same, so their choice of where they go won't be the same either.

In accordance with this idea, Smith mentioned how "it all comes down to personal preference. You have to actually like the school and value its programs."

Smith applied not to Columbia because of its Ivy status, but because it had exceptional programs for her field of interest, political science and psychology, as well as the campus being located in a preferable location for her.

It's important to remember that the name of a college means nothing without interest or dedication to what you are studying. Both of which are easier to have when you like your surroundings.

Good colleges breed good students, but a good college is a lot more than just its name.

Ivies can be worth it if they are the right match for the person attending, but just because you don't have the grades or the test scores doesn't mean that your life won't amount to its full potential.

While in high school, most people look past the grades of other students and see their peers as people instead of numbers. We need to look past the tags we have placed on colleges, but see the ability of the student as an individual.

### MOVIES

## Same old story, new cast

By  
Naomi Partridge  
Column

If you turn on the T.V. right now, you might think you are in a never ending time loop. Film and television reboots are nothing new, but "nothing new" can perfectly describe the entertainment industry now.

From *Dune* to *West Side Story* and *He's All That* to *Gossip Girl*, why is Hollywood so saturated with remakes?

Either way, there seems to be little new ideas and stories circulating as almost all of the visual media we are seeing is re-packaged, remodeled and re-marketed.

There is this thought that "Hollywood is running out of ideas," but remakes and sequels are safe. There is no need to gain interest for a new concept, because there is already an audience for

but it's also disorganized and frustrating. You get 30 minutes into the movie before you realize the main plot hasn't started yet.

Netflix has also jumped on the remake train taking the beloved 1990s film, *She's All That*, and genderbending the cast and appealing to a Gen Z audience. But *He's All That* fails to make use of these alterations or have any of the charms of its predecessor.

The remake's biggest pull was casting TikTok star Addison Rae to play the main character, Padget. She bets she can transform an unpopular "dweeb" classmate, Cameron (played by Tanner Buchanan) into a prom king.

In theory, Cameron is supposed to change outwardly as Padget transforms internally realizing she's been living by a false set of values, but no such thing happens. This movie fails to address the deep sense of falseness of social media that Padget has

## Reboots

### VS. ORIGINAL

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ★ SHE'S ALL THAT (1999)  | ★ HE'S ALL THAT (2021)   |
| ★ DUNE (1984)            | ★ DUNE (2021)            |
| ★ 101 DALMATIONS (1961)  | ★ CRUELLA (2021)         |
| ★ WEST SIDE STORY (1961) | ★ WEST SIDE STORY (2021) |
| ★ MULAN (1998)           | ★ MULAN (2020)           |
| ★ LITTLE WOMEN (1994)    | ★ LITTLE WOMEN (2019)    |
| ★ FREAKY FRIDAY (1976)   | ★ FREAKY FRIDAY (2018)   |
| ★ THE MUMMY (1999)       | ★ THE MUMMY (2017)       |
| ★ CINDERELLA (1950)      | ★ CINDERELLA (2015)      |

the taking. Hollywood is able to capitalize on the connections people already have with their favorite characters, while tapping into the feeling of nostalgia we're all appealed by.

Disney has had such a success with this that they created the 2021 *Cruella* prequel to the 1996 *101 Dalmations*, which was a remake of the 1961 cartoon version.

*Cruella* tries in vain to be something it's not and often pauses to remind itself that it's supposed to have something to do with *101 Dalmations*. Although a lot of iconic production design elements were kept, such as Cruella's black and white hair, the Bentley roadster and the dalmations, the script tries to mold Cruella into a child navigating a world of useless adults, becoming enthralled in plots to expose the villain.

There's no denying that *Cruella* is stylish and iconic with an edge,

fallen victim to.

Even the production falls flat. *He's All That* is over-saturated by brands making the film seem like an average influence feed. Even the wardrobe, which has the potential to be such a critical tool in any teen movie, is a completely wasted opportunity.

*She's All That* is no masterpiece either, but it still feeds the audience's need for 1990s sentimentality with a large cast of appealing young actors. *He's All That* falls short because of its lack of depth.

So, where does that leave us? In times of major economic upheaval, Hollywood turns to remakes. With the world devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, remakes and sequels were needed to keep the industry and fans happy.

So, like it or not, remakes are here to stay.

# HAPPY HOLLA-DAYS



-Photo by Dylan Ball

The teacher band, called The Stollers, plays "Mr. Brightside." Mr. Cowgill led vocals and was supported by Mrs. Buono, with Mr. Neff and Mr. Childs on guitar, Mr. Renz on saxophone, Ms. Lucas on bass, and Mr. Pizzini on drums.



-Photo by Dylan Ball

Eloise Fox, who also attends The Julliard School, performed an opera solo.



-Photo by Dylan Ball

Connor Reger and Brayden Nguyen sing "Unwritten," by Natasha Bedingfield.



-Photo by Dylan Ball

Alek Pochan wears his big suit in the Ben Coppins Memorial Tribute Band while playing "Them Changes," by Thundercat.



-Photo by Dylan Ball

Mr. Langhorne was pried in the face as part of a National Honors Society fundraiser.



-Photo by Dylan Ball

Mr. Ricketts took a dramatic fall after being pried in the face for a NHS fundraiser.



-Photo by Dylan Ball

Brayden Nguyen rolls around with Heelys while belting out "Unwritten," by Natasha Bedingfield.